



"A Postcolonial Reading of Bassam Shams Addin's novel "The End of A Furious Man"

قراءة ما بعد الاستعمار لرواية بسام شمس الدين "نهاية رجل غاضب"

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Abstract: This essay is a postcolonial analysis of Bassam Shams Addin's contemporary Yemeni novel, *The End of A Furious Man*. The study attempts to apply postcolonial literary theory such as othering, binary oppositions, hybridity and liminality in an attempt to examine how the novel portrays the encounter of rural and urban, modern and traditional. It also seeks to examine how it brokers identities at margins. The research finds that the novel resists the forces of homogenization. This it does by foregrounding multiplicity and fluidity of identities. It reveals this through its complex characters navigating spaces in-between.

Keywords: Postcolonial literature, Bassam Shams Addin, Yemeni Novel, Othering, Hybridity, Liminality

المستخلص

تُقدّم هذه الورقة تحليلاً ما بعد استعماري لرواية بسام شمس الدين اليمنية المعاصرة "نهاية رجل غاضب". من خلال قراءة متأنية وتطبيق مفاهيم أدبية ما بعد استعمارية، مثل الآخريّة، والتناقضات الثنائية، والتهجين، والعتبية، تبحث الورقة في كيفية تصوير الرواية للقاء الريف والحضر، والحديث والتقليدي،



وكيفية تعاملها مع الهويات الهامشية. ويخلص التحليل إلى أن الرواية تتحدى نزعات التجانس من خلال تسليط الضوء على سيولة الهويات وتعددتها من خلال شخصياتها المعقدة التي تنتقل بين الفضاءات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: أدب ما بعد الاستعمار، بسام شمس الدين، الرواية اليمنية، الأخيرة، التهجين، العتبية

Introduction

Bassam Shams Addin is a Yemeni author best known for describing rural and tribal life. His novel *The End of a Furious Man* takes place in remote highlands. There, the tale of Zayd, the protagonist torn between modernity and tradition, and city and rural lives, is narrated. This essay addresses the way the text addresses such encounters. It uses postcolonial concepts such as othering, hybridity, liminality, and binary oppositions, to illustrate how the novel resists homogenization. It rather presents identities as fluid and negotiated at the margins.

Othering

The writer, Bassam addresses a controversial topic of rural and urban in a way that reflects how rural is perceived as other. This is depicted and implemented in his novel *The End of a Furious Man* reflects. The novel reveals how contact between the rural and urban results in the mutual construction of identities through opposition and difference. The interaction between the protagonist Zayd and Malik through the novel is an example. This reflects postcolonial theorist Gyan Prakash's (1992) description of the rural-urban encounter as one defined by "a logic of difference" where identities are constituted in relation to a perceived other.

When Zayd finds himself in Malik's car traversing the "desolate wilderness," he is bewildered and fears getting lost, positioning the unfamiliar terrain as other (Shams Addin, p.6). Similarly, Rahab town seems "alien" to his rural sensibilities with its government buildings and electric lights (p.14). Here, Zayd perceives the urban through binaries of rural-urban, familiar-strange that establish his own



sense of self. As cultural theorist Homi Bhabha (1994) notes, othering is a process through which the self is defined in opposition to a constructed other. For Zayd, crossing into urban territories positions him as other against the familiar domain of the village.

Conversely, Malik views Zayd's village with disdain, dismissing the villagers as "wretches" living in "paradise" (p.12), constituting their rurality as strange and inferior against his urban norms. Here, contact between the rural Zayd and urban Malik results in the mutual construction of identities through processes of othering, as Gyanendra Pandey (1992) observes frequently occurs in rural-urban encounters. Both perceive the other through opposing categories that maintain difference and hierarchies between self and stranger.

Postcolonial theorist Edward Said (1978) argues such binary constructions of self and other emerged from colonial structures that instituted hierarchies between the colonizer and colonized identities. In a postcolonial context, the mutual othering depicted in the novel reflects how colonial legacies influenced perceptions and power relations between rural and urban communities (Bhabra, 2014). The interactions highlight rural and urban identities are not essential or fixed, but relationally defined through processes that position one in opposition to a perceived stranger.

The relationship between Zayd and Malik reveals the rural–urban tensions at the heart of *The End of a Furious Man*. The novel shows that encounters between the two worlds, rural and urban, often produce identity politics based on mutual othering. These conflicts are tied to colonial hierarchies that survive within nationalist settings. Thus, the novel offers a postcolonial view of how selfhood and community are defined against a constructed "other."

