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قراءة للشخصية الهجينة في ضوء نظرية ما بعد الكولونيالية في قصة حنيف قريشي"ابني المُتَعصب"

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الملخص:

إنّ النضال المستمر للهوية هو مسألةٌ تشغل الأفراد مدى الحياة. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تُعتَبرُ الرغبةُ في الانتماءِ ذات أهميةٍ كبرى ولها آثارها الهامة على الثقافات. وتشكل الهوياتُ الهجينةُ مصدراً للاضطراب في فهمِ الصورةِ الذاتية للأفراد. وهذا الأمرُ واضح ليس فقط في العصور الكولونيالية، ولكن أيضاً في مرحلة ما بعد الكولونيالية التي يكافح فيها بعض الأفراد لفهم السؤال الذي يتردد صداه باستمرار: "من أنا؟" ولا عجب أن المرء قد يرتبك في صياغةِ الإجابة. حنيف قريشي، كاتبٌ بريطاني باكستاني ذو هويةٍ هجينة، هو مثال عملي لفهم مثل هذه الاضطرابات، خاصة في قصته القصيرة "ابني المتعصب" التي تتعمق في الأمر مما يمكن أن يكون تجربة مباشرة. يمكن القول إنها محاولة لتصوير التقلبات التي يتحملها المرء أثناء الانغماس في القيم الليبرالية التي يختبرها في الغرب جنباً إلى جنب مع تعاليم الإسلام. إنّ الموضوع المهيمن في القصة هو صراع الابن والأب مع تداعياته الأوسع وذلك في عمل يثير العديد من الأسئلة ولكنه يجيب على القليل منها. يحاول هذا البحث تسليط الضوء على الشخصية الهجينة في بيئة ما بعد الكولونيالية كما عرضت في قصة "ابني المتعصب."

الكلمات المفتاحية: الهوية، ما بعد الكولونيالية، الشخصية الهجينة، صراع الأب/الابن.

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Hybridity in the Light of Post-Colonialism in Hanif Kureishi's "My Son the Fanatic"

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Abstract:

The constant struggle of identity is a life-long question for individuals. In addition, the desire of belonging is of major importance, which has its significant cross-cultural implications. Hybrid identities form a source of turbulence in understanding self-image. This is evident not only in colonial eras, but also in the post-colonial stage in which some individuals struggle to understand the forever resonating question, "who am I?" There is no wonder that one might undergo confusion in formulating an answer. Hanif Kureishi, a 'Hybrid' British-Pakistani writer, is an ideal example for understanding such turmoil, especially in his short story "My Son the Fanatic" that delves into the matter from what could be a first-hand experience. It is arguably an attempt to portray the fluctuations that one endures while being immersed in the liberal values celebrated in the West in juxtaposition to the teachings of Islam. In a work that raises numerous questions but answers very few, the dominant theme in the story is the son-father clash with its wider implications. This paper attempts to trace the notion of hybridity in the short story's post-colonial setting.

Keywords: Identity, Postcolonialism, Hybridity, Kureishi, Father/Son Conflict.

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In theory, hybridity is a concept devised by Homi K. Bhabha to explicate the novel and singular cultural identity that materializes from the interplay between the colonizing and the colonized. Hybridity is not a simple amalgamation of extant cultural components, but a modality of metamorphosis or transmutation that destabilizes the discourses of colonial authority and hegemonic cultures. It also contests the dichotomies of inclusion and exclusion that delineate a dominant culture.[1] On the other hand, the term "post-colonial literature" refers to a type of literature written by authors from formerly colonized countries by European powers. This genre tackles several main themes, such as the political and cultural independence of former subjugated nations, racialism and colonialism. A range of literary theory has evolved around this subject, which addresses the role of literature in perpetuating and challenging what postcolonial critic Edward Said refers to as 'cultural imperialism'. Postcolonial theory is a critical approach that examines the impact of European colonial rule and its representations in literature. It, thus, deals with the ways that colonized peoples resist, reclaim, and articulate their identities and histories, and the manner that colonizing cultures distort, appropriate, and justify their domination.

