



RESEARCH PAPER

Colonial Legacies and the Third Space: A Comparative Study of Hybridity and Mimicry in Moni Mohsin's Novels

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ABSTRACT

Mimicry and hybridity are key concepts of postcolonial theory given by Homi K Bhabha. These ideas explain how colonized people adopt the culture of their former masters, often creating new, mixed identities. The aim of the study is to discover these two significant concepts within the socio-cultural framework of the South Asian elite class as portrayed in Moni Mohsin's novels *The Diary of a Social Butterfly* and *Between You, Me and the Four Walls*. The research used qualitative comparative analysis approach to analyze how Mohsin use satire and characterization as a literary tools to reflect the enduring colonial mindset in Pakistan's upper class. Further, by employing a comparative literary analysis both novels have been analyzed. It also used theory of Homi K Bhabha to explore elite characters from the novels and highlighted how they navigate their identities through mimicry of Western norms as well as the resulting hybridity in their cultural or personal expressions. The results show that both novels reveal a deep entanglement of postcolonial identity struggles rooted in linguistic and cultural hybridity in the Pakistani society.

KEYWORDS Post-Colonial Literature, Homi K Bhabha, Hybridity, Mimicry, Third Space, Pakistani Society

Introduction

Post-colonialism refers to a framework that examines the aftermath of imperialism and colonialism on the social, cultural, and political aspects of society (Nair, 2017). After becoming independent, many colonies still grapple with the lasting impacts of colonial rule. This legacy is particularly evident in identity struggles, where individuals and communities navigate between their indigenous heritage and colonial influences. In South Asia, Pakistan is one of those countries who has also been colonized, which is evident in their personalities and way of living. The socio-economic structure of the country reflects a deep-rooted class divide, where each class operates within its own cultural codes and social conventions. In Pakistan, English is often associated with prestige, social status, and educational attainment, while cultural aspirations frequently emulate Western standards. Pakistan's postcolonial reality is rooted in its complex history, which spans British colonial rule, the partition of India in 1947, and the nation's subsequent formation as an independent state. The legacies of colonialism linger in various facets of Pakistani society, contributing to ongoing struggles with identity, governance, and modernity (Ahmed & Tamoor, 2021). The legacies of colonialism and its impact on society are highlighted by the literature. Moni Mohsin is one of the Pakistani writers who used satire as a tool to highlight the impact of colonialism on society.

This article explores how Mohsin's novels *The Diary of a Social Butterfly* and *Between You, Me and the Four Walls* reflect key postcolonial themes, particularly hybridity and mimicry. In his book *The Location of Culture* (1994), Homi K. Bhabha theorized the concepts

of *Hybridity*, *Mimicry*, and the *Third Space* to present the social condition of a hybrid community where people are still obsessed with their former colonizers and tries to mimic them in their daily routine, but this hybridization and mimicry often leads them to a Third Space, where neither they fully Westernized nor fully connected to their cultural roots. This conflict indicates the shattered identity of people living in a society where multiple cultures are linked with each other.

By exploring the themes of hybridity and mimicry in Mohsin's novels, the research demonstrates how literature reflects and critiques postcolonial conditions. Mohsin's novels offer critical reflection on the perseverance of colonial legacies in language, behavior, as well as cultural ideals, contributing meaningfully to postcolonial studies.

Postcolonial literature has been emphasized by the different scholarly attention, still, works of Moni Mohsin remain underexplored within this framework (Chaudhry, 2021). The novels of Mohsin *The Diary of a Social Butterfly* and *Between You Me and the Four Walls*, offer rich examples of how hybridity and mimicry visible in the lives of Pakistan's elite (Shah, 2018). Bhabha's theory of mimicry is highlighted in the struggles of the Moni characters, where the colonized subject incorrectly imitates the colonizer, making ambivalence as well as subtle resistance. In spite of these connections, there are some scholars (Riaz, 2018; Dizayi, 2015) have engaged with Mohsin's novels through the lens of postcolonial theory. Thus, the study fills the gap by moving her work as critical postcolonial literature, signifying how her satire reproduces broader questions of identity, power, and cultural shift in Pakistan's context.

