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Linguistic and Social Mimicry in Post-9/11 Diasporic Fiction: A Comparative Study of *Burnt Shadows* and *Home Boy*

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Abstract

This paper examines how linguistic and social mimicry has been depicted in post-9/11 diasporic fiction in *Burnt Shadows* by Kamila Shamsie and *Home Boy* by H. M. Naqvi. It elaborates on the idea of mimicry, as theorized by Homi K. Bhabha, in describing how diasporic characters attempt to gain acceptance in culturally and politically charged environments by mimicking dominant western linguistic and social norms. The study uses the method of qualitative textual analysis that highlights specific moments in the story that demonstrate linguistic, accentual and social performances. It shows that linguistic mimicry is a symbolic capital which enables limited inclusion in the dominant society and yet it is a way to assert the difference of the subject. Social mimicry is also a process of integration and preservation, highlighting fluidness and variability of diasporic identity in the post-9/11 world. The research demonstrates that mimicry is not just a matter of imitation, but a dynamic negotiation that is shaped by power structures, cultural dynamics and geopolitical pressures. This paper highlights the ambivalent nature of mimicry by juxtaposing the two texts, where the identities created through mimicry are accepted and rejected. It adds to postcolonial literary scholarship by highlighting the importance of language and social performance in the formation of diasporic identity.

Keywords: Postcolonial Mimicry; Diasporic Identity; Linguistic Mimicry; Social Mimicry; Post-9/11 Fiction; Hybridity; Cultural Negotiation.

Introduction

Over the past few decades, diasporic fiction has become an important field of study for the intricacies of identity, belonging, and cultural negotiation in contemporary world of globalization. This is particularly the case in the literature produced in the wake of 9/11, which has raised complex questions of identity and suspicion, surveillance, and geopolitical tension. *Burnt Shadows* and *Home Boy* are novels that provide rich depictions of diasporic Muslim subjects in societies that are under greater surveillance. These texts are not simply about displacement, but also highlight the complex and sometimes ambiguous ways in which people try to find a place within the frameworks of a dominant culture.

The central theme of this negotiation is the theme of mimicry, as developed by Homi K. Bhabha. For Bhabha (1994), mimicry is a strategy used by the colonial/postcolonial subject that mimics the language, actions and values of the dominant culture, who are "almost the same, *but not quite*" (p. 86). This is a formulation that is inclusive and exclusionary, embodying the ambivalence of mimicry. In post-9/11 diasporic contexts, mimicking the dominant norm is a pressing need, as people seek to prevent being marginalized or suspected. However, this is never a seamless fit, the subject is always caught in a position of partial belonging. In addition, mimicry can take many forms, mainly linguistic and social. Linguistic mimicry is the process of adopting the dominant language, accent and style of conversation. It is viewed as a means of cultural legitimation and social mobility. Pierre Bourdieu (1991) suggests that language is a symbolic power, and that some modes of speech are more valued than others. Thus, the way in which people talk is closely tied to questions of authority, acceptance and

identity. Social mimicry, in contrast, is not restricted to language, but extends to patterns of behaviour, lifestyle and cultural performances that are congruent with the dominant social norms. Though seemingly strategic, both forms of mimicry are signs of tensions in diasporic identity formation.

Home Boy is a vivid account of young Pakistani men who are aware of their identity and want to fit in with the new world, in this case, New York, by adopting westernized speech and behaviour. Initially, their employment of American slang, references to popular culture, and their developed cosmopolitan identities seem to be a successful negotiation of belonging. But the events after 9/11 break up this constructed identity, and reveal the fragility of their mimicry. In the same way, *Burnt Shadows* maps characters' travels from one geographical and historical setting to another, showing how mimicry changes according to the changing power dynamics. The novel emphasizes the endurance of cultural difference in the face of assimilation, thus reinforcing the possibilities of mimicry as a means of acceptance. Additionally, the post-9/11 era adds to the pressure of mimicry with the emergence of new types of surveillance and suspicion. In times of political crisis, the East is more likely to be seen as the "other" in Western discourse, as Edward Said (1978) has pointed out in his discussion of Orientalism. As part of this context, diasporic subjects are not only negotiating their cultural difference, but they are also reacting to imposed identities created from fear and prejudice. This makes it more difficult to mimic, because it is no longer a sure sign of acceptance. In such conditions, instead of earning acceptance, mimicry generates suspicion which may further lead to greater scrutiny.