Pakistan, the homeland of Hanif Kureishi, is not an exception as it was a part of the British Empire. In the words of Hira and Naveed: "Postcolonial subjects find it difficult to self-define their identities in territories of colonizers" (285). Kureishi's work "My Son the Fanatic" illustrates this ordeal of constructing an identity within an alien land; it delves into the intricate complexities of cultural identity, religion, the clash of cultures and the enduring influence of colonialism even when not colonized. This work of literature introduces two main voices of a father "Parvez" and his son "Ali", immigrants from Pakistan whose narratives resonate in the echoes of colonialism on the cultural and social fabric of post-colonial societies. Parvez and Ali struggle to defy hybridity by forging an identity that lies at either end of the colonial polarity; Parvez attempts to assimilate into the English culture, while Ali insists on returning to his native roots. In other words, this paper argues that resistance of hybridity ignites the father-son/colonizer-colonized clash between Parvez and Ali.

Renunciation of heterogeneity drives Parvez and his son, Ali to adopt two contradictory identities, English and native Pakistani, respectively. Hybridity dwells in what Bhabha refers to as the "third space," in which a multiplicity of cultural spheres overlap, begetting composite figures.[2] These hybridized figures are "shaped by past traditions, old memories, intercultural influences, and stereotypes" (Morrison 48). Parvez and Ali are an amalgamation of the Pakistani and English culture. However, they attempt to totalize their hybrid identity by isolating themselves in two opposite spaces; they drift from the "third space" to either end of the polarity in order to purify their contaminated self.

Contrasting realms of traditional Pakistani culture and the Western culture is a central motif of the work, thereby reflecting the marks left by colonialism. Parvez, the protagonist, assumes the role of a taxi driver who wholeheartedly embraces Western customs and values. As he goes around freely indulging in alcohol, cinema and other Western commodities, his reasoning behind it is the sense of belonging to the place where he is at the time being. He states, "But we live here!" believing that physical existence in a place changes his origin (Kureishi 126). Conversely, his son is depicted to be more immersed in the Western culture at the beginning of the narrative as he is studying accounting and embracing a number of extracurricular activities like playing the guitar. Yet, his character faces a serious shift as the story progresses. For instance, after having some drinks in a restaurant, Parvez gets tipsy. The consumption of alcohol is portrayed to be part of the Western culture. Thus, Ali reacts in a hate-charged manner, rebuking him in a "fatherly" manner as one would do to his child in an incident of father-son image reversal: "Finally as Parvez's eyes filled with tears the boy urged him to mend his ways" (Kureishi 126). Further investigating the deep-rooted impacts of colonialism on socio-cultural dynamics of post-colonial societies, the characters' experiences serve as a piteous reminder of the aftermath of colonialism on individuals.

The ongoing clash and interplay could be critically examined in the narrative, among historical circumstances, cultural assimilation and the visible tensions that arise in treading the path of discovering self-identity. Ali, himself, decides to swim upstream against the West as he starts to obliterate the existence of any West-like

[1] See (Easthope 1998)

[2] Homi Bhabha explains the notion of "third space" in his work, The Location of Culture

ideas, habits, and belongings: "Instead of the usual tangle of clothes, books, cricket bats, video games, the room was becoming neat and ordered…" (Kureishi 119). This extends to the point that he refuses to go through a "Western" education. The aforementioned belongings that Ali embraces at the beginning of the narrative could be remarked as symbols of unconscious hybridity, a self-image that existed within him to be later juxtaposed against the conscious purity formation of the self-image he later formulates for himself. Those elements exist before the unnarrated point of epiphany that shifts him towards a conscious construction of self-image. The protagonist, Parvez, shuns away from the habits, which his son Ali has been picking up, with extreme caution and confusion. He worries when this change starts to become evident on Ali's personal appearance; he is concerned that Ali is growing a beard.