Literature Review

Mimicry and hybridity are two important concepts that highlight the impact of post-colonialism on people. These concepts reveal how individuals in post-colonial societies navigate the complexities of identity, culture, and power after colonial rule. Mimicry narrates the way through which colonized people imitate their former masters, while hybridity reflects the mixing of different cultures, languages and identities. Valarmathi (2004) research' examined that "Colonial echoes" illustrate the aftermaths of colonialism that continue to shape societies long after formal colonization ends. These echoes still linger in the contemporary society, especially in the form of power, resources, and exploitation. (Valarmathi, 2024).

Edward Said: Orientalism and the Colonizer/Colonized Binary

Edward Said's disruptive work, *Orientalism* (1978), laid the foundation for post-colonial theory by critiquing how the West constructs the East as "Other". Said says that the East (like Asia or the Middle East) is often shown in a way that makes it seem strange, old-fashioned, and weak. This picture was created by the West to make it seem okay for them to control or rule over those places. Additionally, Said argues that this false image was often used to justify military campaigns, colonial rule, and the violence that came with them (Hamadi, 2014).

In Mohsin's novels, Said's concept of Orientalism can be found out in the form of elite class, thinking they are superior than others and through the degradation of lower class. The elite's internalization of colonial attitudes toward their own culture highlights the lasting power of these binaries. Mohsin's novels, such as *The Diary of a Social Butterfly* (2008) and *Tender Hooks* (2011), also depict this harsh reality of internal colonization. The protagonist of the novel *Butterfly Khan*, is a wealthy and frivolous woman, who mocks her traditional values and idolizes the Western modernity.

The Diary of a Social Butterfly is one of the famous novels that is based on the different aspects of society and also highlights the lifestyle of the people of post-colonialism (Mohsin M. , 2008). In this novel, she used the different words and that show that colonialize affects the people's mindset of the East and highlights the impact of the colonialism. For example, her obsession with luxury goods and her preference for English over her native language reflects a deep-seated inferiority complex rooted in colonial history. A significant study by Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin in *The Empire Writes Back* (2002) also focused on how post-colonial elites often perpetuate colonial ideologies to maintain their privileged status (Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2002).

Another research by Fatima Riaz in (2001) revealed that the Moni highlighted the impact of the colonialism on the mindset of the people of the western areas in her novels. The study focuses on the portrayal of the elite Pakistani women, epitomized by the character Butterfly, who leads a life centered on nightlife and superficial pursuits. Mohsin critiques the lingering colonial mindset evident in such characters, exposing how the psychological remnants of colonial rule persist in post-colonial societies (Riaz, 2021).

Arian (2018) explored Indian diasporic literature is the most talked topic of this era, which portrays the suffering of diasporic people and their longing for their far away homes and the quest for ethnic and racial identity in an interconnected world with a multiple marginalized identities. Selvon and Naipaul, the two prominent figures who are victim of postcolonial migration, highlights the suffering of displacement and homelessness caused by diasporic migration. The longing to reconnect with their roots and the sense of "Home" as well as formation of identities are the essential features of displacement. Researcher conducted the diasporic study of *The Lonely Londoners* and *A House for Mr. Biswas* which awakes a sense of identity through the character of Selvon and Biswas and their desire to build a past upon which their cultural present may rely. The researcher examined how adaptation of westernized culture and living in a hybrid society led to identity crisis. Through the chosen novels, the authors' tries to explore the downfall of Indian migrants in Trinidad due to adopted cultures, imitation of foreigners and hybrid culture (Arian, 2018).

Material and Methods

In this research, Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) employed to investigate cause and effect through identifying various combinations of factors or conditions that result in a particular outcome. This study explores post-colonial themes within the texts selected from the Moni Mohsin's novels *The Diary of a Social Butterfly* and *Between You, Me, and the Four Walls*. By focusing on 4 carefully chosen excerpts from each novel, this research aims to analyze or compare the illustration of mimicry, hybridity, as well as identity crises in the elite class of post-colonial societies. Through comparative analysis, the study emphasized how these themes are not only shaped by historical colonial effects but also reflect constant cultural dynamics in post-colonial Pakistan.

