

But... Can the Subaltern Sing?

Rebecca Romanow

University of Massachusetts Boston & University of Rhode Island

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb>



Part of the [Comparative Literature Commons](#), and the [Critical and Cultural Studies Commons](#)

Dedicated to the dissemination of scholarly and professional information, [Purdue University Press](#) selects, develops, and distributes quality resources in several key subject areas for which its parent university is famous, including business, technology, health, veterinary medicine, and other selected disciplines in the humanities and sciences.

CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture, the peer-reviewed, full-text, and open-access learned journal in the humanities and social sciences, publishes new scholarship following tenets of the discipline of comparative literature and the field of cultural studies designated as "comparative cultural studies." Publications in the journal are indexed in the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature (Chadwyck-Healey), the Arts and Humanities Citation Index (Thomson Reuters ISI), the Humanities Index (Wilson), Humanities International Complete (EBSCO), the International Bibliography of the Modern Language Association of America, and Scopus (Elsevier). The journal is affiliated with the Purdue University Press monograph series of Books in Comparative Cultural Studies. Contact: <clcweb@purdue.edu>

Recommended Citation

Romanow, Rebecca. "But... Can the Subaltern Sing?." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 7.2 (2005): <<https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1263>>

This text has been double-blind peer reviewed by 2+1 experts in the field.

The above text, published by Purdue University Press ©Purdue University, has been downloaded 4177 times as of 11/07/19. Note: the download counts of the journal's material are since Issue 9.1 (March 2007), since the journal's format in pdf (instead of in html 1999-2007).

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.

This is an Open Access journal. This means that it uses a funding model that does not charge readers or their institutions for access. Readers may freely read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of articles. This journal is covered under the [CC BY-NC-ND license](#).

CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture, the peer-reviewed, full-text, and open-access learned journal in the humanities and social sciences, publishes new scholarship following tenets of the discipline of comparative literature and the field of cultural studies designated as "comparative cultural studies." In addition to the publication of articles, the journal publishes review articles of scholarly books and publishes research material in its *Library Series*. Publications in the journal are indexed in the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature (Chadwyck-Healey), the Arts and Humanities Citation Index (Thomson Reuters ISI), the Humanities Index (Wilson), Humanities International Complete (EBSCO), the International Bibliography of the Modern Language Association of America, and Scopus (Elsevier). The journal is affiliated with the Purdue University Press monograph series of Books in Comparative Cultural Studies. Contact: <clcweb@purdue.edu>

CLCWeb Volume 7 Issue 2 (June 2005) Article 6
Rebecca Romanow, "But... Can the Subaltern Sing?"
<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol7/iss2/6>>

Contents of CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture 7.2 (2005)
Thematic Issue *New Papers in American Cultural Studies*
Edited by Joanne Morreale and P. David Marshal
<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol7/iss2/>>

Abstract: In her paper, "But... Can the Subaltern Sing?," Rebecca Romanow discusses the dominance of the English language in rock music and the cultural values and global power that are exerted through the exportation of rock by American and British bands. Further, she explores the question of the ways in which this music represents an area of popular culture where the voices of the non-English speaking and the non-Western are silenced. Salman Rushdie, in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, complains that rock music "is precisely one of those viruses with which the almighty West has infected the East, one of the great weapons of cultural imperialism." The business of rock music production insures that rock remains a global conduit of Western culture, and, emphasizing Edward Said's exhortation to "think of the affiliation ... between music and nation," Romanow argues that the social and cultural power of rock creates a silencing of the non-Western voice. Reading the global proliferation of Western rock through Deleuzian and postcolonial thought, as well as exploring the notion of "world music," Romanow shows the ways in which imperialistic and neo-colonialist hegemonies are embodied within this silencing, creating not a model for hybridity, but rather a deployment of Bhabha's notion of the colonial "mimic man."

Rebecca ROMANOW**But... Can the Subaltern Sing?**

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak opened up the doors to Subaltern Studies twenty years ago with her essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in which she proclaimed that "for ... the 'true' subaltern group, whose identity is its difference, there is no unrepresentable subaltern subject that can know and speak itself" (*Critique* 272). For the subaltern, the heterogeneous subject, defined by Spivak in the differential space between the history as colonial subject and the marking as "postcolonial," "the notion of what the work *cannot* say becomes important" ("Subaltern" 28). While the Subaltern Studies Group, as well as much postcolonial theory, have continued the investigation into the ways in which the subaltern's voice is silenced in the local and global arenas, little attention has been placed on the role of rock music in creating this arena of silence of the subaltern voice.

