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This is a study of Sara Suleri's *Meatless Days* (1987) and *Boys Will Be Boys: A Daughter's Elegy* (2003) using principally Suleri's own critical analysis of literature about India written in English, *The Rhetoric of English India* (1992), as well as her critical essays on contemporary postcolonial and feminist discourse. Suleri is an eminently qualified expert on the subjects because she is an immigrant from Pakistan, her father Z.A. Suleri was a leading Pakistani intellectual, her mother a Welsh teacher of English (as well as a lover of Jane Austin novels), and she is herself a professor of English at Yale University. Particular emphasis will be placed on the topics of family, gender, history, law, and self-awareness as they are represented in the idioms of dubiety and migrancy.

An idiom is conventionally defined as the "use of words peculiar to a given language; an expression that cannot be translated literally" (Harmon and Holman "Idiom"). However, Suleri expands this narrow definition of the metaphoric nature of words to include genre and our unconscious assumptions about language. Suleri presciently

defines the idioms of dubiety and migrancy that she adopts, perhaps subconsciously, in her own writing when analyzing the texts created in English India by Europeans and Indians in her critically commended study *The Rhetoric of English India*. She defines the idiom of dubiety as "a mode of cultural tale-telling that is neurotically conscious of its own self-censoring apparatus" (3). This type of narration

is preternaturally dependent on the instability of its own facts. For colonial facts are vertiginous: they lack a recognizable cultural plot; they frequently fail to cohere around the master-myth that proclaims static lines of demarcation between imperial power and disempowered culture, between colonizer and colonized. Instead, they move with a ghostly mobility to suggest how highly unsettling an economy of complicity and guilt is in operation between each actor on the colonial stage. (3)

Finally, the idiom of dubiety recognizes that "[t]he necessary intimacies that obtain between ruler and ruled create a counterculture not always explicable in terms of an allegory of otherness" (3).

Suleri defines the idiom of migrancy as one in which the "migrant moment of dislocation is far more formative, far more emplotting, than the subsequent acquisition of either postcolonial nation or colonial territory" (5). For example, the effect of Suleri's sister Ifat's death on Suleri's life was that it "cut away her intimacy with Pakistan, where history is synonymous with grief" (*Meatless* 19).

Dubiety as a hesitant uncertainty that tends to cause vacillations in reference to genre is demonstrated by Suleri initially proclaiming *Meatless Days* a memoir. Indeed, her publisher, the University of Chicago Press, continues to promote the text as a "finely wrought memoir of life in postcolonial Pakistan" (cover). However, at least one reviewer, Rukhsana Ahmad, recognizes it as "a sad, poignant and graceful elegy" to her sister, Ifat, and her mother, Mair (744). In Suleri's subsequent autobiographical text, *Boys Will Be Boys: A Daughter's Elegy* [to her father], she confesses that *Meatless Days* "is largely an elegy for her" mother (16). As a matter of fact, near the end of *Meatless Days*, Suleri reminisces about saying to her mother, "you must be just who you are, and we must discover why" (166). In *Meatless Days*, Suleri not only laments the loss of her mother, but grieves over the possibility of ever understanding who her mother was; however, in *Boys Will Be Boys*, ostensibly an elegy, Suleri repeatedly engages her deceased father in dialogue as if he were present. Tellingly, the title of her elegy to her father, *Boys Will Be Boys*, is the title of the book her father planned to write before he died. She writes poignantly of it in *Meatless Days*: "So many books will remain unread. The one I most regret is *Boys Will Be Boys*, my

father's life and times, since I doubt he will ever write it now" (183). She, of course, wrote it for him after he passed away.

These are significant facts when we recall that a memoir is an autobiographical text in "which the emphasis is not on the author's developing self but on the people and events that the author has known or witnessed" (Abrams "Memoir") and that an elegy is a "formal and sustained lament...for the death of a particular person, usually ending in a consolation" ("Elegy"). A close reading of *Meatless Days* and *Boys Will Be Boys* reveals not only that Suleri vacillates between the two similar, although not identical genres, but also that her ostensible memoir more closely resembles an elegy and her apparent elegy more closely resembles a memoir. Suleri's mother Mair is an absent presence in *Meatless Days* and Suleri's father Pip's absence is a tangible presence in *Boys Will Be Boys*. Some readers may mistakenly interpret Suleri's texts, *Meatless Days* and *Boys Will Be Boys*, as catachrestic rearticulations of Western texts—catachrestic inasmuch as they are elegies in the form of memoirs: Or, are they memoirs in the form of elegies? However, Suleri's dubiety in reference to genre is deliberately subversive of any master-myths that proclaim static lines of demarcation between genres.

The reward of understanding one's self through one's interaction with other selves is arguably one of the objectives of writing memoirs/elegies. Yet, Suleri's purpose is far more ambitious and her rhetoric more complex than in a conventional memoir/elegy. A traditional example of the genre may be thought of as a narrative, a chronicle, a catalogue of events, or a even a type of *bildungsroman* wherein the author explores the possible meanings, contradictions, rememberings and forgettings which constitute the texture of a life. Under such a paradigm, it is a given that the process of weaving the story of one's life necessarily changes the texture of that life in a fundamental way. The author's entanglement in the text causes the author to lose something even as she is learning it. In other words, one's sense of self is not a product but a process. Salmon Rushdie reflects gracefully on the re-membering process in *Imaginary Homelands* (1981):

It may be that when the Indian writer who writes from outside India tries to reflect that world, he is obliged to deal in broken mirrors, some of whose fragments have been irretrievably lost. But there is a paradox here. The broken mirror may actually be as valuable as the one which is supposedly unflawed...it was precisely the partial nature of these memories, their fragmentation, that made them so evocative for me. The shards of memory acquired greater status, greater resonance, because they were remains; fragmentation made trivial things seem like symbols, and the mundane acquired numinous qualities. (11-12)

The process of identity formation may also be understood through Michel Foucault's paradigm of thinking about the self occupying three subject positions simultaneously—past, present, and future—and about the movement of the self within these three positions. However, multiple subject positions in time are not the end of the story. Sara Suleri's memoirs/elegies clearly demonstrate her thesis, defined in her essay "Woman Skin Deep: Feminism and the Postcolonial Condition," that one's lived experience as a woman and one's historical experience as a member of a people are also crucial issues that must be considered as essential components in the process. The formation of one's self and the attempt to define and share that self are perhaps the most challenging textual exercises any author confronts. Suleri's *Meatless Days* and *Boys Will Be Boys* are courageous and candid explorations of Suleri's sense of self as well as the multifarious selves and histories that shared in that creation.

