

## Mimicry as a Strategy of Survival in *Moth Smoke*

*This research explores the cultural encroachment of British rule in tribal areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan which creates adverse conditions for Muslim tribal in Mohsin Hamid's Moth Smoke. The whites are dominative against Muslim tribal culture of Afghanistan and Pakistan after the Second World War. The whites discriminate Muslim tribal even in the supply of basic items which every human being expect for the survival. For the whites, Muslim tribal people are inferior and below the human line. Tribal people do not get education, health facility and freedom. Natural rights and fundamental rights are mere dream for tribal. In the midst of prejudice and other anti-Islamic hassles, Islamic tribal do not hesitate adapt to the shifting cultural locale as a strategy of survival. The protagonist of the novel Darashikoh Shezad adopts western way of education, culture and religion as a camouflage to resist western atrocities. The cultural encroachment of British rule in tribal areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan is put into question in Moth Smoke.*

Key Words: Mimicry, Hybridity, Strategy, Inbetweenness, Rejection

This research focuses on the influence of mimicry of Western culture on Muslim culture in Mohsin Hamid's *Moth Smoke*. This novel attempts to subvert the hegemony of Western culture by highlighting the unique cultural and socio-political realities of each nation. *Moth Smoke* is set in Tribal Areas of Afghanistan. The title character is Darashikoh Shezad, (Daru) who was born near the borders of Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan meet in the Siahpad tribe. Daru is safe, but abandoned; he is later picked up by Baluch tribesmen, then handed off from person to person and eventually, he simply strikes out on his own. He is a typical colonial character, an individual confused by the plural but unequal society he was raised in and for whom identity is a crucial concern. Since the novel is situated in the colonial societies and

portrays brightly the complexities inherent to such societies. Daru goes through problems of the colonized people: their sense of alienation, identity crisis, displacement and homelessness which make him a mimic man. The novel is all about the hybrid mentality of Daru and other Muslim Characters. Characters are frustrated with life and always dreams of having a adoption of western cultural norms. From fragmentation of familial relationship and responsibility, some characters try to escape from Tribal cultural values and family responsibility through the drinking, smoking, extra marital relationship and fantasizing. Daru is longing for personal freedom,extramarital affairs, alcoholism and involvement in sexual affair to make him adjust with colonial culture.

The novel depicts the theme of cultural fragmentation form Western entry where the tribal culture is replaced by Western culture In this aspect, the western culture, or precisely the developed nations in the western part of the globe have since long claimed their supremacy over the eastern, or undeveloped and under-developing eastern and central nation of the world. The base of their claim, through dubious, largely rests on the facts that they play a leading role in the present world politics and occupy a definite place in determining the development activities carried out in the present global scenario.

The relative marginalization of the Muslim Tribal- society with the negative stereotypes form the west has hegemonizedDaru. Along with the inclusion of Muslim Tribal culture, practice of non-western mysticism, issues of salvation and the non-western cultural practices ,Daru and other characters adopt western education system, religion and way of life as strategy of survival in the novel *Moth Smoke* that makes them hybrid in identity.

Set in the post-WWII era in the mess of land on the Pakistani, Afghani, and Iranian border, *Moth Smoke* follows the life of Daru, a nomad. As Daru visits the different tribes in the region, unwilling to settle with any of them and instead preferring a solitary life, and gets a sense of the difficulties of life in this harsh but beautiful environment. Through Daru, *Moth Smoke* examines the nomadic way of life, as well as the tribal culture of the region. Readers get a glimpse into this completely foreign world, encountering the difficult realities of tribal justice (honor killings, kidnappings, etc.), but also getting the chance to explore the unique culture behind this lifestyle. DarashikohShezad himself was an orphan, raised by many different people, so he is a wanderer even among the nomads. Through his quest for closeness to God, the reader really gets a sense of life in this desolate place. *Moth Smoke* is succeeding in shining a light on the suffering of the Muslim Tribal people.

*Moth Smoke* depicts the condition and question their own beliefs about the conflict and its root cause of Muslim Tribal-suffering. "*Moth Smoke* is a novel that seems like it takes place centuries ago, in the wild lands on the borders of Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. The culture is ancient, and the nomadic way of life a time honored tradition among the tribes" (Bennet 45). They live as they have for hundreds of years; time seems to stand still in the desolate region. But as modernity encroaches upon these nomadic tribes, the realities are jarring. As the region becomes more important on the world stage and modern notions such as international borders set in, it impacts the life of Daru and other nomads in ways no one could have predicted.

The story revolves around young Daru and his war ravaged country Pakistan and the growing tension from Afghanistan and amongst this backdrop his will and courage to survive and fight his way out to make a living for himself and his family. His journey from one land to the other and the barrage of issues he faces which leads

him to places and people which unexpectedly become part of his life and share their sorrows and joys with him. The Muslim Tribal society and religion has been marginalized in the his story of civilization despite its perfection. What are the features of the Muslim Tribal culture to make it powerful? How the West judges the Muslim Tribal in terms of relative marginalization? Which aspects of the text empower the position of the Muslim Tribal culture? What is the motto of the author to empower the Muslim Tribal cultural uniqueness? are some of the questions that the research aims to solve.

*Moth Smoke* captures the depth of emotions and the journey of a young and a naive lad. The family commitment, the sorrows, the joys, the will, the courage, the fear, the love, the sacrifices and the loss of near and dear ones one way or the other makes the book an outstanding piece of work by an author. has receives several critical criticism the time of the publication. Different critics have analyzed the novel from multiple perspectives that proves the univocal nature of the novel. Eamonn McCabe views:

A book of similar to the theme strung between two excerpts from the author's travel journal, whose failures are similar to those of its exiled characters -- expatriates in countries where the language is never known quite well enough, where customs are followed rather than understood. The plot is based on the lurking situation of Pakistan and Afghanistan partition. All I could perceive and understand was that it is somewhat similar to the situation prevailing between India and Pakistan and their saddening political mishaps. (4)

He argues that the travel journal excerpts seem an irrelevant and slightly arbitrary "frame" for stories lost in the never-never land between allegory and reality,

which don't quite explode with the momentous themes they always seem on the verge of revealing. Paul Karl Lukacs views the title of the novel is interesting and masterful. Each of the story is notionally about what people choose to do with freedom. For him:

As soon as you start with reading the chapters, you continue to visualize the scenes discussed and feel pain that they feel. Description of the pain and terror through the eyes of a young boy, who is merely 10 years old is painful and at times might fill up your eyes with tears. The writing style of the author is so simple yet influential and you need not put an extra effort to visualize the scenario, facial expressions and emotional turmoil of the characters so much so that you can actually feel the bullets hitting you hard as soon as they take the form of words. (23)

But the stroke was probably author's idea of collecting five different stories about travelers and convincing people that they formed a novel. Next thing you know, some band might cobble together a series of singles and claim that it's a rock opera about a deaf, dumb and blind kid who sure plays a mean pinball.

