

GENDER OPPRESSION IN POST COLONIAL FICTION: HAMID'S PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

This study is about the gender oppression in Pakistani-English literature, focusing on the analysis of the selected novel through post-colonial feminism. The main aim of the researcher is to highlight how female gender has been represented by Mohsin Hamid. The study is an analysis to the representation of gender, analyzing how the writer has addressed feminist issues in his novel. The women marginalization and their lack of voice in the patriarchal society of Pakistan exist since British colonization. The present study focuses on Hamid's portrayal of women. The novel represents an effort to challenge the double colonization of female gender, where females are subjugated by both the colonization as well as by patriarchal power in the Pakistani society. The researcher has selected *Moth Smoke* by Mohsin Hamid in terms of women's representation and gender oppression. The research is qualitative in nature where the researcher has analyzed the text of the novel through textual analysis technique. The result shows that woman as portrayed in the novel has been subjugated by the male counterpart in the patriarchal society and they do not have any voice against this oppression. Moreover, the writer has shown that the patriarchal powers have oppressed the female gender through many ways in the novel. Thus, gender issues persist in the writer's novel.

Key Words: Gender Oppression, Post-Colonial Feminism, Pakistani English Novel

1. INTRODUCTION

The study delves into the inception, justification, context, and primary considerations of the current research endeavor. This part comprises several segments elucidating the essence and purpose of the study.

This research delves into the issue of gender oppression as depicted in selected Pakistani novel. The primary objective is to examine how Pakistani English writer portrays the female gender. Consequently, the study conducts an analysis of gender representation. The term 'Feminism' has historically encompassed literary, social, and political movements advocating for women's rights. Originating in European literature, feminism has also emerged as a significant theme in post-colonial literatures. As noted by Ashcroft et al. (2001), feminist perspectives intersect with post-colonial criticism, mutually informing each other.

The marginalization of women and their lack of voice in Pakistani society trace back to the British colonization of India. Feminist novelists in Pakistan endeavor to address this issue and empower Pakistani women. This research aims to analyze the selected novel published in the last two decades, authored by male writer. The novel is perceived as a response to the 'double colonization of women,' whereby they are oppressed both by societal structures and the patriarchal mindsets within their families. The study seeks to illuminate gender oppression and female representation in Pakistani literature through the lens of post-colonial feminism. The study takes in account "*Moth Smoke*" by Mohsin Hamid that sheds light on how gender subjects are treated in Pakistani literature. This exposition elucidates the perspectives of the author on women's representation and gender oppression, reflecting

varying levels of feminist discourse. The narratives of the works revolve around women facing challenges due to their gender within Pakistani society, underscoring the importance of understanding male and female approaches to women's representation and gender oppression.

This study examines women's representation in selected Pakistani English novel through the prism of postcolonial feminism. Therefore, it is pertinent to provide a brief introduction to the selected novel, author, and theoretical considerations. The researcher outlines the plots of the selected novels and introduces the basic tenets of post-colonial feminism to provide context for the study.

1.1 Research Questions

In "*Moth Smoke*," how does Mohsin Hamid depict female characters seeking strength and autonomy within the confines of a post-colonial patriarchal Pakistani society?

2. Literature Review

In this portion an examination of gender oppression and marginalization in chosen Pakistani novel is undertaken through the lens of post-colonial feminism. The initial segment offers an insight into Pakistan's historical and cultural context, succeeded by an exploration of the theoretical underpinnings guiding the study. Subsequently, attention is directed towards an analysis of the prevalent themes of gender oppression and marginalization, specifically within Pakistani literary works. The portion culminates by pinpointing deficiencies in current literature and delineating the research inquiries that this investigation endeavors to tackle.

2.1 Feminism and Gender Oppression

In the global context, the issue of gender is widely acknowledged, giving rise to feminism, a global movement advocating for female equal rights and aiming to free them from the injustices associated with traditional male dominance.