Before we examine Suleri's creation of her sense of self, let's discuss some of the histories. Why is Suleri writing in English? She recognizes that it is not a neutral language when she foregrounds it by her consciously awkward translations of Urdu in *Boys Will Be Boys*. She writes of "making the mistake of telling him [her father Pip] about my attempted translation of Ghalib" while he was descanting about translation (4). Pip advised her that "translation is not in the word; it is in the essence!" (5). Later, Suleri recounts her struggles to read newspapers written in Urdu to her father: "I hate to admit it, but reading in English was easier for me, and when you [Pip] asked for an article in Urdu, I felt incompetent beyond belief" (5-6). It is very important to note her comments on Punjabi, too: "it always struck us as a singularly male language: we even cringed slightly when Ifat taught herself to speak that red-blooded tongue with such gusto. The rest of us women remained monogamous" (69).

If we agree with Mikhail Bakhtin's observation that any "utterance is to a greater or lesser degree the echo of another voice" (cited in Lyons 185), Suleri's expert proficiency in English as well as her lack of proficiency, yet paradoxical "intimacy," with the languages of Pakistan and India, strongly suggest that her texts "echo" not an indigenous voice, but all the attenuated "isms"—colonialism, imperialism, classism, etc.—of her adopted language. This observation gives a new valence to the question, "Who is speaking?" Does Suleri's extensive education and expertise in Western literature and language make her more or less susceptible to "echoing" Western rhetoric? In other words, is she a cultural mediator or an apologist of Western culture? Mara Scanlon points out that Suleri "claims from the first words of her book [*Meatless Days*] a disassociation from the language of her youth because it cannot contain her identity, or that of her mother and sisters, as women." Because there is "no vocabulary to discuss fully the idea of 'women'," there are no women in the third world (416-17). On the other hand, Elazar Barkan cites Suleri's interpretation of Harriet Tytler's memoir in *The Rhetoric of English India* to ask: "Tytler, although an Anglo, wrote in India; Suleri, although from Pakistan, writes at Yale. Are these new perspectives, or are they merely a

new twist of occidental appropriation? Can the subaltern speak only in the suburbs?" (189-90). Rushdie, however, suggests a persuasive counterargument to Barkan's insinuations when he writes:

Those of us who use English do so in spite of our ambiguity towards it, or perhaps because of that, perhaps because we can find in that linguistic struggle a reflection of other struggles taking place in the real world, struggles between the cultures within ourselves and the influences at work upon our societies. To conquer English may be to complete the process of making ourselves free. (17)

On another note, Barkan claims that a new rhetoric has recently emerged from the antagonistic colonial/anti-colonial paradigm: the "post-anti-colonial" (181). Suleri, who wrote wistfully, "Had I any veto power over prefixes, *post-*, would be the first to go," would be amused at Barkan's neologism, but back to the issue at hand ("Woman" 761). The post-anti-colonial approach "takes into account the anticolonial/poststructuralist sensibilities but examines them in light of more traditional methodological and epistemological approaches" (Barkan 181). One of the reasons for the emergence of this new rhetoric is the fact that "subalterns are being pulled to the center like moths, scorching their alterity in the process" (183). While honoring Gayatri Spivak's observation about the obstacles to subalterns speaking, Barkan asserts that a new genus of subaltern has emerged: the suburban subaltern (183). She defines this class as an "Indian elite educated largely in leading First World schools" (183). This new genus avoids nativist romanticization and Orientalist distancing (185). Suleri speaks to this notion before Barkan when she describes the language of alterity as simply a postmodern variant of the obsolescent idiom of romance in *The Rhetoric of English India* (11). Suleri observes that the "insistence on the centrality of difference [a language of alterity and binarism] as an unreadable entity can serve to obfuscate and indeed to sensationalize that which still remains to be read" (11). She explains: "Much like the category of the exotic in the colonial narratives of the prior century, contemporary critical theory names the Other in order that it need not be further known" (13). Indeed, the idiom of romance presumes that the Other cannot, and even should not, be known. Suleri's term for this error is "alteritist fallacy" (16).

However, Suleri may not be the proverbial Other for another reason. Perhaps she is not the voice of "native agency," but the resonance emanating from a nativist position of privilege unintentionally created by the project of colonialism. Suleri is a professor who constructs and deconstructs the Other in an institution of higher education located in the metropole of the United States, where, even as she criticizes the project of colonialism, she is a living testament to its success as a "civilizing" agent whose unintentional consequence, a native who can speak, mitigates, if not

masks, the legacy of oppression and exploitation which are the necessary attendants of colonialism. It is clear from her oeuvre that her values, modes of entertainment, goals, and consciousness are indistinguishable from those of mainstream U.S. culture. In fact, *Meatless Days* and *Boys Will Be Boys* are not so much postcolonial texts as they are contemporary late imperial, or what Kwame Anthony Appiah terms "post-nationalistic narratives" (Appiah cited in Parry 18) which are produced by the "comprador intelligentsia," a "relatively small Western-style, Western-trained group of writers and thinkers who mediate the trade in cultural commodities of Western capitalism at the periphery" (Parry 20).

Mary Louise Pratt notes the "obsessive need [of the West] to present and represent its peripheries and its Others to itself" (cited in Parry 15). This may explain why texts such as Suleri's are not only valued, but needed by the West. The fact that they are written by a presumable Other lends a patina of legitimacy and authority to them without the necessity of asking tasking epistemological and ontological questions of the author (producer) or reader (consumer). This may be considered a form of postcolonial intellectual colonialism. In this instance, the "native" is producing a necessary and palliative product to be consumed by the dominant culture. However, there is a specific rhetoric required of the producers: their writing (a) must legitimize the colonial project while demonizing those who conducted it; (b) demonstrate the ultimate superiority of the West; (c) contribute to the assimilation of a token number of Others to strengthen the West's own cultural DNA and resistance to domination itself; and (d) reify traditional Western values as normative.

Pratt's argument, like Barkan's, is premised on a traditional binary paradigm, whereas Spivak, like Suleri, is "critical of the binary opposition colonizer/colonized, her concern being to examine the heterogeneity of 'colonial power'" (Parry 13). In fact, the arguments proffered by Pratt and Barkan are not applicable to Suleri because Suleri's heterogeneity of colonialism, especially postcolonialism, does not involve the binary opposition between colonizer and colonized, but a hybrid crossing of those terms. Her own heterogeneity is not only ideological, but physical—she is the daughter of a white, European woman and a Pakistani man. Her body is heterogeneous, and her texts illustrate that she is the ideologically hybrid progeny of her father and mother as well as her other family members, friends, and lovers.