This problematic underlines the importance of music and its connection to ideas of nationhood, as well as emphasizing the pervasive presence of American and British rock music in the formerly colonized countries of Africa and Asia. The ways in which primarily English-language, Euro-American rock functions, not only as a cultural and economic globalizing force, becomes an epistemic machine that confronts and silences national and local music production. This machine of globalization and Westernization can best be seen in the realities of music consumption in Asia and Africa. The BBC reports in "The Global Music Machine" that "up to 90% of the global music market is accounted for by just five corporations: EMI Records, Sony, Vivendi Universal, AOL Time Warner and BMG. Collectively, these corporations are known as 'the Big Five,' and operate in all of the major music markets in the world. Each of the corporations maintains their headquarters in the US, the largest of the world's markets" (3). The Recording Industry Association of America underlines this impact of American corporations and product in global music sales by reporting that "the U.S. recording industry accounts for fully one-third of [the] world market"

(<<http://www.riaa.com/news/marketingdata/default.asp>>), an estimated global music market of \$32 billion in 2003 (<<http://www.ifpi.org/site-content/statistics/worldsales.html>>[inactive]). Yet CD sales figures can no longer account for the enormous proliferation of American and British music which is listened to in Asia and Africa, as the International Federation for the Phonographic Industry (IFPI) reports that "street-corner peddlers of pirated compact discs sold more than 1 [billion] illegally copied CDs last year, turning a shady black-market trade into an estimated \$4.5 [billion] industry ... More than one out of every three music compact discs bought by consumers in 2003 was pirated ... [which] represents nearly 15% of the worth of the global record music market"

(<<http://www.itfacts.biz/index.php?id=P1304>>). Pakistan and China are noted specifically for the proliferation of black market CDs and piracy, emphasizing the probable increased infiltration of English-language rock music in South and East Asia.

This global music machine is, of course, also fueled by the presence of MTV throughout the world. Fredric Jameson notes that "MTV above all can be taken as a spatialization of music" (299), and the MTV Asia website reveals some interesting facts about that spatialization: in 2003, the annual MTV Asia awards show ten separate "favourite music artist awards from Asia "

(<<http://www.mtvasiaawards.com>>). Each nation, China, India, Indonesia, Thailand, Hong Kong, Korea, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Taiwan, is granted one outstanding winner. All ten of these artists are different; no one artist serves as an "MTV favourite" in any country other than in his homeland. It is safe to assume, then, that across Asia, rock artists' fame and acceptance remains a nationalized affair, and that the voice of Stefanie Sun, the winner in Singapore, would no doubt barely be heard in India, where A.R. Rahman was victorious. However, any appearance of an overarching sense of nationalism in local Asian rock music is minimized by the facts which are shown in MTV Asia's International awards: in 2003, various "favourite" categories were won by Americans Robbie Williams, Avril Lavigne, and Linkin Park twice. The list of award nominees for 2004 in India reveals only one category for "favourite music artist from India"

(<<http://www.mtvasiaawards.com/India/Nominees/>>[inactive]). The remaining six categories: "favourite female artist," "favourite male artist," and so forth, list the name of not one Indian artist, but are completely comprised of British and American rock stars, with many repetitions of Christina Aguilera, Justin Timberlake, Linkin Park, and Radiohead

(<<http://www.mtvasiaawards.com/India/Nominees/>>). There is no doubt that MTV Asia may represent a particularly American viewpoint towards rock music in Asia and India; but there is also no doubt that the pervasiveness of MTV inherently reflects and supports the fact that Western rock music throughout Asia overshadows local artists with the exposure of international rock stars, all of whom are from the United States or Britain. In South Africa, the picture is much the same: *Musica*, an online South African CD merchant, reports that, for the week of 1 May 2004, of the Top 40 selling artists, only three were South African, and while one of these artists ranked at #3, the other two South Africans were placed at #37 and #40

(<<http://www.musica.co.za/eMusica/charts.asp?SegmentID=1&GenreID=0>>). Back in India, a Bryan Adams concert in Bangalore was touted as "the best Christmas gift the city has ever received" (<<http://www.themusicmagazine.com/bryanadams04.html>>[inactive]). A previous Bryan Adams concert in Mumbai in 2001 brought out between 35,000 and 60,000 fans; the numbers were apparently so large that it was difficult to get an accurate count. And while Tony Mitchell argues that "in most countries where rap has taken root, hip-hop scenes have rapidly developed from an adoption to an adaptation of U.S. musical forms and idioms ... [involving] an increasing syncretism and incorporation of local linguistic and musical features" ("Another" 11), in 2005, MTV Asia advertised its show "Jams" by saying, "Kanye West, Petey Pablo, Usher, Beyonce, Lil Jon, they're all here! We got da sauce on MTV Jams with the hippest and hottest R&B, soul and hip-hop beats. Get down with VJ KC Montero as he brings on the weekly party with all the fun, fellas and honeys" (<<http://www.mtvasia.com/Onair/>>). The artists are all American, and there is no "incorporation of local linguistic and musical features" in the rap music which is being presented on this MTV Asia program.