Furthermore, Parvez wants to embrace a new identity as an English man in an attempt to suppress the old familiar image from "home." This should not actually make his son's current behavior alarming or a cause of worry as revealed in the story: "Parvez had grown up in Lahore where all the boys had been taught the Koran" (Kureishi 123). His former religious education is later to be contrasted with his actions as he attempts to reformulate his identity into a new one, leaving traces of his roots behind: "After this indignity Parvez had avoided all religions" (Kureishi 123). By eluding "all religions," Parvez somehow will be unable to be a part of community wherever he treads foot. The new Parvez is in constant struggle and under the spotlight of two communities at once, the English preserved society and home mostly represented by his son's voice and reactions. Some of Parvez's behaviors and deeds are highly criticized by his own son, highlighting Parvez's hybridity and his view that moving away from home equals embracing a whole new identity and actions: "Ali then reminded Parvez that he had ordered his own wife to cook pork sausages, saying to her 'you're not in the village now, this is England. We have to fit in" (Kureishi 125). These references when scrutinized echo the voice of colonialism in modern aspects. In short, Parvez embraces the Western lifestyle, renouncing an integral part of his identity, his native culture, while Ali obliterates the influence of the English culture on his "self" in order to reclaim a "pure" Muslim, Pakistani identity.

After undergoing assimilation or resistance, Parvez and Ali resort to the power of the gaze in an attempt to maintain control over the "Other," and fix it in a stereotypical image.[3] This forceful gaze is an indispensable constituent of imperial dominance, surveillance. The strategy of observation:

> implies a viewer with an elevated vantage point, it suggests the power to process and understand that which is seen, and it objectifies and interpellates the colonized subject in a way that fixes its identity in relation to the surveyor. (Ashcroft et al. Key 207).

Surveillance aims at perpetuating the colonial power hierarchy; the "imperial gaze" allows the colonizer to consolidate the colonized in a state of subjugation and subalternity in order to reinforce colonial hegemony.

Since Parvez assumes the identity of an "Englishman," he appropriates the imperial gaze to maintain authority over Ali, "the colonized Pakistani". Parvez's perspective is drenched in Western mentality due to assimilation. Fanon argues, "in order to assimilate the culture of the oppressor and venture into his fold, the colonized subject has to pawn some of his own intellectual possessions … he has had to assimilate … the way the colonist bourgeoisie thinks" (13). Bettina, Parvez's English companion, expresses the western fabricated view of the "Other," which Parvez undoubtedly adopts. Ali's strange behavior unsettles Parvez, resorting to Bettina's guidance. She informs him that Ali is a drug addict or a religious fanatic.

Following Bettina's instructions, Parvez seeks evidence to mold Ali into these stereotypical images of the "Other." First, Parvez attempts to prove the following allegation: "His boy – the drug addict killer" (Kureishi 121). Bettina commands Parvez to 'watch' Ali's every move and observe his eyes, for eyes would reveal Ali's secret. In addition, Parvez "sniffs, inspects and probes" the house for tangible evidence: "Bettina had drawn pictures of capsules, syringes, pills, powders, rocks" (Kureishi 122). After several days of "constant observation," Parvez reports that this accusation is false. Thus, Parvez indirectly accuses Ali of being a 'fanatic,' or as Bettina describes it as joining a superstitious cult. Parvez's accusation is established on two clues; Ali is growing a beard and praying five times a day. Parvez deciphers Ali's 'unusual' actions within the colonial portrayal of religion to facilitate control over his son.

[3] The use of "it" is intentional because the other is perceived as an object.