Through biographically sketching her family and friends, Suleri is engaging in the process of self-discovery. However, even the most perceptive, empathic, and intuitive biographer cannot accurately expose the inner life of another. Consider, for example, the renowned biographer Irving Stone. When he writes about the motives and nature of his subject, he is, in reality, speculating on his subject's life and not revealing identifiable facts. If one examines his oeuvre closely, one finds recurring revelations about the inner life of his subjects that occasionally disclose more about Stone's inner life than that of his subjects. Likewise, as we read

Meatless Days and *Boys Will Be Boys*, we see that Sara Suleri's understanding of the significant people in her life is repeatedly abruptly altered by their behaving in ways contrary to her illusory image of them or by their saying something incongruent with her expectations. In recognizing the disparity between her image of them and their ideas about themselves, Suleri's own heterogeneous sense of self is revealed to her. For example, Suleri is shocked when she witnesses her father kissing the telegram announcing the return of her mother (*Meatless* 12). The event causes her to become cognizant of an amorous aspect of her parents' relationship previously unrecognized. In another instance, when her brother Irfan is badly scalded and Suleri sees his injured male genitalia exposed, she has a new consciousness of him as male and of herself as female (12).

Thus, the important people in Suleri's life, revealed in intimate biographical sketches, often tell us more about Suleri's own self than about the people she describes. Consider, for a moment, how dramatically different a biography of Suleri written by her brother Shahid would be from her own memoir. Suleri, for example, is surprised to learn that Shahid has a vivid memory of her throwing a brick at him, while she has no recollection of the event at all. If he were to write a memoir and include a biographical sketch of her, she would be stunned to discover who he thinks she is. We may justifiably wonder, therefore, how accurate Suleri's assertion is that Shahid wakes up "indignant for all the affronts he is soon to suffer" (*Meatless* 176). Another interesting illustration of this phenomenon is that Suleri's memory of her sister Ifat falling and injuring herself is centered around intimations of mortality, whereas Ifat's own recollection centers on the fluid properties of her body—the evaporating moistness on her forehead. This observation is not intended to diminish Suleri's biographical sketches of the people in her life, but to change the focus from her subjects to what her representation of them reveals about her own inner self. Her ideas of them, as opposed to their ideas about themselves, are essential constituent elements of her identity and sense of self. Suleri shrewdly comments about her parents: "What would possess me to believe that they could be, to me, of such unfailing interest...if they were not my parents?" (176). Similarly, she writes of her sister Ifat, "so much of her was inside of me...a twin...the sleepy side of Ifat" (131).

The disparity between who she thinks other people are and who they consider themselves to be demonstrates to Suleri the multivalent nature of her self. It is a startling revelation to discover that one's self is a process and not a product. This revelation is foreshadowed when Halima, the cleaning woman, who "gives birth to one child while another is dying" asks: "Do I grieve or celebrate?" (10). Who is she? A grieving mother or a new mother? In fact, one of the themes of the first chapter of *Meatless Days* is slippage. Suleri's fascination with Dadi, her father's mother, may consist in Dadi's ability to defy definitions, a fixed identity, or any ascribed category; it is part of the fluid property of her body. Dadi appears to be the clichéd reticent Muslim woman, yet Suleri recalls that she cursed men and

thought of women as superior. For instance, she would often proclaim: "there is more goodness in a woman's little finger than in the benighted mind of man" (7). On another occasion, she asserted: "Heaven is the thing Muhammad says lays beneath the feet of women" (7). Even when Dadi appeared to be at her most pious—fasting, for example—she was actually celebrating a gluttonous meal, *sehri*, which occurs before the fast (30). In addition, Dadi composed her own reading of the external world. Although the fast of *sehri* was supposed to begin at daybreak, she would ignore all evidence that day had broken, such as the daylight, the sirens, the sound of morning birds chirping, and the milkmen going about their business. It was not dawn until Dadi stopped masticating (30). Dadi even defied the doctors who pronounced her dead inasmuch as they said she would certainly die and yet she managed to recover. One of the meanings of the parable of "meatless days" is that life is the "little swerve from severity to celebration," from stability to flux (31).

Self as process means that one may never know definitively who one is or who anyone else is, either. The lack of concreteness is simultaneously unsettling and liberating. The danger of a self obsessively seeking a fixed identity is discussed in Eric Hoffer's sagacious populist text *The True Believer*. The danger consists primarily in the delusion that by allowing one's self to be defined by others, or by playing a role defined by others, one is not really one's self but, like the so-called third-world woman, an object that cannot know but only be known. Nevertheless, there is a "sweet peace of saying someone else's lines" and a "serenity that accompanies a body engaged in work, in habit" (*Meatless* 178-79).

One of the temptations of life is to fall into habit. A "habit" is Suleri's term for self as product. She is always struggling against habit, against "waking to become this thing, a name...an over alliterated name...this thing I have to be" (152). Suleri believes her mother succumbed to the temptation and allowed herself to "reach a point where [she] no longer bothered to differentiate between what the world imagined her to be and what [she] was" (169). She writes that it is not easy becoming habitual, for much must be lost and suffered (158). Maintaining a role, a habit, is difficult because significance "must be bailed out all the time; it must be peeled away with onion tears in order that habit can come bobbing up like mushrooms on the surface of a soup" (177). Living with other people, she says, causes a part of her to "wail with maniacal devotion, night and day; another of me with great forbearance weeps" (178). Her mother, Suleri thinks, went one step further and mastered the "art of distraction." In other words, "[s]he learned to live apart, then—apart even from herself—growing into that curiously powerful disinterest in owning, in belonging, which years later would make her so clearly tell her children, 'Child, I will not grip'" (164). This is one of the reasons why Suleri remembers her mother as distant from her, and why she seems to grieve more for her than she does for her father. It is also, perhaps, why she is able to imaginatively converse with her father so effortlessly in *Boys Will Be Boys*—they know one another so well. On the other hand, her

mother remains a mystery, evocatively symbolized as an ever receding sea (*Meatless* 159). Scanlon hypothesizes that the title *Meatless Days* may serve as an oblique metaphor for Suleri's unrequited pleas for nourishment from her mother (418). Suleri's confession three years later in *Boys Will Be Boys* that *Meatless Days* is an elegy for her mother lends credibility to this proposition.

