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Cross Cultural Identity: Locating Hybridity and Ambivalence in Naqvi's Home Boy

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Abstract: The present study is an attempt to study M.H. Naqvi's Home Boy through the lens of Homi K. Bhabha's concepts like 'hybridity', 'third space', 'ambivalence' and mimicry. Bhabha challenges Western colonial discourse in order to put an end to the idea of world's division into 'Self' and 'Other'. He presents the idea of cross-cultural interactions of immigrant and diasporic subjects and indicates on 'impurity' and 'mixed-ness' of cultures. This study which is a qualitative library-based research, aims to analyze M.H. Naqvi's Home Boy, based on Bhabha's aforementioned concepts in order to shed some light on cross-cultural issues. This study tries to analyze the hybrid situation of Pakistani characters in America in order to find the ways they interact in the 'third space of enunciation' and the way they imitate American lifestyle. It presents the change through the very fabric identity of these three Pakistani characters which leads them to the process of self-invention in order to reach a kind of consciousness within their lives.

Key words: Hybridity, third space, ambivalence, mimicry, identity

INTRODUCTION

Home Boy, the winner of the inaugural DSC Prize for South Asian Literature is the debut novel of Naqvi who was born in London in 1973 and was graduated from Georgetown University with degrees in Economics and English Literature. He won the Phelam prize for poetry and represented Pakistan at the National Poetry Slam in Ann Arbor, Michigan (Naqvi, 2009). His novel narrates the experiences of diaspora subjects and reveals the complexities and nuances of such an experience for the readers. It is about three male characters who, being displaced are struggling to survive in the unfamiliar surrounding they are entangled in. The story is narrated by Chuck, a 21 year old boy from Karachi who has been in New York City for 4 years and could take a degree in English Literature. His friends AC, the brother of his mother's friend with an academic degree and Jimbo, DJ and son of a Pakistani immigrant to New Jersey, accompany him through the novel. At the beginning of the novel they live a life of American style and feel quiet accepted in the society. But then the catastrophe of 9/11 occurs and everything changes. People with dark skins are viewed with suspicion and the land of freedom goes strange and limitative. They embark on a road trip to find the Shaman, a Gatsby like character who is disappeared but things go horribly wrong and FBI agents arrest them mistakenly. By the end of the novel, they again find their freedom but Chuck is forced to make a decision about staying in America or returning to Pakistan (Naqvi, 2009).

This study which is a qualitative library-based research, proposes a reading of the Pakistani-American characters situation in Naqvi's Home Boy in the light of Homi K. Bhabha's concepts of hybridity, third space, ambivalence and mimicry. Bhabha is "a prominent figure in postcolonial studies" who has "infused thinking about nationality, ethnicity and politics with poststructuralist theories of identity and indeterminacy" (Greenblatt, 2006).

He developed new concepts into colonial discourse in order to challenge the pre-established notions of imperialism. Bhabha "dispels the specter of pure culture with the realism of hybridity" and also "spoils the intricate, delectable misunderstanding between the colonizer and the colonized with the image of mimicry" and he presents a third space that "quite properly challenges our sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force" (Bhabha, 1994).

Naqvi's novel examines the effects of 9/11 attack from a Pakistani, "Muslim" perspective and reveals the changes of the lives of Pakistani American characters afterwards. The present study then aims at offering a more nuanced interpretation and focused study directed at

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highlighting the hybrid situation of these characters as portrayed by Naqvi while taking a postcolonial stand from the viewpoint of Bhabha.

Theoretical background: Homi K. Bhabha is one of the most influential theorists within the postcolonial movement who has extended "certain tenets of poststructuralism into discourses about colonialism, nationality and culture" (Habib, 2005). These tenets are a challenge "of the notion of fixed identity, the undermining of binary oppositions and an emphasis on language and discourse together with the power relations in which these are imbricated as underlying our understanding of cultural phenomena" (Habib, 2005).

According to Bhabha (1985), the history of colonialism is considered "as something locked in the past" but he shows how colonialism's history and culture "constantly intrude on the present" in order to transform the present understandings of "cross cultural relations" (Huddart, 2006). Bhabha believes that colonialism is not a "straightforward oppression of the colonized by the colonizer" rather it is an "ongoing" period of interaction between them (Huddart, 2006). He remarks that "the meaning of culture is not simply imposed by the colonizer" and "the colonizer's cultural meanings are open to transformation by the colonized population" (Huddart, 2006). Bhabha points to the element of "negotiation" of cultural meanings during the interaction of the colonizer and the colonized that can structure their identities and marks colonialism by a "complex economy of identity" in which the colonized and the colonizer "depend on each other" (Huddart, 2006).