While there is abundant scholarship on the subject of mimicry and diasporic identity, the comparative analysis of linguistic and social mimicry in post-9/11 fiction is still relatively unexplored. Most of the critical work is on mimicry as a concept, rather than on the various forms of mimicry and how these forms work in various texts. In addition, although there are individual studies of *Burnt Shadows* and *Home Boy*, there is limited research which brings them into direct comparative dialogue, with special attention to the concept of mimicry as the primary analytical lens.

Thus, this paper aims at filling this gap by giving a comparative study of linguistic and social mimicry in the selected novels. It seeks to examine the role of these modes of mimicry as negotiation strategies, the influence of the socio-political realities of the post-9/11 world, and the part these modes play in the formation of diasporic identity. The study distinguishes between linguistic and social aspects, providing a richer insight into mimicry and what it means. Ultimately, the paper proposes that mimicry in diasporic fiction of the post-9/11 period is not only about copying, but also about ambivalence, negotiation and resistance. It gives some access to the dominant spaces of culture, and exposes the continuity of divisions and lines of demarcation of inclusion/exclusion. This study, after a close reading of the selected texts, contributes to the postcolonial literary discourse by examining the complex interactions of language, social behaviour and identity in the contemporary diasporic narratives.

Literature Review

Mimicry is a key concept in postcolonial theory, of which Homi K. Bhabha is a key figure. Bhabha (1994) refers to mimicry as a strategy which involves the colonized subject mimicking the colonizer, who is "almost the same, but not quite" (p. 89). In this context the multiplicity of mimicry is emphasized: mimicry can be used to make things alike, but also to make them different. Mimicry does not lead to an absolute change but

to a “Partial presence” (1994, p. 88) that does not confirm but challenges the colonial discourse. The ambivalence lies at the heart of the understanding of mimicry, that is, the act of imitation, but also of negotiating identity, of destabilizing the categories of self and other. To complete this colonial and postcolonial argument, Bhabha adds that in this situation, mimicry “emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal” (1994, p. 86), meaning that identity is always incomplete, or even fractured.

Recent scholarship has further developed Bhabha's concept of mimicry, focusing on the psychological and socio-political aspects of mimicry in racialized discourses. Trucco and Pokitsch (2026) agree with Moore-Gilbert (1997) that the colonized subject is structurally marginalized and forced to assimilate with the dominant norms. It illustrates Bhabha’s concept of the similarity and dissimilarity, of simultaneously being the same and not the same (p. 86), as mimicry simultaneously replicates authority and also undermines it minimally. Furthermore, the ability to use imperial culture is necessary to be part of the dominant space, complicating identity formation as Spivak (1988) explains. These viewpoints enhance the concept of mimicry as a broken and power-laden negotiation.

Accordingly, the study of mimicry has been expanded to be based not on the mere imitation but on the performative and strategic aspect of mimicry. Bhabha’s formulation has been the focus of scholars on the performative and strategic aspects of mimicry, rather than mere imitation. However, in the context of colonial power relations, mimicry must be understood as a part of colonial power and colonial resistance, as Ania Loomba (2005) has proposed. Her version of mimicry is a learning and iterative process echoing that not only is mimicry about difference but also about its reproduction and thus its destabilization of fixed meanings. She emphasizes this aspect of mimicry, and its ability to question claims of authenticity. This repetition creates a gap between the original and the copy, and thus the artificiality of the colonial rule is made clear. Likewise, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2002) argue that mimicry serves a double purpose: it is a means of compliance with colonial norms and it is a subtle means of resistance. Following Homi K. Bhabha, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2002) argue that mimicry is a way of showing the instability of the colonial discourse, which is based on difference and ambivalence. Thus, mimicry can be an ideological battleground in which power is affirmed and contested.

This double function of cultural negotiation—as both compliance and resistance—has been demonstrated in postcolonial African fiction as well. Khan and Khattak (2025), in their reading of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, show that hybridity operates simultaneously as a survival strategy and as a source of psychological alienation, a finding that resonates with the diasporic predicament examined in the present study. While the colonial context of Achebe’s Igbo characters differs historically from the post-9/11 diasporic experience, the underlying dynamic of Bhabha’s third space—producing identities that are neither fully indigenous nor fully assimilated—traverses both literary traditions.

