



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***HYBRIDITY IN BAPSI SIDHWA'S AN AMERICAN BRAT AND
H.M. NAQVI'S HOME BOY***

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H.M. NAQVI'S *HOME BOY***

By

HINA GUL

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in
Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in English Literature**

February 2016

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in
fulfilment of the requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts

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Chairman : Rohimmi Bin Noor
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As immigrant fiction continues to emerge from the South Asian diaspora across the globe, theories of gender and identity that mostly treat such novels as *Bildungsromans* are often used to bring to light the plight of literary characters caught between two different cultures. Similar is the case with the novels *An American Brat* by Bapsi Sidhwa and *Home Boy* by H.M. Naqvi. Sidhwa and Naqvi are both Pakistani novelists who have experienced immigration to the United States, as do the main characters in their novels. However, while the two selected novels are united in their setting which is the US, there is a major difference in the time period that the stories are set in. *An American Brat* was written and published in a pre-9/11 America, and thus offers a different picture of life in the US than does *Home Boy*, a major part of which is set in a post-9/11 America. Both these novels are often read through the lens of the identity crisis that is experienced by the protagonists in them. Taking Homi K. Bhabha's concept of hybridity as an analytical tool, however, this study uses mimicry, ambivalence, and unhomeliness, concepts under hybridity, to facilitate the understanding of the experiences and decisions of Feroza and Shehzad, the protagonists in the two novels. Besides studying if the three selected elements of hybridity can be found in the protagonists, this work also investigates whether or not they are responsible for their decisions to choose to stay either in Pakistan or in the United States at the end of the novels.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Master Sastera

**HIBRIDITI DALAM *AN AMERICAN BRAT* KARYA BAPSI
SIDHWA DAN *HOME BOY* KARYA H.M. NAQVI**

Oleh

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Pengerusi : Rohimmi Bin Noor
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Sejak fiksyen imigran terus muncul dari diaspora Asia Selatan merentasi dunia, teori gender dan identiti yang kebanyakannya diolah dalam novel-novel tersebut sebagai *Bildungsromans* biasanya digunakan untuk membawa gambaran nasib watak kesusasteraan yang terjebak antara dua budaya yang berbeza. Keadaan yang sama juga wujud dalam kedua-dua novel, iaitu *An American Brat* oleh Bapsi Sidhwa dan *Home Boy* karya H.M. Naqvi. Sidhwa dan Naqvi, kedua-duanya merupakan pengarang novel dari Pakistan yang mempunyai pengalaman imigrasi ke Amerika Syarikat, seperti juga watak-watak utama dalam kedua-dua novel mereka. Walaupun terdapat ciri latar seting yang sama, iaitu Amerika Syarikat dalam kedua-dua novel, namun terdapat perbezaan yang utama dari segi latar masa kedua-dua novel dihasilkan. *An American Brat* yang ditulis dan diterbitkan pada masa pra9/11 Amerika, dan oleh sebab itu memberikan gambaran yang berbeza tentang kehidupan di Amerika Syarikat berbanding dengan kehidupan dalam *Home Boy* karya H.M. Naqvi, iaitu sebahagian besarnya adalah pada masa pasca9/11 Amerika. Kedua-dua novel tersebut biasanya dibaca melalui cerminan krisis identiti yang dialami oleh watak-watak protagonisnya. Mengambil kira konsep hibriditi yang diutarakan oleh Homi K. Bhabha sebagai alat analitikal, walau bagaimanapun, kajian ini menggunakan ajukan, ambivalens dan ketidakmesraan, konsep yang diutarakan dalam hibriditi, bagi merangsang pemahaman pengalaman dan keputusan yang diambil oleh watak-watak protagonis, iaitu Feroza dan Shehzad. Selain mengkaji sama ada tiga elemen yang dipilih dari konsep hibriditi wujud dalam diri protagonis, kajian ini juga menyelidiki sama ada watak-watak tersebut bertanggungjawab terhadap keputusan mereka untuk sama ada tinggal di Pakistan atau di Amerika Syarikat pada penghujung cerita kedua-dua novel tersebut.