Derek Wright views that there is the notion of freedom as a scientific metaphor. The reference here is apparently to the random motion around the atomic nucleus of electrons whose speed and position can be measured, but never at the same time, and which are said to be "in a free state" since their movement is impossible to plot exactly. The accidental, unpredictable travel of particles is comparable to that of the book's characters. He Claims:

The story seems to move without any clear direction in a space without any gravitational pull or magnetism which would hold them together around a common center. You should read this book to

understand the state of the people facing these conditions and find the answer to the question – Is war the only solution left for deciding about the political issues? (21)

These are superficially linked by an abundance of arbitrary plot connections, parallel incidents, and echoing motifs: the characters' American involvements; the motif of the journey which removes people from their normal surroundings; shifting alliances of the strong against the weak; the scapegoat-victim seeking refuge from freedom in a locked space; personality breakdowns and outbursts of groundless anarchic violence. The narrative's movement has a roaming, associative kind of logic that invites any number of possibly spurious correspondences between its episodes and, like the erratic progress of the subatomic particles, is finally unpalatable.

It is easy to see why contemporary reviewers described this novella as a depiction of cruelty, the human facility for violent sadism and unleashing horror, this story of a long drive to a place where there's "nothing to do" undertaken by two British acquaintances in a former Muslim colony, is a worthy heir to *Moth Smoke*. In this respect Jackie French claims:

On Ahmed's twelfth birthday, that fear becomes reality, with his father imprisoned, his family's home and possessions confiscated and his siblings quickly succumbing to hatred in the face of conflict, Ahmed begins an inspiring journey using his intellect to save his poor and dying family. In doing so he reclaims a love for others that was lost through a childhood rife with violence and loss and discovers a new hope for the future. (67)

Although the writer has recently suggested he has no literary influences, at the time of writing he was happy to acknowledge a debt about Muslim Tribal issues. For Lisa

Hill It's hard to imagine what effect this book might have had .Booker was less well-known then, and it may not have had much impact on the reading public. She puts:

I am not a political expert by any means so my review is nothing about whether they were Pakistan – who were suffering or about the Afghan army who were casting atrocities or an American to justify the decision of posting military for the sake of security and leaving the decision to UN to decide and leaving the petty people behind to suffer. If you are looking for something with a political perspective, dear friend, I request you to plunge into the vast oceans of websites flooding the internet. My review is just about the book and the author. (1)

The situation into which he so naively ventured is too overwhelming, and he is powerless even to identify the acts perpetrated by both institutions and individuals that have ruined his life, much less exact revenge. Thus, it is evident that different critics have analyzed the novel from multiple perspectives but the issue of Mimicry has been yet untouched , which proves the innovation of the research..

The research uses the tool of cultural studies. The idea of Mimicry and hybridity are focused. Hamid, in the novels, exemplifies this category that to whom many displaced people are similar. Hybridity and mimicry are basically associated with the occurrence of postcolonial discourse and cultural imperialism. Effects of hybridity upon identity and culture cannot be ignored. In the theoretical development of hybridity, the key text is *The Location of Culture* by Bhabha, wherein hybridity is presented as an illustration of colonial anxiety. The principal intention is the hybridity of colonial identity, which, as a cultural form, made the colonial resistant ambivalent, and as a result altered their power and identity. Bhabha also comprehends the cultural

politics of the condition of being a migrant in the contemporary colonial world.

Orientalism is a term well defined by Edward Said to mean the Western study of Eastern cultures and, in general, the framework of how the West perceives and characterizes the East. Said claims that the strategy of marking the colonized nations as the barbarous people who should be civilized by the Western nations is a trick through which colonizers justify their presence among the oriental nations. Since colonizers reveal themselves as members of civilized nations, the colonized natives try to identify themselves with colonizers. They try to communicate with Europeans and imitate them so that they can show that the barbarous opinion that the westerners have about them is not true. Throughout these actions and reactions the colonized nations would not be anything but hesitant, ambivalent, and mimic men.

Homi Bhabha talks about mimicry in relation to colonialism. He brings the reference of Lacan in the beginning of the essay. Lacan considers mimicry as a camouflage or the process of hiding. Redrawing the concept of Lacan regarding mimicry Homi Bhabha argues that mimicry as the technique of camouflage adopted by colonizers. According to Bhabha colonizers are like serpent in the grass who hide their face with the mask of civilizing mission and empowerment of colonized. However, irony of mimicry is only to teach imitation of European culture and spread colonial discourse by misrepresenting national culture and history. In a single sentence, colonizers teach or force to mimic colonial culture only to expand colonial rule in the name of civilizing mission. He further argues:

Mimicry in colonial and postcolonial literature is most commonly seen when members of a colonized society (say, Indians or Africans) imitate the language, dress, politics, or cultural attitude of their colonizers (say, the British or the French). Under colonialism and in



the context of immigration, mimicry is seen as an opportunistic pattern of behavior: one copies the person in power, because one hopes to have access to that same power oneself. Presumably, while copying the master, one has to intentionally suppress one's own cultural identity. (56)

Mimicry, however, is not all bad. In his essay "Of Mimicry and Man," Bhabha described mimicry as sometimes unintentionally subversive. In Bhabha's words, mimicry is "thinking and strategy of survival" (56). By contrast to mimicry, which is a relatively fixed and limited idea, postcolonial hybridity can be quite slippery and broad. At a basic level, hybridity refers to any mixing of east and western culture. Homi Bhabha argues that there is always ambivalence in colonial discourse. According to him colonial mission of mimicry is to form 'othering' of colonized by excluding them. It is the subject of difference that is "almost the same but not quite" (Bhabha 127). It means mimicry in the surface level seems to design for the betterment of colonized but colonizers never let colonized to improve and become like themselves. Mimicry is not quite like colonizers but it is ironical improvement of colonized. Colonizers teach language, culture and civilization to 'empower' and 'civilized' colonized and to create hegemony.