Suleri equates a reified definition of self with entombment. Her anecdote about the woman who was "bricked up alive into her grave," for example, is a powerful image that helps her to avoid becoming an object, a name. "To be engulfed in grammar," an analogy that follows on the heels of the anecdote about a woman being bricked up alive, "is a tricky prospect...a voice needs to declare its own control any way it can" (*Meatless* 155). One of the most memorable examples of Suleri exercising her voice to identify herself and the mutable nature of that identity is her visit to the Jamia Masjid mosque in Dehli. The man at the gate will not let her enter because Muslim women are not allowed in between the hours of *maghrib* and *isha*. She tells him, "I'm not a Muslim," to which he replies that he will never let her in. Suleri, undeterred, shouts: "Then of course I'm a Muslim! My grandfather was a Hajji and my father is Hajji—he's probably in there now!" (81). Later in the text, she explains further about names: "Mamma, marmalade, squirrel—names cannot define a person because they are not a fixed thing, but a discourse" (169). Discourses flow and have many fluid properties.

Suleri's own definition of who she is is constantly being revised. The sweetbread parable is an example of the fluid and mutable nature of self. Suleri explains that she always thought of herself as a native of Pakistan. *Kapura* (sweetbread), like *native*, was "something that had sat quite simply inside its own definition but was now claiming independence from its name and nature, claiming a perplexity I did not like" (*Meatless* 22). The dubious definition of *kapura* threatened Suleri's definition of *native*, which was one of the terms she used to define who she was. Critic Anita Mannur avows that for immigrants "food becomes both [an] intellectual and [an] emotional anchor" (11). When asked if she knew what *kapura* was, Suleri wanted to be able to say "yes, of course, who do you think I am" (*Meatless* 27). Suleri was shocked to discover that *kapura* also referred to genitalia. The new knowledge had the impact of weaning her from her childhood sense of self. While weaning is shocking, it indicates growth and maturation. The parable of *kapura* also teaches us that definitions are a matter of convenience and that they often mask reality. The scholar Parama Roy asserts that the *kapura* parable foregrounds the "oblique and libidinally saturated coupling of the literal and the metaphoric upon which autobiographical writing and culinary syntax are both predicated" (473). The *kapura* episode "speaks to willed self-delusion and the semantic instabilities of self-knowledge" (474). Thus, "Suleri's desire to know exactly what *kapura* is can be read as a symptom of her own location among a US-based community of Pakistani expatriates" (Mannur 19).

Suleri's utilization of various temporal perspectives is also a type of knowledge that allows her further insight into the process of the formation of one's self. Suleri recalls, for instance, that when Mustakor, her childhood friend, looks to the future, leaving Kinnard Boarding School behind, she throws away her Coca-Cola bottle nipple as a sign of growing up; this is similar to when Suleri stops looking at Pakistan as a surrogate mother (*Meatless* 58). Suleri's lover Richard X, on the other hand, looks to the future and sees the end of things instead of the beginnings. His fault, Suleri writes, "is that he anticipated the past tense in every story...he already thought of me as completely lost to him" (67). He said, for example, "you'll say about me, 'He used to cook for me'" (66). Suleri wanted to shout some "idiotic truth such as, 'I'm nice. I'm real'" but never did (67). In reference to the past, Suleri says, it is naïve to think that returning is "somehow sweeter, less dangerous, than seeking out some novel history" (49). In *Boys Will Be Boys*, Suleri relates an anecdote of being stopped by a student in the corridors of Yale. She writes: "My heart stopped with the burdens of memory. 'You are Amir Ali's daughter?' I asked. 'His granddaughter,' she replied" (12). In *Meatless Days*, Suleri notes that in time "faces slip, become third persons" (176). Analogously, Rushdie muses, "The past is a country from which we have all emigrated...its loss is part of our common humanity" (12). Suleri affirms that of all temporal spaces—past, present, and future—now is the hardest place to occupy because of "all the detail that has to be forgotten to pay vociferous attention to it" (*Meatless* 111). For instance, after her mother's death, Suleri says that she is "uncertain that the present was a place [her father] could again inhabit" (124). Suleri herself sometimes longs for the theater where "plots are uncomplicated by the threat of future resumptions" that teaching poses (179).

One of the constituents of fixed identity that Suleri fiercely challenges is gender. It is interesting to note that before one reads the first words of Suleri's book *The Rhetoric of English India*, Suleri has already delivered a potent message about gender to her audience by ingeniously placing the image of a transgender nineteenth-century Indian on the cover. As the photographer's remarks illustrate, the transgender native mystified the Englishman who took the photo: "it is the strange peculiarity of this person that he [she] dresses himself [herself] on all occasions in female apparel" (110). Suleri explains the power of the image, and, if I might add, the person represented in the image, to disrupt colonial discourse:

The photograph itself smiles back a cultural mocking at the colonizing camera eye: dragging in his [her] unreadability to upset an imperial reliance on the gendering and costuming of its empire, the image confirms what the text [*The People of India*] has already guiltily acknowledged—to dress the colonial picturesque in either feminine or masculine garb is

tragically to defer that cultural realization which knows that its official representations remain psychically skin-deep. (110)

The first chapter of *Meatless Days* also begins with a gender challenging statement: "leaving Pakistan was...tantamount to giving up the company of women" (1). It concludes with the provocative and carefully worded assertion that "there are no women in the third world" (20). These lines, strategically juxtaposed as the first and last lines of the first chapter, appear to contradict one another. Yet Suleri is too gifted a writer to mistakenly contradict herself. Therefore, there must be an explanation. One possibility is that Suleri is deliberately using contradiction as a pedagogical technique (she is, after all, a professor): the reader has to resolve the dilemma for her or himself. Her rhetorical device may also function as a subtle form of persuasion because it eliminates the psychological barrier raised against inculcation of ideas and opinions originating outside of the self by challenging one's ideas of what she means by use of the term "woman." Is woman a colonial, postcolonial, Muslim, or Western construct? Are these constructs mutually exclusive?

One of the faults of Western feminism, according to Suleri, is its entrapment within a discourse of binary oppositions: men verses women, for example. The essentialist position asserts that genders are biologically determined. It is articulated in publications as divergent in authorship and audience as Ashley Montagu's *The Natural Superiority of Woman*, Elizabeth Gould Davis' *The First Sex*, as well as in radical separatist lesbian rhetoric, and in the long tradition of misogynistic Western male-authored texts such as those by Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas. Essentialist thinking positing that one's abilities and ways of thinking are biologically determined is analogous to the equally empirically suspect claim that "each member of a race is supposed to share [certain abilities or lack thereof] with every other member" (Appiah 276). The danger of essentialist thinking is made manifest if one considers early polemics defending colonization and slavery such as Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda's assertion that, "if you know the customs and nature of the two peoples [European and native]...with perfect right the Spaniards rule over these barbarians...who in wisdom, intelligence, virtue, and humanitas are as inferior to the Spaniards...as women to men" (my emphasis, Sepúlveda).