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Hybridity is a concept which is comprehensively discussed by Homi K. Bhabha in his book, *The Location of Culture* (1994). Through hybridity, an individual is able to participate in and be a part of two or more cultures. This amalgamation of more than one culture enriches the individual's identity as he/she is then a hybrid who might be able to straddle more than one culture. Such a person possesses an awareness of the various facets to his/her identity. Such hybridity could be seen as a weakening for the colonisers, for if the colonised adopt part of the colonisers' culture as their own, they begin to diminish the sense of difference between themselves and the colonisers. With this they also begin to destabilise the 'superior/inferior', 'self/other' binaries by which the colonisers operate.

Bhabha argues that because colonial authority is shaped by colonial discourse, it no longer is a stable entity; instead it exposes its weaknesses:

The stereotype can also be seen as that particular 'fixated' form of the colonial subject which *facilitates* colonial relations, and sets up a discursive form of racial and cultural oppression in terms of which colonial power is exercised. (112)

This makes possible the questioning of colonial allegations of supremacy and breaks down the exclusiveness of the colonisers' language, education system, lifestyle, mode of transportation, thoughts and ideologies, and everything related to the colonisers into one that is no longer restricted to and ruled by the colonisers' notion of social hierarchy.

As binary notions of identity between *Self* and *Other* are impaired, an alternative space of the "in-between", neither the dominant *Self* nor the marginalized *Other* is created. This "in-between" space is a space of hybridity, a space in which two or more elements come together, and it is exactly the creation of this space that makes the colonisers lose their dominance when their culture is forced upon the colonised, creating a hybridised culture for the colonised (Bhabha 3-5).

Bhabha mentions various concepts that fall under the umbrella of hybridity: ambivalence, cultural difference, enunciation, stereotype, mimicry, unhomeliness, and Third Space. This study uses the concepts of mimicry, ambivalence, and unhomeliness

According to Bhabha, mimicry is a strategy of colonial power that represents “a reformed, recognizable *Other* ... as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite” (86). In other words, although mimicry retains its contemporary meaning of copying, it is not necessarily a negative concept in hybridity. In fact, mimicry places the colonised or the *Other* at an advantage. According to Bhabha’s school of thought, mimicry is a metonym of presence and is “at one resemblance and menace” (123).

Bhabha also explains that culture consists of opposing dimensions and perceptions and that “the colonial presence is always ambivalent, split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference” (153). Therefore, the colonised *Other* then comes to assimilate in himself aspects of his own cultural identity and that of the coloniser’s.

In a lecture called *The World and the Home*, Bhabha explained that unhomeliness is commonly found in works of fiction: “In the House of Fiction [there is] the deep stirring of the “unhomely.” You must permit me this awkward word—the unhomely— because it captures something of the estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world in an unhallowed place” (141). In an essay of the same title, however, Bhabha clarifies that the ‘unhomely’ is not a concept that is restricted to a condition that is either colonial or post-colonial; it has a “resonance that can be heard distinctly, if erratically, in fictions that negotiate powers of cultural difference in a range of transhistorical sites/historical conditions and social contradictions” (142).

Although hybridity as a concept in postcolonialism first emerged as a response to cultural imperialism, Bhabha’s work can also be used today to understand the condition of being a migrant in a foreign society. Today, hybridity as a literary concept can be used to comprehend and bring to light the problems that are caused by the influx of cultures.

Through an expression of the experiences of literary characters, writers today, more than ever before, are using literature as an authentic medium to discuss and address the real-life problems of people who are caught between different cultures and/or places. Two such writers are Bapsi Sidhwa and H.M. Naqvi, the authors of *An American Brat* (1993) and *Home Boy* (2010): the two novels used in this study. Sidhwa is a renowned Pakistani writer who has authored five novels: *Cracking India*, *The Pakistani Bride*, *The Crow Eaters*, *An American Brat*, and *Water*. She has been awarded with numerous accolades for her work over the years, a few of which are the Bunting Fellowship at Radcliffe/Harvard, the Lila Wallace-Reader’s Digest Writer’s Award, and the Sitara-i-Imtiaz, Pakistan’s highest national honour in the arts. Her novels are realistic works of literature as they concern partition and immigration, both of which she has experienced in her own life. She has thus gained immense popularity with her work and has made a mark for herself in the literary academe. Naqvi, on the other hand, is an emerging Pakistani novelist who has authored *Home Boy* and is presently working on his second novel. Winner of the