*Moth Smoke* begins in Baluchistan in the early 1950s, as a tribal chief's daughter married to an impotent man elopes with her father's servant and finds shelter in an isolated fort manned by a few dozen lonely soldiers. Hamid conveys the fear and desperation of the lovers as he describes them being offered water on their arrival at the fort gates after an arduous trek. "As she sensed water, she started sucking his hand and fingers like a small animal. All of a sudden, she lunged towards the bucket, plunged her head into it and drank with long gasping sounds until she

choked"(45).The couple find shelter in an abandoned corner of the fort. A son is born, and they raise the child in a hidden corner for six years until the Siahpad, their tribe, sends men in pursuit of them. The couple and their son run for safety but are hunted down, and two stone shrines are raised over their graves as a sign of Siahpads' revenge. Shezad, the boy left to die, is adopted by Baluch rebels fighting the Pakistani government and grows up to be Moth Smoke of the title, a boy with no fixed identity, moving between precarious worlds full of humanity, courage, cruelty, and above all poverty so dire that survival seems to be the greatest virtue.

Colonialism generated contact zone between native Mulim culture and European culture. As a result both colonizers and colonized are turning mimetic and hybrid. Daru's Father belongs to Islamic community but he mimeses European style of marriage. They marriage without the consent of family and society. Their identity turns out to be inbetween and dislocated. They do not belong to any culture. Finally due to impact of colonialism they bear the tragic death. After that, Daru adopts the nomadic life. He incorporates western life, befriends with whites indulges in free life forgetting his cultural root. DarashikohShezad is the orphan of two fugitive lovers (like Romeo and Juliet breaking social barriers to be together) hunted down by their tribes and killed. He is brought up by various nomads and is thus unique and troubling to all because he belongs to no tribe. He goes through mimicry and hybridity as a strategy of survival.

According to Bhabha, "mimicry" is one of the most effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge "Mimicry", in colonial and postcolonial discourse, is defined as when people of the colonized country start imitating the behaviours, attitudes, language and culture of the colonizers. The feeling of superiority of the colonial masters over the natives leads the members of the colonized nation to look at

themselves as the inferior human beings. Thus, it automatically establishes the belief that the West is always “educated”, “civilized”, “reformed”, “disciplined”, and “knowledgeable”, while the east is “illiterate, barbaric, primitive and ignorant.” “Mimicry” seems to be an opportunistic method of copying the person in power. This suppresses one’s own cultural identity and leaves the person to an ambivalent and confused state. Bhabha says that “...the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence”(86).

In *Moth Smoke*, Daru’s Father went to prison when he was young for helping a Muslim Tribal refugee. As the oldest of 14 nine children, his father had to work to support the family. It was quite difficult to survive in the poverty. He met an English man and started the job of spy to disclose the secrecy of natives. While accompanying with whites he used to disguise in the manner of whites. This fact is evident from following lines:

The story is based on my personal experiences. The greatest issue I had was learning how to tell my story. One lives and survives only if one has the ability to swallow and digest bitter and unpalatable things. We, you and I, and our people shall live because there are only a few among us who do not love raw onions. It is quite difficult to survive where life is larger than it appears. (3)

Mimicry is the mean by which the Daru’s father adapted the culture (language, education, clothing, etc.) of the colonizer but always in the process changing it in important ways. Such process pushes him to the direction of “the ambivalence of hybridity” (Ashcroft 23).

Derek Walcott’s concept of what we do is “all bout the Mimicry of our culture”(67) again proves the relevance of postcolonial constructivism. Walcott takes

mimicry as laboring task which is the mirror of purpose, balance and hierarchy.

Walcott argues “language itself is mimicry so that no literature, history and culture can be separate from mimesis” (87). Walcott further states that we human beings are imitator of monkeys so that everything is imitation in this world. He further argues:

Alexander to Columbus all are imitators. Walcott considers mimicry as an act of imagination and creativity. Some animals mimic and transfer into camouflage to defend enemies. Human also needs imitation of other animals and creatures to survive. Human phenomenon are the imitation of nature. (78)

He gives examples of Ford car and electricity as the imitation of nature. He further states that we imitate the advancement of western culture whereas itself is imitation of nature. The mimesis theory of Walcott further becomes Dense when he argues every religion and culture are imitation of another culture.

*Moth Smoke* presents Daru, Muslim Tribal from Afghanistan who wants to study science, but then Afghanistan makes military service a prerequisite to high level scientific jobs. He wants to study in Muslim tribal way but adopts western way because it is prestigious among the community. This is an example of objective or factual Mimicry. This becomes more clear when the author puts” Shezad, my protagonist, is a compilation of many Muslim Tribals from Afghanistan I knew personally and whose lives I witnessed. I wrote about what I know that affected me” (3). The characters are compilations of many Muslim Tribals the author knew over the years. Ahamed becoming able to preserve the identity become crystal clear from the following authorial comment:

To make sure my story is strong enough that it transcends the historical context. In *Moth Smoke*, I wrote about a Muslim Tribal boy

who overcomes seemingly impossible obstacles to achieve what others have only dreamed. My concern was that my story be reach anyone who has overcome hardship so that reader can relate to my story on a human level. (55)

*Moth Smoke* written is a story of a character larger than life itself. It is a journey comprising of despair, hunger, fear, death, life, joy, happiness, courage, sacrifice and determination. Ahmed under such painful and stressful conditions had to see a lot during his childhood - death of his siblings due to various unwanted situations, getting his father jailed for no crime, getting debarred from their house and ultimately moving from bad to worse situation in life. But one symbolic companion that kept inspiring, motivating and helping Ahmed is an almond tree that is grown outside his house. The unfavorable situation of DarashikohShezad is depicted as follows when his residence is being gripped:

It was summer and the whole house breathed slowly from the heat. I stood alone in her room, hoping the quiet would tell me where she'd stumbled off to. A white curtain caught a breeze. The window was open – wide open. I rushed to the ledge, praying that when I looked over she wouldn't be there, she wouldn't be hurt. I was afraid to look, but I did anyway because not knowing was worse. *Please God, please God, please God.*(1)

They could only opt for the least living standards, lowest possible work, no possibilities of growth and then their each and every move is under the supervision of army. "Postcolonial studies is not one thing," HomiBhabha asserts, "it has never been one thing" (99). It is an engaged mode of inquiry committed to understanding the complex terrain of the postcolonial in connection with relations of power.