According to definitions provided by the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary and the Dictionary of Living English, feminism is described as the belief in granting women equal rights to men to fulfill their aspirations and achieve equality in all spheres of life. However, a deeper examination and clarification of feminism's definitions are necessary. It is commonly perceived as a Western concept that portrays men as the perpetrators of female rights violations, often

relegating women to secondary roles within this framework. Feminism primarily addresses the injustices inflicted upon women, as emphasized by Deborah Madsen (2000), who underscores feminism's role in promoting equal rights for women and protecting them from political and intellectual oppression.

Similarly, Morris (1991) elaborates on feminism as a response to gender inequalities prevalent in male-dominated cultures and societies. Hooks defines feminism as a struggle against both sexual and oppressive acts targeting women, asserting that not only men but also passive and silent women contribute to the perpetuation of women's oppression.

Feminism encompasses two primary perspectives on gender and male dominance, seeking to challenge outdated notions of male superiority over females. Disparities in rights and privileges between men and women form the core principles of feminism. Across nearly all societies worldwide, women face injustices, cruelty, and inequality, becoming targets of sexual, social, and economic exploitation.

The feminist movement historically campaigned for women's suffrage in England and America during the 19th century, with its origins tracing back to the 16th century. Works by influential feminists like Betty Friedan, Germaine Greer, and Kate Millet have significantly contributed to the ideology of feminism.

The term "Feminism" originates from the Latin word "femina," signifying women or feminine qualities. Coined in 1890 in opposition to "Womanism," which denotes sexual equality, it was first used by Alice Rossie in her 1895 journal "Athenaeum." Further elaboration came from Jack Stacy in her 1993 article "Untalented Feminist Theory."

Since the 1960s, extensive Women's Liberation movements have emerged in America, Japan, and Europe, reigniting discussions on women's inequality and injustices. These movements challenge traditional perspectives, as depicted in influential works like Virginia Woolf's "A Room of One's Own" and Betty Friedan's "The Feminine Mystique" (1963), shedding light on the unequal treatment of women.

Kate Millet's "Sexual Politics" (1969) serves as a critique of traditional feminist ideologies, highlighting the disadvantaged and non-social position of women in male-dominated societies. The study of feminism in the United Kingdom and the

United States during the 19th century has been categorized into three main areas: First-wave feminism, Second-wave feminism, and Third-wave feminism.

First-wave feminism, pioneered by Elizabeth Robins, Dorothy Richardson, Katherine Mansfield, and Virginia Woolf, advocates for women's equal rights in all aspects of life, including property rights and voting rights.

Simone de Beauvoir's renowned book "The Second Sex" (1945) exposes the injustices faced by women, examining areas of inequality from biological, psychological, and economic perspectives. The second-wave of feminism delves into sexual disparities and challenging experiences faced by women, with Kate Millet emerging as a prominent figure advocating for women's rights.

The third-wave feminism, which began in the 1960s and has evolved into the 21st century, focuses on gender and language, challenging notions of multiculturalism and white feminism, and advocating for gender equality.

The most recent iteration of feminism is known as radical feminism, which confronts societal structures favoring men and advocates for revolutionary change to eradicate oppressions. Patriarchy leads men to view women as the "other," resulting in their marginalization and oppression.

Gender is viewed as an ideological framework dividing people into two classes - men and women - based on hierarchical relations of domination and subordination. Sexuality, gender roles, and characteristics are socially constructed, perpetuating a division of labor and defining attributes of femininity and masculinity.

According to Grant, gender is inscribed on bodies based on their biological sex, with meanings attached to them structured by gender. People may diverge from typical notions of womanhood and manhood within their communities, challenging the gender ideology that privileges men as a social class.

Modern concepts of power are effective because they are deeply ingrained in internalized sexism and intersect with routine aspects of life. This results in the emergence of an invisible power that is both acknowledged and overlooked, falling into categories of legitimacy and naturalness.