Clearly, the rock music of English-speaking nations has permeated the economic and cultural landscape of previously colonized countries. In *Musical Elaborations*, Edward Said points out that "the transgressive element in music is its nomadic ability to attach itself to, and become part of, social formations" (70). He continues by saying that "the closer one looks at the geography of Western culture and of music's place in it, the more compromised, the more socially involved and active music seems, the more concealed its social energies have been" (58). While Said is specifically referencing the impact of Western classical music, he locates the social involvement and cultural power of music as "transgressions ... into adjoining domains -- the family, school, class and sexual relations, [and] nationalism" (56). There is no doubt that rock music transmits cultural values and norms that are exerted through the exportation of rock music by primarily American and English bands. Indeed, Salman Rushdie, in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, complains that rock music "is precisely one of those viruses with which the almighty West has infected the East, one of the great weapons of cultural imperialism" (95). Yet, it is in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* that Rushdie provides a clear example of the cultural power of rock music in postcolonial countries. This novel centers on the lifelong romance between two Indian singers, Ormus and Vina, who become global rock stars. Rushdie has created Ormus as a figure who has somehow channeled Western music before it exists: Ormus "writes" the music of Elvis and The Beatles before they do. Thus, Rushdie explains that "the genius of Ormus Cama did not emerge in response to, or in imitation of, America ... the music he heard in his head ... was not of the West, except in the sense that the West was in Bombay from the beginning" (95). In presenting what Rushdie calls this "alternative reality," he states that "we Bombayites can claim that it was in truth our music, born in Bombay like Ormus ... not 'goods from foreign' but made in India, and maybe it was the foreigners who stole it from us" (96). Inverting intentionally what we know to be true of the history of rock music, Rushdie, then, not only comments on the ways in which Western culture has become an implicit power in India, but he also opens up the notion of the ways in which the West has built that culture through the colonizing project. Yet Rushdie also questions "Why do we care about singers?"

Wherein lies the power of songs? ... Song shows us a world that is worthy of our yearning, it shows us our selves as they might be, if we were worthy of the world" (19-20).

Perhaps, the implication which can be derived from *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* is that the longing which is produced by the omnipresence of Western rock music in the postcolonial world is for a sense of "worthiness" in the world; a longing for this cultural phenomenon to be truly constructed outside of hegemonic colonial constructs, and for the power which it exerts to be one of national pride, rather than globalizing heterogeneity. Yet current narratives of successful Indian performers reveal an inclination towards hybridity and towards the inevitable Westernizing of local and national music, where the subaltern's voice is again silenced as it mingles and reproduces the voices of the West. In a recent article in *The Music Magazine*, which promotes itself as "India's first and finest music e-zine" (<<http://www.themusicmagazine.com/junoonfeat.html>>), the band Junoon is hailed as "one of the world's most significant bands" (1), a significance which is latter elaborated on: "Junoon's first international album ... sold hundreds of thousands of copies and became an instant hit even in the Middle East" (2). Compared to the amount of sales, often in the multi-millions, and the global permeation of the Western rock star, the labeling of this band as "international" underlines a hopefulness which almost seems to accept the limits imposed on Indian artists. This is reminiscent of a comment made by Said: "the greatest and most famous singer of the twentieth-century Arab world was Um Kalthoum, whose records and cassettes, fifteen years after her death, are available everywhere. A fair number of non-Arabs know about her too" (*Reflections* 346). In both cases, the apparent disequilibrium between the expectations of fame and financial success for local and Western artists seems to go unnoticed and uncommented upon by the authors, as if the very notion of these voices being heard is also silenced. The feature writer of the Junoon article, Sreeram Chaulia, points out that "Bob Marley showed that music could transcend man-made frontiers. Until Junoon sprang up in 1996, there was no band in the sub-continent comparable to Marley's Wailers" (2). The comparison may be well-made, as Junoon combines lyrics from Sufi and Urdu poets with traditional rock music in a combination that reflects Marley's use of Jamaican music and the appropriation of it by white America. Chaulia explains that with Junoon's interpretation of ancient poetry "purists wailed that the [poets] would be turning in [their] graves" (2), as the concept of using the nation's verse to transcend global cultural spaces might imply a loss of the nation's culture itself. Indeed, this article later reveals that "bassist O'Connell is a native New Yorker" (3), as if to further ensure the hybrid, global nature of this band. While insisting that "Junoon visited America in a spectacular concert tour that took cities like New York by storm," Chaulia also points out that at a concert at Cornell University, he "found the majority of the audience Indian" (3-4).

What this suggests is that if Junoon is hailed as "a significant" international band, promoting the ancient poetry of India, which might represent a pre-colonial, national voice, the band is, in fact, producing a hybrid which reflects and supports the hybridized voices of the Indians at Cornell who attended their concert. A reading of another article in *The Music Magazine* underscores the ways in which both Indian bands, and the Indian music press, have come to expect and revere this hybridization and incorporation of Western rock in the bands they hold up as "Indian." Anand Varghese reviewed the band Indus Creed in an article entitled "A creed proud of its roots" (<<http://www.themusicmagazine.com/induscreed.html>>). The very name of this band presents conflicting cultural messages: "Indus," while certainly referring to an ancient, pre-colonial era, is also, etymologically, a Western term for India; "creed," with its Christian overtones of a "credo" seems also to be mimicking the vastly successful American rock band, Creed. Yet Varghese hails this band as "a high water mark in the short history of Indian rock," saying that they "[provide] Indian bands with the inspiration to discover their own sound" (1). This sound, it is quickly and prominently noted, was "recorded and mixed in Los Angeles [and] boasts ... some slick production. It also sees the band departing from their dated '80s pop-rock style towards more wholesome modern rock territory" (2). The move away from dated Western rock towards more current models is clearly what is perceived as Indus Creed's status as "pioneers" (2), but results in what Timothy Brennan, in "World Music Does Not Exist," notes are "layers of meaning and traditions of codification [which] undergo a disastrous transformation and traducement" (49). What is particularly