However, Parvez's authority over his son withers under Ali's relentless gaze; Ali hijacks the imperial gaze and silence, once tools of colonial oppression, to reverse the power hierarchy. Ali perceives the Western 'Other' as a "sink of hypocrites, adulterers, homosexuals, drug takers and prostitutes" (Kureishi 126). This degenerate image drives Ali to reprimand his father for indulging in such profanities. In some instances, Ali is alert and watchful; he is silent and returns "his father's long looks with more than a hint of criticism, of reproach even" (Kureishi 122). Every time Parvez drinks a cup of whiskey, his son, Ali, has a look "full of disgust and censure" on his face (Kureishi 125). Moreover, Ali attacks Parvez with his 'sharp tongue' and addresses his father's flaws in a condescending manner as if Ali is the father and Parvez his son.

Ali succeeds in reversing the hierarchy of authority. Ali abandons his role as an obedient son, and transforms into a father figure condemning Parvez. He strikes fear in his father's heart: "he had become slightly afraid of his son" (Kureishi 119). Ali's watchful eye and reproach anguish Parvez, who questions, "Where has he gone? Why is he torturing me?" (Kureishi 120). In addition to the reversal of the father/son roles, Ali's gaze imprisons Parvez in the image of an outlaw. Parvez claims, "I cannot bear to be looked at as if I'm a criminal" (Kureishi 127). Ironically, Parvez does not accept to be labelled in the same manner he has previously done to his son. The apex of the process of exchanging roles is mimicry; instead of adopting the Western culture and embodying its values as the colonized is assumed to do, Ali deprives Parvez of his assimilation by forcing him to oscillate towards partial embracement of the native identity Ali upholds. Parvez mimics Ali's appearance and thinking. In order to win his son's approval, Parvez starts growing a beard like his son, hoping he will compliment him. He also informs Bettina that people in the West have no philosophy to adhere to, so they are empty inside, echoing Ali's view of the West. In addition to mimicry, the aforementioned incidents confirm Ali's usurpation of fatherly authority and reversal of the colonial power hierarchy.

Resistance of hybridity does not only lead to the reversal of the power hierarchy, it also severs the link between father and son and widens the spatial gap between them. Although Ali has never been to Pakistan, he carries traces of his ancestry from his father, for his father is his source of origin: "The Other can only … be constructed out of the archive of 'the self', yet the self must also articulate the other as inescapably different" (Ashcroft et al. The 102). However, Ali attempts to distance himself from his father by lack of communication and use of pronouns.

First, poor communication occurs between father and son after Ali's radical change. One of the most interesting points of "My Son the Fanatic" is the fact that Ali, who did not have a direct contact with his home town, as far as the narrative shows, is more clinging to his roots than his father who grew up there. In a way, Ali is becoming the manifestation of all that his father wants to escape when he has taken the decision to leave it all behind and travel. Thus, Parvez cannot find a way to properly communicate with his "son the fanatic" showing that there is an apparent expanding gap between the two: "I can't talk to him anymore. We were not father and son – we were brothers" (Kureishi 120). This illustrates an essential statement that sheds light on the father-son clash. The communication breakdown is evident between the two as the story progresses, at some instances, Ali starts acting as a father figure, reprimanding Parvez in various occasions. In addition, it could be inferred that Ali could not establish a "father" figure in Parvez so he sought fanaticism as a replacement to help him determine what is to be done. This climaxes to the point that the father cannot properly converse with his own child.

Second, Ali attempts to establish his father and himself as two isolated entities. During the conversation about the philosophy of life, Parvez addresses his son, "I will continue – in you …And your grandchildren" (Kureishi 128-9). Parvez is the origin from which Ali and his children stem; Ali cannot deny this truth. Nevertheless, Ali digresses from this topic to discuss the purpose of life. Immediately, Ali's choice of pronouns tears asunder the connection Parvez tries to rebuild. Ali states, "All over the world our people are oppressed," but Parvez does not know to which group "our" refers (Kureishi 129). In another incident, Ali claims, "My people have taken enough … I, and millions of others, will gladly give our lives for the cause … For us the reward will be in paradise" (Kureishi 126). Ali uses the following pronouns, "our, my, I, us," to distinguish himself from his father and broaden the gap between them. He belongs to Islam, and with his fellow Muslims, they will combat the Western world of infidels, where his father dwells.