Patriarchal societies portray women as subordinate to men, with gender discrimination intersecting with other established power structures based on racism, social class, culture, geography, chronology, and sex,

thereby perpetuating discrimination against women worldwide.

Power abuse manifests as a covert struggle for control over others. Similarly, power dynamics underpin interests that are exercised, manipulated, and avoided through various means, often with varying degrees of transparency. Examining its explicit manifestations reveals instances of sex discrimination, social biases, physical violence against women, sexual harassment, and defamation. These blatant displays of power are often experienced as a curse by women in many communities, despite legislation against gender inequality (Lazar, 2007).

Modern concepts of power are effective because they are deeply rooted in internalized sexism and intersect with everyday life. This results in an invisible power that is both acknowledged and overlooked, fitting into categories of legitimacy and naturalness (Rahimi, 1991). Patriarchal societies depict women as subordinate to men, with gender discrimination intersecting with other established power structures such as racism, social class, culture, geography, chronology, and sex, thereby perpetuating discrimination against women worldwide.

Hill et al. (2020) argues that heterosexism is privileged over homosexuality or lesbianism due to societal norms and values. Gay and lesbian individuals are marginalized by the hetero-gendered order, as entrenched systems are resistant to change, leading to discrimination against them (Lazar, 2007). According to Ayesha (1990), a social system where the male gender dominates, marginalizes, and oppresses women is termed patriarchy. Ray (2006) echoes this sentiment, defining patriarchy as paternal rule with male dominance and women's subjugation, where men control women based on biological traits and social roles. In patriarchal societies, men are perceived as dominant, strong, and industrious, while women are expected to embody femininity and submission. Women are often confined to the roles of child-rearing and nurturing, with limited opportunities for independent development outside the home (Ray, 2006). The political arena is male-dominated, relegating women to the role of homemakers. Afghanistan serves as a vivid example of women's lives in a patriarchal system.

Every community differs in race, class, religion, ethnicity, and social norms (Ray, 2006), and Afghanistan is no exception. Strong religious and political influences have entrenched patriarchal

structures in Afghanistan, leading to perceptions of the country as hazardous for women (Khan, 2018). The Russian (Soviet Union) and Taliban regimes exacerbated the plight of women in Afghanistan, imposing restrictions on their activities and education. Under the Taliban government, women were prohibited from participating in outdoor activities, required to remain veiled at all times, and unable to travel alone without a male companion. The majority of Afghan women and girls were illiterate during this period.

Violence against women is a pervasive issue in Afghan society, as reported by UNAM and Deeba et al. (2023). Cultural, social, and attitudinal factors contribute to the harsh treatment of Afghan women, who often lack the freedom to pursue opportunities and are subjected to maltreatment.

Polygamy further reinforces the unequal treatment of women within patriarchal systems. The Civil Code of Afghanistan has outlined specific provisions regarding this practice (Women & Children Legal Research Foundation, 2006). According to these provisions, a man may marry up to four wives if he can ensure equal rights for each of them (Saboori, 2005). However, men often exploit this practice for their own sexual gratification, using polygamy to legitimize their actions. This can lead to discriminatory treatment of spouses, including the use of abusive language, inheritance disputes, and confinement to the husband's house. In some cases, these issues become so severe that women resort to suicide (Saboori, 2005).

Gender oppression refers to the discriminatory treatment faced by women. While gender is often confused with biological sex, there is a difference between the two; sex is one's biological condition, and gender is the societal roles associated with being a man or a woman.