Postcolonial studies presents itself, then, as less a conversation than an intervention (Ashcroft 5). Hence, we can find the relevance of the implantation of the tool of postcolonial studies. The unfavorable situation of the individuals in Afghanistan is again replicated from the information of curfew in the novel, as DarashikohShezad puts” ‘Curfew begins in five minutes,’ a soldier announced through his megaphone from his military Jeep. ‘Anyone found outside will be arrested or shot (8)’. More than a dozen soldiers were fencing their land and home with barbed wire. Daru’s mother Gulbibibi kneeling under olive tree holding middle brothers. This is also presenting the unfavorable contemporary life of Pakistan.

In the two years Daru and his brothers had lived in new house with other members . There they had seen things they had never seen before. Boys and girls, older and younger than Daru, held hands and formed circles and danced and sang together, their arms and legs naked. They had electricity and green lawns, and yards with swing sets and slides. And they had a swimming pool that boys and girls and men and women of all ages swam in, wearing what looked like their underwear. This also presents the contemporary life. Daru’s description of the contemporary events also proves the mimicry of Daru:

I knew from a young age that I wasn’t like the other boys in my village. Abbas was very social and had many friends. When they gathered at our house, they would speak of their hero Jamal Abdul Nasser, the President of Egypt, who had stood up to Afghanistan in the 1956 Suez Canal Crisis and was championing Arab nationalism and the Muslim Tribal cause. I idolized Albert Einstein. As the Afghans controlled our curriculum, they always supplied us with ample books on the accomplishments of famous tribes.(14)

In the novel, Nontribals exploit nature as well as all possible human resources, of mind, of science, as they want to possess Muslim Tribal wealth as much as possible and want to keep them under their control. It is the story of Muslim Tribal-Afghani conflict for a land which is spiritual for both the communities. So, actually the conflict is between the Oppressive power represented by the non tribal who are a strong military power and a Creative Muslim Tribal boy who struggle throughout his life for his family and people and gain power. Mimicry is the production of the meaning of the concepts in our minds through language. There are two processes, two systems of Mimicry. The relation between things, “concepts and signs lies at the heart of the production of meaning in language. The process which links these three elements together is what we call Mimicry”(8). Ageing, the unfavorable situation is being narrated as:

A brass tray of coloured tea glasses scattered the sunlight that streamed through the open window like a prism. Blues, golds, greens and reds bounced onto a group of old men in battered cloaks and white kaffiyahs secured by black rope. The men of the Abu Ibrahim clan sat cross-legged on floor pillows placed carefully around the low table now holding their steaming drinks. They had once owned all the olive groves in our village. Every Saturday they met here, only occasionally exchanging a word or greeting across the crowded room. (17)

Thus it is proved that mimicry is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture. It does involve the use of language, of signs and images which stand for or represent things. And surely it is not a simple or straightforward process.

Daru stated, “I didn’t need a Muslim Tribal because I lived among the Muslim Tribals inside the green line for seven years and saw with my own eyes the Muslim Tribal reality”(51). This statement speaks directly to the arrogance of Daru that Abulhawa described. Abulhawa is Muslim Tribal, born to a Muslim Tribal family and raised among Muslim Tribals in Jerusalem, in Jordan and Kuwait. Her characters were composites of grandmothers, uncles, aunts, neighbors and friends. Yet she still had several of her Muslim Tribal friends and at least one Muslim Tribal academic read her manuscript at different stages because she understands what Daru clearly doesn’t that novelists should approach the lives of others with humility. The Muslim Tribal struggle with its many painful facets is something Abulhawa grew up with. She wasn’t an observer “on weekends while away at school, but she still didn’t presume to fully comprehend everything her grandmother and parents told her about their dispossession and she sought to authenticate her writing from those who did” (6). To do otherwise is arrogant and insensitive in the extreme. But it is politics of representing the culture from the perspective of what Stuart Hall calls the “representative dynamics of postcolonial inconsistencies” (5).

*Moth Smoke* is a gateway book for westerners learning the Muslim Tribal story from the viewpoint of how the history has been represented. Afghan are not demonized in the book, and this is critical both because it rings authentic because it allows the possibility of reaching genuinely broad audiences, including Nontribal Afghan and Christian Zionists.

Bhabha analyzes mimicry in the colonial discourse hints that there is a need to use mimicry as a subversive method in postcolonial discourse. He suggests that having entered into the “symbolic order” of our development, we should now speak.



The influence of Freud and Lacan on Homi Bhabha is obvious as he has considered them in his essay. According to Bhabha mimicry does not only destroy, as he says:

Mimicry does not merely destroy narcissistic authority through the repetitious slippage of difference and desire. It is the process of the fixation of the colonial as a form of cross-classificatory, discriminatory knowledge in the defiles of an interdictory discourse, and therefore necessarily raises the question of the authorization of colonial representations. (90)

According to him, mimicry is an “eccentric strategy of authority in colonial discourse” and the ambivalence of mimicry leads us to think that the “fetishized colonial culture” is an “insurgent counter-appeal” (123).

In the novel *Wandering Falcon*, we can see different characters using 'Bible' and showing their belief in Christianity for their survival. For example, nomadic Kharot Powindas ("foot people") have brought their livestock to graze along their traditional wandering routes, but now the border is guarded by soldiers who will not let them pass without proper papers. But these documents cost money and require birth certificates, health documents and identity papers, neither of which the thousands of Kharot possess. One brave woman puts the Bible on her head, relying on the fact that she will be protected, and leads her animals forward only to be fired on by soldiers. As others make the same attempt, they and their animals are mowed down in what will become a massacre. The narrator implicitly states about the strategy of the survival of nomadic people as:

There was a full moon, and it hung half hidden behind the northern cliff. The moonlight was strong and dazzling to the eyes... A long distance away on the mountain crest, he could see small antlike figures

silhouetted against its orb. There was a long chain of them moving slowly with loads on their backs. These were the ice cutters. (67)

A tribe comes to grips with the newly enforced border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, not sure if everyone will be able to get across as they move their few animals to better grazing. The tribe's leader tries to negotiate safe passage with an army official pretending as if they are converted Christians. As he leaves, he adjusts his cloak and remembers his own tribal god.

