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Intellectual Mimicry and Its Discontents: Sartre, Self, and Postcolonial Iraq in Papa Sartre (2009)

Abstract

This paper looks at Ali Bader's novel Papa Sartre (originally published in Arabic in Beirut, 2001, and it was published in English in 2009) through the ideas of intellectual colonialism and mimicry, with Homi Bhabha's Theory of Mimicry from The Location of Culture (1994). It investigates how Bader's protagonist, Abd al-Rahman, an Iraqi philosopher who follows Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialism, goes with Bhabha's idea of mimicry. The analysis looks at Abd al-Rahman's superficial assimilation of Sartre's philosophy as a critique of intellectual colonialism. This colonialism involves rejecting local culture and blindly accepting foreign ideas. The study argues that in Papa Sartre, mimicry reveals the confusion and instability caused by trying to copy foreign concepts, this often leads to a fractured identity and cultural alienation. Thus, the research shows how Abd al-Rahman's intellectual crisis highlights the dangers of coping western philosophy without understanding it or adapting it to local culture. The findings confirm that , in Papa Sartre, mimicry increases cultural conflict, leading to the rejection of both the foreign and local intellectual ideas. The work provides a critical view of mimicry as harming way of engaging with foreign thought.

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الملخص

تتناول هذه الدراسة رواية علي بدر "بابا سارتر" (التي نُشرت في الأصل بالعربية في بيروت عام 2001، وترجمت إلى الإنجليزية عام 2009) من خلال أفكار الاستعمار الفكري والتقليد، باستخدام نظرية التقليد لهومي بابا من كتابه موقع الثقافة (1994). تبحث الدراسة في كيفية تبني بطل الكاتب بدر، عبد الرحمن، الفيلسوف العراقي الذي يتبع فلسفة جان بول سارتر الوجودية، لفكرة التقليد التي طرحها بابا. يعكف التحليل على دراسة الامتصاص السطحي لعبد الرحمن لفلسفة سارتر كنوع من النقد للاستعمار الفكري. يرتبط هذا الاستعمار برفض الثقافة المحلية والقبول الأعمى للأفكار الأجنبية. تؤكد الدراسة أن في رواية "بابا سارتر"، ينكشف التقليد عن الارتباك وعدم الاستقرار الناجمين عن محاولة تقليد المفاهيم الأجنبية، مما يؤدي غالبًا إلى تشظي الهوية والاعترا ب الثقافي. يوضح البحث كيف يبرز الصراع الفكري لعبد الرحمن مخاطر محاكاة الفلسفة الغربية دون فهمها أو تكييفها مع الثقافة المحلية. تؤكد النتائج أن التقليد في "بابا سارتر" يزيد من الصراع الثقافي، مما يؤدي إلى رفض كل من الأفكار الفكرية الأجنبية والمحلية. تقدم الدراسة رؤية نقدية للتقليد باعتباره طريقة ضارة للتفاعل مع الفكر الأجنبي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التقليد، الاستعمار الفكري، هومي بابا، الوجودية، الهوية ما بعد الاستعمار

1. Introduction

Ali Bader's *Papa Sartre* is a severe critique of an intellectual mimicry of sorts: a deceitful acceptance of Western ideologies and its cultural complexity in postcolonial Iraq. Through the character of Abd al-Rahman, Bader presents an Iraqi intellectual who tries to represent the existential philosophy of Jean Paul Sartre, thereby illustrating the problematic details and limitations of trying to integrate foreign philosophies without a sincere commitment to both an internal understanding of such texts and an external adaptation of their ideas to local cultural situations. Abd al-Rahman's intellectual journey, which the name of 'Sartre of al-Sadriya', attests to the superficial character of his philosophical interests and his insistence on performing rather than actually subsisting with Sartrean existentialism. Such exchange between the conservation of culture and

adaptation show the cultural relativity of culture and how it transforms in relation to the different environment or experience (Muhi,2023).