Furthermore, mimicry is always related to the formation of identity, particularly in diasporic contexts where individuals are required to perform within several cultural frameworks. Stuart Hall (1990) provides a useful theoretical perspective that speaks about the idea of identity as a process, rather than a static phenomenon. He believes cultural identity is “not an essence but a *positioning*” (Hall, 1990, p. 226) implying that it is fluid and dynamic. Hall (1990) further claims that identities are not static but are

continually being produced and reproduced in relation to representations. This implies that identities are not fixed but are created in the course of cultural practices and discourses. This view is similar to the idea of mimicry in that both highlight the performative and contingent aspects of identity. In diasporic contexts, people may mimic in order to negotiate with the dominant culture, to situate themselves within the dominant culture, while at the same time holding onto parts of their own cultural identity. Building on this, Siddiq et. al (2026) define mimicry as a coping strategy used by marginalized people to deal with a world that excludes them. Their analysis indicates that diasporic subjects are able to mimic the dominant linguistic and cultural discourses in order to be accepted but are still not fully included. Likewise, Ahmad and Hussain (2026) suggest that mimicry is a process of adaptation and resistance, and that it not only enables the subject to transform dominant cultural discourses but also reveals their fragility.

In addition, there has been a lot of postcolonial and sociolinguistic research on the use of language in mimicry. Language is used as a medium of communication and it is also a sign of identity, power, and social status. Pierre Bourdieu (1991) defines language as a symbolic capital that, as he says, is "linguistic exchanges [that] are also relations of symbolic power in which the power relations between speakers or their respective groups are actualized" (p. 37). This approach places emphasis on the role of some forms of language in the social context, and the authority and legitimacy of those who are able to successfully adopt those forms. Linguistic mimicry occurs when people mimic the dominant language or accent in order to fit in and gain social acceptance and mobility in diasporic contexts. But this can be a tense experience in which the native language identity is kept suppressed or marginalized.

Likewise, Fairclough (1992) emphasizes the importance of discourse in the processes of social identity and power. He believes in the social nature of language, namely that it reflects and constructs social structures, which is often referred to as language being socially constitutive and socially conditioned. According to Fairclough, "discourse is a practice not just of representing the world, but of signifying the world, constituting and constructing the world in meaning" (1992, p. 64). Such type of knowledge is especially important for the investigation of linguistic mimicry as it highlights the political and social context of language practices. As diasporic subjects seek to conform to the norms of the dominant culture, the dominant discursive forms are used, with inequalities and exclusions always detectable. The language/identity negotiation has also been discussed in previous literary traditions in postcolonial settings. Khan and Khattak (2025) examine how Achebe's conscious use of English in *Things Fall Apart*—hybridizing the colonial tongue through the incorporation of Igbo proverbs, idioms and syntactic structures into English—is a "sameness in difference" (Bhabha, 1994), or a performance of the same and the other, the dominant and the deviant, the familiar and the foreign. Though situated in a different historical moment, this dynamic anticipates the linguistic mimicry observable in post-9/11 diasporic fiction, where language remains a primary but ultimately insufficient tool of belonging.

Other scholars have not only discussed linguistic considerations, but also social aspects of mimicry, particularly with regard to cultural performances and use in everyday life. However, mimicry is not restricted to language, but to clothing, behaviour, lifestyle, etc., all of which contribute to the development of identity. Social mimicry is an important means for negotiating identity, as Hall (1990) suggests that identity is continually negotiated in the context of cultural practices. The performance is generally

strategic and aimed at gaining recognition in the dominant culture system. But they are also tense because the subject is aware that what he is doing is not genuine.

In the post-9/11 context, these dynamics are now worse for Muslim and South Asian diasporas. Following September 11, 2001, the environment of mimicry has been altered, by increased surveillance, suspicion and racial profiling. In this regard, the idea of Orientalism proposed by Edward Said (1978) remains relevant. Said is convinced that the west sees the east as different, and inferior, as an "other." That this discourse originated in the Orient's "adjacency" to Europe is a fact of history, as it also happened to be the site of "Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies" (Said, 1978, p. 1). These representations have been reinforced during the post-9/11 era through messages in the media and politics that produce a culture of Islamophobia (Kumar, 2012). Islamophobia is more than just a set of ideas; it is a system of power that shapes policy and public opinion, as Kumar (2012) argues. This is a context which may overburden the diasporic subjects with the obligation of performing acceptable identities, limiting the chances for complete belonging.