Beauvoir (in Fallaize, 1998) views gender and sex as boundaries between social and natural roles. She argues that while "female" is a biological term, "woman" is a socially constructed identity shaped by society. Sharing this perspective, she asserts that societal constructs of identity can be challenged and resisted. Chattervedi (2013) further explores the distinction between gender and sex, attributing it to socio-cultural constructions and natural orders. She posits that gender is defined by actions rather than inherent qualities, emphasizing the performative aspect of gender identity. According to her theory,

gender encompasses cultural and social practices as well as behavioral performances of men and women. Gender discrimination, a socially constructed phenomenon, perpetuates gender differences. Society assigns distinct values and roles to men and women, portraying women as vulnerable and submissive while men are seen as powerful and dominant. Morris (1993) highlights the institutionalized injustice faced by women due to socially structured inequalities in social rank.

Gender oppression often leads to tyranny and injustice within society. It's not limited to oppressed systems but can also constrain people in liberal societies. Such oppression stems from narrow-minded individuals with unfamiliar norms, social practices, and symbols. These rules restrict people's freedom and limit their mobility.

Gender oppression refers to the discriminatory treatment faced by women, often stemming from narrow-minded individuals with unfamiliar norms, social practices, and symbols. These rules restrict people's freedom and limit their mobility, leading to the emergence of an invisible power that is both acknowledged and overlooked, falling into categories of legitimacy and naturalness.

2.2 Methodology

The current study aims to examine the selected novel through the lens of postcolonial feminism. Therefore, it is characterized as an explanatory and interpretive inquiry, wherein the researcher seeks to elucidate and interpret the chosen novels, bringing forth the gender issues faced by the female characters within the framework of post-colonial feminist theory. This type of explanatory research endeavors to unveil fresh perspectives within the studied material, which is often considered essential for robust research endeavors (Syed, 2017). Conversely, interpretive research aims to uncover new layers of meaning within the given text, thereby enriching the understanding of the topic under scrutiny (Sidhwa, 2000). Furthermore, both explanatory and interpretive research methodologies fall under the broader umbrella of qualitative research. Qualitative research, distinct from quantitative methods, involves the analysis, exploration, explanation, interpretation, discussion, and elaboration of textual data. As the present study involves the interpretation of the selected novel, it aligns with the qualitative research paradigm.

2.3 Textual Analysis

Wilbe (1996) suggests that textual analysis is how individuals comprehend the external world within various contexts. Therefore, individuals interpret the world based on the context and their own viewpoints. The main focus of textual analysis theorists lies in understanding this process of creating meaning within the world. In the present study, Catherine Belsey's textual analysis model, as outlined by Ashcroft (2007), is employed. This model is chosen because it emphasizes close examination of cultural production, and the novel selected for this study serve as representations of cultures. According to Belsey (2011), the model entails a form of cultural analysis encompassing cultural history, English, and social issues. She asserts that there is no definitive interpretation, as "meanings are always undecidable" (p. 172), implying that multiple interpretations can exist for any social phenomenon. Building on this argument, it can be observed that interpretations may vary significantly depending on the context and individual perspectives. This approach aligns with the theoretical perspective adopted in the present study, where women's issues are scrutinized within the selected text through the lens of post-colonial feminism.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

Chandra Talpade Mohanty is a notable feminist scholar recognized for her contributions to postcolonial and transnational feminist theory. Her work critically examines power dynamics, socioeconomic class, race, and gender, particularly focusing on women in the Third World. One of Mohanty's seminal writings is "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," published in 1986, which has since been widely cited and discussed. In this essay, Mohanty critiques mainstream feminist literature originating from Western academia, arguing that it often perpetuates colonial discourses and overlooks the diversity and agency of women in the Global South.

A central concern in Mohanty's analysis is the tendency of Western feminist literature to construct a simplistic and uniform image of "Third World women" as passive victims of oppression. She contends that this essentialist portrayal fails to acknowledge the varied circumstances and experiences within the Global South, reinforcing a colonial narrative that positions the West as superior. Mohanty challenges the notion that all women in the

Global South are mere victims, emphasizing the importance of recognizing their agency and diverse forms of resistance. Additionally, she criticizes Western feminist researchers for abstracting specific issues from their local contexts and presenting them as universal problems without considering the complex social, economic, and political dynamics at play. This approach, according to Mohanty, perpetuates a distorted and homogenized view of the Global South, neglecting regional nuances and underlying causes of oppression and inequality.

