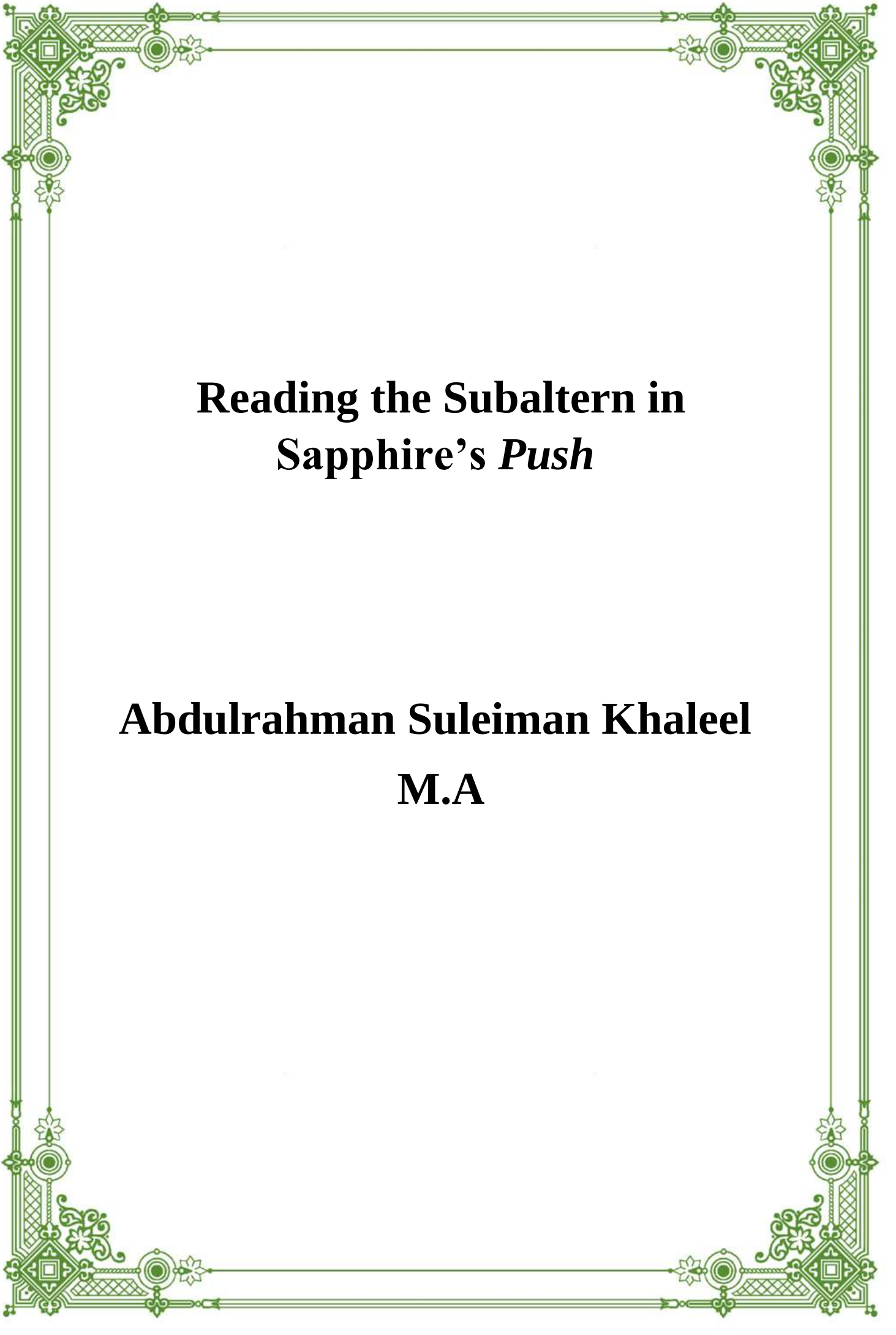




Reading the Subaltern in Sapphire's *Push*

Abdulrahman Suleiman Khaleel

M.A

غاياتري سبيفاك (١٩٤٢-) ، ناقد ما بعد الاستعمار ، أثبتت نفسها جدير بالثقة في حقبة ما بعد الاستعمار منذ نشر "هل يستطيع التابع أن يتكلم؟" (١٩٨٧). وسعت الكاتبة الهندية وجهة نظرها لتشمل موضوعات مثل النسوية والتفكيك والماركسية. حاولت تخزينه. بشكل واضح ، ترفض فكرة أن العالم الغربي متفوق على بقية العالم. تسلط خطاباتها النقدية الضوء على قضايا التهميش ، مثل وضع المرأة وتمكينها. هذه المقالة فكرة عن التابع التي تظهر في كتابات سبيفاك على رواية سافاير "الدفع" وهدف هذه المقالة الرئيسي هو تسليط الضوء على شخصية "غالية" كشخصية تتبعية في الرواية