Data Collection

A comprehensive textual analysis of *The Diary of a Social Butterfly* and *Between You, Me, and the Four Walls* was conducted to collect and interpret data. It involved careful and detailed reading of both novels to find out important post-colonial thoughts, themes, character journeys, and storytelling styles. The analysis was focused on discovering how the protagonist of the novels, Butterfly Khan symbolizes the contradictions or challenges of living in a post-colonial elite society. The analysis also examined how the writer uses language, humor, and sarcasm to point out problems in the behavior and lifestyle of the elite people living in post-colonial society.

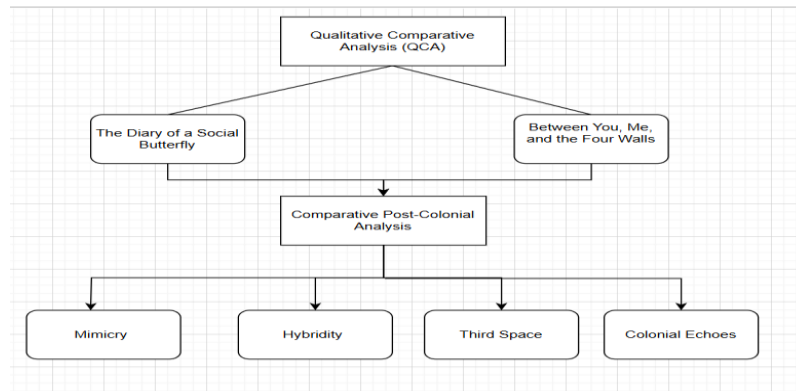


Figure 1: Research Framework

Theoretical Framework

The collected data has been analyzed under the lens of post-colonial theories, with a particular focus on Homi K. Bhabha's concepts of mimicry and hybridity. Mimicry was explored through the character of Butterfly's imitation of Western ideologies, lifestyle and attitudes. The collected data revealed how imitation leads to identity crises and create a third space for the colonized people. Hybridity was analyzed as a transformative process through which Butterfly directed her identity within the limitations of a post-colonial elite society.

Examined Linguistic Markers: In Mohsin's novel, multiple languages are employed, reflecting the interaction between Western and Pakistani cultures. The protagonist's use of code-switching and anglicized terms was carefully analyzed to reveal the existence of mimicry. These linguistic choices emphasized how Butterfly has adopted colonial language and expressions, frequently reflecting a tension between her natural cultural identity and the pressures of a post-colonial environment.

Analyzed Narrative Strategies

The collocation of traditional and modern elements within the narrative was examined to depict hybridity. This juxtaposition established how Butterfly's identity was neither fully traditional nor entirely modern but rather a fusion of the two, reflecting the fluid as well as transformative nature of cultural hybridity.

Through this framework, the research presented a critique of colonial legacies and their determined influence on elite societies. By examining Butterfly's character and her interactions, the study illuminated how Mohsin skillfully used her narrative to represent the lingering impacts of colonialism on identity, culture, and social hierarchies.

Ethical Considerations

Since the research involves textual analysis, it does not require any ethical approval for data collection involving human subjects. But, to maintain academic honesty, all primary and secondary sources have been accurately cited. Proper referencing standards were adhered in order to ensure the authenticity and reliability of the analysis. Furthermore, efforts have been made to present an unbiased interpretation of the texts, supported by well-known theoretical frameworks and scholarly literature.

Results and Discussion

In an increasing globalized world, where people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds interact with each other more often, ends up adopting each other's beliefs, traditions and languages. They start to imitate each other which leads them to a hybrid identity. Moni Mohsin is one of those authors who highlighted the existence of *Hybridity* and *Mimicry* in post-colonial Pakistan, and by analyzing the characters, she depicts the influence of colonialism. Through the character of *Butterfly Khan* the protagonist of both novels, Mohsin has provided a rich insight of the postcolonial society where the upper class is still obsessed with their colonizers and tries to imitate them.