The various spatial spheres resemble the ruptured relation between Parvez and Ali. Each hovers in his own space that reflects their desired, unattainable identity. Parvez is a taxi driver, working at night, when the money is better. The taxi firm is portrayed as a place of indulgence in worldly pleasures. The taxi drivers waste their time playing cards, telling obscene stories and drinking with prostitutes. In contrast, Ali deserts earthly joys for his spiritual goals. Ali wanders in "the other side of town, in a poor district, where there were two mosques" (Kureishi 129). He also abandons his anti-religious education and future foul career in order to aid Muslims in prisons "struggling to maintain their purity in the face of corruption" (Kureishi 127). In brief, the taxi company and the poor district, and their chosen careers are extreme opposites, residing at either end of the polarity.

Nonetheless, a third space lies between the taxi firm and the poor district. This in-between sphere is a contact zone, a space "where disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of dominance and subordination" (Pratt 4). Parvez and Ali mirror two different cultures, and they are not on equal terms; Ali assumes the role of the father figure, reproaching Parvez and dragging him away from his assimilation into the English culture. These figures meet in three contact zones: in the restaurant, in Parvez's taxi and at home. As Bhabha mentions in The Location of Culture, the negotiation between distinct cultures takes place in the third space. Parvez and Ali struggle to establish a "mezzaterra" between their different understandings of various concepts, mainly religious restrictions and the concept of home.[4]

The first confrontation between Parvez and Ali occurs in a restaurant. Ali reluctantly accepts his father's invitation to meet him and engage in conversation. Ali, acting as a father figure, rebukes Parvez for drinking whiskey and for trespassing into the forbidden by breaking numerous rules of the Koran. Parvez's justification is, "we are only human," and that he is not a wicked man (Kureishi 125). However, Ali's condescending manner elicits fury in Parvez, for Parvez is reminded of his impious actions that bring shame upon him. Moreover, they both illustrate their own definition of "Home." It can be evident that there is a delusion of the concept of home. It is a reformulated definition, a distancing from the "old" yet struggling with the "new." This restructuring of what home is in a post-colonial narrative is mostly evident in the lines of Parvez as he states "'but we live here'" (Kureishi 126). Parvez is comforting himself and asserting the identity he wants to obtain.

On the other hand, Ali addresses the concept of home differently by asserting the existence of "me" and "the other," highlighting the differences between where he came from, and the place in which he is living. While addressing his father, he states, "The western materialists hate us, Ali said, Papa, how can you love something that hates you?" (Kureishi 126). This indicates that Ali does not necessarily identify as a part of the society he is living in although he is portrayed as a person who is immersed in the culture at some points of the story, studying accounting at university and being involved in all sorts of activities. These could allow him to "blend" into the "multicultural" society in which he resides.

In other instances, the voice of Parvez reverberates with the notion of "what has made you who you are?" He is trying to comprehend the effect of post-colonialism in building an identity that he cannot really fully understand. This is most textually evident when Ali is described by the narrator: "yet Parvez felt his son's eccentricity as an injustice. He had always been aware of the pitfalls which other men's sons had fallen into in England." (Kureishi 119). In another incident, Ali is addressed by Parvez to assert this point even further: "What has made you like this?' Parvez asked him…. 'living in this country'" (Kureishi 126). The son-father clash and identity in this work are addressed in a very different manner. Rizvi suggests that: "Kureishi here tries to explicate that for people of the East living in the White World, the quest for identity becomes an indispensable issue in their lives." (215). This hybridity and the differences it creates could also be viewed by other voices in the short story. The female character that Parvez runs to in order to comfort his "English" identity states: "Reminds me of you. But with a more determined faced." (Kureishi 129) this could display the struggle that Parvez had gone through in order to try and change the image that Ali resembles yet Parvez wants to shun away. This portrayal is a part of what the story aims to achieve in highlighting the complexities faced by individuals and communities as they navigate what resembles home in their heritage and the allure of the dominant present Western culture.

