



Article Type: Original Research

Page Numbers: 135-149

Received: 24 November 2023

Accepted: 27 June 2024

Published: 16 March 2025

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.22034/cls.2024.140126.1409>

Author Details:

1. Assistant Professor of English Language and Literature, Department of English Language, Faculty of Humanities, Khatam University, Tehran, Iran. (Corresponding Author)
h.shabrang@khatam.ac.ir

2. MA in English Language and Literature, Department of English Language, Faculty of Humanities, Khatam University, Tehran, Iran.
b.tajik@khatam.ac.ir

Tearing between the Cultures and Turning from Somebody to Nobody in the Hybridized Space of Immigration in Mohsin Hamid's *Moth Smoke*

Hoda Shabrang^{1*}; Bahare Tajik²

Abstract: In the immigration studies, the diasporic female experiences are not indicatively considered as the prevailing experiences of immigrant men who are claimed to stand for all immigrants. Thus, it is challenging to examine female migration experiences and the consequences that are ignored. This article explores the ignored parts of female migration experiences as subalterns and focuses on the process of assimilation in the host country following theories of Gayatri Spivak's post-colonialism. In the age of migration the female characters of the former colonies are being culturally hybridized when they get in touch with the Western factors. That hybridity and their ambivalent attitude between the cultures, they are becoming the mimic women that has not only affected them and led them to identity crisis but also contributed to the dangling of them between cultures lost and confused. This article will carefully examine the consequences of assimilation of the female character, Mumtaz, in Mohsin Hamid's *Moth Smoke* in the hybridized atmosphere. *Moth Smoke* is the debut novel by British Pakistani novelist, Mohsin Hamid, which provides the context for the clash of cultures in its portrait of a country violently divided against itself. Sometimes, assimilation with host cultures are to the extent that the female immigrant becomes baffled and confounded. With shattered identity, she is neither a modern Westernized woman nor an Eastern glorified mother and wife.

Keywords: Gayatri Spivak; Hybridity; Identity; Immigration; Mohsin Hamid; Subaltern.

Citation: Hoda Shabrang; Bahare Tajik. "Tearing between the Cultures and Turning from Somebody to Nobody in the Hybridized Space of Immigration in Mohsin Hamid's *Moth Smoke*". *Critical Literary Studies*, 7, 1, 2024, 135-149. doi: 10.22034/cls.2024.140126.1409

1. Introduction

Mohsin Hamid considers himself a “half-outsider,” having lived in Lahore, New York, and London, and “considered all three home” (Hamid, *Discontents* xiii). Although in his literary career he is committed to be the transnational voice, this global perspective does not rule out national attachment, and the writer has also befitted his access to Western media outlets to draw attention to Pakistan’s struggles. Mohsin Hamid is a well-known author in literary circles worldwide; he has also received praise in Pakistan, and was awarded the 2018 Star of Excellence by the President for his services to literature. Besides immigration and diaspora, *Moth Smoke* (2000) deals with different issues such as corruption, betrayal and even Pakistani’s nuclear competition. By allocating multiple voices to different groups and classes in *Moth Smoke* Hamid portrays perfectly the in-betweenness of immigration.

Moth Smoke presents the picture of Eastern society surrounded by the presence of Western values and cultural rifts. The wealthy characters of the novel, like Ozi and Mumtaz, are pursuing individualistic lifestyle affected by their touch with New York during their studies. Since Ozi and Mumtaz have spent long time in New York and the contact with Western society, they develop individualistic character traits making them culturally hybrid. The hybridized individualistic Western values lead Mumtaz to become an infidel to his husband and have extramarital affair, going against the cultural values of the Eastern society with rigid patriarchal and sexual control over women. In other words, the novel presents various problems generated by the cultural loss that is result of the cultural hybridity between Eastern and Western cultural values. Another issue which will be dealt with in this study is tracing the process of assimilation with host culture by immigrants in liminal space of migration. Immigration experience is always accompanied by tension and conflict. In other words, the immigrant is always under a command to assimilate into the host culture as soon as possible. This paper will carefully examine the consequences of assimilation of the main female character of the selected novel in the hybridized atmosphere.