Bhabha's analysis of mimicry in his essay 'Of Mimicry and Man' is largely based on the Lacanian vision of mimicry as camouflage resulting in colonial ambivalence. He sees the colonizer as a snake in the grass who, speaks in "a tongue that is forked," and produces a mimetic representation that "...emerges as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge" (Bhabha 122). In postcolonial studies 'mimicry' is considered as unsettling imitations that are characteristic of postcolonial cultures. It is a desire to sever the ties with 'self' in order to move towards 'other'. Daru expresses his penchant for colonial mimicry when he wishes to desert his roots. He says: "I wanted to break away. To break away from my family and community also meant breaking away from my unspoken commitment...." (Hamid 31) For Homi K. Bhabha, "colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable 'Other', as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha 122). He is the foremost contemporary critic who has tried to unveil the contradictions inherent in colonial discourse in order to highlight the colonizer's ambivalence with respect to his attitude towards the colonized Other and vice versa. He continues: "The menace of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority" (126). It

is a double vision that is a result of what he describes as the partial representation/ recognition of the colonial object.

*Moth Smoke* starts in the year 1955 and goes up to 2009 during which Darashikoh Shezad went through various stages encountering various inspiring characters - like his father, his childhood teacher, his first love, his professor ; and more than those the characters who tried to downtrend/ demean him from time to time. The hardship the protagonist faced along with his family members can be clarified from the following lines:

There was a full moon, and it hung half hidden behind the northern cliff. The moonlight was strong and dazzling to the eyes... A long distance away on the mountain crest, he could see small antlike figures silhouetted against its orb. There was a long chain of them moving slowly with loads on their backs. These were the ice cutters. (45)

The protagonist is presents how the repressive society has made compelled to stop their mouth, or listen. The author has presented a heart-wrenching and inspiring story for everyone. Ahmed will remain a sturdy example of how motivation and survival instinct combined with intellect made him rise from the ashes. Love and hate are portrayed beautifully as two sides of the same coin through Daru and Mumtaz. The author writes freely here, not complicating his language too much. The different eras spanning Daru's life are well divided into books. His narration is so cogent that one can visualize the hills nesting almond and olive trees. Tragedy is carefully blended with little moments of joy to create an endless pasture of life.

*Moth Smoke* follows the character of Shezad throughout his life. The book starts with his family living on the nomadic state in Pakistan where his family has owned camels for decades. Throughout the book, his travels take him throughout the

various border areas, serving as the vehicle through which Hamid brings his readers into the lives of the different tribes who inhabit this landscape: the Wazirs, Mahsuds, Brahui, the Kharot and the Afridi; there are also the Nasirs, the Dortanis and Baluchs. Along the way Hamid describes how changes in the world outside of these regions have affected the tribes people.

This story is one of loss and perseverance. Daru must learn to forgive those who have destroyed his family and work along with the nontribals he has been raised to despise. I'll stop my plot summary here, but know that almost nothing goes right for Daru through the book. It's almost safe to predict that anything that seems to be going right will fail. From this respect, the book is very lifelike. According to Stephen Jobbs:

Darashikoh Shezad, the young boy who becomes Moth Smoke, moves between the tribes of Pakistan and Afghanistan and their uncertain worlds full of brutality, humanity, deep love, honor, poverty, and grace. The region he travels—the Federally Administered Tribal Areas—has become a political quagmire known for terrorism and inaccessibility. Yet in these pages, octogenarian debut author Hamid lyrically and insightfully reveals the people who populate those lands, their tribes and traditions and their older, timeless ways in the face of sometimes ruthless. (14)

Daru is obviously preaching peace and understanding through education. With Daru's schooling, he learns to interact with and make friends with Non tribes. He sees understanding and acceptance on both sides while studying at school. His nephew has the chance to study at MIT, but cannot get out of Afghanistan to seize the opportunity. The nephew loses hope with no chance of education and no way of ever

leaving Afghanistan because his father (Daru's brother) is a member of Hamas. This view becomes evident from the view of the author:

As I mentioned, the lack of emotion in Daru made him harder to relate to and I think the story suffered from that. I would have liked to see fewer scenes and instead more emotional description and reaction from the characters which would have helped me sympathize with them more. The author's ability to keep his plot interesting and moving forward is more than commendable. He's written quite the page-turner which I think all writers hope to produce. (65)

The first Nontribalish person we meet is an Afghani soldier who is described as pimply-faced and brutal demeanor. On the other hand, DarashikohShezad, boy genius, hero of this novel, is handsome with beautiful eyes and hair, intelligent and compassionate, whose innocent family is constantly abused by such as these. Next, the reader meets a murderous Iraqi Nontribal, the construction boss at the site where Daru and his younger brother, mere children, are forced to work to support their family when their father is beaten by tribals. This is evident from:

And then the screams came. It was Mama's voice, then Baba's from somewhere far behind us. Then I realised that Amal wasn't gone. I could see something. I could see her arm. It was her arm, but her body wasn't attached to it anymore. I wiped my eyes. Amal was torun up like her doll after our watchdog ripped it apart. I opened my mouth and screamed so loud I felt like I was going to split in two. Baba and Uncle Kamal ran up, panting, to the sign. Mama didn't look at them, but when they got there she began to whimper, 'My baby, my baby ....(6)

Daru's parents are refugees from their tribe. They travel for three days through a desert sandsDarum arriving, finally, at a fort. The subedar [official] gives them water and then asks if they want anything else. The man says “Yes, I wish for refuge for the two of us. We are Siahpads from Killa Kurd, on the run from her people. We have traveled for three days in the sDarum, and any further travel will surely...” (22). He is interrupted by the subedar who says that he cannot give them refuge. “I know your laws well, and neither I nor any man of mine shall come before a man and the laws of his tribe” (25). However, he does agree to given them shelter “...for as long as you want to stay” (29). GulBibi, Daru's soon to be mother, and her lover, take shelter in one of a series of rooms that had been built fifty years earlier, during WW I, when the fort was very crowded. After the war they were unoccupied; many crumbled. At first, the couple did not come out of their room, becoming more courageous later. Soldiers provided them with food. To reciprocate, the man starting fetching water for the troops. He would load up his camel with water skins and visit the springs twice daily. Also, he brought, as a gift, a few baskets that GulBibi had woven out of date-palm leaves. As the contingent of soldiers changed, the departing soldiers would leave anything they could spare. Eventually, a son was born to the couple. One winter morning, a Siahpad on a camel came and asked questions of the subedar about the couple. The subedar warned the couple who prepared to leave. The soldiers packed provisions and the three left the fort. It symbolizes a blending of their worlds, although it is short-lived which may also foreshadow the continuing failed effort of the tribal's peace process.