DSC Prize for South Asian Literature for *Home Boy* in 2011, Naqvi also experienced migration to the United States at one point of his life and is therefore able to translate his real-life experience into his work of fiction. By studying these authentic works of literature to find out whether hybridity exists in the main characters and whether or not it affects their decisions to choose to stay for good in a particular country, one can deduce what happens in real-life situations such as these.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In examining literature based on Sidhwa's work, there is a pattern that seems to be taking shape. It is found that a considerable number of studies are based either on the 'trauma' caused by the Pakistan-India Partition and the long-lasting after-effects of it or the post-colonial feminism that her characters are found to embody. Some examples of this pattern are: *Gender, memory, trauma: women's novels on the Partition of India* (2005) by Kabir, *Border work, border trouble: Postcolonial feminism and the Ayah in Bapsi Sidhwa's Cracking India* (2000) by Hai, and *Telling tales: women and the trauma of Partition in Sidhwa's Cracking India* (1999) by Bahri.

Moreover, the novel is treated mostly as a *Bildungsroman*, a novel of formation or a coming-of-age story. Anupama Jain, for example, in her study of *Hybrid Bildungs in South Asian Women's Writing* (2001) discusses diasporic bildung and anonymous autonomy in *An American Brat*. She argues that the novel reveals how an immigrant woman in the U.S. continues to give shape to the iconography of the country even as she fashions herself. Shirin Zubair, on the other hand, in *Crossing Borders, Reinventing Identity (ies): Hybridity in Pakistani English Fiction* (2012), takes theoretical insights from the works of Stuart Hall (1993) Bhabha (1994), Pennycook (2007) and others to problematise the complex notion of identity(ies) with regard to the construction of identity(ies) in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *An American Brat* (65). In her work, however, I have found that hybridity is studied on a superficial level, with almost no other reference to it than the following:

The protagonists are stranded between two worlds not knowing where they stand—displaced in both cultures they struggle to find an alternative space, and to create alternative discourses to articulate their experiences of transculturality. (66)

This work, on the other hand, delves deeper into the concept of hybridity to find out whether it actually exists in the form of mimicry, ambivalence, and unhomeliness in Feroza. Moreover, it also strives to investigate if (in case the three elements of hybridity do exist in Feroza's personality) these hybrid elements compel Feroza to make the decision of deciding to stay in Pakistan or in America at the end of the novel.

On the other hand, in the case of Naqvi's *Home Boy*, there have been studies such as *The Tragic Mulatto Reconfigured: Post 9/11 Pakistani-American Identities in HM*

Naqvi's Home Boy and Moshin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2011), *Post 9/11 Identity Crisis in HM Naqvi's Home Boy* (2012), and *Cosmopolitanism, Fundamentalism, and Empire: 9/11 Fiction and Film from Pakistan and the Pakistani Diaspora* (2013) that have explored the novel through the lens of the identity crisis that is experienced by the main character following the September 11 attacks. Bidhan Chandra Roy, for instance, in *The Tragic Mulatto Reconfigured*, explores 9/11 as a seminal event in the representation of South Asian diasporic identity in Naqvi's *Home Boy* and Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. However, while he believes that 9/11 changed everything and therefore reading *Home Boy* from a hybrid perspective is not enough, in this study I argue that 9/11 is a merely a catalyst that may or may not cause the hybrid elements of mimicry, ambivalence, and unhomeliness to be brought to the surface of the protagonist's personality. I also strive to find out if these sub-concepts of hybridity influence Shehzad to make the decision of living either in the United States or in Pakistan.

In conclusion, it is important to mention that no studies till date have used the concepts of mimicry, ambivalence, and unhomeliness together to highlight the experiences and final decisions of Feroza and Shehzad in *An American Brat* and *Home Boy*.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are twofold. They are also interdependent, as the successful completion and result of the first objective facilitates the completion and affects the outcome of the second objective.

Firstly, this study strives to determine whether Feroza in *An American Brat* and Shehzad (also known as Chuck) in *Home Boy* have signs of hybridity in terms of mimicry, ambivalence, and unhomeliness. As a fact, the emergence of hybridity depends on a number of factors. In some circumstances, hybridity may even not appear at all. However, when it does, the mode of its manifestation in one character may be entirely different from that in another character. Hence the objective of this work is to study and find out if hybridity exists specifically in the form of the three selected elements in the protagonists.