[4] "Mezzaterra:" is an in-between ground. This concept is illustrated in Ahdaf Soueif's "Mezzaterra: Fragments from the Common Ground."

Another collision between father/son and colonizer/colonized happens in Parvez's taxi. While driving home late one night, Parvez passes Ali on the street and beckons him to get in. The taxi symbolizes anti-religious practices; the taxi is drowned in the scent of Bettina's perfume and she rests her hand on Parvez's shoulder, which arouse sensual pleasure. Ali ventures into his father's realm with an air of defiance. He does not want to answer Bettina's questions because she is a prostitute. Ali is anxious and eager to get out of the taxi due to the suffocating atmosphere of sin. In short, trespassing into the third space begets mayhem; father and son do not find a middle ground on which their concepts intertwine.

Anxiety stemming from the contact zone is a result of repression of one's hybrid nature. Ali attempts to extinguish the effect of the English culture on his "self" by throwing out his possessions and emptying his room. It can be argued that his room mirrors his identity. Ali strives to construct a "pure" identity, but this is merely an illusion because "claims to inherent originality or purity of cultures are untenable" (Bhabha, Cultural 208). This is highlighted in: "The room was perfectly bare. Even the unhappy walls bore marks where Ali's pictures had been removed" (Kureishi 120). Ali's identity shall forever carry the traces of the culture in which he has previously indulged. On the other hand, Parvez declares, "spaces began appearing where before there had only been a mess" in Ali's room (Kureishi 119). He is aware that the room with its possessions parallel the chaotic amalgamation of two cultures that have formed Ali's identity, and to an extent, his own. Despite his acknowledgement, he attempts to quell the roaring sound of his origin by assimilation. This partial repression is futile; Ali's aggressive behavior and relentless gaze revive the suppressed native part of Parvez's 'self,' transforming him into a mimic man. Parvez is willing to grow a beard and even start to pray just to gain his son's approval.

The peak of the father/son – colonizer/colonized clash takes place in the most intimate contact zone, their home. Denial of hybridity or partial repression of it renders the composite figures – Parvez and Ali – fragile and anxious because hybridity in postcolonialism is a strength, involving the heteroglossia of both polarities.[5] In this state of emotional turmoil, Parvez and Ali resort to two contradictory acts to create a sense of inner tranquility. After arriving home, Parvez fidgets; he is unable to do anything, so he starts drinking alcohol, intensifying his anxiety. His son, Ali, is too preoccupied with praying to the extent that he does not look at his father entering his room. Ali's extreme transformation torments Parvez: "He'd swallowed someone else's voice" (Kureishi 126). Parvez uses violence to express his anger towards Ali's 'fanaticism:' Parvez kicked him over. Then he dragged the boy up … and hit him … The boy's face was bloody. Parvez avenges from an image he does not desire to remember, yet it is his own son who reincarnates it. Parvez's instability heightens the feelings of pity within the reader. Although Parvez brutally attacks his son, Ali does not fight back. Ali has "no fear in his eyes. He only said, through his split lip: 'So who's the fanatic now?" (Kureishi 131). The story's end invites the reader to ponder the implications and consequences of cultural domination through leaving it for the reader to determine who is the 'fanatic.'

In conclusion, the story ends with an open question, "Who's the fanatic now?" which is interpreted in various ways. It is a form of challenge between Parvez and his roots as he continuously attacks them at every given chance even when Ali, his son, becomes the manifestation of the old identity from which Parvez is trying to orbit away. It could also be a form of self-assurance since Parvez wants to prove that he is deeply rooted to his new identity as much as Ali is. In addition, it is a larger image that Kureishi wants the reader to ponder upon; he invites us to reflect on the colonial societies with their accelerating desire to eliminate difference of their former subjects and mold people into a new image. In a world where each individual questions his own identity and belonging, hybrid characters have to swing like a pendulum back and forth on the verges of both the old and the new.

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[5] See (Ashcroft et al. Post 183)

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