In the field of literature, novels after 9/11 have emerged as an important context for the study of these subjects. *Home Boy* (2009) by H.M. Naqvi and *Burnt Shadows* (2009) by Kamila Shamsie are more nuanced portrayals of a diasporic identity and cultural negotiation. *Home Boy* is a portrait of young Pakistani men in New York, seeking to find their place in a complex landscape of inclusion/exclusion. Naqvi (2009) emphasizes the ambiguity of the racialized self, and how 'brownness' is not a self that can be easily contained by the existing racial categories. This is a problem with mimicry because the characters' efforts to conform to dominant norms are complicated by a sense of difference.

The scholarship on *Home Boy* provides a recent context to these concerns in the post-9/11 world. Hussain (2025) stresses that identity in South Asian Anglophone fiction is flexible and historically and politically contingent. Likewise, Nawab et. al (2025) discuss the socio-psychological consequences of post-9/11 policies, including themes of alienation, surveillance, and internalized fear among Muslim youth. To this, Muhammad et al. (2025) add that the American Dream is undermined by racial discrimination, and the fragility of immigrant belonging is exposed. Likewise, *Burnt Shadows* has a transnational approach to identity, following the characters' journeys through historical and geographical settings. According to Shamsie (2009), Hiroko remains defined by history in ways that she cannot erase or comprehend. This shows the extent to which history affects the identity of individuals. The novel also emphasizes how memory and trauma can affect diasporic experiences, making it impossible to completely forget the past. As Upstone (2016) states, postcolonial literature frequently involves in spatial and historical displacement, showing how identity is created in the process of movement and displacement.

In recent times, more scholarly works have emerged on *Burnt Shadows*. Abbas et al. (2026) contend that the narrative structure and the multiple perspectives in Shamsie's work are not just aesthetic, but also a formal representation of historical trauma. Similarly, Azam et al. (2026) use Critical Discourse Analysis to uncover the ideological power structures that are encoded in language in the novel and the reinforcement of cultural hierarchy. Further, Banu (2026) draws attention to the 'intersectionality of female bodies' in the novel, as she notes that political conflict, migration and patriarchal control converge on women's bodies, resulting in multiple layers of trauma.

While there is considerable scholarship on mimicry and diaspora, there is a lack of

nuanced analysis of the topic which points to a significant gap in literature. Majority of the current studies focus on the general concept of mimicry rather than distinguishing between the linguistic and social aspects of mimicry. In addition, although each study on *Home Boy* and *Burnt Shadows* offers interesting insights, there is little comparative analysis that explores the work of mimicry in the two texts on a common framework. This comparative focus is lacking, which limits the kind of insights that can be gained into the role of mimicry in various narrative and historical contexts. Hence, the present study aims to fill this gap by providing a comparative analysis of linguistic and social mimicry in *Home Boy* and *Burnt Shadows*. The theoretical frameworks of Bhabha, Bourdieu, Fairclough, Hall and Said will be utilized in the study to have a more holistic view of the phenomenon of mimicry. In doing so, it contributes to ongoing debates in postcolonial and diaspora theory, particularly on the shifting dynamic of identity in the post-9/11 world.

Methodology

This research uses a qualitative research method based on close textual analysis of the linguistic and social mimicry in the two novels: *Burnt Shadows* and *Home Boy*. It employs an interpretive approach to analysis to explore the processes of meaning making in language, narrative and character behaviour. Specifically, the study focuses on linguistic and social mimicry, particularly in the imitation and negotiation of culture. It draws on the theoretical concept of mimicry introduced by Homi K. Bhabha, especially with regard to the 'partial' and 'ambivalent' similarity of mimicry. It uses the 'critical discourse analysis' technique developed by Norman Fairclough and the theory of language as symbolic capital developed by Pierre Bourdieu to aid the analysis. The data comprises text extracts that are purposefully and specifically selected relating to language, behaviour and cultural performances.