Mohanty's scholarship has had a profound impact on feminist activism and research since the publication of "Under Western Eyes." Through her critique of colonial discourses and advocacy for a more inclusive and culturally grounded feminist praxis, she has played a crucial role in challenging Eurocentric biases within feminist theory and promoting a broader, intersectional understanding of gender oppression. Some key themes addressed in Mohanty's work include double marginalization, intersectionality, resistance and agency, colonial legacies and power dynamics, and hybridity. The current issues will be further analyzed and explored within limited context of Mohanty's hybridity and energy and colonial legacies, and the power dynamics of feminist analysis.

2.5 Colonial Legacies and Power Dynamics

Mohanty (1986) conducts a critical analysis of how colonial legacies persist in shaping power dynamics in the modern era. She contends that Western feminism often reinforces the notion of Western superiority and Global South inferiority, thereby perpetuating colonial ideologies. Mohanty's scholarship underscores the imperative to challenge these neocolonial connections, which influence knowledge production, and to dismantle these power structures.

2.6 Hybridity and Energy

Mohanty (1986) examines the notion of hybridity, which involves the fusion and evolution of cultural customs and identities, within her exploration of this topic. She highlights how hybridity disrupts essentialist understandings of identity and undermines dominant power structures. Mohanty advocates for embracing these intricate and fluid dynamics.

3. Analysis and Interpretation of Moth Smoke

This section focuses on the analysis of the selected text from the novel *Moth Smoke* in the light of the theoretical considerations of Mohanty (1986). Various excerpts of the novel ideologically loaded with gender issues have been selected for the purpose of analysis.

3.1 Hybridity and Identity

In her examination of hybridity, Mohanty (1986) delves into the notion of blending and transforming cultural practices and identities. She underscores how hybridity disrupts fixed ideas of identity and confronts dominant power dynamics. Mohanty advocates for embracing these intricate and fluid modes of resistance and self-identification, acknowledging the vitality and creativity that emerge from diverse environments.

"She passes the cigarette, and we share it, each taking a few drags before passing it back." (*Moth Smoke*, p. 49)

In the postcolonial context, hybridity refers to the mingling and merging of diverse cultures, personalities, and encounters resulting from imperialism and its aftermath (Nazar, 2016). It disrupts the notion of fixed and essentialist identities, highlighting the complexity and fluidity of individual and collective personas. In "*Moth Smoke*," the act of sharing a cigarette serves as a symbolic representation of hybridity.

The act of passing the cigarette back and forth among the characters suggests a shared experience and an exchange of identities. By engaging in this communal act, they transcend personal boundaries and immediately blend their personalities. It implies a sense of interconnectedness and mutual understanding among the characters, regardless of their diverse backgrounds and experiences. This act of sharing suggests that identities are not static or solitary, but rather can be negotiated and transformed through interaction and mutual influence.

Furthermore, the act of smoking itself can be seen as a metaphor for defiance, rebellion, and freedom, particularly from societal norms and expectations (Sultana, 2010). Smoking has often been associated with challenging established authority and conventional values. In the context of "*Moth Smoke*," it can be interpreted as an act of resistance against the restrictive norms imposed by the postcolonial society in which the characters reside.

From a feminist perspective, this theme can be explored in terms of female agency and empowerment. The act of sharing the cigarette suggests a sense of solidarity and sisterhood among women navigating a patriarchal culture. By participating in this act, the characters assert their autonomy and defy the gendered assumptions and constraints placed upon them. It signifies their active involvement in shaping their own identities and experiences, despite the limitations imposed by their cultural environment.