In his book, The Location of Culture in 1994, Bhabha states that the source of the western compulsion to colonize is the result of their traditional representations of foreign cultures; therefore, he attacks the western philosophy of binary oppositions which include "center/margin, civilized/savage and enlightened/ ignorant" (McEwan, 2009) in order to "undermine the simple polarization of the world into 'Self' and 'Other'" (Huddart, 2006). He argues that once the binary oppositions are destabilized, cultures can be understood to "interact, transgress and transform each other in a much more complex manner than the traditional binary oppositions can allow" (Edwards, 2008). Accordingly, Bhabha generates a series of concepts such as 'hybridity', 'third space', 'ambivalence' and 'mimicry' into colonial discourse to argue that "cultural production is always most productive where it is most ambivalent" (Al-Taee, 2010).

The present study's central focus then is on the reading of Naqvi's Home Boy in the light of the aforementioned concepts which are chosen as the theoretical framework of this study and are discussed in the following section within the novel.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Hybridity and third space: Hybridity is "one of the most widely employed and most disputed term in post-colonial theory, commonly refers to the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization" (Acharya, 2009). The application of the term goes back to the linguist and cultural theorist Mikhail Bakhtin who used it "to suggest the disruptive and transfiguring power of multivocal language situations and by extension, of multivocal narratives" (Ashcroft *et al*., 2006).

David Huddart in his book, Homi K. Bhabha, remarks that the notion of hybridity in Bhabha's writings "refers to the mixed-ness or even impurity of cultures" and is considered as "an original mixed-ness within every form of identity". He states, "in the case of cultural identities, hybridity refers to the fact that cultures are not discrete phenomena; instead, they are always in contact with one another and this contact leads to cultural mixed-ness" (Huddart, 2006); therefore, Bhabha's use of the term 'hybridity' challenges the "notions of identity, culture and nation as coherent and unified entities" (Habib, 2005).

Bhabha (1992) explains that diaspora people find themselves "in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present , inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion" (Bhabha, 1994). He defines identity of diaspora people as an ambivalent state of mind where there is no longer a specific place or home but mixed feelings over the fact that nothing is stable anymore or is the way we expect things to be.

In this regard, he states that when two or more individuals/cultures interact, there will be an ambiguous area where they meet which he calls the "Third Space". For him, this Third Space is an ambivalent area of discourse which serves as a place for the discursive conditions of enunciation and "displaces the narrative of the Western written in homogeneous, serial time" (Acharya, 2009). It does so through the "disruptive temporality of enunciation." He claims that "cultural statements and systems are constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation" (Acharya, 2009). As a result, the hierarchical claims to the innate originality or purity of cultures are invalid. The enunciation in the third space implies that cultures have no fixity and even the same signs can be changed,

translated and re-read (Acharya, 2009). Therefore, as Bhabha explains, it "challenges our sense of the historical identity of culture as homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by the originary past, kept alive in the national tradition of the people" (Bhabha, 1994).

Bhabhaexplains (1983) that the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges; rather hybridity is the 'Third Space' which enables other positions to emerge (Rutherford, 1990). Thus, the third space is a mode of articulation, a way of describing a productive and not merely reflective, space that engenders new possibility. It is an "interruptive, interrogative and enunciative" (Russell, 2006) space of new forms of cultural meaning and production blurring the limitations of existing boundaries and calling into question established categorizations of culture and identity. According to Bhabha (1990), this hybrid third space is an ambivalent site where cultural meaning and representation have no "primordial unity or fixity".

Naqvi's characters represent the sort of ambiguous unstable and at times outrageously cosmopolitan swag as hybrids. Chuck is portrayed as a self-proclaimed young man who has left Karachi to New York to attend college 4 years before. Ali Chaudhry, known as AC is a "charming rouge, an intellectual dandy, a man of theoretical presence" (Naqvi, 2009). AC is well-known for his "rhetorical jujitsu" which means stating insightful remarks with random lines from rap songs. His talent had brought him closer to America's "black" culture than his own South Asian folk. The third character, Jamshed Khan, alias Jimbo, alias DJ Jumbolaya, is "a different cat altogether" (Naqvi, 2009) as he was born and raised in Jersey city, one of the largest American hubs of Arabs and Muslims (Naqvi, 2009). He works as "DJ slash producer" (Naqvi, 2009) who fuses fragments of folklore into a compilation of "world" music, "starting downtempo wit, say, a track from a cooing Portuguese lounge singer, he'd then kick it with some thumping Senegalese pop, seamlessly, effortlessly, as if the latter were an organic extension of the former" (Naqvi, 2009).

At the beginning of the novel, characters present their lives as if they are quiet accepted within American society. Talking about his relationship with his new home, Chuck proudly declares that "I'd since claimed the city and the city had claimed me" (Naqvi, 2009). Naqvi (2009)'s characters represent themselves in a positive light within the Anglo-American Pop culture and keep their "fingers on the pulse of the great global dialectic".