Although almost all migration studies believe that the hybridized atmosphere is actually an impossible situation, the diaspora opens up and narrates a liminal space (Beyad & Sadeghyan Fard 19). Most of the time this assimilation is to the extent that the immigrant turns to specter in liminal space of migration neither belonging to his own culture nor to the host culture. Immigrants in this case are completely lost and confused wandering between the cultures. With shattered identity, she is neither a modern

Westernized woman nor an Eastern glorified mother and wife. As Spivak states this kind of immigrant women turn from “somebody” to “nobody” (*Selected Subaltern Studies* 77). If the character is entrapped in this place, she neither belongs to her native culture nor to the host culture. This will prevent her from creating a sense of home and belonging, making her alienated and silenced forever. The present article explores the ignored parts of female experiences in migration as subalterns and it focuses on the process of their assimilation in the host country in accordance with the Gayatri Spivak’s theories of post-colonialism and immigration.

2. Literature Review

Mohsin Hamid's novel, *Moth Smoke*, has gained international fame and critical acclaim and it explores the complexities of immigrant identity and offer an insight into the lives of immigrants living in the post-9/11 world. Previous studies have explored this novel from different perspectives i.e. political, psychological and neo-liberal etc. Maëlle Jeanniard du Dot (2022) in her article “A Hazy World Seen through Smoke: Threshold Effects in Mohsin Hamid’s *Moth Smoke*” analyzes Mohsin Hamid’s *Moth Smoke* through the motif of the threshold. The motif of threshold unfolds thematically as an expression of Pakistani society’s inherent political divisions. Babaienian et al. (2022) in her article “In-between History and Memory” shows how trapping inbetween two cultures leads indigenous people to search for new cultural identity. Moshtaq Bilal (2020) in his study titled, “Reading Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* as a World Novel”, explores how Mohsin Hamid’s fiction challenges the so-called “natural law” of world literature according to which a work of literature has to be first born into a national literature before circulating into world literature.

In a recent article entitiled “Facilitating the Process of Integration to Host Culture for Female Immigrants through Hybridized Identities in Mohsin Hamid’s *Exit West*”, Shabrang and Tajik (2024) state that the representations of the experience of the migrant woman underline how this shift in identity does not only come in the form of a physical alteration of her body and geographical crossing of borders but, more so, in her symbolical and psychological being (27). “Nowrouzi Roshnavand (2019) in his article, “Hybrid Marginality, Intercultural Bonding and Reconstruction of Black Motherhood” explains that a colored woman is traditionally restrained to the domestic roles of a devoted wife and mother, thus obliged by the totalitarian patriarchal discourse to sacrifice her subjectivity for her husband and children. Muhammad Safdar (2018) in his article “Gender in Hamid’s Fiction: A Reflection on the Cultural Paradigm Shift Brewing

among Pakistani Women”, portrays how modern women are not satisfied with the roles traditionally ascribed to them as obligatory; they rather feel stifled by them. Abdul Ghafoor Awan et. al. in the article entitled “Psychoanalysis and Transformation of Heroes in Mohsin Hamid’s Novels *Moth Smoke* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*” (2011) discuss the novel from psychoanalytical vein and analyze the protagonists’ miserable conditions. This study provides an analysis of *Moth Smoke*, by looking at the theme of shattered migrant identity and cultural misunderstanding in the context of a postcolonial world. It examines how Hamid’s novel challenges the notion of a single, unified identity and the way in which the female characters explore the idea of belonging in a postmodern world.

3. Methodology

Gayatri Spivak in her original text "Can the Subaltern Speak?" made the concept of inferiority problematic when she questioned the claims of inferior studies. This question is raised that can the subordinate speak? This rhetorical question repeats itself throughout her article. She concludes that the subaltern cannot be heard or read and even cannot be reached since what is said is either ignored, forgotten or it merely “disappears from the official, male-centered historical records” (Morton 33). Spivak’s argument reveals how the migrant woman’s identity transforms from “somebody” to “nobody”, she further more hopelessly agonizes as she also turns from a former member of a society to someone who is just “the Other” (*Selected Subaltern Studies* 77). Spivak condemns British exile from Sati practice in India in the early 19th century. She argues that the colonial intervention with Indian female subordinates legitimizes imperial hegemony and perpetuates the dual hierarchical confrontation of British/Indian barbarism. Most importantly, Hindu law does not consider "the free choice of woman as the subject" to be sacrificed at her husband's funeral. Her identity is defined and configured on the basis of the essentialist politics and universality of the colonial discourse (“Can the Subaltern Speak?” 273).