problematic in this construction of Indian rock music is the recurrence of the overly-enthusiastic tone in which the journalists frame their discussions, and the tension between the desire to praise these artists for their ability to assimilate Westernness into their music with the reverence for a true Indian art form. In his article, Varghese ends by stating that "Indus Creed ... have created a distinct mood of 'Indianness' on the album, without abandoning their hard rock roots. The vibes are Indian regardless of whether Indian instruments are being used" (3). In this, the very vagueness of what might comprise an "Indian" sound swallows up the Indian voices themselves, insisting that the music be placed as Other, but watching it negotiate the boundaries of hybridity. Revealing this uncomfortable negotiation further, Varghese, in complaining about the poor drum sound on one song, comments that "maybe that's how they do things in LA ... who knows?" (2).

Steven Feld, in his essay "A Sweet Lullaby for World Music," discusses the ways in which this supportive and elevating tone serves to enhance globalization and silence the local: "celebratory narratives counter ... anxieties by stressing the reappropriation of Western pop, emphasizing fusion forms as rejections of bounded, fixed, or essentialized identities. That is, celebratory narratives of world music often focus on the production of hybrid musics. They place a positive emphasis on fluid identities, sometimes edging toward romantic equations of hybridity with overt resistance. Celebratory narratives tend toward hopeful scenarios for cultural and financial equity in the entertainment industries. Here the designation *global* can replace the previous label *international* as a positive valence term for modern practices and institutions ... Celebratory narratives of world music tend to normalize and naturalize globalization" (152). If, in fact, as we see the silencing of subaltern voices in the local and global rock arenas as they adopt the sound of American and British rock, it might be argued that the one genre in which the voice of the subaltern might be sought out would be the in the field of what is called "world music." Feld discusses the ways in which the term "world music" becomes a codification for the Westernizing of local music, noting that the fact "that any and every hybrid or traditional style could so successfully be lumped together by the single market label *world music* [signifies] the commercial triumph of global musical industrialization" (151). As Subaltern Studies have shown, the very naming and placement as Other in literature, film, and other cultural and social fields, serves to both appropriate texts and "Orientalize" them, in Said's terminology. Feld remarks that "Interestingly, the situation would have been little different had world music been more bluntly termed *third world music*. And outside of the academy, in the world of commerce, that is exactly what happened . . . the development of a highly visible commercial documentary music recording industry solidified ... when the phrase *third world* made new marketing sense of the diverse set of previous categories loosely conjoining academic and commercial enterprise, namely recordings variously labeled and sold as *primitive*, *exotic*, *tribal*, *ethnic*, *folk*, *traditional*, or *international*" (147; emphases in the original).

This marketing of the "primitive" and "exotic" reflects the ways in which the West has enfolded "foreign" music in order to assume and control its commercial potential. Simultaneously, the global marketplace has dictated that postcolonial rock bands produce a commodity which serves as a hybridized, saleable version of "native" music. For bands and fans alike, the rock which emerges must silence any genuine national voice, for the power and influence of British and American rock continually plays over the spaces where the native might speak. The postcolonial musician re-enacts what Homi Bhabha, in "Of Mimicry and Man: The ambivalence of colonial discourse," shows to be the ways in which colonial Britain attempted "the challenge of conceiving of a 'reformed' colonial subject" (87). Referring to Charles Grant's "Observations on the state of society among the Asiatic subjects of Great Britain" (1792), Bhabha suggests that the colonial project aimed to construct malleable native subjects through a process which would expose them to English literature, language, and Christianity, as the exposure to Western rock modifies and "reforms" the postcolonial musician. Grant explains this program as producing "'the imitation of English manners which will induce [the colonial subjects] to remain under our protection'" (qtd. in Bhabha 87). The resultant subject, termed "the mimic man" by Bhabha, embodies a figure who replicates the behaviors of the colonizer, yet remains "native." Bhabha explains that "colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (86; emphases in the original), and, in this, the postcolonial rock musician re-enacts colonial mim-

icry, where "the desire to emerge as 'authentic' through mimicry -- through a process of writing and repetition -- is the final irony of partial representation" (88). This movement is certainly seen in Indian bands such as Junoon and Indus Creed, where the link between "native" music and Western forms and technology is celebrated by music critics and fans alike. It is also replayed in the embrace of Western music by Asian fans, as they "inscribe the colonial text erratically, eccentrically across a body politic" (Bhabha 88). Certainly, the "mimicry emerges as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge" (Bhabha 85), as the dissemination of rock music throughout Asia compels a modeling of Western cultural norms, and an infusion of the English language, while Otherness is maintained through special "foreign" CD packaging, and local bands' own desires to retain and mix national and traditional music with Western rock. These fans and musicians, indeed, become "appropriate objects of a colonialist chain of command, authorized versions of otherness" (Bhabha 88), as they consume and generate a cultural product which both aligns them with the West, and simultaneously produces them as "mimic men" and Other.