The critical framework that can be utilized for analysis of Abd al Rahman's actions and ideological struggles with a concept of postcolonial theory is the concept of mimicry (Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 1994). Mimicry, in Bhabha's definition "almost the same but not quite", describes an uncertainty of imitation under colonial influence (p. 86). According to Bhabha, this uncertainty denotes the instability of mimicry as a means of mental and cultural penetration of adopting the Western ideas as the guides of refinement and without establishing them in the local cultural practice. Bader's novel vividly captures the experiences of Iraqi intellectuals during the 1950s and 1960s, particularly highlighting their engagement with Western philosophical movements. Influential figures such as Sartre, De Beauvoir, Darwin, and Nietzsche played a significant role during this era, with their works being widely translated and distributed by Lebanese publishers. Arab intellectuals deeply explored these philosophies, contributing articles and translations to periodicals like *Arabic Literature and Writer* (Abd Al-Ridha , p.p.3-4). Existentialism is considered one of the most thrilling movements in contemporary philosophy. Many have contemplated its key themes, such as the roots of despair and suffering, overcoming adversity, the boundaries of reason, individual and societal interactions, authenticity, death, and freedom (Olson, p.7). The novel, through its portrayal of Iraqi intellectuals grappling with existentialist ideas, reflects the broader challenges and complexities faced by Arab intellectuals in navigating the convergence of Western philosophical currents and their cultural and societal contexts. This analysis of the plight of Arab intellectuals within the novel underscores the profound impact of existentialist thought and its enduring relevance in contemporary philosophical discourse (Al-qaraghli).

Chakrabarty (2000) argues in *Provincializing Europe* that ordinary philosophical

practice of applying western philosophies uncritically to non-western context results in what he calls "abstract universals" , that is far removed from social realities and the histories of the people who use them (p.16). Abd al Rahman's life exemplifies this detachment; he tries to be Sartrean existentialist informs himself from his society and from his own identity. Another example is Moore-Gilbert (1997), who also claims that postcolonial intellectuals are often under pressure to promote Western philosophy as a sign of modernity and complexity, and therefore have the sense of self that is split (p. 114). The tension between Abd al-Rahman's attempts to be Sartrean existentialist and his roots is clear in his life.

This research attempts to trace how *Papa Sartre* mirrors the theory of mimicry as proposed by Bhabha in viewing Abd al-Rahman's superficial adoption of Sartre philosophy as a satirical critique for intellectual colonialism. By means of textual analysis, it also explores how Abd al-Rahman's brutal satire at the level of mimicry sheds light on the problematic contradictions and cultural alienation engendered by unreflexive mimicry of western thought within a postcolonial context. In Postcolonial Theory, Gandhi talks about how "intellectual alienation" can divide a postcolonial intellectual between a native identity and the lure of western philosophical ideals (Gandhi, 1998, p. 34).

Further, the paper traces Abd al-Rahman's intellectual journey to highlight the risks and consequences for individual identity and cultural coherence in postcolonial Iraq from adopting Western ideologies, which are symbols of intellectual refinement and presents societal implications of mimicry by coping western ideas. *Papa Sartre* demonstrates a logical approach to how critical engagement and cultural awareness occur in the formation of postcolonial intellectual identities.

2.Theoretical Framework

Using Homi Bhabha's Theory of Mimicry as a theoretical framework, this paper investigates Ali Bader's critique of intellectual colonialism through the character of Abd al-Rahman. In *The Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha introduced his notion of mimicry that we will draw on to explain the protagonist's attempt to bring Jean Paul Sartre's existentialist philosophy from a French setting to an Iraqi setting. Emerging from Bhabha's mimicry we encounter a "not quite" or "almost the same but not the quite," a key characteristic of an unstable and uncertain attempt to imitate foreign ideologies (Bhabha, 1994, p. 86). In Abdul Rahman's biography, analyzing the fractured nature of his identity is crucial to understanding his oscillation between emulating Sartrean philosophy and his Iraqi cultural background. In this sense, mimicry as defined by Bhabha is both a reflection of mimicry as a reflection of colonial influence and a subtle subversion of mimicry as a reflection of colonial influence, through Abd al-Rahman's mimicry, which helps to expose the fallacy of superficial imitation as a means of achieving intellectual, and thus cultural, originality. (p. 91).