The Role of Hybridity in Identity Formation

Hybridity means creation of something new by mixing two different entities. It is a combination of two different elements to create something unique and novel. This concept is frequently used in post-colonial theory, sociolinguistics and cultural studies. It depicts the process through which different languages, identities and traditions meet with each other and produce a new mixed culture. In her novels, Mohsin has also used the technique of language duality to represent the social condition of Pakistan and the obsession of Pakistani people with the English language. Linguistic and cultural hybridity depicts the mixing of languages and cultures, especially in places that were once ruled by other countries. People may speak both their local language and the colonizer's language in daily life. Culturally, they may follow both traditional and modern ways. This creates a mix of identities, where people belong to more than one world at the same time.

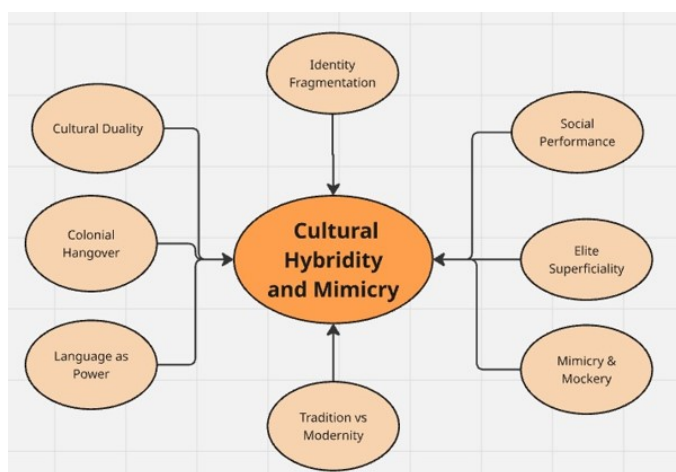


Figure 2: Cultural Hybridity and Mimicry

Linguistic Hybridity in Mohsin's Works

Butterfly Khan, the main character from the novels *The Diary of a Social Butterfly* and *Between You, Me, and the Four Walls*, is an actual depiction of a hybrid identity. The term *Hybridity*, as used in Moni Mohsin's works, describes the combination of several cultures with sociological and linguistic phenomena, illustrating the complexity of post-colonial identities. Butterfly, the protagonist of the novels often uses code-switching in her conversation by borrowing words from the Urdu language.

Extract: "I live in Lahore. In a big, fat kothi with a big, fat garden in Gulberg, which is where all the khandani, khaata-peeta types live." (P4, *The Diary of a Social Butterfly*)

Living in a big *Fat Kothi* (a large house) indicates her superiority complex, she uses English phrases "*I live in Lahore*," "*big, fat garden*," and "*Gulberg*" to emphasize the point that she lives in an expensive house, which is located at the most expensive area of the city, she deliberately includes these phrases to reflect her modern, cosmopolitan outlook and aspiration to associate with the elite urban class. She prefers using English words to show off her wealth and Western-style sophistication, which are qualities often linked to the rich and powerful in postcolonial societies. Beyond her use of English, she also adds culturally loaded Urdu terms like "*Khandani*" and "*Khaata-Peeta*" which reflect her connection with her roots. She uses the word "*Khandani*" that refers to being from a respected or noble family and the Urdu term "*Khaata-Peeta*" literally means "well-fed," but here indicates prosperity and wealth. Both of these words have great significance in South Asian culture, highlighting social hierarchies and class division

Extract: Oho Kulchoo, I said, aik tau you also take off baal ki khaal. Plane, rocket what's the difference? Its all same to same. (P6, Between You, Me and the Four Walls)

The character of the protagonist successfully depicts the social condition of Pakistani people, especially those who belong to the elite class. The higher class of Pakistani society tends to code-mix and code-switching while speaking. She consistently shifts from the English language to her native language. She uses Urdu words and phrases like *Oho, aik tau, and baal ki khaal* which literally means *Typical of you or you always. While take off baal ki khaal* is a hybridized version of Urdu idiom *Ball ki Khaal utarana*. Instead of fully translating the actual idiom, the protagonist uses a hybrid version which highlights her hybrid language.