M. S. Nagarajan refers to mimicry as “divided self” of the colonized as “unhomeliness”. He says, “One becomes a psychological refugee, in not being able to feel at home even in one's own hom”(187). During the rule of the colonial masters in

the colonies, the influence of imperial powers led the dominated natives feel dispossessed, and devoid of the language of the colonizers to communicate. This pressure forced them to imitate the superior Other. The colonized native at this first stage of imitation belongs to Lacan's, "mirror stage", when the child neither has the language, the symbolic system, nor the understanding of the world. He looks at his own image in the mirror and looks at "Others". This ignorant and child-like native also looks at his own image in the mirror of colonial masters superior etiquettes only to find himself inferior and small, but he can not express himself until he enters into Lacan's "symbolic stage" and learns to speak and raise his voice. Mimicry reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called an itself that is behind. "The effect of mimicry is camouflage.... It is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled— exactly like the technique of camouflage practiced in human warfare" (Bhabha 121) .

*Moth Smoke* opens with a horrific scene of loss and sadness. A young child, heedless to the danger, steps into a closed area in the Muslim Tribal Territory controlled by England, and is blown up by a mine in front of her mother's and sibling's eyes. They were helpless to help the 4-year old child as she ran through the minefield chasing a butterfly. Tribals crammed into a small area with barely any amenities to support life, which have never allowed the Muslim Tribals to enter and assimilate their identity. The novel is a tragic tale of horror. It is evident from:

I was disgusted by the unjust brutality the author accused Afghanistan of committing. Although I believe they have justification in being overcautious, because of the past incidents committed against them by the Arabs, the existence of so much hate and anger on the part of Afghanistan came as a shock to me. After all the brutalization of

Nontribals, down through the ages, I thought we would have had more compassion on our side rather than vengeance. (77)

Tribal people are the victim of colonization. They are prevented from the basis ground of human identity. They are not free to adopt their own culture. They do not have any chance to feed their stomach without the mercy of Whites. They feel without home in their own home. As a result they adopt western culture to survive.

While the Daru isolates himself from the world, he is cast out in it utterly “ill-equipped” ( Hamid 24). He meets different people in colonial Afghanistan. As Daru makes friends with, and comes to admire, Smith Smith, a white Christian from London, he has to confront his own prejudices:

Smith was kind and he was not Paki. Therefore he was OK? [...]  
Therefore he liked Muslims and hated only Pakis? Therefore he liked Smith, but hated the general lot of Muslims? [...] No, no, how could that be [...] Therefore he hated all black people but liked Smith?  
Therefore there was nothing wrong with black people and Smith? ( Hamid86)

From this line of reasoning emerges a perceived hierarchy of the immigrant communities, where whites are superior to (at least) blacks and Muslims. Nonetheless, Daru seems to discover that, even though his fellow immigrants may be different from him, they all suffer from the impact of colonisation and racialization. However, he never manages to discard his beliefs in a hierarchical system, even though, he finds that he had “a habit of hate” (86) and “possessed an awe of white people, who arguably had done great harm, and a lack of generosity regarding almost everyone else, who had never done a single harmful thing to Muslims” (86). This further indicates an internalised racist discourse and, as noted by Daru, the



difficulties for Others to connect in the “context of a shared history of political violence” (378). With the arrival of a Pakistani in the kitchen comes relief: “At least he knew what to do [...] against Pakis. Ah, old war, best war” ( Hamid 24-25). In his condition of great solitude and abuse, he appears to return to a familiar discourse; partly because of its familiarity, the maintenance of it seems comforting.

Daru’s place in the hierarchy is non-negotiable. The restaurants he works in offer “the authentic colonial experience. On top, rich colonial, and below, poor native” ( Hamid 23). The aforementioned fight with the Pakistani, leads to their being fired as “the sound [travelled] up the flight of stairs [...] they might upset the balance, perfectly first-world on top, perfectly third-world twenty-two steps below” ( Hamid 25). This could be read as “balance” being created through the hierarchical divide of people, within restaurants, but also, beyond. Masterson writes: “[b]eneath the glossy rhetoric of a borderless planet, supposedly liberated by liquid capitalism, lies the principle that order is ensured by the increasingly intense policing of these stratifications”(423).

Edward Said's *Orientalism*, published in 1978, focuses his attention in this work on the interplay between the "Occident" and the "Orient." This interplay between 'East' and 'West' is particularly brought here to show the suppressive nature of West over East i.e. 'Colonizer' (England) over 'Colonized' (tribal areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan.) The Occident is his term for the West (England, France, and the United States), and the Orient is the term for the romantic and misunderstood Middle East and Far East. According to Said, the West has created a dichotomy, between the reality of the East and the romantic notion of the "Orient" (76). The Middle East and Asia are viewed with prejudice and racism. They are backward and unaware of their own history and culture. To fill this void, the West has created a culture, history, and

future promise for them. On this framework rests not only the study of the Orient, but also the political imperialism of Europe in the East. "The Orient is an integral part of European material civilization and culture". He further states:

Orientalism is a style of thought based upon ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident." Thus a very large mass of writers, among who are poet, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, "mind," destiny, and so on.(1-6)