In the field of immigration studies, the individual experiences of women in the diaspora are not significantly considered as the dominant experiences of immigrant men who are still claimed to represent all immigrants ("Can the Subaltern Speak?" 119). Given the migration of women as a "highly sexual and gendered" phenomenon, as argued by Ladel and Omotayo, the need to highlight and centralize women's specific experiences of migration becomes an urgent issue (54). Moreover, the humanities demonstrate this ability by examining the aesthetic and cultural expression that presents and discusses the immigrant situation. From the seemingly unknown masses and the raw number of

immigrants, turn your attention to the individual expression of the immigrant experience (Spivak, *Aesthetic Education* 74). In other words, unlike other contexts that emphasize the overall experiences of immigration, the humanities place more emphasis on the individual or personal experience of the immigrant. The use of the literature as a representation of the immigration experience not only provides new evidence of relevant issues on the subject, but also raises new issues and questions that are similarly relevant in understanding the immigrant situation.

This article studies the postcolonial issues like ambivalence, cultural hybridity, mimicry, assimilation and identity crisis in Mohsin Hamid's novel *Moth Smoke*. The story is set in Lahore in the late 1990s and represents the predicament faced by Westernized women of this society, who are bound by the restrictions imposed on them by the patriarchal order and constrained by the demands of their roles as mothers and wives. Although living abroad has bestowed the main female character, Mumtaz, a hybridized identity, it is the cause of her confusion and nonconformity later both in America and Pakistan. Hamid's novel explores a woman's thoughts and feelings as a separate individual, as a part of the family, and as a member of the society. In particular, the novel presents the woman protagonist who feels walled up or constricted by stereotypical and patriarchal roles. Mumtaz belongs to an affluent family of Lahore yet still feels the suffocating limitations imposed upon her because she is a woman.

Some migrant women are torn between two extremities of the first and third world. In other words they are caught mentally and physically between two worlds. Sometimes dwelling inbetween different cultures force them to assimilate to the host culture to the extent that they lose their native identities and at the same time they are not open in accepting their new identities. These female immigrants are lost, confused and alienated. They turn to specters wondering in hybridized space since they are neither modern westernized women nor glorified eastern mothers and wives. In fact, as Spivak states, they turn from somebody to nobody (*Selected Subaltern Studies* 77). In *Moth Smoke*, although Mumtaz undergoes the assimilation process in New York and turns to a Westernized educated woman, later on when she returns to her home land she faces identity crisis. Mumtaz is culturally Westernized, and is very individualistic in contrast to the communal Eastern society. The gender roles and stereotypes of Eastern society,

the image of submissive mother and dominating father is avoided by Mumtaz, which comes with the price and causes her downfall.

This article addresses questions such as: How does assimilation take place in hybridized space for female immigrant in *Moth Smoke*? How does assimilation with the host culture cause ambivalence of female character in the selected novel? To what extent the new hybridized identities of female immigrant prevent her to expand a sense of home and belonging in the host countries? How does the assimilation process in *Moth Smoke* exceed sometimes to the level that makes the immigrant women lost and confused? To what extent confusion and shattered identity of immigrant woman silenced and paralyzed her in hybridized space.

4. Analysis

4.1. Western Culture Influencing Assimilation

Ozi and Mumtaz have spent a long time in New York and the interaction with Western society cultivates individualistic character traits making them culturally hybrid. We will focus on the postcolonial problems of the main female character and its consequences, which was ignored in previous studies, either because the focus was on the male characters or they labeled the female character as a disgraced woman both as a mother and a wife. One of the crucial problems of Eastern women in their societies is the gender discrepancy. Women's inferiority is internalized first by their families and later by social rules and regulations. Eastern Women as subalterns, have very limited roles in their communities and countries and inferiority to male members are imposed upon them very restrictedly. Now, they believe that "their status has been that of a subjugated, colonized, and subservient because of the social upbringing process and procedure", and needs to be changed drastically (Sarup 23).