Bhabha points out that the mimic man "becomes transformed into an uncertainty which fixes the colonial subject as a 'partial' presence" (86). In this, "world music" becomes a genre which, as Feld points out above, locates the Other as primitive and exotic, and, therefore, a subject of interest, titillation and examination for the West. While Tony Mitchell argues that "the world music phenomenon ... has functioned as a positive form of cultural influence in terms of providing momentum and inspiration for the indigenous and often dissident musics of ethnic minorities ... [and] has also helped to establish a musical language of hybridity" (*Popular* 6-7), the danger of this "hybridity" is that "partial representation rearticulates the whole notion of *identity* and alienates it from essence" (Bhabha 89), and the performer of world music thus re-enacts the epistemology of us/Other, playing across notions of acceptance and exclusion. The West listens to this music purely in the context of its production by the Other, of its non-Western status, and of the impossibility of world music ever seriously competing with or eroding the financial and cultural success of American and British bands. As Bhabha explains, "The success of colonial appropriation depends on a proliferation of inappropriate objects that ensure its strategic failure, so that mimicry is at once resemblance and menace" (86). While music produced in the postcolonial countries assumes the attributes of Western music, the conflation of East and West in this genre produces a combination of both locations which only serves to magnify difference and to clearly place "foreign" rock in a position which ensures that it cannot be competitive in the global marketplace. This music does, indeed, as Bhabha suggests "[come] from the prodigious and strategic production of conflictual, fantastic, discriminatory 'identity effects' in the play of a power that is elusive because it hides no essence, no 'itself'" (90). The identity of the Other is re-formed and reproduced in the very construction of the act of mimicking, which validates the voice of the neo-colonizer, while subsuming and evaporating the voices of the colonized, as the self becomes a product of power.

Rock music which is being produced in postcolonial nations, and sung primarily in English, thus creates a discursive mimicry which results in "a discourse at the crossroads of what is known and permissible and that which though known must be kept concealed; a discourse uttered between the lines and as such both against the rules and within them" (Bhabha 89). It is in this conflictual space that the silence emerges, as postcolonial musicians sing in a language which is not theirs, mimicking both Western rock and traditional music, their voices lost "between the lines," their identity negotiated within the certainty of the power of the mimicked art form upon their culture, their production as imitators, and their placement as Others. The silencing of the subaltern in rock music occurs with "the splitting of colonial discourse so that two attitudes towards external reality persist; one takes reality into consideration while the other disavows it and replaces it by a product of desire that repeats, rearticulates 'reality' as mimicry" (Bhabha 91). Hence, Varghese's statement above concerning Indus Creed's ability to "have created a distinct mood of 'Indianness' on the album, without abandoning their hard rock roots" reflects the splitting of discourse: first, the band is congratulated for maintaining "Indianness," while simultaneously the discursive project of "hard rock," a purely American idiom and iconology, moves this band into the sphere of mimic men, of "reality as mimicry." This discourse and, of course, the very usage of English by postcolo-

nial and world musicians and their fans, serves only to further the act of colonization, as the music assumes that it is upon the bedrock of Western rock that all rock and pop music must be built. For the mimic men, "the *founding objects* of the Western world become the erratic, eccentric, accidental *objets trouves* of the colonial discourse" (Bhabha 92), and the glorious rhetoric which is found in the South Asian and African press supports the notion that, for the rest of the world, the only template for rock music is the one devised by American and British bands. In replicating these models, the subaltern voice of the postcolonial musician is drowned out by the echoing of Western voices which pervade the construction of the music itself. This is what Bhabha calls "the *metonymies* of presence": "those inappropriate signifiers of colonial discourse -- the difference between being English and being Anglicized" (89-90).