Abstract:

Gayatri Spivak (1942-), a postcolonial critic, has established herself as a trustworthy voice of the postcolonial era since the publication of "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1987). The Indian author has broadened her views to include topics such as feminism, Deconstruction, and Marxism. Spivak has attempted to resist colonial legacy via her critical and cultural ideas. She rejects the notion that the Western World is superior than the rest of the world. Her critical discourses highlight issues of marginalization, such as subaltern women's position and empowerment. This article applies Spivak's notion of the subaltern on Sapphire's *Push*.

The Theory of the Subaltern:

Spivak has established herself as an authoritative voice of the postcolonial period since the publication of her article "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1987). Spivak attempts to confront colonialism's legacy via critical and cultural ideas. Spivak, as previously mentioned, did not believe that the Western World was superior than the Third World. Spivak borrows Gramsci's term "subaltern" to describe those in a society who have no voice (Gramsci, 2004, p. 55). As people in India have battled for their country's freedom, the idea has grown in significance. "I like the term 'subaltern' for one purpose: It is totally situational... Subaltern originated as an explanation of a specific rank in the military," Spivak explains (Spivak, 1990, p. 272). Gramsci used the word "monism" to refer to Marxism, and he referred to the proletariat as "subaltern." Within duress, the phrase was transformed into an excuse for anything that does not fall under the purview of a thorough class inquiry" (Morton, 2004, p. 45). India is a vibrant and diverse nation that is divided into several regions based on language, gender, citizenship, religion, class, language, and culture. The condition of the subaltern is all the more sad from this scattered perspective. Spivak came to fame in the literary world with her article "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1987). The article explores the concerns of Indian women who practice "sati," or widow-sacrifice. Spivak offers her theory of subalternity, in which she defends the subaltern's limits and poses a crucial question: "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (Spivak, p. 283, 1987). The term "subaltern" is used in this article to describe oppressed people or those of "lower status." "The subaltern, in the framework of imperial creation, cannot speak or have a history; the subaltern, as a woman, is even more deeply in darkness," says Spivak (Spivak, 1987, p. 287). "The subaltern cannot speak," writes the essay's conclusion. Spivak's conclusion that "subalterns cannot communicate" has sparked debate in the post-colonial context. Spivak's statement is, in reality, a one-stop shop for all questions. It is the product of her life-long search for truth, and it is influenced by societal relationships. Her idea proposes that even when the subaltern speaks, he or she is not heard. His or her voice is a message that never gets through. Humans have an innate ability to speak, but it is the listener's responsibility to understand what is spoken in the actual meaning. "Spivak's statement that 'the subaltern cannot speak' implies that subaltern females do not have a political activity because they are not being represented," Morton (2004) says of the gap between interpretation and articulation of subaltern women (p. 66). Spivak, a pioneer in post-colonial studies, offers her readers the idea that the post-colonial age is a crucial period for the underclass, when both the people and the nation had just been freed from colonial rule's draconian rules. This century begins on a mission to recreate the colonial misery of the underclass through literature. "The first step for colonized people in establishing an identity and a voice is to recall their own history," writes Fanon (1970). (p. 192). For many years, European colonists would have downplayed the nation's history, seeing the pre-colonial era as a historical vacuum or a state of pre-civilization limbo. White and black children will be taught that progress, culture, and history began with the arrival of the Europeans. As a result, if reclaiming one's own history is the first step toward a postcolonial mindset, the next step is to begin to undermine the imperialist notion that the past was reduced (Fanon, 1970, p. 192). Every country that has been colonized has a subaltern