Said's own focus in *Orientalism* is specifically and almost exclusively on the Arab Muslim Middle East, which he presumably (and gratuitously) considers a representative case study illustrative of the situation throughout Asia. In *Moth Smoke* Daru attains an Arab scholarship against all odds and gains entry to an Afghani university. Tribal students are humiliated for their "backwardness, poverty and cultural backwardness" (56 Hamid). But he does deal with the split identities and selective vision that artificially enforced racial, religious or ethnic divisions can bring about. Afghani students who know Daru grow to accept and love him while continuing to loathe other "Arabs," while Daru cannot tell his sufferings to other due to fear of his teachers. Mohsin Hamid has depicted the sufferings of Muslim Tribals and the atrocities of the Nontribals in his novel, *Moth Smoke*. In the novel, Nontribals exploits nature as well as all possible human resources, of mind, of science, as they want to possess Muslim Tribal wealth as much as possible and want to keep them under their control. It is the story of Muslim Tribal-Afghani conflict for a land which

is spiritual for both the communities. So, actually the conflict is between the Oppressive power represented by the Nontribals who are a strong military power and a Creative Muslim Tribal boy who struggle throughout his life for his family and people and gain power. Throughout the novel, the novelist has tried to reflect a strong critique of the reductive bias worldview experienced by the Nontribal.

Eventually, he feels barely human at all. Daru has internalised a view of himself as something deviant and abnormal, he has become the Other, all in relation to the English, white majority. Frantz Fanon has described this process: “[i]n the white world, the man of color [becomes] an image of the third person. All around the body reigns an atmosphere of certain uncertainty” (90). Fanon’s man of colour is no longer in authority to define himself freely, but with qualities attributed to him by his oppressor, qualities which are derogatory. There is no doubting the Daru’s view of himself as “the third person”: he stops using the personal pronoun “I” altogether, instead reverting to the impersonal “one” when speaking about himself. It is a conscious decision, a refuge to “keep everyone at bay, to keep himself away from himself” ( Hamid 122). As we have seen, Daru comes to mimic the English, but he is also made into an Other:

Daru’s mind had begun to warp; he grew stranger to himself than he was to those around him, found his own skin odd-colored, his own accent peculiar. He forgot how to laugh, could barely manage to lift his lips in a smile [...] he couldn’t bear anyone seeing his gums, his teeth. They seemed too private. In fact, he could barely let any of himself peep out [...] for fear of giving offence. ( Hamid45)

At once, he is isolating himself from others but also hiding, or negating, his own opinions or agenda. Again, Fanon has described the impact on one’s identity

when one, as he puts it, “gives oneself up as an object” and he describes this as causing tangible pain on the body itself ( Hamid92). Surely, it is also an attempt to remedy the *certain uncertainty*, which can be seen as originating from what Fanon calls an awareness “of his liminal position in between the spaces that are unequivocally occupied by the coloniser and the colonised” (61). In this liminal space, between borders, Daru’s mimicry is a survival strategy in a colonial world. With the Afghani independence, however, the demands are the contrary (62). This only paralyses him further. Thinking back on the English leaving Afghanistan, he grieves them “leaving behind only those ridiculous Afghans who couldn’t rid themselves of what they had broken their soul to learn” ( Hamid 224). Contrary to what Bhabha suggests, Daru is not able to find strength nor strategies to resist binary notions in this position; instead, he identifies himself as “broken” and withdraws from the world, which he finds is “only a different version of the same old [with a] man with the white curly wig and a dark face covered in powder, bringing down his hammer, always against the native, in a world that was still colonial” ( Hamid224).

In *The Empire Writes Back*, Ashcroft writes that hybridity has been accused of being depoliticised since it sometimes fails to consider “the material status of the operation of power” (206). Hybridity and mimicry both serve as reminders of the ambivalence and weakness within the hierarchical system (102). Ashcroft argues that as the colonised subject takes on traits of the colonizer. He further describes :

lose the sense of the masterful self and its social sovereignty. It is at this moment of intellectual and psychic ‘uncertainty’ that representation can no longer guarantee the authority of culture; and culture can no longer guarantee to author its ‘human’ subjects as the

signs of humanness. The Other can, of course, only be constructed out of the archive of 'the self', yet the self must also articulate the Other as inescapably different [...] and this instigates an ambivalence at the very site of imperial authority and control. (195)

Like hybridity, mimicry breaks down the boundaries between what is considered for example English and Muslims, leaving the coloniser powerless to control it; thus, the limitations of authority are revealed. In *Moth Smoke*, Daru moves through Federally Administered Tribal areas which have become "...a political quagmire known for terrorism and inaccessibility" (78). He witnesses all the extremes of the human condition and behavior – hatred, poverty, honor, deep love, brutality, and humanity. He sees dishonesty when Dawa Khan tries to avenge the murder of one of his cousins. However, the murderer had died a natural death leaving a widow and two young sons. Dawa Khan is waiting for the boys to grow up, so he can kill them. However, they will not wear the shalwar, signifying the transition into manhood. Since the traditional code was clear that revenge could not be visited on women and children, and the young men did not want to be killed, Dawa Khan would probably never get his revenge. The men would probably wear the dress of children until their natural deaths. The author puts:

The last straw is reached when Khan's is accused of terrorism and arrested by the Afghani soldiers. and his younger brother , at the age of twelve and ten, shoulder the responsibility of providing for the family by working on construction sites. In a world where the Muslim Tribals have no stronghold over their homes, their belongings and their lives, Ahmed's father directs him, through correspondence, to take the

more peaceful route, and not to harbor hatred in the face of extreme adversity. (299)

Daru sees various faces of hospitality – given graciously when an old KukiKhel woman gives him a meal of coarse millet loaves, chicken with lentils and butter milk, but ungraciously when they ask for walnuts and corncobs . Daru’s maturity sees a transformation from typical tribal man to mimic men at the end of the novel.

For Bhabha, even if the hybrid arises from contact, it is hybridity within what was (seen to be) coherent and a unity that he calls up. In this way, his version of hybridity gestures more directly to the unequal position of power within which hybridity is created. He argues:

If the effect of colonial power is seen to be the production[emphasis in original] of hybridization rather than the noisy command of colonialist authority or the silent repression of native traditions, then an important change of perspective occurs. It reveals the ambivalence at the source of traditional discourses on authority and enables a form of subversion founded on that uncertainty, that turns the discursive conditions of dominance into the grounds of intervention. (173)

Bhabha’s hybridity is more concerned with an assessment of the Unitarians of dominating discourses, which are then revealed to be fractured, doubled, and unstable. But he also believes in the remedial power of a new conception in which he makes a “shift from the cultural as an epistemological object to culture as an enactive, enunciatory site”(178). In this form, culture is revealed to be hybrid, and this hybridity provides the space from which subaltern agency can be enabled. Hybridity is generated by dominating discourses.