Results and Discussion

The examination of Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* (2009) and Naqvi's *Home Boy* (2009) shows how mimicry is a multi-layered strategy that helps diasporic subjects negotiate their identity in the turbulent socio-political environment of the post-9/11 world. The discussion is organized around two main types of mimicry: linguistic mimicry and social mimicry, with reference of the interdependency. Both novels are examples of how mimicry is a way to adapt and to belong, but also reveals the possibility of limits of assimilation and cultural and racial difference.

One of the first things to be noticed in *Home Boy* is the use of linguistic mimicry as a key tool in the making of the protagonists' identities, as Chuck, AC, and Jimbo are all Americanized and use slang and cultural idioms to do so. At the very beginning of his *Home Boy*, Naqvi (2009) introduces his characters with multiple identities, religious, national and cultural, thus emphasizing the fluidity of the "brown" identity in the American racial system. This emphasizes the fluid nature of race and highlights the characters' efforts to situate themselves in a complicated racial hierarchy through language. Their speech is fluent, and they also seem to be comfortable with the American vernacular culture, indicating an internalization of dominant language norms. The inquiry "*Am I a home boy?*" (Naqvi, 2009, p. 64) is a moment of intense questioning that challenges identity and makes it uncertain and situational. The phrase "home boy" is a sign of belonging in an urban American context but is rendered ambiguous by a diasporic subject. This uncertainty is a reflection of the power of

mimicry, as mimicry of cultural belonging does not guarantee recognition or acceptance. They also have a fluency in language, aided by their engagement with popular culture and urban speech, and for some time they feel at home. They speak to each other in terms of references that situate them on a continuum of native and adopted cultures, and relate them to a cosmopolitan, globalized identity. In this way, language is used as a tool of self-fashioning, empowering characters to create their identity in accordance with the dominant expectations. But this performance is always somewhat shaky. Bhabha (1994) maintains that mimicry creates a subject that is "almost the same, *but not quite*" (p. 86), and that this "gap" is the space of exclusion. The fragility of linguistic mimicry is especially apparent after the 9/11 attacks. Linguistic skills that were once useful in the process of inclusion are made irrelevant in the context of increased surveillance and suspicion. The story marks a change in perspective at one point, where the main characters, who feel assimilated, are now identified as outsiders. This change reflects the "restrictions" of language as symbolic capital. The characters have language markers that indicate that they belong, but their racial and cultural identities supersede their language markers. This is in line with Said's (1978) reasoning that the "Orient" is produced within discourses so deeply entrenched in the culture that they are not easily broken apart by the adaptation of individuals.

Furthermore, *Home Boy* offers other moments that highlight the conflict between performance of language and imposed identity. For example, when the narrator thinks about the role of being in America, there is a subliminal recognition that they are not given wholehearted acceptance by others because of their speech. The "Americanness" of their speech and accent does not obscure the visible signs of difference, and further contributes to the sense of the difference between what is and what can be. This is the ambivalence of mimicry that Bhabha sees as the gap. Bhabha sees this as the ambivalence of mimicry, in which resemblance exists alongside exclusion. The mimicry of life and resistance can be better understood through recent views on mimicry as survival and resistance. When considering the significance of mimicry for marginalized people, Siddiq et al. (2026) suggest that it helps them temporarily negotiate acceptance while hiding more profound fractures of identity. The performative assimilation of the protagonists in *Home Boy* is embodied in this, which is continuously shifting and vulnerable in the face of the post-9/11 gaze. Likewise, Ahmad and Hussain (2026) have argued that mimicry does not simply imitate the dominant discourse, but it is also a form of active reshaping of the discourse, which is subversive and ambivalent.