identity. However, it is only via postcolonial studies that they are able to comprehend their historical subjugation. It is a monumental task for people in developing nations to reclaim their own history. To their great sorrow, the subalterns admit that their brains have been colonized, and that it is still difficult for them to eradicate imperialist ideas. "The subaltern" embraces "cultural polyvalency and hybridity" and their identities are "of diversity" (Spivak, 1984, p. 198). The notion of the split, double, or fluid identity, which is a characteristic of the postcolonial writer, explains the postcolonial writer's appeal to deconstruction and post-structuralism. The main goal of post-structuralism is to demonstrate how gender and personal identity are inherently unstable and changeable. Postcolonial studies, on the other hand, includes a study of women's roles in society. Spivak, like many other postcolonial critics, concentrated on subaltern women in her study of the subaltern. Spivak reinvigorated feminist discourse with her article "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1987). She concentrated on Third World Women's problems. However, under the international feminist paradigm, these problems have been overlooked. As previously stated, Spivak's talks paralleled the oppression and struggle of women in Third World countries. Feminism as a philosophy did not take into account the goals and viewpoints of all women in all nations. As a result, Spivak rakes many issues connected with the practice of widow self-immolation, or "sati," in her 1987 article. It is the greatest example of how subaltern women were denied the chance to express themselves and convince their communities of the importance of their dissident voice. The British colonists resolved to end the traditional practice of widow sacrifice in 1829. Sati refers to an Indian lady who became a symbol of devotion by rising from "her deceased husband's pyre and uniting with him in the act of self-immolation." The British colonists adopted the word "Suttee" instead of sati, and they were responsible for the abolition of this terrible practice as part of their civilizing mission (Sivak, 1987, p. 297). "White men protecting brown women from brown men" was the colonial rulers' slogan (Spivak, 1987, p. 293). The British were most disappointed when they discovered that the majority of Indian women wanted to join their deceased husbands by self-immolating, and they tried to erase such a tradition. In general, subalterns, according to Spivak, are mainly the women who are under the control of men, women who cannot make their decisions by their own. So such women can be found in any place in the world at any time, that is why, her study has gained a great popularity, since it addresses all women around the globe.

Precious in Push:

Academics and critics have studied and acknowledged Sapphire's *Push* (1996) for its intersecting and varied depictions of class, gender, and race. When the book was first published in 1996, several reviewers predicted that it would quickly become one of the most important works in the canon of African-American literature (Spencer, 2012, p. 53). The book, on the other hand, took years to establish a home in African-American and American critical circles. Sapphire's book is also not regarded part of the "African American literary canon," despite its interaction with and resemblance in breadth and content to a large corpus of black women's literature and cinema (Spencer, 2012, p. 54). *Push* may be described as a forbidden work dealing with taboo themes such as topics and bodies. Mining areas of quiet, silence, and gendered violence that need critical attention and confrontation are shown in the tale. The book of Sapphire is not about "the black man," "the black lady," "the black family," or "the black community". It's a powerful story of hope, perseverance, injury, and sometimes faltering determination, a story that's relevant to the experiences and lives of a wide racial range of oppressed young females whose voices are never heard—black and not, American and not, lesbians and heterosexual—females who are differently positioned, but who are loving, hoping, dying, and living on the snide corners of the social and political worlds. The victims in *Push*, according to Wulandari (2013), go unreported since they are mostly women (p. 62). Precious and Mary remain objects of trade under Carl's, Precious's father's, dominance. He does not believe he is to blame for Mary's death. The father is the one who physically and mentally abuses his family. Carl slaps, kicks, and punches Mary as part of his physical abuse. Carl regularly rapes Precious, even when she was a newborn, in the course of psychological torture, and this raping was done in front of Mary. "You got it? I ask. "No." "How you know?" "We never did, you know –" I look at Mama like she fucking crazy! What she talking about? "You know," she repeat. "What you got to do to get it." "He never fuck you," I say shock. (Sapphire, 1996, p. 97). When Marry talks to Precious, the speaker of the statement above is Marry. Carl Jones' death, she explains, was unusual because he had AIDS. Precious begins to wonder whether her mother has AIDS as well, but Marry informs her that she hasn't had sex with him since Precious became porn. Carl was verbally assaulting her, she claims, particularly when she tried to stop him from rapping Precious. The