Such insights are resonated by Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967). It further highlights the psychological fragmentation with which Abd al-Rahman writes. Fanon (1967) argues that imitation often ends in alienation, because the colonized self somehow assumes the culture and degree of the colonizer, without really being the colonizer's culture, leading to a split identity. (p. 17). Abd al-Rahman's experience embodies the split between intellectual and social prostration in an unshakable way, his mimicry of Sartrean existentialism mixed with a passion for Sufism amuses and serves as a way to gain social prestige. Because he cannot fully occupy the identity that he admires culturally, therefore, he cuts off from both Sartre's philosophy and his own cultural identity (Fanon, 1967, 35). Similar to Bhabha's position that mimicry results in uncertainty, in this case, uncertainty appears as a lack of genuine connection to the culture being imitated, thus

undermining both individual selfhood as well as intellectual coherence (Bhabha 1994, p. 88).

Bhabha's theory of mimicry is complemented by Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), wherein Said discusses how post colonial's intellectuals become markers of complexity since they adopt the ideologies of the colonizers, thus, assimilating to the colonizer's civilizations. Seeing Said's ideas may help shed light on how Abd al-Rahman, whom his colleagues called the "Sartre of al-Sadriya," served as a parody of the intellectual tradition, in which Western philosophies serve as social symbols rather than bases for personal or cultural development (Said, 1993, p. 42). Abd al-Rahman's preference for a selective engagement with Sartre's philosophy, discussing only the abstract aspects of the thought, rather than that of the politically engaged aspects, highlights the limitations of mimicry as a mode of satisfying intellectual need because he was unable to transform existentialism into a meaningful philosophy in his Iraqi context (Bhabha, 1994, p. 49).

In *Papa Sartre*, Bader employs satire to expose the superficiality of Abd al-Rahman's intellectual pursuits to critique the phenomenon of intellectual mimicry in postcolonial Iraq. Bader dramatizes Abd al-Rahman's character to argue that mimicry is a performative, aesthetic act and one that stands in opposition to Sartrean existentialism. Abd al-Rahman's imitation of Sartre, his empty admiration by his followers, show the risks in a community of thinkers uncritically taking over foreign ideas to be exotic symbols of intellectual sophistication. Through satire, Bader shows how mimicry turns into a performance of intellectual identity, where the mask of sophistication hides actual participation, ultimately revealing the futility of accepting western ideologies verbally regardless of the real adaptation based on local culture. (p.33).

Overall, the theoretical framework, based on Bhabha's notion of the mimic, enriched by Fanon's and Said's contributions, allows a deft interpretation of *Papa Sartre* as a satirical challenge to the racism and cultural imperialism of intellectual colonialism. Through his portrait of Abd al-Rahman, Bader illustrates how mimicry leaves the mimicked misunderstood and bivalence, and destroys the mimicker. Bader uses Abd al-Rahman's character to undermine the conformity of the adoption of Western philosophies as symbols of prestige without real integration into the local cultural space. Finally, this framework highlights the way mimicry is an unstable, uncertain act, and calls for critical engagement in the formation of a postcolonial intellectual identity.

3. Discussion

3.1 The Concept of Mimicry and Its Relevance to *Papa Sartre*

In postcolonial theory, as expressed by Homi Bhabha, mimicry is the complex interaction between the colonizer and the colonized, who are simultaneously encouraged to imitate, and to be simultaneously refused the full achievement of imitation. The mimicry of this kind produces "a difference that is almost nothing but not quite - to menace - a difference that is almost total but not quite" (Bhabha, 1994 p. 91) as it reveals the cracks within the colonial authority and the lack of colonized individual's ability to deal with the culture of the colonizer in its completeness. By means of Abd al-Rahman's obsessive mimicry of Sartre, Bader exposes the fragility and superficiality of mimicry as a method of intellectual identity in postcolonial Iraq.