Burnt Shadows, on the other hand, offers a more multifaceted and, to a certain extent, historical depiction of linguistic mimicry. The trips made by Hiroko Tanaka in Japan, India, Pakistan, and the United States reveal the ways in which language functions as a tool of survival, as well as a marker of displacement. Hiroko's linguistic adaptation takes place over a range of cultural and temporal contexts, as opposed to *Home Boy's* mimicry which is localized in an urban context. Her competence in mastering new languages and adapting to new cultural contexts illustrates a degree of agency, but at the same time also shows the constant negotiation that needs to be engaged to maintain this adaptability. The story clearly points to the fact that this process has its limitations. As Hiroko tries to forge her own identity and finds her way through language and cultural adaptation, what is clear to her is that no amount of effort can erase the power of history. The narrator tells us, "history had blown all of them off course, no one ending—or even middling—where they had begun" (Shamsie, 2009, p. 282). This

reflection reinforces the idea that life is not about us and our lives are profoundly affected by forces outside our control. So, Hiroko's identity is not the one she can easily fashion, but one that is constantly being remade through geopolitical violence, displacement and loss. Language can provide her with a way of linking to others, but it cannot remove the historical inscriptions that have been inflicted on her body and memory.

Moreover, the novel provides an example of how linguistic competence can be used as symbolic capital as Bourdieu (1991) would suggest, but which depends on other power structures. Hiroko has the ability to communicate with people in multiple languages which helps her to work in different societies but does not stop her being affected by war, displacement and political disagreement. This seems to show the conditional nature of the power of language, of how language can enable movement and interaction, but not security or belonging.

Aside from linguistic mimicry, social mimicry is also a key element in both novels and influences how the characters try to conform to mainstream cultural discourses. Social mimicry is also seen in the characters of *Home Boy* adapting to the western lifestyle; their fashion, social interactions, and consumerism. They are involved in nightlife, they are well acquainted with American cultural norms, and they try to fit in with the culture of the city they are in—all in an effort to be accepted. All of these are not simply passive acts but active attempts to align with the principle of dominant modernity and success. However, there are several socio-political facts about the post-9/11 world that challenge this alignment. Fascinatingly, the characters' carefully formulated identities are tumbled and broken within a short span of time, giving the impression of their superficial inclusion. From acceptance to suspicion, one can see how fragile social mimicry is: that which is caught in the world's eye outweighs what one does to fit in. In line with Hall's (1990) premise that identity is a dynamic process of "becoming" and is constantly redefined in relation to the context, this study finds that identity is dynamic and constantly changing throughout time. The identities of the main characters are not predetermined, but are continually redefined by surrounding conditions which are out of their control. A loss of a carefully crafted cultural identity under external pressure mirrors what Khan and Khattak (2025) observe in Okonkwo: a cultural identity that is carefully constructed, no matter the effort, is fragile during the sudden and irreversible turn of the political environment. The lesson of postcolonial fiction across traditions, from Achebe's colonial Nigeria to Naqvi's post-9/11 New York, is that mimicry and hybridity offer no permanent shelter from the power structures that define belonging.

Likewise, *Burnt Shadows* offers social mimicry as a process of change and transformation. The scenes of Hiroko crossing cultures show her adaptability, while allowing her to retain her identity. Her connections with characters of different backgrounds reveal the intricacies of engaging with other cultures, and the need to adapt, but not completely. Hiroko assumes the social norms of her surroundings at times, but she is also aware of her difference, which highlights a sense of belonging and otherness that never subsides. Another aspect of social mimicry manifested in the novel is the emotional side of it. From Hiroko's point of view adaptation can be accompanied by a sense of loss, where people have to maneuver between several identities. The negotiation is not always smooth; at times there are dislocations and moments of uncertainty. The experiences confirm Bhabha's (1994) concept of ambivalence, in which mimicry is both empowering and limiting for the subject.

Comparing the two novels shows some concurrences and discrepancies of the depiction

of mimicry. *Home Boy* is a mimicry that is in real-time, urban and deeply connected to the context of post-9/11 America. The protagonists' experiences are determined by a sudden rupture, in which their sense of belonging is suddenly taken away. But *Burnt Shadows* places mimicry in a longer-term pattern of historical events and movements, in a view that allows for the possibility of more than one identity emerging over space and time. Although there are differences, both texts have a strong gaze on the precariousness of mimicry as a means of inclusion. Although the subject of trauma, identity and displacement has been examined in post-colonial fiction, there has been little attention to the specific ways in which mimicry of language and culture is a strategic gesture to evade surveillance in post-9/11 situations. Recent research indicates that mimicry is not only about adaptation, but also a subtle manifestation of resistance that highlights the problems in the regime of dominant power. This foregrounding of this aspect of the landscape contributes to ongoing discussions and to the visibility of the active agency of diasporic subjects in their negotiation of belonging and identity.