The second objective is aimed to elucidate the effects of hybridity with regard to the main characters' decision to stay in the United States or return to their homeland. Decisions of residence are often informed by multiple factors and it should be noted that this study does not overlook the other factors as having an impact on the characters' final decisions. It does, however, strive to find out if hybridity, if found to be existent, also has a hand in their choice of final residence in a country.

1.4 Conceptual Framework

One of the seminal concepts in postcolonial discourse is hybridity, which Bhabha discusses at length in *The Location of Culture* (1994). However, the term 'hybridity' has had a long and evolving history in which its meaning has changed multiple times. Robert JC Young explains in his book *Colonial Desire* (2005) that the term was first used in the field of philology in 1862 to refer to "a composite word formed of elements belonging to different languages." He further mentions that in the nineteenth century, hybridity was largely used to refer to a living thing produced from parents of different breeds. In the twentieth century, however, there was a shift in the meaning of the term as it came to describe cultural phenomenon (6). Young also states in the same book that in the field of linguistics, hybridity is central to the work of Jacques Derrida and Paul de Man, who claim that hybridity is a general characteristic of language, where it is impossible to decide the primary meaning (20).

Today, the term hybridity is used in the postcolonial theory to refer to a "Third Space" (Bhabha 53). In postcolonial theory, hybridity is important as it redefines the concept of culture, which was before thought to be rigid and unchangeable. Although Western ideology may encourage otherwise, the differences in culture are not inflexible, rigid, or primeval. As discourse and power are controlled by the West, social differences between the colonisers and the colonised occur. Edward Said draws from Michel Foucault's notion of discourse in his book *Orientalism* (1978). Orientalism, as Said explains in his study, is a Western concoction for dominating the East (88). He rejects the Western homogenization of world history from a privileged Eurocentricity (Selden 190), advocating a "decentered consciousness" and interdisciplinary work in dismantling systems of domination (Selden 191).

It is by this questioning and redefining of the systems of Eurocentric domination that cultural hybridity comes into action. Bhabha (1994) refers to hybridity as an "in-between" or "interstitial" space that gives birth to new signs of identity through a negotiation of differences (1-2).

In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha claims that identity comes with an imposed image, which may not necessarily represent the truth about the individual, called "stereotyping." To stereotype a person is to fix a label on his identity; for instance, Frantz Fanon claims that to make a Negro talk pidgin is to label him based on his skin colour (32). However, the stereotype is not a simple idea. It is a complex entity, as it is both an identification (as the colonised individual embraces the imposed image), and also a disavowal of difference (as he or she rejects it because he or she does not wish to be associated with the fixed labelling of his or her racial identity). This identification and disavowal is called ambivalence, which brings us to the next point in Bhabha's colonial discourse.

An important concept in colonial discourse is mimicry, which is also connected to ambivalence and stereotype (Childs 131). Bhabha (1994) claims that mimicry is a

strategy of colonial power that represents “a reformed, recognizable *Other* ... as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite” (86). Fanon writes in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) that in order to compensate for his inferiority complex, the colonised assumes the culture of the colonisers. The colonised is elevated in his “jungle status” when he adapts the colonisers’ cultural standards; “[h]e becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle” (418).

As Bhabha says, English literature contains “mimic men” in abundance, such as Dr Aziz in E.M Forster’s *A Passage to India* (1984), Dr. Veraswami in George Orwell’s *Burmese Days* (1999) and Ralph Singh in V.S. Naipaul’s *The Mimic Men* (2002). These characters are read in terms of mimicry as mockery, as they disrupt the colonial authority (Childs 131). The ambivalence of mimicry turns into a menace, as the colonisers perceive themselves in the position of the colonised. As Joseph Conrad’s Marlow says in *Heart of Darkness* (1995), “the thought of their humanity – like yours – the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar. Ugly” (qtd. in Childs 132).

Bhabha also discusses another important aspect under the umbrella of hybridity: unhomeliness. In a lecture called *The World and the Home* (1992), given at Princeton University, Bhabha sheds light on the concept.

You must permit me this awkward word—the unhomely—because it captures something of the estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world in an unhallowed place...In that displacement the border between home and world becomes confused; and uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting. (141)

He describes ‘unhomeliness’ as a moment of realisation/shock that happens in a person’s life when he/she suddenly realises that his/her ‘home’ is not limited to the confinement of the four walls that surround him/her, rather, the world is his/her home.