Suleri writes in "Woman Skin Deep" that she shuns the "banality of easy dichotomies" and does not advocate any type of "simple binarism" or the rhetoric of "us and them" which, she believes, "beleaguers issues of identity formation" (756) and is evidence of a "conceptually parochial" mind (765). In *The Rhetoric of English India*, Suleri quotes Spivak's assertion that knowledge is made possible and sustained by irreducible differences, not fixed identities (12). Suleri, in fact, shares the social constructionist view of the definition of women. The constructionist position is perhaps best articulated in Simone de Beauvoir's bold assertion that "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" in *The Second Sex*

(267). Judith Butler's persuasive text *Bodies That Matter* provides voluminous evidence supporting Suleri's perspicuous observation that gender is not a fixed identity, but a culturally constructed artifact and a constantly shifting paradigm.

Suleri asserts that it is not the postcolonial woman's voice that is heard by feminists but the white feminist's own. In her critical essay, "Woman Skin Deep," she criticizes the adumbration of two distinct categories, postcolonial and woman, into one, as well as Western feminists' use of "postcolonial woman" to assert their own rights instead of the rights of third-world women ("Woman" 759). Suleri contends that third-world women never rise above "object status" in Western feminist rhetoric (760). The problem with being an object is that "the person who is known, somehow seems not to have a problematic self...only the person who knows has all the problems of selfhood" (Spivak cited in Suleri "Woman" 756). Until the third-world or postcolonial woman is a subject instead of an object, her lived experience, her autobiographical text, can only "serve as fodder for the continuation of another's epistemology" (766).

Consequently, within the context of one strain of feminist discourse, there are no third-world women as subjects, only as objects. Yet the "company of women" that Suleri left in Pakistan was not composed of objects, but of loved ones and friends. Thus, we may see another way both of Suleri's statements—"leaving Pakistan was...tantamount to giving up the company of women" and "there are no women in the third world"—are true in reference to leaving Pakistan. Suleri saw "imperial Ifat," "Mamma in the garden," "Halima the cleaning woman," and "Dadi with her goat," all very personal images and people whom Suleri cannot depersonalize or objectify to serve the cause of Western feminism any more than she could ignore the human toll of Pakistan's civil war (*Meatless* 122).

It is vital to keep in mind the genre of the Feminine Picturesque as delineated in Suleri's *The Rhetoric of English India* as a genre in which the woman writer's role is to "aestheticize rather than analyze" (75). Indeed, *Meatless Days* may be a reversal of the Feminine Picturesque—in the way it accentuates analysis over aesthetics—as well as a play on the Feminine Picturesque's most evocative symbol, the *zenana*, inasmuch as it begins with equating Pakistan itself as a type of *zenana*. Suleri asserts that "leaving Pakistan was...tantamount to giving up the company of women" (1). *Zenana*, an area of a house reserved exclusively for women, is the source of endless speculation and curiosity in colonial literature about India. It is perhaps the most imagined aspect of British India because, ironically, it was a boundary where imperial patriarchal authority ended and indigenous matriarchal authority reigned. *Zenana*, as depicted in the colonial imagination, may be yet another the answer to the puzzle of what Suleri means when she writes that there are no women in the third world—because the "third world is locatable only as a discourse of convenience" (*Meatless* 20). As a matter of fact, Suleri describes Kinnaird College for Women in Lahore, which she ironically notes was located on Jail Road, as

a type of *zenana khana*, a "magical arena containing only women" (*Meatless* 47).

Additionally, in "Woman Skin Deep," Suleri identifies three key components that contribute to the formation of one's self: lived experience, historical contexts, and theoretical contexts. Lived experience is defined as the "anecdotal literalism of what it means to articulate an 'identity' for a woman writer of color" (762). In addition to anecdotal narrative, lived experience is articulated through "that other third person narrative known as law" (766). Historical context identifies where the literal body resides in time and place. Confinement within postcolonial discourse is a prime example of theoretical context. Suleri specifically defines postcolonial discourse as the "free-floating metaphor for cultural embattlement" and a "signifier for the historicity of race" (759-60). Postcolonial discourse, for instance, has the power to "raise identity to the power of theory" (762). Suleri asserts that lived experience, historical contexts, and theoretical contexts interact in a dynamic way to create a sense of self. For example, while lived experience is a distinct category, it is influenced by historical and theoretical factors. Law is simply the manifestation of particular historical forces, but its impact on one's lived experience is enormous. The title *Meatless Days* refers to Pakistan's program of Islamization and the way individual lives are manipulated by forces, third-person narratives, outside of their control. *Meatless Days* illustrates how the people who ostensibly control the third-person narrative are themselves manipulated by other forces of which they may not be fully conscious or able to control. The title *Boys Will Be Boys* also has an historical antecedent; the title refers to the cadre of Pakistani nationalists around Suleri's father, and it may also be considered an oblique reference to the infantilizing nature of nationalistic narratives. As Suleri writes in *Boys Will Be Boys*, "Patriotic and Preposterous equals Pip" (11).

Lived experience may be direct or vicarious. An example of direct lived experience in the idiom of migrancy is Suleri's testimony that the effect of Ifat's death on her life was that it "cut away her intimacy with Pakistan, where history is synonymous with grief" (*Meatless* 19). Anecdotes concerning Mair, Ifat, and Dadi become vicarious lived experiences in her life. It is important to note that when Suleri writes of Ifat and Dadi becoming anecdotes, she does not mean that they are becoming objects, but instead refers to a most intimate transmogrification. She describes them as food, a part of her. Suleri relates a dream that she had after her mother died in which she put a piece of her mother beneath her tongue, in her mouth. She explains the would-be cannibalistic act as an "extremity of tenderness" (44).

Another component of Suleri's lived experience is, of course, her experience of her own body, the physicality of self. Suleri seems to have a fundamental mistrust of her own body. She was surprised, for instance, when her body refused to retch or faint at appropriate moments (*Meatless* 26). When her sister Ifat explains the sexual and physiological

implications of nursery rhymes and the names of food, she is livid at her for "destroying her innocence" (137). Her sister's fall is shocking because of the exposure of blood. The only niece she mentions by name is Heba, and the anecdote is included because she is the one who informs Suleri that boys have a penis and girls are "composed of blood" (42). Heba gazes at Suleri's brother Irfan's injured male body, while Suleri is frightened at the sight. It may be that Suleri is not so scared by the sight of the naked, injured male body as she is by the physicality of existence and the sudden knowledge that she too is somehow anchored to a body, a body which she seems to deeply distrust.