His attempts to follow Sartre are filled with physical and intellectual limitations. On a larger scale, Abd al-Rahman is far from perfect to emulate Sartre's appearance. As a false imitation, his representation of Bhabha's mimicry means that Bhabha's idea of mimicry as incomplete is manifested in the impossibility of complete residence as an intellectual identity for the French philosopher. The flaw

in his ideology, at least in terms of imitation, is an expression of man's admiration of Sartre and his failure to come to his own saving imperfection, his inability to form his sense of self and place it in an Iraqi context. Said of mimicry is: "The effect of mimicry is to force the colonizer to produce a subject that is almost the same, but not quite, and the moment of difference that is revealed is a moment of ambivalence." (Bhabha, 1984, p.126). This underlines the phenomenon of intellectual mimicry which, in postcolonial societies, implies the attempt to integrate the idea of Western philosophy, such as existentialism of Sartre was, but which at the same time cannot be effectively incorporated, which is the core of the play's theme of failure, a tension between imposture and the local and Western therefore.

Abd al-Rahman's mimicry also turns out to be superficial in his intellectual pursuits. However, despite his attempts to present himself as a great (existential) thinker, he does not fundamentally understand the fundamentals of existentialism. As Bader writes, "The truth is that Abd al-Rahman was unable to write in French or Arabic... his education was superficial... They only knew the titles of books and what had been written in newspaper reviews" (Bader, 2009, p.34). Abd al-Rahman shows himself as a figure of void in his intellectual mimicry: an understanding of Sartre's philosophy that he proceeds to apply without ever truly looking beyond book titles. What comes across in his approach is how hollow intellectual mimicry can be without attendant critical examination and cultural adaptation.

In his work *Black Skin White Masks* (2008), Frantz Fanon describes how colonizers imitate the colonized to represent a divided identity that lives with part of the colonizer within it and denies connection to the self. (Fanon, 2008, p. 35). In addition, we can see the psychological fragmentation through Abdul Rahman's alienation from his Iraqi roots. But much of this interest in Sartre is also fascination with himself as a figure beyond his reach: "Sartre is one thing and we are

something else. What is given to Sartre is not given to anyone else. Sartre writes to have his books translated into Arabic so that we may read them” (Bader, 2009, p. 36). Abd al-Rahman feels inferior to Sartre and definitely his intellectual cannot be equal. Consequently, his imitation is filled with an admiration for surrender, which further fractures his identity as he is trying hard to harness a strange philosophy that he still does not know and does not belong to.

Bhabha’s concept of cultural hybridity is complemented in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) by Edward Said’s theory of ‘cultural mimicry’ in which the subject of the colonized adopts the culture of its colonizer superficially, producing a fractured identity (Said, 1993, p. 42). Abd al-Rahman’s selective imitation of Sartre’s existentialism, dismissing Sartre’s political leanings as mere misunderstandings caused by poor Arabic translations, illustrates this fractured mimicry: “He didn’t believe that politics or ideology played a part in existentialism. He argued that the poor quality of the Arabic translations gave the false impression that Sartre’s writings had a political content” (Bader, 2009, p.79).

This interpretation is a shallow grasp of existentialism that involves purposeful neglect of those parts of Sartre's philosophy which aren't to his taste. Therefore, Abd al-Rahman’s mimicry is an incomplete and selective adoption, and this mimicry is subject to many of the limitations inherent in mimicry as a cultural adaptation strategy.

The mimicry is further explored by Bader as he deals with the satire of Abdal Rahman’s followers who really accept his changed version of existentialism. Abd al-Rahman’s disciples regard him as a superior intellectual, but are as shallow in their understanding of his philosophy as he is. Perhaps the most satirical part of his followers was the danger of being in a group where one showed off superficial imitation of foreign philosophies in order to receive social validation, instead of in the pursuit of actual knowledge. Abd al-Rahman’s disciples are little more than his

own shallow engagement with existentialism, and their mirror image is taken by the failure of mimicry as a means of intellectual fulfillment.