subalterns, according to Spivak (1987), are downtrodden objects whose voices are never heard (p. 283). As a result, Mary and Precious are subordinates in Spivak's eyes, since Mary's cries to stop Carl from rapping her daughter have no impact on the cruel parent. The message is never heard by the listener when the subaltern speaks (Spivak, 1987, p. 283). Carl's commanding role in the family is undeniable. He comes late at night to steal food and money, as well as rape his little daughter. Those who must assist her and listen to her screams, on the other hand, never do. Precious matches Spivak's definition of the subaltern well, since she has never found anybody to assist her in her early years. Precious, on the other hand, claims that the residents of Harlem's area are tightly knit. Only drug addicts who come to Precious' building to beg for a place to stay ring her doorbell. She despises them because, in her opinion, they "contribute to the negative image of black people" (Sapphire, 1996, p. 15). Precious is also "never nice" with the little girls in the neighborhood. They attempt to avoid her whenever they see her; they've been doing all they can to avoid Precious since they found out what happened to her. This shows that Harlem culture is unconcerned about Precious' well-being and makes no attempt to assist her. Precious demonstrates this carelessness when she asks, "Why doesn't anybody throw Carl in prison when I have a kid with him when I'm twelve? Is it my responsibility since I didn't speak to police?" (Sapphire, 1996, p. 137). Precious' mother, Mary, was the first to learn about her pregnancy. Then some people in the neighborhood find out about it. When Precious attempts to communicate, the government sends a social worker to explore Precious' origins. Precious' father and the father of her child are both brought up by the social worker. When she responds, he just murmurs "shame...shame..." without taking any action to report Carl's crime, and as a result, Carl returns to rape Precious again, leaving her with a second kid. As a result, Mary, the community, and the social worker have all had a hand in what has happened to Precious. They do not do anything to assist her, and when she tries to speak, no one pays attention, and her voice goes unnoticed. Harlem's seclusion makes it tough for residents to learn about one another. Carl abused his wife and raped his daughter as a result of his estrangement. Carl is well aware that no one will intervene since no one cares. He also understands that even if his wife and daughter inform their neighbors or the police about what he does, no one will assist them; rather, they would be blamed since the police and locals will think they are drug addicts. When Precious wants to disclose anything about her father, no one believes her; in fact, instead of assisting her, the inhabitants begin to shun her. Precious' area has been plagued by various crimes as a result of her seclusion and the authorities' negligence. Prostitution, promiscuity, non-marital relationships, and marriage without connections were all prevalent in Harlem while I was growing up. That is why no one pays attention to Precious when she speaks. She learns that other girls in the area have also been sexually assaulted. As she puts it, "girls raped by their brothers, elderly ladies raped by her father; doesn't remember until he dies when she is 65 years old" is common in Harlem (Sapphire, 1996, p. 142). Rita, one of Precious's acquaintances, has been a street prostitute since she was eleven years old. Ronda has been a victim of incest in the neighborhood since she was a kid; her brother has been rapping her for her whole life, and when her mother finds out, "she throws her out" (Sapphire, 1996, p. 105). Sapphire highlights the reality that violence, aberrant sexual practices, and sexual assaults are all too prevalent in Harlem by depicting such tales. All of the victims mentioned in the book, including Precious, are female. Spivak claims in her article (1987) that the majority of the subalterns are people of "lower status," or oppressed objects (p. 283). Precious and the other girls in the neighborhood are fascinated objects whose voices are never heard in this way. All women-victims of patriarchal crimes and abuse, according to Spivak (1990), have something to say, and they wish to state their stance on whether they are for or against the proposal (p. 11). Precious is outspoken about her father's sexual misconduct, yet her voice goes ignored. When she goes to school, on the other hand, she expresses herself clearly, stating that she wants to "learn." The school, on the other hand, is depicted as being managed and controlled by an administration and instructors who have been trained to operate within and support a system that often devalues or silences kids' entire experiences. Precious is clearly repressed by such a paradigm, which keeps her both restrained and condemned. Precious has a discussion with the administrator when she visits the Principal's office. Sapphire illustrates the gap between two individuals with opposing academic literacies and socioeconomic means via this discussion. Precious is irritated when the principal calls her by her first name, Chaireece. Precious feels alone and unknown when the administrator addresses her by her first name, according to Stapleton (2004), and this demonstrates the absence of connection that Precious's family urgently needs (p. 215). When the principal inquires about Precious' age, she instantly thinks to herself, "White cunt box had my file on her desk... Bitch know how old I am" (Sapphire, 1996, p. 8). Sapphire's Push is a complex tale of rape, incest, child abuse, dysfunctionality, trauma, black masculinity,

urban life, phallocentrism, repressive and dominant hip-hop/rap culture, New York's educational institutions, social welfare, love, compassion, friendship, and illiteracy. Throughout the book, the reader follows and experiences Precious' horrific existence as she transforms from a sexual, verbal, and physical abuse victim to a loving mother who finds love in her child and her tutor. Ms. Rain and the group of ladies who urge her to speak finally hear her voice, which has gone unnoticed for a long time. To conclude, for several reviewers, such as Samuel (2012), Sapphire's *Push* "is a tale of victory," a story of "self-determination," and it is similar to many previous books in the "African-American literary tradition" (p. 151). Precious' experience is similar to Celie in *The Color Purple* (1982), Jamie in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), and other characters who have been physically and mentally repressed and mistreated. Precious, like Morrison's Pilate in *Song of Solomon* (1977), Gaines' Ticey in *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* (1971), and Sethe in *Beloved* (1987), persists in her quest for spiritual and physical wholeness despite seemingly insurmountable failures, difficulties, and challenges. Precious, like Sethe, must bear her own cross on her back.

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