This article analyzes the assimilation of female characters in different hybridized spaces of America and Pakistan. Mimicry is a trope devised by postcolonial writer Bhabha with the critical vein to counter colonial discourses and authority. This concept is also used in the name of assimilation in many postcolonial sources. Spivak has discussed this notion of mimicry or assimilation as promoted by colonial discourses as a psychological construction of the colonized subjects who is similar in habits with the colonizers so that be compliant to be ruled ("Imperialism and Sexual Difference" 92). According to Ashcroft et al. "The problem for colonial discourse is that it wants to produce compliant subjects who reproduce its assumptions, habits and values – that is, 'mimic' the colonizer. But instead it produces ambivalent subjects whose mimicry is never very far from mockery"

(13). Despite the attempt of colonial discourses promoting the mimic men as the basis for colonization, Spivak sees the psychological process of the colonized assimilated men and shows that it does not only confirm the colonial rule rather it also subverts the colonial rule because it turns closer to a mockery of their authority (Spivak, "Imperialism and Sexual Difference" 93).

Assimilation or mimicry of the colonized subjects is only the partial presence for Spivak. This partial presence has got its own weaknesses and limits and they cannot remove all the inappropriate subjects with this appropriation. Mimicry thus becomes at once resemblance and menace for the colonial authority. In *Moth Smoke*, cross-cultural contact zones of the Asian societies as well as contact zones between Eastern and Western cultures are presented. The characters appear to be divided along with the contact zones among the numbers of cultures in Lahore, Pakistan, cultural hybridity of the characters in cross-cultural contact zones in diasporic condition. Further, there are sub-cultural groups of drug users and smugglers. The concept of hybridity is a famous post-colonial trope used by Bhabha first and later by Spivak. Hybridity is defined as "one of the most widely employed and most disputed terms in postcolonial theory, hybridity commonly refers to the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization" (Ashcroft et al. 118).

The first part of Mumtaz's narration recalls her stay at New York and getting married to Ozi when she meets him and sleeps with him in a party. She begins her recollection of New York that displays her cultural hybridity and ambivalent attitude to the cultural norms of America and Pakistan. "Halloween. I'm dressed as Mother Earth. My roommate, Egyptian, English major, is improvising around the Cleopatra theme again. This year there's a sun motif. Ra, you know. Last year it was more Leo" (Hamid, *Moth Smoke* 147). Mumtaz's narration begins with the recollection of her New York college life. Despite the fact that she is a Muslim girl from Pakistan, she does not only celebrate Christian festival Halloween but also dresses as the Mother Earth, the cultural deity of very different culture. Her cultural hybridity and mimicry for her survival in America is clearly seen in this instance. According to Bhabha mimicry is "constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference" (*Location of Culture* 122).

The ambivalence, love-hate relationship between two different cultural values paves way for mimicry. The authority in the colonial discourses is formed on the very basis of mimicry and it has the nature of indeterminacy. Thus, mimicry or assimilation is the

indication of a double articulation; an intricate strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which “appropriates” the Other as it visualizes power. The Muslim Eastern girl, Mumtaz, mimics the look of Mother Earth and since she wants to assimilate with American culture while her Egyptian mate is doing the role of Cleopatra. The American culture and its mimicry have become the norms for the college students who study in America. There is double articulation of identity and it is normalized for them. Mumtaz herself accepts that her mimicking of the role of Mother Earth itself is ironic. The effect of cultural hybridity is great in the Third World characters living in America. They have made the parties and wine common things and find freedom to express them in such environment. The party culture and openness to sex is seen as being part of Mumtaz’s lifestyle that is unthinkable in South Asian society, let alone a Muslim society.