Maturity does not mitigate, but exasperates the problem Suleri has of acknowledging the physical component in the montage of her identity. Suleri reports that the "tragedy of adolescence" is, in fact, becoming a woman (*Meatless* 139). Ifat, Suleri writes, hated her body becoming womanly, and it is womanhood which "precipitates [Ifat's] separation between body and self" (139). The separation between body and self seems endemic to the family, perhaps inculcated by her mother who "seemed to live outside her body" (156). Sara, as a child, observes that her mother is "not where she is; she has gone somewhere different" (179). *Meatless Days* ends with a juxtaposed image of the body as at once a fixed identity and a fluid substance. The flesh can only be known in obliteration, she writes: "Only in obliteration," her body tells her, "will you see the shapes of what I really can be" (186).

Although *Boys Will Be Boys* is ostensibly an elegy to her father and *Meatless Days* an elegy to her mother, it is in *Boys Will Be Boys* that Suleri writes most intimately about the physiological difficulties of being a woman in Pakistan. For instance, she writes: "'O nature,' we girls exclaimed in Pakistan, when once again the city of Lahore had run out of Tampax. Taxed as a luxury item throughout the world—which strikes me as abominably unfair—we were always in wait for Tampax" (13). She notes that the Pakistani version, Yumpax, is a poor substitute. But that is a small misery compared to the terror she felt one summer of having conceived in Pakistan because "to abort in Pakistan...would have been quite messy, coat hangers and all" (114).

One of the effects of Suleri's cognition of the bodily aspect of self upon her identity formation is her frequent juxtaposition of literary and literal procreation. For example, Suleri juxtaposes her father's lament that "I have written nothing, done nothing with my life" while "two rooms are full of stacks of newsprint of his prose" with a reference to herself as her mother's book (*Meatless* 184). It is interesting to note in *Meatless Days* that Suleri portrays her mother much more sympathetically than she does her father, although she does use affectionate appellations for him such as Pip, and she does talk about his jail as a "father-sized playpen" (93). Despite her palpable partiality towards her mother, Suleri's life imitates that of her father. Suleri devotes herself to writing, to reproducing literarily while her sisters reproduce literally. She exclaims at one point in the text, "while I write, Tillat germinates another child" (176). She

describes writing Ifat's biography as "keen, painful labor," referencing, of course, the labor of childbirth (108). In addition, she uses deliberately evocative language when she talks about herself, saying that "express letters rather than breasts were my normal ken, and it hurt to watch [Ifat]...relieve her body of the extraneous fluid" (35). It is significant to note that Suleri uses the phrase "extraneous fluid" and not milk, which again demonstrates her vexatious relationship with all things fleshy.

Meatless Days also dramatically shows how historical context affects our identity formation as much as "all things fleshy." Pip, Suleri speculates, felt at the hub of history and that is why he married a Welsh woman and divorced his wife Baji by mail (112). He wanted a new life in a new nation. Suleri's mother, too, imagines she is going with Pip to a new nation, but it was an "ancient landscape" with "centuries of mistrust" (163). Suleri asks, "What choice did that world have but to be resistant?" (163). The historical context forced Suleri's mother to "live apart...apart even from herself" in a "world that was still learning to feel unenslaved" (163). The danger of being enamored with history is that one does not see the human toll, the hurting that the partition of India and Pakistan caused the people (116). "Partition" may also serve as a metaphor for Pip's divorce from Baji and the hurting that caused.

Ashis Nandy's "History's Forgotten Doubles" provides insight on the idea of history in Suleri's texts. Nandy addresses the problem of the "millions of people [who] still live outside history" (44) and asserts that many of these people desperately seek to be historical. Pip is certainly an example par excellence of those who seek to discover a "repressed historical self" (45). Nandy contends that the elite of defeated societies are especially eager to become historical rather than ahistorical. Although historical consciousness is a relatively recent phenomenon, and one which has had to coexist and contend with other "modes of experiencing and constructing the past" (46), it is a dominant theme in Suleri's texts. One of the "major differences between those living in history and those living outside it...is the principle of principled forgetfulness" (47). Principled forgetfulness is an embracing of the idea that it is sometimes important to not remember something about the past. This forgetfulness is not haphazard, but the result of an "elaborate internal screening devices, the defenses of the ego or the principles of ideology that shape...forgetfulness along particular lines" (47). Nandy elaborates on relevant questions posed by Gyanendra Panday:

Speaking of the partition of British India and the birth of India and Pakistan, Gyanendra Panday asks: Why have historians of India (and Pakistan and Bangladesh) failed to produce richly layered, challenging histories of partition of a kind that would compare with their sophisticated histories of peasant insurrection; working class consciousness; the onset of capitalist relations in agriculture; the construction

of new notions of caste, community, and religion,... and, indeed, the writing of women's autobiographies...? Or, to ask the questions in another way, why is there such a chasm between the historian's history of partition and the popular reconstruction of the event, which is to such a large extent built around the fact of violence? (48)

Panday's questions highlight the distinction between historical and ahistorical modes of consciousness. Under the auspices of a historical consciousness, "this massive uprooting [partition] has produced a cultural psychology of exile that in turn has led to an unending search for roots, on the one hand, and angry, sometimes self-destructive, assertion of nationality and ethnicity on the other" (Nandy 55). Suleri's texts demonstrate the phenomenon concretely in the instances of Pip's sometimes self-destructive assertion of nationality, and Ifat's immergence in an ethnic identity. Vinay Lal suggests that history itself may be defined as a type of "social consciousness" (cited in Nandy 53). Nandy notes that Suleri perceptively terms history whose purpose is to reactivate cultural memories "contraband history" (53).

Heartbreakingly, history has fatal implications for Ifat. The record of the history of misogyny in the family of Ifat's husband, which includes a brother in jail for rape and a great-grandfather who murdered his infant child for being born female, makes Ifat's murder seem almost historically preordained. Therefore, it is not surprising that Suleri calls history "that great machine at the heart of things" (*Meatless* 118). History's hegemony is not absolute, however; Suleri and her sister Tillat, for example, did not wait for history to change them—they changed themselves (113). Suleri came to America and Tillat moved to Kuwait.

Suleri's father, unfortunately, never escapes the grasp of history. For Pip, the distinction between being a minority in India or a citizen of Pakistan is an irrefragable part of his sense of self. Pip's sense of self is intertwined with his sense of being Pakistani. Suleri, on the other hand, never addresses herself as Pakistani, but Indian. In one of her confrontations with her father, she says he looked as if "I was telling him I was not a nation anymore, I was a minority" (*Meatless* 123). In fact, she was telling him exactly that in many subtle ways. Ifat's sense of self, like Pip's, is also dependent on being Pakistani. She identifies with the nation her father helped create. Her marriage to Javid represents, for Suleri, Ifat's total immersion into Pakistan (140). Her metaphorical death and loss of an independent sense of self thus foreshadow her literal death at the hands of her husband or her husband's family.