Cultural Hybridity as a Reflection of Colonial Legacy

In the post-colonial context, cultural hybridity refers to when colonized people share their cultures and traditions with their colonizers while adopting their too. This mixing of different cultures can be beneficial as they can be creative and empowering but at the same time, it can be harmful to conventional beliefs because when people adopt new traditions they often forget their own. Mohsin's novels included in this study are filled with examples of cultural hybridity by depicting characters who navigate the blend of traditional Pakistani values with Western influences.

Extract: So the chor gestured towards them with all his gun and said, Have you looked at the way you're dressed? Specially you're your daughters? Wearing nighties, and those too, half-sleeved? Haven't you thought how you will look if thieves came to your house? (P70, The Diary of a Social Butterfly)

The speaker narrates the humorous situation when the robbers come to a house for heist but end up preaching the lesson about culture and morality. The mention of daughters *wearing nighties and half-sleeved* dresses represents the coexistence of multiple cultures in Pakistani society. The ironic statement of robbers about being *dressed properly* in a *Muslim way* shows the cultural expectations of Muslim women. Muslim women historically wore modest and decent attire. They covered their bodies properly according to their religion and culture. In South Asian countries, women wear *Shalwar, Kameez, and Dupatta* which represent their culture and are seen as modest garments. Even when foreign women visit Pakistan, they wear this modest dress to show solidarity and to respect the cultural beliefs of Pakistani society. While *Nighty* is a Western dress that is used as a nightgown. Over time, Muslim women have adopted this dress for home wear rather than just sleepwear. However, this adaptation exists alongside traditional expectations of modesty and creates a tension between modernity and culture. The robber's statement shows that even criminals

follow and enforce cultural norms, which means these expectations are deeply rooted in society. They themselves are corrupt but still, they know their cultural values.

Extract: So she adviced me that now kulchoo's labradog is dead, I should get a small sa designer dog for myself only. Apparently, it's called a Choo Haha and all jimmy Choose-wearing fashionistas like Parish Hilton vaghera, they all have them. (P17, Between You, Me and the Four Walls)

This passage represents *cultural hybridity, and consumerism*, in postcolonial elite society. *Chihuahua* is a Mexican dog breed which is considered as a family-friendly dog. Her friend advised her to buy a *Chihuahua* as a fashion status. While the protagonist can't even pronounce the name properly and calls it *Choo Haha* instead. Her mispronunciation adds a humoristic touch to the situation, revealing the ironic situation of how she has adopted the Western culture but does not understand it. She also calls the brand *Jimmy Choo* as *Jimmy Choose* which reflects her lack of knowledge about foreign brands but she tries to include their name in her conversation to seek validation and to be a part of their culture.

Mimicry as a Social Critique

In postcolonial studies, mimicry refers to how colonized people imitate the culture, language, or behavior of the colonizers. This can be both a way to fit in and a way to make fun of or challenge the colonizers. It often creates a mix of both cultures, making something new but also showing the power differences between them.

Extract: Minnie tau changed overnight. Bechari used to be quite plumpish and quite shortish. And darkish also. Ab tau, she's so thin, spends all her time in the gym and has a personal trainer, and I think so thori si liposuction bhi karwai hai. Also I think she's had chemical peel done because her color become creamy-creamy jaisa. (P47, The Diary of a Social Butterfly)

The drastic change in the appearance of Minnie overnight, her weight loss, skin-lightening treatments, and the hours she spends in the gym reveal her desire to mimic and to meet Westernized beauty standards. The focus on *creamy-creamy* skin shows Minnie's complex about her skin tone and her obsession with white skin, it reflects her post-colonial mentality that lighter skin is more beautiful and a symbol of respect and status. This concept came from the colonial era when white skin was linked to power and beauty while black skin was considered ugly and showed powerlessness. Her desire to be slim like Western females reveals the influence of wealthy and modern society. The phrase *Bechari used to be quite plumpish and quite shortish. And darkish also*, reflects post-colonial mentality by contrasting the past and present appearance of Minnie. The author cleverly uses the technique of malapropism to criticize the elite class who cannot even pronounce the actual word but still do so in an effort to imitate their former colonizers as the protagonist mispronounces liposuction as *liposuction*.