The party is great. I down some excellent ex, low on zip but high on joy, if you know what I mean, and make out with one or two acquaintances. But at some point (you saw this coming) I find myself on the fire escape with the brown boy I’d seen before. We’re dancing, just the two of us, and his name is Ozi and he’s wickedly sexy, and what the hell, we spend the night together. So that’s how it all began. Nine months later we were married. My fault, of course. Because I should have known better. I should have known I wasn’t the marrying sort, even then. But I didn’t. Besides, I was in love. (Hamid, *Moth Smoke* 148)

Mumtaz narrates the events that unfolded at the Halloween party. In the narration, it becomes clear that Mumtaz has not only become open to the alcoholic drinks but also open to the drug use and sex. She uses ex, a kind of drug, and feels joyous in the party. She sees a sexy brown-skinned boy in the party and develops a desire for his body and she spends a night with him. They marry after nine month of that physical union. Mumtaz soon repents about her decision to marry because she decided about it in the time when she had no knowledge what a marriage actually meant. We see that she expected the same freedom American culture taught her even after the marriage.

4.2. Lost and Confused between Two Cultures

In *Moth Smoke*, we clearly see that there are cultural differences in Mumtaz and other conventional women in her family and friends’ regarding their view about marriage. The conventional women prioritize marriage with the fear that the future of a woman remains uncertain if they do not marry a good and wealthy man from their own culture. But as a free girl grown up with air of free lifestyle, Mumtaz does not understand what they actually mean. But at the same time, having no knowledge of marriage and being

influenced by the conventional views, she decides to marry. “I shouldn’t have married him. He proposed during a snowstorm in March, looking cold as only a Pakistani man in America can. And I said yes. Because I was in love with him, and I had no idea what marriage really meant, and I didn’t know myself” (Hamid, *Moth Smoke* 148).

She recalls how the people of her circle praised the couple and depicted Ozi as a prince and her as a slut and gossiped that she was very lucky to get the husband like Ozi (Hamid, *Moth Smoke* 149). Before Mumtaz knows what marriage actually means, she shows Ozi as her possible husband in a party of South Asian Student Association where everybody praises her luck. Her friends envied the couple as most of her friends adore Ozi and her parents become happy. They got married in Karachi as soon as both of them complete their study. At the beginning phase of their marriage, they loved each other very much; their relation was passionate and she shares everything with him. She does not feel any apathy too the marriage: “It’s not hard to remember what things were like then, in that first year of our marriage, when we were so good together, even if my memories are a little colored now by what happened later” (Hamid, *Moth Smoke* 148).

Sharp contrast and cultural difference are presented in terms of marriage. There is passion everywhere in their marriage: “We went out all the time. We danced like crazy, both of us sweating and stripped by the end of the night. We had insane sex. Once, we were caught on Ozi’s desk by his officemate, who later swore he hadn’t seen anything and always blushed when I spoke to him at the firm’s cocktail parties. But the best part of it was the talking. I was completely open with him” (Hamid, *Moth Smoke* 148). However, in Asia the husbands control their wives. There is the instance of turbulent marriage in Mumtaz’s family too; Mumtaz shares Ozi the story of the turbulent and violent relation between her father and mother. Her father controls and beats her mother. Sometimes so hard is the punishment that it might cause life-time damage: “I remember what it felt like to tell him how my father used to beat my mother, once so badly she lost her hearing in her left ear” (Hamid, *Moth Smoke* 148).

The gender roles and stereotypes of Eastern society, the image of submissive mother and dominating father is avoided by the young couples Ozi and Mumtaz. It is one of the instances of cultural hybridity, at the same time there is mimicry of the Western form of marriage. The reason behind their non-conformation to the stereotype of their native social codes is to avoid social othering from their open minded Americans as their attitude to the Muslims is not without prejudices and orientalist views. To avoid the cultural stereotype an American has formed about the Muslim people, both Ozi and

Mumtaz mimic and assimilate the Western ways even after the marriage. There is strong web of racism against the Arab people or the Muslims. So, they do not want to be caught in the web of racial orientalist stereotype in America is clear. This results in their mimicry of the Western lifestyle though they see how marriages go in the Eastern societies.