In order to understand characters that live in both colonial and postcolonial times as well as in different areas of the world where there is a constant intermingling of cultures, ambivalence, mimicry, and unhomeliness are important concepts that fall under the umbrella of hybridity.

This study explicates the main characters in the two selected novels: *An American Brat* (1993) and *Home Boy* (2010). The researcher’s interpretation is based on Bhabha’s theory of hybridity as discussed in *The Location of Culture* (1994). Pertaining to this, mimicry, ambivalence, and unhomeliness are the three elements of hybridity that are focused upon. It is also examined if, in case these elements are found to be present, they have a role to play in the main characters’ decisions to stay in the US or return to their homeland, Pakistan.

1.5 Significance of the Study

An American Brat (1993) was written by Sidhwa. What seems to have been the trend in the study of her works till date is an inclination towards the subjects of trauma, identity crisis, and the Indo-Pak Partition

Moreover, much ink has been spilled by writers of the Subcontinent pertaining to the issue of Feminism; the reason being that it seemed to be the most pressing problem of the bygone years. However, time has changed, and other issues have come to the surface in our part of the world; one of which is hybridity (an area where there is a lack of comprehensive research in respect to Pakistani fiction).

Home Boy (2010) by Naqvi is also different from most of the other Pakistani literature in that it does not deal with the themes of Feminism or Partition either. Benefiting from these authors' unique presence and perspective, this work studies the two selected novels from a different perspective: hybridity.

This study is unique in the sense that it explores the effects of mimicry, ambivalence, and unhomeliness, concepts under hybridity, which have not been used together by any studies to highlight the experiences of the protagonists and their decisions to stay in the US or return to Pakistan in the two novels.

1.6 Scope of the Study

Sidhwa is the author of five novels: *Cracking India* (2010), *The Pakistani Bride* (2008), *The Crow Eaters* (1990), *An American Brat* (1993), and *Water* (2013). Her work has been published in translation all over the world. Out of the five novels, I have chosen *An American Brat* as it deals with the concept of hybridity and is set in a very different time zone and location from the other four novels. Naqvi's *Home Boy* is similar in location to *An American Brat* but not in the time zone.

This research focuses on the texts *An American Brat* (1993) and *Home Boy* (2012). It narrows down to the selected characters in the two texts: Feroza in *An American Brat* and Shehzad in *Home Boy*. Moreover, this research focuses on the concepts of mimicry, ambivalence, and unhomeliness.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

There are various theories that are encompassed under the huge umbrella of postcolonialism. However, this study has chosen to use the concepts theorised by Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* to analyse the development of the characters in the novels. This is because Bhabha's concepts of hybridity are believed to be the most applicable concepts that can be used in the multiracial and multicultural setting of the novels.

In addition, this study only concentrates on some selected concepts from Bhabha's that include unhomeliness, mimicry and ambivalence. This is because these concepts are important in the due course of the analysis to reveal the reasons behind the characters' final decision in the novels. Finally, the analyses and findings of this study are limited to the corpus of the two selected novels.

1.8 Methodology

This study entails a thorough critical analysis of the novels *An American Brat* and *Home Boy*. I choose to study the protagonists in the novels in accordance to the concepts of mimicry, ambivalence, and unhomeliness as presented in Bhabha's theory of hybridity in *The Location of Culture*. This interpretation requires me to use these concepts to find out whether hybridity exists in Feroza Ginwalla in *An American Brat* and Shehzad in *Home Boy*.

In order to accomplish the first objective of finding out whether hybridity exists in the main characters, comprehensive research is done on postcolonialism, hybridity, and its sub-concepts: mimicry, ambivalence, unhomeliness. Besides shedding light on these concepts in Chapter 2, which is the Literature Review, a summary of the lives of the authors (as they are closely related to the lives of the main characters in their novels) and a discussion on the critical reception of their works are also included in the same chapter. Moreover, the third chapter of this work consists of the analysis of the three selected concepts of hybridity to find out if they are present in Feroza and Shehzad. Chapter 3 also addresses the second objective of finding out whether hybridity influences Feroza and Shehzad's decision of choosing to remain in the United States or returning to Pakistan by examining the effect of the presence, or vice versa absence, of each of three elements of hybridity on the protagonists.

Finally, this study demonstrates how literature is an authentic medium through which the downtrodden are given a voice. By finding out whether or not hybridity affects the characters' decisions to choose to stay for good in a particular country, one can deduce what happens in real-life situations such as these.

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