"I watch the taillights of her car flash red, and then she's gone around a turn." (*Moth Smoke*, p. 49)

The passage illustrates themes of departure and transformation, epitomizing the concept of hybridity. Daru's act of observing the taillights of Mumtaz's vehicle signifies a fleeting moment of connection between two individuals whose paths briefly intersect. The protagonist witnesses the departure of this person, suggesting the transient nature of connections and experiences within the context of hybrid identities. The vivid red taillights symbolize a moment of transition, a crossing of boundaries between different characters and experiences.

Moreover, Mumtaz's disappearance around a corner signifies a departure into the unknown, a symbolic journey towards a different path or destiny. This departure reflects the constant movement and evolution inherent in hybrid characters, as individuals navigate various social, cultural, and personal influences. It suggests that characters are not static but are shaped and transformed through encounters and experiences, often leading individuals to venture into unfamiliar territories.

Furthermore, the departure depicted in this passage also connotes the challenges and complexities that women may encounter in the postcolonial setting. It highlights the ways in which women navigate hybrid identities and negotiate their own paths in the face of cultural norms, social expectations, and patriarchal patterns. The departure around a bend symbolizes a departure from the familiar and an exploration of new possibilities, showcasing the resilience and determination of women in shaping their own identities.

"Mumtaz is watching me and I look away because she's beautiful and I don't want to stare. I haven't seen her since the wedding, and I must have been more drunk than I thought because I don't remember thinking then that Ozi was such a luckybastard." (*Moth Smoke*, p. 15)

The passage suggests the presence of hybridity through the protagonist's interaction with Mumtaz, triggering a range of thoughts and emotions. The protagonist's response to Mumtaz's beauty reflects the intersecting factors of social identity and personal attraction. The act of averting one's gaze indicates an acknowledgment of her beauty, but also a hesitation or restraint in looking, suggesting an awareness of social norms and respect for personal boundaries. This moment highlights the blending of diverse social influences and the negotiation of individual identities within a postcolonial context.

Furthermore, the mention of not remembering Mumtaz at the wedding and considering Ozi fortunate suggests the potential complexities of hybrid relationships and the interplay of social identities within them. The protagonist's intoxication at the wedding underscores the blurring of boundaries and the potential impact of altered states of consciousness in shaping perceptions and experiences. It also suggests a lack of attention to Mumtaz's presence, possibly rooted in cultural biases or assumptions.

From a feminist perspective, this passage can be examined in terms of agency and objectification. The protagonist's decision to turn away from Mumtaz's beauty can be seen as an act of respect and an attempt to avoid objectifying her. It reflects an awareness of power dynamics and gendered expectations that often come into play in interpersonal interactions, particularly within a postcolonial setting. Additionally, the mention of Ozi being perceived as a "lucky bastard" implies the complexities of gendered power dynamics and the potential impact of cultural assumptions on relationships. This observation may stem from a feminist analysis of the stereotype and commodification of women, emphasizing the importance of seeing individuals as more than objects of desire or possession.

"Since you're one of my husband's dearest friends," she says, 'I have little hope for you.' Ozi gives me a wink." (*Moth Smoke*, p. 16)

The passage emphasizes power dynamics, gender roles, and the negotiation of identity within a hybrid social context. Mumtaz's statement, "since you're one of my husband's dearest friends, I have little hope for you," reflects a power dynamic where the protagonist's relationship with Ozi, Mumtaz's spouse, leads her to form a judgment about his character. This underscores the complexities of relationships within a postcolonial society and how

individuals are perceived based on their affiliations and connections. Mumtaz's comment suggests that she holds little expectation for the protagonist due to his association with Ozi, indicating a possible suspicion or distrust towards Ozi's male companions. This statement implies a critique of patriarchal patterns that perpetuate harmful behaviors and attitudes, and it highlights the challenges faced by women within these power dynamics. The subsequent wink from Ozi can be interpreted in various ways. It could be seen as a sign of complicity or endorsement of the power dynamics at play, suggesting that Ozi shares Mumtaz's perspective or finds amusement in the situation. Alternatively, it could indicate a form of resistance or solidarity between the protagonist and Ozi, acknowledging the complexities of their relationship and the constraints imposed by cultural norms.