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o in *Decolonizing the Mind* (1986) argues that true intellectual independence in postcolonial societies demands acceptance of local knowledge and not foreign frameworks which seldom correspond with cultural reality of the colonized (p. 89). On the other hand, Abd al-Rahman's imitation of Sartre, clearly indicates the difficulty of accepting Western philosophy without adapting it, resulting in a kind of mere intellectual mimicry which makes no sense in an Iraqi context. On failing to translate existentialism to a philosophy that speaks to the social and cultural debates in Iraq, he lands up with an identity that is at once culturally alienated and intellectually unfulfilled. He doesn't even have access to his own environment to create his existentialism, which remains abstract and foreign, to create an intellectual identity that won't fit with his environment.

To sum up, *Papa Sartre* explores how the notion of mimicry resorts to the weaknesses and the contradictions of a postcolonial imitation of foreign intellectual identities. Bhabha's notion of mimicry provides for Abd al-Rahman to mimic Sartre in mimetic attempts to be like but not quite the same, a simultaneously going through and exposing gaps of cultural and intellectual identity that prevent him from fully inhabiting the identity he wants to emulate. By examining the flaws of intellectual mimicry, Ali Bader wisely critiques Abd al-Rahman as a character, and highlights the aching necessity for intellectual vigor and cultural insight in the formulation of intellectual identity in postcolonial societies.

3.2. Abd al-Rahman as the "Sartre of al-Sadriya": The Superficial Imitation of Existentialism

Bhabha, in *The Location of Culture* characterizes mimicry as a process in which colonized subjects imitate the colonizer's culture, but the imitation is always

"almost the same, but not quite.". According to Bhabha the uncertainty in mimicry results in a 'resemblance and menace' (Bhabha, 1994, p. 88). As it uncovers the instability of colonial authority. Thus, mimicry is both a ritual of compliance, and a barely perceptible form of resistance, because mimicking the foreign without really changing culture is contradictory.

In using satire, Ali Bader critiques Abd al-Rahman's imitation of Sartre's existentialism, showing how an empty philosophy has to be a hollow philosophy, by making a bad imitation of an existentialism that it does not even understand. About Abd al-Rahman, Bhabha's phrase "almost the same, but not quite," (Bhabha, 1994, p. 86) is embodied; he mimics Sartre's speech and appearance without Sartre's ideas and existentialism, so that the imitation is not authentic, and incoherent.

From the beginning, we see Abd al-Rahman's desire to be Sartre as at best a misunderstanding of what is meant by social prestige and at worst an admission that he hasn't read Sartre. "That evening, I began writing the first words of the biography of the existentialist Iraqi philosopher nicknamed the Sartre of al-Sadriya." (Bader, 2009, p. 26). The characterization of this makes mimicry as a resemblance, which is actually subversive in nature, because Abd al Rhaman's imitation is tasteless and insincere. The absurdity of his mimicry is reinforced in the gravity with which he becomes a "Sartre of al-Sadriya.", in his pursuit for the image of the philosopher without its intellectual depth. By doing so, this underscores the superficiality of his mimicry, and the fact that Abd al-Rahman's Character is intended more to restructure and create Sartre's identity as arguably the greatest philosopher of the West in Iraq, devoid of any philosophical rigor possessed by the original, along Bhabha's lines of mimicry as incomplete, and even 'menacing' to authenticity.

Similarly, Abd al-Rahman also turns Sartre's existentialism into shallow self-interpretation, as he reduces it to the fashionable version of oversimplification. He declares, Existentialism is a rather jolly nausea. This nausea that Sartre gave us, that nausea that frees us of all illusions (Bader, 2009, p. 80). In a similar disposition, Abd al-Rahman fails to engage critically with the philosophy behind it, as Bhabha states "a slippage between what is seen as similar and what actually is" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 86). This is "slippage," for the way Abd al Rahman takes on Sartrean language, without understanding the depth of it, and transforming existentialism into an empty, fashionable phrase. His reading is consistent with Bhabha's critique of mimicry as inherently inaccurate and the shallowly adopting of foreign philosophies, which is a vanity surface rather than an intellectual pursuit.