Bhabha does suggest the possibility that "the fetishized colonial culture is potentially and strategically an insurgent counter-appeal" (91). While it certainly seems that the subaltern voice is silenced in today's global rock marketplace, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's concept of "minor literature" provides an alternative reading of the ways in which postcolonial rock musicians might "make use of the polylingualism ... to oppose the oppressed quality of this language to its oppressive quality, to find points of nonculture or underdevelopment, linguistic Third World zones by which a language can escape" (Deleuze and Guattari 26-27). If English remains a conduit of cultural, economic, and social norms, reinforcing the power structures of the West as it moves through melody and lyrics to enforce mimicry upon the silenced subaltern singer, it might be argued that there remains the opportunity for the postcolonial subject to make use of English itself, transforming it in such a way that language itself becomes the vehicle with which the minority voice is heard. In "What is a Minor Literature," Deleuze and Guattari ask "how many people today live in a language that is not their own?" (19), suggesting that there exists a mode for resisting the hegemonies of European language through the "vernacular" use of a dominant language. They explain that by mixing a dominant language with minority culture, "the possibility of setting up a minor practice of major language from within" (18) can be realized. In this, "minor literature doesn't come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language" (16). Deleuze and Guattari point out that minor literature should undermine power structures so that "the literary machine thus becomes the relay for a revolutionary machine-to come" (17-18). Yet when Deleuze and Guattari query "how to become a nomad and an immigrant and a gypsy in relation to one's own language?" (19), they are imagining the ways in which a native language, which has become an instrument of colonizing hegemonic processes, can be subverted or become counter-discursive. This does not in any way replicate the dilemma of the postcolonial subject whose very language has been silenced through the violence of colonization, and must in some way be recovered. "Minor literature" does not refer to a vernacular, or to the types of mimicking which are produced by the fusion between "traditional" musics and Westernized rock, but rather to a way of utilizing language and the written word so that power structures are undermined serving the "revolutionary machine-to come." In the postcolonial rock world, the attempt to replace the language of the colonizer with a native language, or a vernacular of the dominant language, results in the use of power, political, and capitalistic mechanisms which only function to recolonize the subject. It might be argued that what may be seen in the usage of English by postcolonial rock musicians is an attempt to create a "minor language," yet these musicians seem to fail in the ultimate goal of a subversive rendering of language which has been modified for revolutionary use, what Deleuze and Guattari call "the possibility to express another possible community and to forge the means for another consciousness and another sensibility" (17). In the rock of Junoon or Indus Creed, and in the enormous popularity of American and British rock in postcolonial countries, "another consciousness" does not emerge; rather, the consumption and conflation of Western rock into local music serves only to manufacture a discourse which cannot produce a voice with "no possibilities for an individual enunciation that would belong to this or that 'master' and that could be separated from a collective enunciation" (Deleuze and Guattari 17). The global permeation of Western rock becomes the voice of the "master," and collective enunciation evolves into a parody and mimicry of that voice.

While Deleuze and Guattari address the ways in which a dominant language can be made to "speak" for the minority, they are also implicitly referring to the type of resistance available to the European underclasses whom Spivak discusses in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*. Spivak points out that "men and women among the illiterate peasantry, Aborigines, and the lowest strata of the urban subproletariat ... the oppressed, if given the chance ... and on the way to solidarity through alliance politics ... *can speak and know their conditions*" (269; emphases in the original). In this, Spivak differentiates between the European oppressed and their ability to be heard, and the post-colonial subject whose voice is silenced by "the violence of imperialist epistemic, social, and disciplinary inscription" (271). Deleuze and Guattari's "minor language" is, indeed, "political" and "takes on collective value" and "what each author says individually already constitutes a common action" (17). This parallels Spivak's notion that the minority voice in Europe, grappling with its own native language and the hegemonic traces which it contains, may perform a collective resistance through linguistic and written performance, yet she contends that this cannot equate with "the problem of the muted subject of the subaltern" (282). As Spivak contends that "[o]ne of the guiding principles of geography -- 'nation' -- [is] inextricably tangled with the mysterious phenomena of language" (379), the silencing of the subaltern voice thus becomes a heuristic for the silencing and submersion of the nation itself. In this, the postcolonial rock musician takes on the role of "native informant," speaking for and to the West, supplementing the hegemonic messages which are transmitted through Western rock itself. Spivak explains that "The postcolonial informant has rather little to say about the oppressed minorities *in* the decolonized nation as such, except, at best, as especially well-prepared investigator. Yet the aura of identification with those distant objects of oppression clings to those informants as, again at best, they identify with the other racial and ethnic minorities in metropolitan space. At worst, they take advantage of the aura and play the native informant uncontaminated by disavowed involvement with the machinery of the production of knowledge. Thus this last group either undermines the struggle by stimulating the effect of a new third world, by piecing together great legitimizing narratives of cultural and ethnic specificity and continuity, and of national identity -- a species of 'retrospective hallucination' (*Critique* 360). Indeed, bands like Indus Creed and Junoon, in their attempts to infuse their music with "Indianness," provide exactly this type of "legitimizing narrative," which both lulls their listeners into a collective "hallucination" that their national voice is heard and that they do, indeed, speak to the world through this music.

With an infusion of postcolonial bands who sing in English, and with the all-encompassing popularity of Western rock in de-colonized nations, it might be argued that those rock musicians who sing in their native tongue may be more closely negotiating an authentic, minor voice in rock music. The use of a native language however, seems to underscore Bhabha's notion of mimicry only more strongly, especially when it is seen in diasporic populations. As seen with Junoon and Indus Creed in India, the emergence of rock bands in the diaspora further confuses notions of identity, language, and nation. The term "diaspora" has evolved to encompass the many people who have left their homelands, founding and assimilating into communities around the world. The individual may enter the diaspora for any number of reasons, either voluntarily or not, but the effects of living away from the homeland remain consistent as "habits of life, expression, or activity in the new environment inevitably occur against the memory of those things in another environment" (Said, *Reflections* 186). Exile from the homeland, for whatever reason, produces endless traces of culture and loss which imprint the diasporic condition on constructions and images of the self. The Pakistani Music Online site, <<http://www.emarkaz.com>>, presents an article, "An emerging Montreal (Canada) based band ... JOSH!" which underscores the ways in which the dilemma of rock music in the diaspora again evokes the confusion surrounding the conflation of Western art forms with perceived national identities