Postcolonialism is another aspect of historical consciousness that figures prominently in Suleri's sense of self. Postcolonial identity has national as well as racial components. Nationally speaking, one was Pakistani because the scissors of a certain Englishman—Lord Mountbatten—clipped the map of India in 1947 (*Meatless* 74). To Suleri,

independence was actually a slivering up of space, the beginning of a "long unmaking" (74). "History," she writes, "like a pestilence, forbids any definition outside relations to its fevered sleep" (8). Suleri mocks the Pakistanization of names and cities by putting "pur" on the ends of them, as in the case of Cambellpur. Even the word Pakistan, she explains, emerged from Cambridge (110). She mocks the line in the Pakistani national anthem which asserts that it is the "purest land." Suleri writes: "Pakistan: land of the pure...it is a great misnomer...Pakistan has little to do with purity, as we all know" (*Boys* 103). At one point she hypothesizes that her mother's motivation for marrying Pip was to "assume the burden of empire,...to let my father colonize her body...to perform some slight reparation for the race from which she came" (*Meatless* 163). Her father too was motivated by postcolonialism: "his desire for her [Mair] was quickened with empire's ghosts...his need to possess was a clear index of how he was still possessed" (163). In *Boys Will Be Boys*, Suleri notes that a number of men in her father's family married European spouses: Swiss Bertie and Dutch Tiné, for example (63). Dadi, for her part, always resented "the white-legged woman" and did not show her the proper respect of mourning. In fact, Dadi's failure to show the proper respect prompted bitterness in Suleri that was never reconciled before Dadi's own death.

Suleri realized the implications of race as a child. For instance, when her father asked her about her lack of friends, she replied that Ifat had many friends because she was white, and that she herself did not because she was brown (*Meatless* 160). Of course, this news outraged her father the politician and maker of history. But Suleri simply accepted it as a fact, "a fact that shaped any day as much as weather did, the wet chill of an English Spring" (160). Suleri's use of weather as a metaphor for race invokes a well-worn cliché: you can't change it by complaining about it. However, by specifying "wet chill," she is ingeniously and poignantly communicating its effect on people and on herself as a child. Her mother, she says somewhat ironically, "loved to look at us in race" (160). She adds that her mother seemed "subdued with the awe of the comingling of color...she had colluded to produce...what will happen to these pieces of yourself?" It was a question that made her retreat" (161). Suleri, obviously, feels that race creates distance between people; mournfully, she explains how race alienates mothers and daughters—an idea elaborated on at length in Mara Scanlon's "Mother Land, Mother Tongue: Reconfiguring Relationship in Suleri's *Meatless Days*."

The law, which Suleri characterizes as a third person narrative in the lives of people, is another external force that exerts a profound influence on one's sense of self. The institution of meatless days in Pakistan was intended to promote an atmosphere of abstention, but instead "came to signify the imperative behind all things fleshy" (*Meatless* 32). Another example of the law having the opposite of its intended effect were the Hudood Ordinances. Though designed to usurp Anglo-Saxon legal hegemony, a colonial legacy, and replace it with an Islamic based

jurisprudence, the impact of the program fell heavily on women because it criminalized sexual intercourse between unmarried persons—criminalizing even the victims of rape and incest—while mandating extreme penalties, such as stoning to death or one hundred lashes for offenders. The Hudood Ordinances created a new reality, an alternative reality to Anglo-Saxon jurisprudence, and an alternative construction of identity in which a woman's testimony is half that of a man's. The lived experience is that of a fifteen-year-old child (Jehan Mina), who after being raped, is convicted of fornication and sentenced to one hundred public lashes. Suleri places the responsibility for the horrific ordinances, not on Pakistani politicians and lawmakers, but on the United States' intervention in the political affairs of the hemisphere ("Woman" 768). The fifteen-year-old child's sense of self is formed, or more accurately misshapen, by the interaction of her lived experience of being raped and publically whipped, and the historical contexts which made that reality possible.

The final and most significant component of Suleri's identity is the product of her resistance to the prevailing legal and cultural hegemonies of her environment. Suleri refuses to engage in marriage negotiations with Dr. Sadik, her father's life-long friend (*Meatless* 59). Later, after her mother dies, she refuses to be a dutiful daughter and to return to Pakistan with her father (129). Finally, she and Pakistan came to a parting for "I felt supped full of history" (123). Suleri's life demonstrates her repudiation of ascribed norms for a dutiful daughter, a conventional Pakistani woman, and a postcolonial woman. In fact, Suleri repeatedly evades hegemonic discourses of ascribed identity. By way of contrast, Suleri's sister Ifat embraces the prevailing hegemonic discourses of gender, nationalism, and religion, and consequently loses her identity and, tragically, her life. Sara instead migrates to America and raises an oppositional and life-affirming voice. She refuses to be subsumed into the macro-political discourses of Pakistan, colonialism, postcolonialism, race, and gender as her mother, father, and sister were, while simultaneously declining to become an object of Western white feminism.

Although Suleri is keenly aware of many of the factors that influence her sense of self, some critics claim that she remains inexplicably silent on the topic of class in her life as well as her scholarship. Mannur maintains that Suleri is "blind to the incommensurability of her class position and those of the very people she claims are written out of the patriarchal nationalistic narrative" (21). This critic asserts that "Suleri imagines herself linked to the cooks who labor in the household. But with the exception of Qayyum...the voices of the cooks do not emerge" (21). Mannur seems particularly incensed that Suleri nostalgically recalls the elaborate meat dishes, but does not acknowledge those who prepared and served the meats, even asserting that to Suleri "servants" were not "women" and "cooks" were not "we" (21). She imagines *Meatless Days* as "ambivalently situated between Suleri's desire to reject the official

rendering of history, and her refusal to acknowledge the class-based implications of her own nostalgically rendered histories" (27).