The uncertainty of mimicry is satirized when Abd al-Rahman's followers see philosophy as an exotic badge of class status, rather than a serious subject. One of his followers, Ismail Hadoub, he admires Abdul Rahman's obscure language, mistaken for lack of understanding and wisdom: "words that were incomprehensible to him, puzzling philosophical declarations. They didn't require proof; they were self-explanatory through their complexity alone"(Bader, 2009, p.58). Ismail's blind admiration is portrayed by Bader similarly to Bhabha's mimicry, as being 'almost the same but not quite' in imitating Western intellectual ideas with a narrow mind. Ismail's veneration of the obscure statements of Abd al-Rahman illustrates Bader critique of intellectual imitation was a socially motivated, shallow performance rather than a sincere intellectual engagement (Ashcroft et al., 1989).

In a mirror of mimicry's uncertainty, Abd al-Rahman's selective understanding of Sartre's thought leads to dismissing part of Sartre's work that does not accord with his self-image. Bader brings to the fore the aesthetic dimensions of mimicry as

Abd al-Rahman wished to adopt his style as a symbol of intellectual legitimacy. Bader points out, "Abd al-Rahman got dressed in front of the long armoire mirror in his warm bedroom. He tied his slim blue tie and slipped on his square eyeglasses with black plastic frames. He compared his reflection to Sartre's photograph hanging on the wall and was overwhelmed with sadness" (Bader, 2009, p. 28). Bhabha's (1994) statement on the notion of mimicry is presented in this scene and it explains how mimicry preaches colonial authority through a 'double articulation,' (p.88), in order to present colonial authority as something deep but clearly shows its shallowness. By doing so, his followers are imitating his appearance and thereby reducing existentialism to an aesthetic rather than to a philosophical commitment fully embodying Bhabha's notion of mimicry as a 'difference' that "emerges from the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 86). This social mimicry satires the tendency to take up Western ideologies as symbols of sophistication, but without really grasping the ideology of how they come about, pointing out the shortcomings of mimicry as a strategy for intellectual satisfaction.

The superficiality of the mimicry is once again highlighted by Abd al-Rahman's self-deception. Bader describes him, " He was destined to be a philosopher and realized that he belonged to a family of philosophers. As such, he was made for thinking, not working, and it fell to him to take those ideas back to his homeland" (Bader, 2009, p. 112), in which he disclosed an arrogant sense of importance even without any meaningful philosophical insight. Bhabha's mimicry theory advises that mimicry may deceive the imitator, and result in self-deception because the true identity of the imitator is merged with the image projected. Abd al Rahman's Self-reinforcing provides an example of this idea, this is due to his slight imitation of Sartre. he believes that he can build an identity out of nothing. It is this satirical critique of mimicry, The self-deception inherent in mimicry, but above all the

emptiness of the Western intellectual personality devoid of substance. In a satirical wake, Abd al-Rahman's failure is his final disillusionment regarding failing to be anything other than a mere copy. Reflecting on his life, he says:

The truth of the matter was that Abd al-Rahman was enamored of the great French philosopher and his philosophy but never managed to meet him during his stay in Paris. He had seen Sartre a few times...but every time he got close to the philosopher, he trembled with fear and left without speaking to him (Bader, 2009, p. 31).

This view is consistent with Bhabha's theory of mimicry as a failed and fragmented strategy. According to Bhabha, mimicry "creates a space of splitting and doubling," (Bhabha, 1994, p. 90), thus, leaving the imitated no real basis for identity. Abd al-Rahman's existential crisis is that of a life imitated without critical engagement spent in mimicry of foreign ideals – which Bader criticizes as ultimately unsatisfying in postcolonial societies.