(<http://www.emarkaz.com/shop/store/items_b.php?cname=&product_id=2051>). Coming from Montreal, the band Jösh is hugely popular in its homeland of Pakistan, raising the question of the ways in which the Pakistani population consumes Western-based music, performed in the native language by musicians living in the diaspora, as a viable alternative to purely Western rock. As seen in the journalism surrounding bands from the homeland, e.markaz.com also describes Jösh in

terms of their mimicking and conflation of Western and South Asian influences, saying that "Take Western counter culture alternative, mix it with a deep rooted base for ethnicity and a natural sense of Desi rhythm: what forms is an amalgam named Jösh. Not just followers but leaders, Jösh has discovered a way to resurrect the musical essence of the home soil in a distinctive manner. ... Jösh is a collection of diverse ethics and beliefs, giving it a personality which transcends conventional musical barriers. Each member adds their respective musical influences which when combined form a unique sound that is characteristic of Josh and easily palatable to all. ... These are the conflicting pillars of influences which propagate and nourish the non-stagnant flow of ideas defining the very essence of Jösh"

(<http://www.emarkaz.com/shop/store/items_b.php?cname=&product_id=2051>).

The "conflicting pillars of influences" enunciates the very notion of the conflicting hegemonic constructions under which a band like Jösh must work. As Deleuze and Guattari point out, "language exists only through the distinction and the complementarity of a subject of enunciation" (20). Following Spivak's arguments, Jösh cannot speak or sing, as their enunciations are garbled, subverted, and silenced through the transplantation of their bodies and language to a foreign land, and the lyrics they sing must be heard by Pakistanis in a language which has been filtered, not only through Western musical forms, but through the reality of a language which has re-emerged from colonialism, left the homeland, and reappears again through a filter of history. Once again, the journalist provides a reflection of the inability to define -- *to hear* -- this band, claiming, in contradictory terms, "they [do not] attempt to hybridize eastern melodies with Western mainstream beats: a genre that has been already commercially exploited. ... Rather than, they attempt to, and skillfully accomplish, combinations of alternative riffs with Eastern melodic foundations. ... They have struck the optimum balance between creativity and conformity"

(<http://www.emarkaz.com/shop/store/items_b.php?cname=&product_id=2051>). Indeed, what is seen here is "the notion of what the work *cannot say*" ("Subaltern" 28), which Spivak argues becomes the very essence of the silencing of the subaltern. In the oxymoronic placement of "alternative riffs," a clear echoing of Western alternative music forms, with the denial of hybridization, neither Jösh, nor the Pakistani rock journalist who hopes to write on their behalf, can verbalize the ways in which the music, the language, and the concept of the band itself is produced under the recurrent hegemonies of imperialism, neo-colonization, and the diaspora. The Pakistani fans who listen to and revere Jösh, cannot "hear" the music and lyrics because of the ways in which these songs must be produced within the threads of history, in a language which is a product of constant re-colonizing, globalizing and epistemic forces. What can be seen here, then, is both the silencing of subaltern music through its appropriation into the global marketplace, and the hybridization of local and national rock music which reflects both an economic necessity and a cultural surrender. As Spivak points out, "the pre-national is now globalized, after an uneven insertion into the nation form of appearance" (*Critique* 380), where "globality is invoked in the interest of the financialization of the globe" (*Critique* 364). In the face of global economic realities, where worldwide CD sales represent a \$32 billion market ("Music Slump"

<<http://www.cnn.com/2004/TECH/internet/04/12/music.industry.ap/>>[inactive]), postcolonial musicians can only hope to be heard through the mimicking of Western rock, and, by the very nature of this, their national voices must be silenced. At the same time, their only hope of being heard in this vast marketplace is through participating in the arena of world music, where, as Feld explains "the obvious question remains: In whose interests and in what kind of academy must *ethno* and *world* remain distinct from a discipline of music, a discipline where all practices, histories, and identities could assert equal claims to value, study, and performance?" (147).

In 1989, P.J. O'Rourke commented in "The Death of Communism" that "in the end we beat them with Levi 501 jeans. Seventy-two years of Communist indoctrination and propaganda was drowned out by a three-ounce Sony Walkman" (13). Indeed, O'Rourke wrote this as the possibilities of Western global cultural influence became a certainty, and his notion that rock music was instrumental in bringing down the Berlin Wall foreshadowed the enormous cultural impact of the genre. Said reminds us to "think of the affiliation ... between music and nation" (*Reflections* xvi), and the inability for postcolonial and emerging nations to find a voice in the field of rock music

surely points to an area where Western hegemonies are firmly placed and actively working. Jameson also points out that "music also includes a history in a more thoroughgoing and irrevocable fashion, since ... it mediates our historical past along with our private or existential one and can scarcely be woven out of the memory any longer" (299). The very importance of rock music in the cultural landscape, this interweaving of the self and society, of the past and present, asks for the silenced voices to sing. When Spivak first addressed the question of the subaltern, she underlined both the difficulty and the importance of uncovering ways to hear these voices, a problematic which is evident in rock music today. As Spivak noted then, "whether or not [the subalterns] themselves perceive it ... their text articulates the difficult task of rewriting its own conditions of impossibility as the conditions of possibility" ("Subaltern" 27), and rock music, the espoused voice of rebellion and the unheard, should present an opportunity for the conditions of possibility to exist.