Extract: it was nice event but problem was there was too much of talking. Long-long, bore-bore questions and long-long, bore-bore answers and long-long, bore-bore speeches, vaghera. Loved Arun Dhati's sari, vaisay. (P52, The Diary of a Social Butterfly)

Butterfly goes to a book fare, not because she is interested in books and knowledge, but as a desire to mimic colonizers. She doesn't want to learn something new or seek knowledge. All she wants to act like an educated and sophisticated person. But after spending some time at the book fare, she gets bore and wants to go back home and watch

Mera Sultan (Turkish Series). The only thing that she finds interesting at the book fare is the dress of the author. This imitation and the desire to be like others, reveals the aftermaths of colonialism. Post-colonial people seek validation and world recognition. They go to the events just to save their social face.

Extract: "I'm very worried that someone might shout at Janoo or my poor shweetoo Kulchoo, that paki, go home. I'm not so worried about myself because you know I look like a foreigner with my light light skin and my light light hairs and my light light eyes." (P66. Between You, Me and the Four Walls)

Butterfly's comfort for her safety, due to her *light light skin, light light hairs and light light eyes* depicts her post-colonial mentality. Instead of getting angry on the discrimination, she feels relief that she looks like a foreigner. In this situation a patriotic person would feel humiliation and irritation, but Butterfly feels nothing instead she is proud for her *light skin, light hairs and light light eyes* that resembles with the features of foreigners. The phrase *paki, go home* reflects the racial discrimination against the Pakistani people. Butterfly worries about her husband and son because of their color. Both have the dark skin tone like any other Asian person. And due to their color skin tone, they are one the hate list. But instead of raising her voice against this discrimination and degrading behavior, Butterfly feels relief that she looks like the colonizer.

Extract: We could just cover nice sa statue of a Greekan maiden like I saw in House and Garden ki magazine in a castle in North Folk (we could get a plaster wallah to make a copy) and get a crystal ka chandelier for the dining room (from Dubai only) and throw out all those bore moorhas and get some leather sofas with steel kay arms. (P59. Between You, Me and the Four Walls)

Butterfly represents the elite class and their desire to be like the Europeans, she imitates the colonizers not only through her language, food and dresses but she also wants to renovate her house in European style while refusing the traditional elements. The desire to place a *Greekan maiden* and replacement of *traditional moorha* with *leather sofas* ironically represents the contemporary society of Pakistan and criticizes the elite class who wants to transform their interior according to Western styles while replacing their conventional materials. "*Greekan maiden*," "*North Folk*," "*chandelier*" adds humor in the situation and reveals her failed attempt to mimic them.

Conclusion

The research has examined the existence of hybridity and mimicry in a contemporary Pakistani society through analyzing Mohsin's Works *The Diary of a Social Butterfly* and *Between You, Me and the Four Walls*, it becomes evident that both novels, while distinct in structure and tone, share significant thematic and stylistic similarities. Despite portraying different time periods, both works of Mohsin reveals striking thematic and stylistic parallels. The author skillfully uses humor, colloquial language, and satire to critique the Westernized Pakistani elite and highlights the persistent influence of colonial mentality. Using Homi K. Bhabha's idea of the *Third Space*, the research indicated that many characters live in a kind of "*in-between*" space, not fully traditional, and not fully modernized but a fusion of both.

The research highlighted that the obsession of the Pakistani society with Western lifestyles, appearances, and ideologies that has not only suffered but strengthened over time. Both novels are written years apart but they demonstrate an increasing wish to mimic Western norms, frequently at the cost of cultural authenticity. The internalized colonial

mindset highlights that independence has not removed the psychological and also social imprints of colonial rule. Overall, Moni Mohsin's work gives reveals post-colonial society and expose the contradictions and complexities of identity in a globalized world by using the humor as a tool. Both novels based on the different impacts of the post-colonial theory given by Homi K. Bhaba by illustrating how the *Third Space* is not only a zone of mimicry also of hybridity, however, also one where the ghosts of colonialism continue to repeat in everyday life.

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