Accordingly, the alienation of Abd al-Rahman's supporters ultimately highlights the limits of mimicry. Bader adds: "While he managed to duplicate the black plastic eyeglass frames with thick lenses, he had no way of simulating the crossed eyes. That failure remained a source of aggravation for the philosopher that lasted his whole life" (Bader, 2009, p. 112). In this part, we are reminded of Abd al-Rahman's failed mimicry in its inability to deliver intellectual gratification. His followers who once idolized his superficial philosophy come to realize that intellectual imitation of the surface of things is ultimately insufficient without an accompanying understanding. For this breakdown of influence, it points to Bhabha's concept of mimicry, how the imitation breaks down because it lacks inner substance and the double collapses.

Eventually, Ali Bader's *Papa Sartre* surveys how the presentation of intellectual mimicry as satire critiqued the shallowness of intellectual mimicry using Homi

Bhabha's Theory of Mimicry. Abd al-Rahman ultimately had a shallow engagement with Sartre and even those unfamiliar with it.

3.4. The Consequences of Mimicry on Self and Society in *Papa Sartre*

According to Bhabha, mimicry is a phenomenon in which the colonizers imitate the colonizer, but this is never quite the same, it is always an imitation that is 'almost the same, but not quite' (Bhabha, 1994, p86). An 'ambivalence' is generated through mimicry, which, destabilizing the authority of the colonizing culture, brings with it a legitimacy that is not original. Spivak states that Mimicry is, "a blurred copy" where the colonized is caught in the vise of being unable to fully take on the characteristics and ways of the colonizer yet is fully immersed in that dream'. In *Papa Sartre*, this is manifested in the way character tries to apply Sartre's existentialism as liberty of thinkers. However, these characters suffer from loss of their identity; the philosophy they try to assimilate into their existence gives them a social identity that does not match their post- colonial Iraqi nationality (p.255- 256).

Abd al-Rahman's mimicry of Sartre's existentialism in *Papa Sartre* "resemblance and menace" which align with Bhabha's notion (Bhabha, 1994, p. 88). Although Abd al-Rahman idolizes Sartre, his imitation is not completed because he lacks a complete understanding of the philosopher so as to achieve a genuine intellectual identity. However, this superficial mimicry of the Iraqi intellectual aims to forge an identity, it works for a sense of alienation among its self and thus forms a split self. Bader critiques the consequences of mimicry in social existence and for the individual identity on Abd al-Rahman's personal situation and its effect on societal dynamics by using Abd al-Rahman's character.

Abd al-Rahman's desire for intellectual validation is what lies behind his mimicry; however, he has a shallow engagement with existentialism and his trifling engagement with the subject threatens to make it the cause of his frustration. Here

too is Bhabha's notion of mimicry as incomplete and ambivalent act as Abd al-Rahman's access to Sartre is a surface understanding that leaves him unsatisfied, alienated from Sartre's existentialism and also from his North African roots. His mimicry is rendered futile, revealing the inadequacy of the adoption of external philosophies without a rewrite to suit localities (Ashcroft et al., 1989).

Abd al-Rahman's fractured identity can be further illuminated by Frantz Fanon's insights into the psychological effects of mimicry in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967). Fanon (1967) argues that mimicry too often results rather in alienation because the colonized subject is always in tension between two incompatible cultural identities (p. 17). Abd al-Rahman's is one such "split self"; he cuts himself from his Iraqi roots to find solace in another philosophy, one ultimately foreign to him and that he can only partially understand. Bhabha's concept of mimicry is best captured by his notion of 'almost the same, but not quite,' his imitation, always highlighting the psychological dissonance instead of true self-discovery. Abd al-Rahman's dislocation from his cultural heritage typifies the warning against mimicry, for he is removed from his community, and unable to earn intellectual satisfaction, however alienated he might be.

Beyond abd al-Rahman's personal alienation the societal consequences of his mimicry extend to those around him, who superficially mimic him. He is followed by his fans who take his hollowness of existentialism as their intellectual authority without any critical involvement in the principles of existentialism. Abd al-Rahman's failure to offer meaningful philosophical guidance to disillusion him, which shows how the mimetic instability comes to reverberate through social structures (Said, 1993).