*Moth Smoke* a hybrid identity is, at once, both more and less than a pure one.

Daru if his dreams were true, he would be the great judge. Daru's "face seemed distanced by what looked like white powder over dark skin – or was it just the vapour?" ( Hamid 37). The vapour, here easily confused with white powder, has created a distance between the judge and others. If mist is a symbol of hybridity, hybridity creates a distance between the judge and others. Certainly, the judge is lonely: as he cannot make sense of himself nor the world, he distances himself from it and every one he knows.

Growing up in colonised Afghanistan Daru is the only son in an ambitious family of low social status. Eventually, to attain legitimate influence and rise socially, Daru is sent to English school to study law. During his five-year stay, he is constantly subjected to racial discrimination and a lady refusing to call him by any other name than "James", in a sense completely denying his identity. In defence, Daru retreats into solitude, which "became a habit, the habit became the man, and it crushed him into a shadow" ( Hamid 45). Ashamed to be Indian, Daru desperately tries to overcome this, occupying the liminal position between the coloniser and the colonised by performing English identity: "He envied the English. He loathed Afghans. He worked at being English with the passion of hatred and for what he would become, he would be despised by absolutely everyone, English and Afghans, both" ( Hamid 131). This quotation indicates how mimicry can be perceived as a threat towards the racist discourse, where the upholding of difference is a prerequisite of the system's survival. Daru, mockingly, being "almost the same but not quite", "almost the same but not white" (Bhabha 127-

128),exposetheambivalenceattheheartofimperialcontrol.Hisbehaviour uncovers the limits to the colonisers' authority; thus, Daru's semblance to the English serves as an unpleasant reminder of the arbitrary divide between the coloniser and the colonised. Furthermore, the quotation underscores how Daru's struggle to construct a pure English identity is, ultimately, what leaves him utterly lonely.

What eventually brings these walls down is the arrival of Daru, the judge's granddaughter, who, in a sense, also originates from his body. We will return to this point after examining Daru's sense of self. Moving back to the misty opening scene there is a description of the mist's effect on Daru:

The gray had permeated inside as well... [in the mirror, Daru] caught a glimpse of himself being smothered and reached forward to imprint his lips upon the surface, a perfectly formed film star kiss. "Hello," he Daru, half to himself and half to someone else. The mist has the house in its hold, and even though Daru is hesitant to what he sees, looking at himself, he likes it. ( Hamid 2-3)

He greets himself with a kiss – both the part he knows and understands but also what still is unfamiliar in him. Kissing his blurred image could be seen as an almost absolute acceptance of, and affection for, this indefinite quality. The contrast to the judge is striking: for Daru, hybridity is a source of self-loathing, but Daru seems to feel a great tenderness towards it.

*Moth Smoke* follows the lives of the inhabitants of a tribals in mountainous of Afganistan. In the opening scene of the novel there is an opaque and ever-moving mist covering the land, not only further denying the borders but also mocking them. We see how it is constantly attacking the borders drawn by people, but also how people struggle to enforce the borders. In a sense, the mist can be seen as a symbol of



the demise of the absolute, the pure, as the process of moving beyond binaries. Furthermore, it is inescapable as the mist gets “thicker and thicker, obscuring things in parts – half a hill, then the other half [...] Gradually the vapour replaced everything with itself, solid objects with shadow, and nothing remained that did not seem molded from or inspired by it” ( Hamid 2). As solid objects are turned fluid and changeable and boundaries are dissolved, the effect of the mist, in fact, seems to be hybridisation.

In conclusion the present research uncovers the mimicry as strategy of survival in *Moth Smoke*. The tribal culture is represented by the author in the text which is the finding of the research. The political, postcolonial and historical uncertainties are represented in the novel. The author makes international and constructionist Mimicry of tribal culture. The thesis also illustrates that Daru’s fictional text blends the legacies of the ex-colonized and the ex-colonizer to deconstruct a biased narrative integral to the vision of the tribal-nontribal conflict. With the balanced view of the Muslim Tribal question, Daru emphasizes significant colonizer / colonized constructs engaging postcolonial dynamics which lead to conflict rather than dialogue between both sides. Deploying a plethora of voices as reflection of the attitudes of a multi-ethnic community, the incidents of the novel are presented to unearth the protagonist challenging the postcolonial inconsistencies and confirming the identity.

The protagonist Daru could never achieve what he did if he only remained in his village. He came from a rural, impoverished village. Afghanistan has a policy of pushing Muslim Tribal intellectuals into the sciences as a form of ethnic cleansing. Story of *Moth Smoke* is about Daru born in one of the Muslim Tribal families living like slaves in a country that was once their own -Afghanistan. Under these dire conditions members of these families were not allowed to go for a

respectable job, for studies, for a well built house, for any good opportunities in their life. Postcolonial studies does not have a single history that can be simply returned to. Nor does it have a fixed or stable identity that is always and everywhere the same, be it that based on an idea of the organic intellectual or otherwise.

Frantz Fanon analyses the psychological effects of colonial domination in his *Black Skin White Masks*. Fanon exposes the trauma of being a black and the desire to be like the whites. In his Introduction to the *Black Skin, White Masks* he questions, “What does the Black man want?” (10). He answers in his own voice and says that black is not even a man. The desire to mimic the white haunts the black day and night. He confesses, “I am obliged to state it: For the black man there is only one destiny. And it is White”(12). Homi Bhabha strikes at the same point and says that the metamorphosis of the “colonized black” in the process of being a white, makes him different from his own race and community and transforms him only to resemble the white. Thus, Daru is excluded from his own society and belongs to neither his own people nor to the whites, and he is “almost the same but not white” (Bhabha 127). His parents are shot in front of his eyes by other nomadic tribes, which triggers his own nomadic lifestyle, by being passed along from one tribe to another, gaining several foster parents along the way, and ditching them whenever circumstances force him to, Daru oscillates like pendulum for his survival.

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