4.1.3. Hybridized Identity Causing Nonconformity

Mumtaz continually displays the cultural hybridity and mimicry of Western, individualistic lifestyle. She does not want to be a mother even after the marriage when she knows she is pregnant. More ironic is the fact that a Muslim girl from Eastern Islamic culture, where Muslim women are not even allowed to use contraceptives are compelled to give birth to the babies helplessly as far as their body permits, describes herself as a condom person and decides to abort the baby as soon as she finds she is pregnant: “I told Ozi about it sadly, because I’d decided to have an abortion. But he was ecstatic. I’d never seen him so happy. He told me I had to think about it for a week. And he did something I still haven’t forgiven him for: he told his mother (Hamid, *Moth Smoke* 150). Ozi’s happiness at her pregnancy, sharing the news of her pregnancy with his mother, her visits to them with gifts and suggestions are the features of communal culture of Asia that Mumtaz is unable to understand. She is more western than her native, South Asian culture.

This shows that the hybridized identity of the woman causes cultural loss of an immigrant in Western countries. The loss of culture and sense of belonging to a culture or a family leads a person to identity crisis. The idea of identity is the result of crisis of belonging as Zygmunt Bauman argues, “The idea of ‘identity’ was born out of the crisis of belonging and out of the effort it triggered to bridge the gap between the ‘ought’ and the ‘is’ and to lift reality to the standards set by the idea—to remake the reality in the likeness of the idea ...” (20). The crisis of belonging, the feeling that she is nothing in the family starts to haunt Mumtaz after unwillingly bearing all the consequences of pregnancy and giving birth to a baby boy bearing a lot of pain. She recalls how she lacked any emotional attachment to her kid even after mothering him.

Mumtaz shows the boredom and fear in her marriage, and recalls that she felt no motherly attachment to the baby she had given birth. She has no affection for him; she has no wonder, no joy or happiness for the motherhood. “I started to get bored. And then I started to get frightened. Because when I looked at the little mass of flesh I’d produced, I didn’t feel anything. My son, my baby, my little janoo, my one and only: I felt nothing for him. No wonder, no joy, no happiness” (Hamid, *Moth Smoke* 152). She feels as if she

will go insane with the mental void. Her lack of attachment to the kid she has given birth is one of the prominent aspect of American culture which “the parents fulfill their responsibilities to their children while the children are young, but when the children reach ‘the age of independence,’ the close child-parent tie is loosened, occasionally even broken (Althen and Bennett 8).

Mumtaz is seen displaying individualistic American values rather than glorifying motherhood, which is regarded as a matter of pride in Eastern societies. It is clear that Mumtaz is clearly fulfilling her responsibility to her kid, Muazzam, like the American parents do to their kids. She played with him, read books to him, bought him clothes, breastfed him and cleaned his shit and dirt. However, she feels guilty: “I was a monster. But I didn’t want to be. Staying with my baby was the right thing to do, what everyone expected of me. My mother would agree with Ozi. Even my friends. So I gave in. I said I’d write freelance from home” (Hamid, *Moth Smoke* 153). She feels guilty at the lack of her attachment to her child and she is just fulfilling the duty her husband, mother and other members of the society expect from her.

4.1.4. Longing Home in Search of Center

After a while living in America, Mumtaz’s loss of interest and passion for the place and local politics becomes evident. She just misses the home. She feels that people are mistakenly think that the center of the world lies at the point they stand. Actually, she needs to find out another center to come out of this lack of interest and passion upon the city where she lives. She lacks emotion and feelings towards any issue around her, she misses her home and she lacks the center that suggests about her identity crisis: “Slowly, even though I thought it would never happen, New York lost its charm for me (Hamid, *Moth Smoke* 155). After giving birth to a baby, the husband and wife did not have sufficient time to talk even though they both played with the baby. The family lacked the communication and failed to provide her some sense of belonging.