Hybridity and liminality



Hybridity and liminality are important postcolonial concepts that are reflected through the characters and settings portrayed in the novel. While othering creates boundaries between self and other, rural and urban, the novel shows how identities are negotiated in contact zones and borderlands, resulting in fluidity and blending rather than rigid categorization.

Characters like Zayd and Malik inhabit liminal spaces that challenge clear-cut definitions. Zayd, despite belonging to the village, demonstrates traits of modern urban education through his schooling. However, he is still learning the local dialects when interacting with inhabitants of the wilderness (p.8/9). This shows he straddles the rural-urban divide. Similarly, Malik exhibits practices of both rural apiculture and urban mannerisms through his business acumen and manner of speaking to his father (p.6).

Their interaction within unfamiliar borderlands like the "desolate wilderness" results in a further mixing of traits, with Zayd absorbing local knowledge and Malik adapting to communicate effectively with inhabitants (p.8/9). This reflects Homi Bhabha's concept of third space and hybridity that emerges from contact zones. When different cultures interact, new identities emerge that blend elements of both (Bhabha, 1994). Zayd and Malik demonstrate hybrid identities that are constantly negotiated at the fluid borders rather than fixed essences.

This resonates with postcolonial theorizations of identity. Critics like Young (1995) reject essentialist views of rigid self/other binaries, arguing identities are in a constant state of "becoming" through interaction. The characters' fluid acquisition of new traits affirms this ongoing process of identity formation. Spivak (1988) also notes how in a postcolonial context, the colonized absorb aspects of the colonizer through contact, resulting in a hybrid identity. Zayd and



Malik exemplify this as they blend rural and urban ways of being through exposure to each other's domains.

The setting of Rahab town also reflects hybrid identities through the co-existence of modern and traditional elements. It exhibits a mixing of the government complex, security offices and post office alongside mosques (p.14). This challenges simplistic divisions between rural tradition and urban modernity. Even Zayd's village defies the rural-urban binary by containing large houses as well as infrastructure like schools (p.13).

Settings like these reflect the concept of "translated men" put forth by Naficy (2001) to describe postcolonial environments. He argues they contain people and places that have been "translated" into new hybrid forms through contact with colonizing influences, assimilating foreign elements while retaining indigenous roots. Rahab town and Zayd's village exemplify translated spaces that blend modern and traditional.

The idea of fluid hybrid identities is further reinforced through the character of the "beastly ones." Despite living on the margins in caves, they still maintain contact with wider society through practices like trading animal bones (p.11). They subvert expectations of isolated primitive tribes by demonstrating ongoing cultural exchange. This affirms Bhabha's argument that pure, original cultures do not exist and all identities are products of contact and translation (Bhabha, 1994).

Even notions of inside and outside, self and other break down in the borderlands. When the characters encounter the "beastly ones", the boundaries between civilized and uncivilized become blurred (p.11). Their marginal existence at the literal and symbolic edges challenges rigid categorization of cultures (Anzaldua, 1987). The strangeness of living in caves is countered by their participation in



wider economic networks, showing how apparently fixed identities evolve through interaction.

The novel links fluid identities in contact zones with postcolonial place theory. Researchers such as Foucault (1986) and Said (1978) argue that places are not static backdrops but constructed through discourse, memory and experience. This becomes visible when Zayd and Malik move into and inhabit new borderlands. Zayd changes his perception after interacting with people there. He changes his views of the wilderness through his exposure to its people and dialects (p.8-9).

Similarly, Malik changes his perspective towards Rahab from scorn to admiration on seeing its modern amenities (p.14). This sort of change takes us to Massey (1994) who believes that place identities are constructed through relations rather than fixed attributes. The novel, therefore, questions the idea of landscapes as unchanging cultural signs. The novel enriches such vision through its theorization of hybridity and liminality. Zayd and Malik are both figures whose identities merge rural and urban identity in breaching strict compartmentalization. Rahab town is a translated space wherein modernity has been integrated into tradition. Even marginalized groups like the "beastly ones" subvert expectations through cultural exchange. Therefore, the novel verifies postcolonial theses that perceive identity as negotiated, relational, and fluid in borderlands. Rather than locating identity as an essence, the novel shows it as a process built by contact and translation.

Resisting Homogenization

The End of a Furious Man resists essentialized perceptions of identity by giving its characters depth and richness. Malik and Zayd are not reduced to diminished rural or urban stereotypes. Instead, they are defined in ways that resist the binarism that is used to stereotype colonized peoples.



Malik's personality introduces these tensions to the surface. He mocks Zayd's country background, which suggests an urban prejudice. While he is equally showing care for his sister and repairs the family beehive when it gets damaged, these are instances that show traits not fitting into one category.