Moreover, Bader critically examines the cultural results of mimicry, as Abd al-Rahman is influential aesthetically to the point that his followers adopt his symbol of sophistication. The satirical nature of this societal adoption of appearance over

substance sarcarcizes the postcolonial fascination with the Western ideologies as symbols of prestige, since mimicry is understood as an empty form of mimicry recurring only when style, replaces content (Loomba, 1998).

Words like that deepen Abd al-Rahman's mimicry, and as he kept on living in the shadow of Sartre, he has an existential crisis and sees his life for what it really is empty. Bhabha states that mimicry "creates a space of splitting and doubling," which causes the imitator to live in a fractured being (Bhabha, 1994, p. 90). Abd al-Rahman's existential disillusionment reflects the un fulfillment and alienation of mimicry (as a means of intellectual validation), because through the imitation of Sartre, Abd al-Rahman fails to recognize himself and his culture. Bader's critique of mimicry is evident in the personal and cultural emptiness he achieves, on the account of adopting foreign philosophical models without complete involvement (Spivak, 1999).

Finally, it is the disillusionment of Abd al Rahmans' followers that comes to occur which points towards how mimicry does not work when not based in the understanding of a thing itself. Mimicry, as Bhabha would understand it, as an inherently unstable concept is corroborated here, where the collapse of Abd al-Rahman's Arab authority demonstrates the ultimate impotence of imitation in forming a solid cultural or intellectual identity.

Finally, Bader rebukes the banality and the unsteadiness of intellectual mimicry in postcolonial states and unveils its unraveling of cultural dissonance and fractured identity through its uncritical deployment of exotic ideology. Abd al-Rahman's failed mimicry of Sartre warns us about using mimicry as a strategy for gaining cultural validation: intellectual authenticity, culturally aware, becomes vital to navigate postcolonial identities

4. Conclusion

In *Papa Sartre*, Ali Bader satirizes the phenomenon of intellectual colonialism by portraying Abd al-Rahman, an Iraqi philosopher who tries to recreate Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialism in a superficial and non-deep way. An eye for detail, Bader's portrayal suits Homi Bhabha's theory of mimicry when he says 'Almost the same, but not quite'. Colonial discourse that is ambivalent and superficial in its approach to colonial discourse. Abd al-Rahman's story as well as his character is an example showing that, even in an intellectual colonialism, mimicry brings about neither a coherent identity nor significant cultural involvement.

Bader demonstrates the weakness of intellectual mimicry in a postcolonial setting through the character's failed imitation of Sartre: foreign philosophies are quite often taken on as unserious markers of prestige rather than seriously adopted to empower intellectually and culturally. The initial fascinations of Abd al-Rahman's followers were with the aesthetics of existentialism; only when it failed to stick upon their context they abandon it, confirming with Bhabha that, since mimicry 'makes itself and its mannerism available to the other eye', its very nature dislocates the foundations of cultural authority. This attempt to emulate is a failed one and it shows how this is according to Bhabha the unstable and ambivalent act which not only turns into the very sign of the difference it is meant to suppress but also makes apparent the difference between colonizer's culture and the local identity forced to mimic it. The story also reflects on the psychological burden of mimicry for Abd al-Rahman who becomes overwhelmed by the void that comes with mimicking someone else's identity. This slippage into the dissatisfaction with the self, echoed with Bhabha's contention that mimicry operates through a 'splitting and doubling' mechanism that causes the colonized subject to distance themselves from a colonizer's ideology while simultaneously admiring it. Abd al-Rahman understands the limitation of his mimicry and therefore stands as a broader critique of intellectual colonialism, that the uncritical adoption of foreign

philosophies guarantees only cultural alienation instead of validation of intellectual.

Papa Sartre offers a critique of intellectual mimicry, through satire, proving its inability to function in a postcolonial Iraqi context. Applying Bhabha's Theory of Mimicry provides this analysis of the cultural dissonance, and fractured identities, that occur when we engulf uncritically the ideologies of other nations. While Bader's work ends up calling for authentic thinking and awareness of culture, it illuminates the fact that the neo-colonial world should be critical of foreign philosophies not to adopt them as a symbol of prestige.

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