Mumtaz recollects the memories how she entered New York for the first time and fell into its charm. Now, to her greatest fear, it lost all the charms for her. The critics of diaspora see the importance of family in such identity crises. More than the place, caring family with cultural awareness becomes important for her in diasporic condition. Olwig explores the connection among family, ethnicity and the place for a diaspora. He does not give much currency to place as place is constructed point of reference. More than the place of origin, family, ethnicity and sense of community is focused for the construction of identity in his study of diaspora (68). Though Ozi was a good husband, he started to

go to work and returned tired, there was no sexual union and passion left and they talked less in the family. He used to spend some time with the kid and sleep when he returned home tired. The emotional distance created within family play important role to alienate Mumtaz and miss the home instead of renewing any interest with New York.

New York was the place where Mumtaz had a lot of memories. It gave her the freedom she never would be able to get in Asian society. It westernized her and she became sexually independent in New York going against the Eastern cultural values with rigid sexual codes for women: "I lost my virginity in New York. I had my mind blown open by the combination of a liberal arts education and a drug-popping international crowd. I became tough. I had fun. I learned so much" (Hamid, *Moth Smoke* 155). Mumtaz mimics all the free, western lifestyles and cultural values in expense of her Eastern cultural values and now, she is missing home and she has got a feeling of void in the Western world.

Assimilation and mimicry lead Mumtaz to the disillusionment to the West. However, her hybridity, ambivalence and mimicry are more for her survival in the western world rather than resistance to western, colonial mentality. She is one of the mimic women who pursue independent life even after she returns to Lahore with her husband. It is the loss of love and respect to her husband; she develops a passionate, physical attachment to her husband's best friend Daru. In *Moth Smoke*, the female character, Mumtaz is neither a westernized educated woman nor a glorified eastern mother and wife. In other words, her hybridized identity causes her downfall. Hamid's novel has successfully shown this postcolonial impact in the backdrop of Pakistani society.

5. Conclusion

The exploration of Hamid's *Moth Smoke* reveals that the effect of immigration can be very different on female characters. In *Moth Smoke*, the hybridized identity of Mumtaz causes alienation which leaves her lost and confused both in her native home as well as America. In other word, migration can show the complexity of the effects on the transformation of the migrant woman's identity. These effects are far beyond the sheer binary as to whether migration can be strictly considered as either constructive or destructive to the migrant woman's identity.

Migrants leave their native country and try to assimilate themselves into their new countries, they are left with no choice but to exchange their identities for another. *Moth Smoke*; however, presents various problems generated by the cultural loss that is the result of the cultural hybridity between Eastern and Western cultural values. As the novel

progresses, one sees more problems compounding upon the characters, especially the main female character, Mumtaz. This shows that the hybridized identity of the woman causes cultural loss of an immigrant in Western countries. Unsurprisingly, the loss of culture and sense of belonging culture or family leads a person to identity crisis. The crisis of belonging, the feeling that she is nothing in the family starts to haunt Mumtaz after unwillingly bearing all the consequences of pregnancy and giving birth to a baby boy bearing a lot of pain.

Mumtaz shows the boredom and fear in her marriage, and recalls that she felt no motherly attachment to the baby she had given birth. She feels guilty at the lack of her attachment to her child and she is just fulfilling the duty her husband, mother and other members of the society expect from her. Out of her boredom, she wanted to do the fulltime job but with this guilt that she is unable to love her kid, or else what her husband and relative would consider is she does so. After a while, New York has lost the charm for Mumtaz. After giving birth to a baby, the family lacked the communication and failed to provide her some sense of belonging. She learnt liberal lifestyle there; studied liberal arts education and came into the touch with drug using international crowd. She mimics all the free, western lifestyles and cultural values in expense of her Eastern cultural values and now, she is missing home and she has got a feeling of void in the western world.

Assimilation and mimicry lead Mumtaz to the disillusionment to the West. However, her hybridity, ambivalence and mimicry are more for her survival in the western world rather than resistance to western, colonial mentality. She is one of the mimic women who pursue independent life even after she returns to Lahore with her husband. Thus, in the age of migration in postcolonial era, the female characters of the former colonies are being culturally hybrid when they get touch with the western factors. That hybridity and their ambivalent attitudes between the cultures, they are becoming the mimic women that has not only affected them and led them to identity crisis but also contributed to the dangling of them between cultures lost and confused. In *Moth Smoke*, the female character, Mumtaz is neither a westernized educated woman nor a glorified eastern mother and wife. She is in trap of being nobody and belonging to nowhere.