But, they face a change within their original identity which they had cultivated in their homespun "Metrostan". This change is shown explicitly after 9/11 attack since their otherness within dominant society betrayed all the sense of reason that pre-9/11 America had promised: "after spending 10 months in New York, you were a new Yorker, an original settler" (Naqvi, 2009); therefore, the three characters find themselves in a perpetual process of self-invention acting as the protagonists of their own counter-narrative that "required coherence for [their] own selfish motivations and exigencies".

Chuck claims certain changes within their identity which indicates the trio's hybrid situation as a minority group within America, We'd become Japs, Jews, Niggers. We weren't before. We fancied ourselves boulevardiers, raconteurs, renaissance men, AC, Jimbo and me. We were mostly self-invented and self-made and certain we had our fingers on the pulse of the great global dialectic [...] celebrating ourselves with vodka on the rocks or Wild Turkey with water (and I'd discovered beer in June) among the company of women, black oriental and denizens of the Caucasian nation alike (Naqvi, 2009).

While Chuck's "Paksitani carpet" and "hookah" are "integral accoutrements of urbanity" they listen toNusrat along with a new generation of native rockers which is the evidence of their ambivalent situation as self-styled "renaissance men" (Naqvi, 2009); furthermore, as a result of staying in the in-between situation of hybrids, Chuck declares that "like most Muslims, I read the Koran once circa age ten and like some had combed through it afterward. There were issues in the Holy book that were indisputable like eating pork but the directives concerning liquor could easily be interpreted wither way. You should not, for instance, pray when hammered" (Naqvi, 2009).

Encountering the FBI agent, Chuck's contradictory answers to his questions reveal his productive identity as a hybrid. When the agent asks that is he a "Muslim" or not, he answers "yes" while he answers to his questions about praying five times a day he says, "No, sir. I pray several times a year, on special occasions like Eid" (Naqvi, 2009). Hisanswers about eating pork and drinking liquor are also contradictory while his answer to the first one is negative, the second one receives a "yes" (Naqvi, 2009). Admittedly, Naqvi's characters reveal a multi-cultural identity while they share an experience of displacement. In this regard, Chuck remarks, "In a sense, we were peas in a pod" (Naqvi, 2009) which emphasizes their fluctuating situation within American society.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ambivalence and mimicry: The term ambivalence first developed in psychoanalysis to describe "a continual

fluctuation between wanting one thing and wanting its opposite" and also refers to "a simultaneous attraction toward and repulsion from an object, person or action" (Ashcroft *et al*., 2000). Adapted into colonial discourse theory by Homi Bhabha, it describes the complex mix of attraction and repulsion that characterizes the relationship between colonizers and colonized. Bhabha defines ambivalence as a duality that makes a split in the identity of the colonized. He believes that ambivalence presents the colonized as those who are a hybrid of their own cultural identity and the colonizer's cultural identity (Bhabha, 1994). Bhabha explains that colonial signifiers of authority only acquire their meanings after the "traumatic scenario of colonial difference, cultural or racial, returns the eye of power to some prior archaic image or identity. Paradoxically, however, such an image can neither be 'original' by virtue of the act of repetition that constructs it nor identical by virtue of the difference that define it" (Bhabha, 1994). Accordingly, the colonial discourse remains ambivalent and makes a split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference. This leads to the two dimensions of colonial discourse. The first one is characterized by invention and mastery the colonizer and the second one is characterized by displacement and fantasy- the colonized (Bhabha, 1994).

In his essay, Of Mimicry and Man, Bhabha assimilates the colonizer to a snake in the grass who speaks in "a tongue that is forked," and presents mimicry "as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge" (Bhabha, 1994). Bhabha explains that colonial discourse encourages the colonized subject to 'mimic' the colonizer, by adopting the colonizer's cultural habits, assumptions, institutions and values (Bhabha, 1994). He states, "Colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable 'Other', as a subject of difference that is almost the same but not quite" (Bhabha, 1994).

Bhabha asserts that the colonizer wants to improve the other and to make him like himself but in a way that still maintains a clear sense of difference. In that sense, the 'other' becomes "almost the same" as the colonizer but never "quite" fits in with the hegemonic cultural and political systems that govern both of them. However, the result is never a simple reproduction of those traits. Rather, it is a "blurred copy" of the colonizer that reveals the ambivalent situation among them (Acharya, 2009).