Further, the results indicate that geopolitical factors play a very significant role in mimicry. Given the post-9/11 environment, there is a greater pressure and compulsion for conformity, which by extension reinforces restrictions of exclusion. The power dynamics of politics and media create narratives of suspicion of Muslims that restrict the power of mimicry as Kumar (2012) suggests. In both novels characters are forced to rehearse acceptable identities, but these are constantly challenged and sometimes repudiated.

Meanwhile, mimicry has enough potential for subtle resistance. In imitating dominant norms, characters reveal themselves as constructions, and identify gaps in power structures. Bhabha (1994) proposes that mimicry can "menace" authority (p. 86). This implies that mimicry brings to the fore the difference between the ideal and its representation. If excessive participation in American culture is considered a form of performance that reveals the ephemerality of cultural membership, then the characters in *Home Boy* are particularly ironic, given their strident embrace of the culture of their own country. Likewise, *Burnt Shadows* features Hiroko who is able to cross several cultures, a scenario that suggests that culture is not a rigid, definable entity. But often the drive to conform and the risk of being pushed to the margins supersedes this potential for resistance. From the experiences of the characters, mimicry can subvert dominant narratives while not necessarily empowering. Rather, it tends to re-enforce the very structures that it aims to subvert—that is, to keep people stuck in a pattern of mimicry and marginalization.

Finally, the analysis shows that linguistic and social mimicry are interdependent strategies which diasporic subjects use to negotiate identity in post-9/11 contexts. These strategies are also methods of adapting and moving, but they also reveal the porous boundaries of inclusion/exclusion. The quantity of text cited from *Home Boy* and *Burnt Shadows* further illustrates how mimicry is not a consistent or complete process, but rather an ongoing negotiation that is shaped by political, historical and cultural factors. This study investigates mimicry in its different facets and offers a complex interpretation of diasporic identity as a process which is dynamic and contested.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has examined the notion of linguistic and social mimicry as it plays a role in the construction of diasporic identity in *Burnt Shadows* and *Home Boy* in the context of the post-9/11 world. The analysis reveals that mimicry is a complex

and double-edged discourse on identity which diasporic subjects seek to employ when negotiating their place in western societies. Drawing on the theoretical work of Homi K. Bhabha, the paper shows how mimicry can produce "*almost the same, but not quite*" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 89) identities and how it can, therefore, reveal the possibilities and problems of assimilation.

Furthermore, the findings show that linguistic mimicry is symbolic capital, enabling one to occupy the dominant cultural space and at the same time reinforcing the power hierarchy. Social mimicry, in turn, is a performative aspect of identity, in the sense that people try to mimic actions and cultural practices to be accepted. But these shapes are always unstable, because these are created by external forces, like surveillance, racial profiling and geopolitical tensions, and because these are influenced by the laws that govern the nation. In this way, the post-9/11 world impels the process of assimilation and reveals its weaknesses.

Moreover, the comparative study of the two novels has demonstrated that the use of mimicry can be different in each of the novels, in its expression and intensity, but it works in the same way. In both texts, the diasporic identity appears to be fluid: not set, constantly negotiated, sometimes contradictory, broken, and ambivalent. Overall, this work helps the postcolonial literary study by providing a detailed and intricate image of mimicry as a process that is also intricate and multiple, and as such, embodies the complexity of identities in a fragmented global world.

Recommendations

This study presents the following directions for further research. First, scholars can broaden the scope of their analysis to include other post-9/11 diasporic texts, in order to have a more complete picture of how mimicry works in other cultural and literary contexts. Second, interdisciplinary approaches, especially in the field of sociological and media studies, can be used in conjunction with the analysis to explore how the content analyzed is related to other themes at in the real world scenario, such as surveillance and Islamophobia. Further research is needed to explore mimicry but not to ignore the gender perspective as male and female experience mimicry in different ways. A comparative and contrastive analysis of the different ethnic/religious communities might identify other cultural negotiation strategies. Moreover, the use of other advanced models on discourse, such as Fairclough model can help to elucidate the relationship between language, power and identity and further help understand diasporic identity as it is presented in the literature of the post 9/11 world.

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