References:

- Althen, Gary and Janet Bennet. *American Ways: A Cultural Guide to America*. London: Intercultural Press, 2011.
- Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. *Postcolonial Studies: The Key Concepts*. Routledge. 2013.
- Awan, Abdul Ghafoor, Shaista Andleeb and Farhat Yasin. "Psychoanalysis and Transformation of Heroes in Mohsin Hamid's Novels *Moth Smoke* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*", *Journal of Education and Practice*, vol.7, no.1, 2016, pp. 10-17.
- Babaeinia, Leila, et al. "In-between History and Memory: Leslie Marmon Silko's Fictional World". *Critical Literary Studies*, Vol 4, No. 2, 2022, 37-52. doi: 10.34785/J014.2022.786
- Bauman, Zygmunt. *Identity: Conversations with Benedetto Vecchi*. Cambridge: Polity, 2004.
- Beyad, Maryam Soltan and Behzad Sadeghian Fard. "Ethics of Truths and the Diasporic Novel: Radical Ethics in Ben Okri's *The Famished Road*". *Critical Literary Studies*, 6, 2, 2024, 19-34. doi: 10.22034/cls.2024.63175
- Bhabha, Homi. K. *The Location of Culture*. London; New York: Routledge.1994
- Bilal, Mushtaq. "Reading Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* as a World Novel", Brill, Jul 2020. https://brill.com/view/journals/jwl/5/3/article-p410_6.xml?language=en
- Hamid, Mohsin. *Discontent and Its Civilizations: Dispatches from Lahore, New York and London*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 2015.
- _____. *Moth Smoke*. London: Penguin, 2011.
- Jeanniard du Dot, Maëlle. "A Hazy World Seen through Smoke: Threshold Effects in Mohsin Hamid's *Moth Smoke*", *Angles* [Online], 14 | 2022, Online since 01 April 2022, <http://journals.openedition.org/angles/5450>
- Ladele, Omolola A. and Adesunmbo E. Omotayo. "Migration and Identities in Chika Unigwe's Novels." *Studies in Literature and Language*, vol. 14, no. 3, 2017, pp. 52-57. CSCanada, doi: 10.3968/9437.
- Morton, Stephen, *Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*, Uk: Routledge, 2003.

- Nowrouzi Roshnavand, F. "Hybrid Marginality, Intercultural Bonding and Reconstruction of Black Motherhood in Alice Walker's *Meridian*", *Critical Literary Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 2019, pp. 5-30. doi: 10.34785/J014.2019.817
- Olwig, Karen Fog. "Place, Movement and Identity: Processes of Inclusion and Exclusion in a 'Caribbean' Family." Eds. Waltraud Kokot, Khachig Tölölyan and Carolin Alfonso. *Diaspora, Identity and Religion: New Directions in Theory and Research*. New York and London: Routledge, 2004: pp. 53-71.
- Safdar, Muhammad, "Gender in Hamid's Fiction: A Reflection on the Cultural Paradigm Shift Brewing among Pakistani Women", *Asian Women*, Vol. 34, No. 2, 89-109, 2018.
- Sarup, Madan. *Identity, Culture and the Postmodern World*. Uk: Edinburgh University Press, 1996.
- Shabrang, Hoda and Bahare Tajik, "Facilitating the Process of Integration to Host Culture for Female Immigrants through Hybridized Identities in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*", *Critical Language and Literary Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 31, 2024.
- doi.org/10.48308/clls.2023.103777
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012.
- _____. "Can the Subaltern Speak?". In *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. Lawrence Grossberg and Cary Nelson. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988. 271-313.
- _____. "A Conversation with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: Politics and the Imagination, interview by Jenny Sharpe", *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 28, no. 2, 2003, pp. 609-24.
- _____. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.
- _____. "Imperialism and Sexual Difference." *The Oxford Literary Review*, Vol. 7, 1986. Pp. 225-240.
- _____. *Selected Subaltern Studies*. Oxford University Press. 1988.