Teresa Hubel's critique of Suleri's texts mirrors that of Mannur. Hubel specifically critiques Suleri's explication of Kipling's *Kim* in *The Rhetoric of English India* for neglecting the role of class in its analysis. For Hubel, this oversight is simply inexcusable. She notes that the "novel itself is absolutely upfront about this detail [class]" (228). Kim is a "working class protagonist created by a middle-class author writing out of and back to the highly stratified and hypermasculinized colonial cultures of India and England" (228-29). Class may be understood through the "mediums of language, sexuality, experience, gender, choices or lack of them, expectations and conditions of life, race, value systems, etc." and is a "personal and political identity and a social structure that stretches across nations...and between them" (229). Thus, the fact that Suleri is a "suburban subaltern" occupying a position of privilege, for Hubel, compromises Suleri's ability to recognize and critique the issue of class in *Kim* (this begs the question of Hubel's class status). Hubel notes that Kim's foster mother, like so many of Suleri's caregivers, is expendable, not because she is Indian or Pakistani, but because of her class status (237). Hubel also asserts that just as Kim's emotional and cultural distance from some characters in Kipling's novel is based on class, Suleri's distance from certain caregivers in her life is premised on that category. In addition, Hubel observes that "Kipling has taken his protagonist away from what the ruling class whites believed were degrading influences: working class parents, working class communities, and working class places of residence" (240). Similarly, Suleri's parents remove her from the "degrading influences" of working class peers by enrolling her in a series of exclusive, private schools.

Admittedly, it is significant to note that although Suleri devotes an entire chapter of *The Rhetoric of English India* to Kipling's *Kim*, "The Adolescence of Kim," she does not address the issue of class. For some, Suleri misattributes Kim's susceptibility to coercion to cultural, rather than to class, alienation. Hubel writes: "the question that Suleri does not answer, however, is why Kim? What makes him susceptible to this coercion? There are two things: first, his status as a white working-class individual, and second, his isolation from that class and the history of that class in India" (249). Later, she asserts, "the 'terrifying absence of choice' that Suleri quite astutely discerns in Kim's collaboration with the Raj is the result of a working-classness detached from a solidarity that functioned historically as the means through which the white working classes forged a place for themselves in colonial India" (250). At the beginning of Hubel's essay, she insists that "in the India of the British Empire race cannot be understood outside of the constructive might of class" (233).

While Hubel asks some pertinent questions, one wonders why she assumes that Kim's actions are based exclusively on one (Hubel's) or the other (Suleri's) proffered explanations. Richly drawn characters usually are motivated by a number of overlapping, sometimes even contradictory

motives. Hubel's analysis of *Kim* raises some important points in reference to the study of Kipling's texts. It is unfortunate that her valuable contribution is framed as a refutation, even a declamation, of Suleri's work instead of as a complimentary inquiry.

Likewise, Mannur's critique of Suleri omits the occasions when Suleri does address the issue of class by specifically giving voice to cooks and other "servants." For instance, Suleri does give voice to Halima, the cleaning woman, when she simultaneously delivers and loses a child, and asks if she should be celebrating or mourning (*Meatless* 11). In addition, Suleri specifically acknowledges her own class myopia when she recounts how her guest Hafiz Jallundari (the author of Pakistan's national anthem) recognized her family cook, Khansama, as the renowned poet Ilum Din. Suleri writes that when Ilum Din was asked where he had been, she "felt ashamed. Because he has been too busy cooking our *rotis*" (*Boys* 105). While Mannur is writing specifically about *Meatless Days*, Suleri's *Boys Will Be Boys* was published four years prior to Mannur's essay. It would have been prudent of Mannur to read Suleri's subsequent work before publishing judgments that extend beyond the text of *Meatless Days* to Suleri herself.

Another critic, Lisa Lau, raises an additional possible searing criticism of Suleri in her essay, "Re-Orientalism: The Perpetuation and Development of Orientalism by Orientals." Lau suggests that "diasporic South Asian women writers" are "re-orientalizing South Asian literature" (571). Although Lau's essay does not focus on Suleri, she is mentioned by name in the article. Lau is right to raise the issue of how diasporic writers, sometimes removed from the everyday life of South Asia by decades of living in the West, are writing the preponderance of texts about South Asia. Her concern, which she supports by citing figures for the number of publications by diasporic and non-diasporic women writers, is that diasporic writers are usurping the literature of South Asians living in South Asia. Lau does not contend that there is any "insidious intent," despite the provocative title of her essay, or even suggest that the diasporic literature is necessarily "inaccurate" or "distorted" (574). However, she does cite some specific and egregious examples of diasporic authors using hackneyed stereotypes of South Asians in their novels; hence, "Re-Orientalizing." Suleri, of course, is not in that category. Nevertheless, the fact is that most of the literature published and read in the West about South Asia is by diasporic writers. Therefore, it is important that readers, particularly those who select readings for students, consciously choose works written by South Asians living in South Asia as well as abroad. It is wise to remember, as Lyons explains in "Ambiguous Narratives," that the diasporic author is often "highly 'unrepresentative' of his or her society, highly educated, with a particular point of view and particular aims...He or she 'comes to us,' and the process by which certain works, but not others, get published and come to our attention must be part of our understanding" (183).

Rushdie, in contrast, prophetically celebrated diasporic authors when, in 1981, he wrote: "in the future [Indo-Indian fiction] is going to come as much from addresses in London, Birmingham and Yorkshire as from Delhi or Bombay" (17). Perhaps it is best to let Suleri speak for herself in reference to her own writing. In *Boys Will Be Boys*, she declares, "I can only smile wryly when people tell me that I have no right to talk with any authority about Pakistan, since I have been gone for so many decades. 'I do not wish to be an author,' I reply" (110). This may be interpreted as a clever play on the word authority/author, but she may also be smiling at the presumptuousness of someone casting doubt on the authenticity of her experience. In either case, it is vital to be mindful of the fact that Suleri's experience is as authentic and legitimate as anyone else's—she is exactly who she purports to be in her texts: a woman in the process of becoming. The irony of all autobiographical writing is that identity is not fixed, but fluid; or, in Mikhail Bakhtin's words, "the essential human quality is 'unfinalizability,' through which each life is an ongoing process of becoming" (cited in Scanlon 422).

Meatless Days and *Boys Will Be Boys* are memoirs/elegies about the people who contributed to Suleri's sense of self. They are also cogent analyses of ideas about family, gender, history, and law. Suleri studies the process of identity formation through remembrance, and through the analysis of historical and theoretical contexts from a variety of perspectives. Along the way, she wrestles with shadows and ghosts. As Suleri writes in the concluding chapter of *Meatless Days*, "I worked at making Ifat my geography, my terrain of significance, on which I thought, and slept, and breathed. Now context becomes a more abstracting thought, admitting finally; you never lived in Ifat anyway; you live in New Haven" (182). Taking into account Suleri's idioms of dubiety and migrancy, it may be concluded that it is not the destination, but the journey that is most meaningful and enlightening to readers of her texts. Suleri's works leave us with a question the author posed herself in *The Rhetoric of English India*: How does women's autobiography dilute or reify male historiography as it inscribes women's bodies and identities onto a masculine landscape?

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Two Photographs by Andrea Angeli