It is explained by Homi Bhabha's theory of hybridity. In *The Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha argues that colonial discourse tries to freeze colonized people into fixed categories. But their identities are always more complex. Malik's contradictions illustrate this hybridity by showing how he cannot be reduced to either side of a binary.

Zayd also embodies hybridity. Although connected to rural tradition, he mentions attending school and winning prizes. This experience blurs the divide between rural and urban, tradition and modernity. Like Malik, he occupies a space in between.

As Edward Said's *Orientalism* suggests, these hybrid identities reflect the novel's negotiation with colonial frameworks of representation.

Said argues that during the colonial era, the West constructed an imaginative "Orient" differentiated from the European self through essentialized opposites like traditional/modern (Said, 1978). However, in reality colonized cultures embodied complexity and change overtime. Postcolonial authors thus negotiated the task of representing local identities that could not be reduced by imperial frameworks seeking to dominate through othering.

In this sense, the subtle hints at Zayd's schooling and Malik's contradictions reflect how postcolonial writers depicted the ambiguity and flux of lived experiences that resisted imperial stereotypes. As Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin assert, a core concern of postcolonial literature is the articulation of "alternative worlds" challenging the binaries of the colonizer's perspective (Ashcroft et. al, 1995). The novel accomplishes this through multi-dimensional portrayals that evade colonial logic's compulsion to fix "the other" into inferior opposites.



The text further undermines homogenizing categories through its treatment of physical settings. Rahab town incorporates both rural mosques and more urban structures like government buildings powered by electric generators. Meanwhile, Zayd's village contains aspects of modernization like paved roads and the mention of local youth participating in academic contests. The novel blends rural and urban elements in ways that blur fixed boundaries. Colonial buildings had a tendency to draw on those boundaries in a bid to position the urban self above rural others. This fluidity of space resists such logic here. Postcolonial existence in those places has had a tendency to intermingle bits of tradition with selectively adopted bits of modernity. Anti-colonial nationalism, as Chatterjee (1993) explains, involved drawing on indigenous and colonial sources but reframing them in novel, non-Western ways. The novel's hybrid spaces replicate this process and create a "third space" that resists closure.

By creating characters and settings of contradiction and instability, the novel prioritizes ambiguity over essence. This tactic disrupts colonial reliance on stereotypical and binary thinking. The novel prioritizes instead hybridity and fluidity as constitutive of cultural identity. In doing so, it disrupts homogenizing visions of "the other" and demands the authority of local voices to define themselves on their own multifaceted, changing terms.

Negotiating Identities at the Margins

Travel in *The End of a Furious Man* conjures up peripherality lives. Zayd moves between village, desert, and town, existing within places that generate hybrid, "in-between" identities. This part of the work explores how the novel indexes identity negotiation at cultural margins, using the theories of Bhabha, Spivak, and Loomba.

Zayd negotiates rural heritage and glimpses of modern existence. Meeting Malik places him in a "third space" of mixed dialects and behavior (Shams Addin, 10),



showing how postcolonial subjectivity navigates different selves (Loomba, 2015).

Bhabha defines this third space as an interactive zone between cultures where new identities form (Bhabha, 1994). Zayd's experiences show how hybrid identities emerge.

The wilderness is another key site for exchange. Here, Zayd challenges Malik's rigid rural/urban ideas (Shams Addin, 10–15). Bhabha notes that such border-crossings can subtly reshape both participants. Malik's perspective shifts as a result.

Yet the process is uneven. Spivak's "strategic essentialism" suggests subalterns sometimes perform identity to access cultural spaces (Spivak, 1988). Zayd initially simplifies his rural identity for Malik, then slowly introduces complexity. This shows that negotiation at cultural borders is never fully balanced.

The novel portrays identities as fluid and negotiated, yet marked by asymmetry. Zayd and others inhabit liminal spaces that foster hybridity, offering a nuanced look at identity at cultural crossroads.

Conclusion

This paper has explored how *The End of a Furious Man* resists homogenizing views and celebrates multiplicity. Its characters are nuanced, and its spaces mix opposites, avoiding rigid frameworks.

The novel has revealed identity negotiation across borders, reflecting life at cultural margins. Hybridity, liminality, and fluidity challenge binary thinking. Yemeni identities engage with modernity but remain locally grounded, forming flexible third spaces.

Shams Addin uses characterization and border-crossing journeys to emphasize negotiation over polarization. The novel demonstrates that cultural dialogue can occur without domination, affirming diversity and agency in a connected world.



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