At the beginning of Naqvi's novel, the three protagonists mimic Americans. They survey "the Times and the post and other treatises of mainstream discourse on a daily basis" and read the "boisterous voices of contemporary American fiction" (Naqvi, 2009). They greet and pay respect with "high five, chest bump, [and] that kind of thing" (Naqvi, 2009) while celebrate themselves and their city "with libation" (Naqvi, 2009). The three young Pakistani men also spend their leisure time in bars and talk about different things while "leaning on the bar, drink in hand" (Naqvi, 2009) in the style of Americans. Moreover, AC in one of his spontaneous poems clearly reveals the way they mimic Americans. When they are in a bar, once AC "burst in with bloodshot eyes, bellowing, 'I rise at eleven, I dine about two, I get drunk before sev'n; and the next thing I do, I send for my whore, when for fear of a clap, I spend in her hand and I spew in her lap!'" (Naqvi, 2009).

However, despite all their efforts of assimilation, they are never accepted as original settlers and their mimicry is not considered as a genuine act. In this respect, Chuck's recall of the trio's first run with the locals at a bar clarifies the point,

Brawler No. 1 hissed, "A-rabs." Repeating the word in my head, I realized it was the first time I'd heard it spoken that way, like a dagger thrust and turned, the first time anything like that had happened to us all [...] "We're not the same," Jimbo protested. "Moslems, Mohicans, whatever," Brawler No. 2 snapped. "I'm from Jersey, dude!" "I don't care, chief!" (Naqvi, 2009). Considering the brawler's true intentions, his stress on the wrong syllable of the word "A-rabs" reveals his inadequacies in mastering his mother tongue while he insults the trio as foreign intruders which indicates Bhabha's point that the colonizer wants to improve the other and to make him like himself but in a way that still maintains a clear sense of difference (Acharya, 2009).

Naqvi's characters believe that they have more in common with Americans at the beginning of the novel; however, they reveal their opposing behavior as ambivalent characters through empathizing with other minority groups in America at the end of the novel. In this regard, Chuck remarks, "I was reminded that we shared the same rituals, doctrinal vocabulary and eschatological infrastructure, even if we did not [...] subscribe to the same interpretation of history" (Naqvi, 2009). Perpetually, Naqvi's characters seek their original identity as Muslims and Pakistani men through their return toward their original land. When they find that the "life's changed? The city's changed? [...] there's sadness around every corner? There are cops everywhere?" and they "feel like a marked man" (Naqvi, 2009), they "want to come home" and leave America (Naqvi, 2009). This shift of orientation from Americans toward minority groups of immigrants reveals trio's ambivalent state of mind as displaced people.

In order to reach a comprehensive perspective toward the novel, here is a table that summarizes all the instances taken from the novel to enrich the concepts of hybridity, third space, ambivalence and mimicry (Table 1).

Table 1: Bhabha's postcolonial notions of hybridity, third space, ambivalence and mimicry within Home Boy

Bhabha's postcolonial notions	Instances taken from Home Boy
Hybridityand third space	Chuck proudly announces that "I'd since claimed the city and the city had claimed me" (Naqvi, 2009)
	Chuck begins his story by, "We'd become Japs, Jews, Niggers. We weren't before. We fancied ourselves boulevardiers, raconteurs, renaissance men, AC, Jimbo and me. We were mostly self-invented and self-made and certain we had our fingers on the pulse of the great global dialectic" (Naqvi, 2009)
	They changed to the protagonists of their own counter-narrative that "required coherence for [their] own selfish motivations and exigencies" (Naqvi, 2009)
	Chuck remarks, "In a sense, we were peas in a pod" (Naqvi, 2009) which emphasizes their fluctuating situation.
Ambivalence and mimicry	They survey "the Times and the post and other treatises of mainstream discourse on a daily basis" and read the "boisterous voices of contemporary American fiction" (Naqvi, 2009)
	They greet and pay respect with "high five, chest bump [and] that kind of thing" (Naqvi, 2009)
	They celebrate themselves and their city "with libation" (Naqvi, 2009)
	The three young Pakistani men spend their leisure time in bars and talk about different things while "leaning on the bar, drink in hand" (Naqvi, 2009)
	They had more in common with Americans at the beginning of the novel but then they revealed their opposing behavior as ambivalent characters through empathizing with other minority groups in America when they found that they "subscribe to the same interpretation of history" (Naqvi, 2009)

CONCLUSION

Home Boy is novel that unfolds deep within the complexities of post 9/11 cultural issues. It reveals the hybrid situation of the three Pakistani protagonists and focuses on their fluctuation between both American and Pakistani-Muslim cultures. Naqvi depicts his characters' ambivalent situation quiet expertly through the change of their behavior. While at the beginning of the novel they try to imitate Americans, at the end they empathize with other minority groups which indicates a kind of consciousness within their identity as displaced people.

Naqvi's protagonists are neither blind nor unsusceptible to their hybrid situation within America, especially after 9/11 attack. Therefore, their Metrostani identity goes under change as hybrids and they become aware of their ambivalent situation. In order to put an end to his in-between situation, Chuck as the most conscious protagonist of the novel decides to return to his motherland and leave America.

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