Works Cited

- BBC Worldservice. "The Global Music Machine." *BBC Worldservice.com* (5 March 2005): <http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/specials/1042_globalmusic/index.shtml>.
- Bhabha, Homi. "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse." *The Location of Culture*. By Homi Bhabha. London: Routledge, 1994. 85-92.
- Brennan, Timothy. "World Music Does Not Exist." *Discourse* 23.1 (2001): 44-62.
- "Bryan Adams performs in Bangalore on February 8." *The Music Magazine Online* (24 December 2003): <<http://www.themusicmagazine.com/bryanadams04.html>>[inactive].
- Chaulia, Sreeram. "Junoon: Redemption Songs From an Impassioned Band." *The Music Magazine Online* (3 February 2003): <<http://www.themusicmagazine.com/junoonfeat.html>>[inactive].
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. "What is a Minor Literature?" *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. 1975. By Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. Trans. Dana Polan. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1986. 16-27.
- "An Emerging Montreal (Canada) based band ... JOSH!" *e.markaz.com: Pakistani Music Online* (23 July 2004): <http://www.emarkaz.com/shop/store/items_b.php?cname=&product_id=2051>.
- Feld, Steven. "A Sweet Lullaby for World Music." *Public Culture* 12.1 (2000): 145-71.
- "Global sales of pirated music generated \$4.5 billion in 2003." *itfacts.biz* (5 March 2005): <<http://www.itfacts.biz/index.php?id=P1304>>.
- Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham: Duke UP, 1991.
- Mitchell, Tony. "Another Root: Hip-Hop outside the USA." *Global Noise*. Ed. Tony Mitchell. Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 2001. 1-38.
- Mitchell, Tony. *Popular Music and Local Identity: Rock, Pop and Rap in Europe and Oceania*. London: Leicester UP, 1996.
- "MTV Asia Awards Nominations 2004." *MTV Asia Awards.com* (3 May 2004): <<http://www.mtvasiaawards.com/India/Nominees/>>[inactive].
- "MTV Asia Awards Winners 2003." *MTV Asia Awards.Com* (3 May 2004): <<http://www.mtvasiaawards.com>>.
- "MTV Jams." *MTV Asia.com* (5 March 2005): <<http://www.mtvasia.com/Onair/>>.
- "Music Slump: 'Worst May Be Over'." *CNN.com* (7 April 2004): <<http://www.cnn.com/2004/TECH/internet/04/12/music.industry.ap/>>[inactive].
- O'Rourke, P.J. *Give War a Chance*. New York: Grove, 1992.
- Recording Industry Association of America. "Marketing Data." (5 March 2005): <<http://www.riaa.com/news/marketingdata/default.asp>>.
- "Recording Industry World Sales 2003." International Federation for the Phonographic Industry (2004): <<http://www.ifpi.org/site-content/statistics/worldsales.html>>[inactive].
- Rushdie, Salman. *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. New York: Picador, 1999.
- Said, Edward. *Musical Elaborations*. New York: Columbia UP, 1991.
- Said, Edward. *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2000.
- "South African CD Sales." *Musica Online* (1 May 2004): <<http://www.musica.co.za/eMusica/charts.asp?SegmentID=1&GenreID=0>>.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Sing?" *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*. Ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. London: Routledge, 1995. 24-28.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of a Vanishing Present*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1999.
- Varghese, Anand. "Indus Creed: A Creed Proud of Its Roots." *The Music Magazine Online* (12 May 2003): <<http://www.themusicmagazine.com/induscreed.html>>[inactive].

Author's profile: Rebecca Romanow teaches literature and composition at the University of Massachusetts Boston and at the University of Rhode Island where she is a doctoral candidate in English and comparative literature. Romanow's interests and publications include postcolonial and world literatures, critical theory, body theory, and cultural and film studies. Her recent publications include "The Erasure of Language in the Globalization of Rock Music: Sigur Rós and the Politics of Hopelandic" in *Politics and Culture* 3 (2003), which was translated by Mikko Jakonen as "Kielen poispyyhkiminen rockmusiikin globalisoitumisessa Sigur Rós ja hopelandicin poliittisuus" for *Megafooni* (2003), and a chapter entitled "Embracing Maturity: Hanif Kureishi's *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*" is to be included in the collection, *Postcolonial Ethics*, which she is currently editing. Interviews con-

cerning her work concerning rock music and globalization have appeared in the *URI Reporter* (2004), *The Providence Journal* (2004), and *The Alternative Rock News* (2005). E-mail: <rromanow@mail.uri.edu>.