3.2 Colonial Legacies and Power Dynamics

Mohanty (1986) conducts a thorough analysis of how colonial histories persist in influencing power dynamics in today's society. She contends that Western feminism often reinforces the notion of Western superiority and Global South inferiority, thereby perpetuating colonialist ideologies. Mohanty's scholarship underscores the imperative to confront these neocolonial linkages that shape the production of knowledge and to dismantle these systems of power." No. He told me the villagers would not accept me back because I had lost my honor". (*Moth Smoke*, p. 48)

Dilaram's statement unveils the presence of patriarchal power dynamics, as her perceived honorable deficiency is linked to her experience of sexual violence. Within a postcolonial context, colonial legacies refer to the enduring social, cultural, and political impacts of imperialism on colonized societies. These legacies perpetuate power dynamics and perpetuate unequal relations between different groups. From a feminist perspective, this analysis examines the intersection of gender, power, and imperialism, particularly in relation to Dilaram's experience.

Dilaram's statement highlights the pervasive patriarchal norms that contribute to victim blaming and the reinforcement of gendered assumptions. The notion of honor reflects deeply ingrained social values that often place the burden of shame on women who have experienced sexual violence. This social perspective, rooted in patriarchal norms,

should be seen as a colonial legacy that continues to influence cultural attitudes towards women's bodies and sexuality. Dilaram's statement also reveals power dynamics within the village. The fact that the locals would not accept her back further underscores the marginalization and social ostracism faced by survivors of sexual violence. This demonstrates how power is wielded by those in influential positions to uphold oppressive cultural standards, where survivors are further silenced and victimized.

This highlights the enduring impact of patriarchal norms and victim blaming within a postcolonial society, influenced by colonial structures. The notion of honor, as mentioned in the statement, is deeply entrenched in patriarchal practices and serves as a means of control over women's bodies and sexuality. In many postcolonial societies, the concept of honor is tied to a woman's perceived purity and adherence to prescribed gender roles. This notion of honor is often reinforced through societal expectations and judgments, creating a system where survivors of sexual violence are stigmatized and blamed for their own victimization.

"I believed him. The others knew stories of girls who had returned to their families and were killed by their fathers or their brothers. So, I stayed on." (Moth Smoke, p. 48) This excerpt alludes to the lingering influence of patriarchal power structures, possibly rooted in colonial legacies that dictate the fate of women and their agency within the community. Within the context of colonial legacies, the passage reflects the pervasive influence of patriarchal norms and the control over women's lives and choices. The speaker's trust in the statement suggests the internalization of cultural expectations and a sense of fear towards potential repercussions for deviating from prescribed gender roles and norms. This belief is shaped by a collective consciousness shaped by stories of violence against women who have returned to their families, perpetuating a cycle of fear and control.

The power dynamics within society are evident in the reference to fathers and brothers as the perpetrators of violence against young girls who have returned to their families. This highlights the entrenched patterns of patriarchal power that govern lives, asserting that their actions and decisions are closely controlled by male relatives. The threat of violence serves as a mechanism to maintain control and enforce compliance, thereby perpetuating power imbalances and reinforcing traditional gender roles. From a

postcolonial feminist perspective, this passage reveals the interplay between colonial legacies and power dynamics. The fear of violence upon return to one's family reflects the systemic oppression faced by women within a patriarchal culture, shaped by both colonial and indigenous forces. The violence enacted against women who challenge prescribed roles and expectations should be seen as a consequence of the intersection between patriarchal norms inherited from colonialism and traditional social practices. Additionally, the passage highlights the limited agency and choices available to women within this context. The speaker's decision to stay on, despite potentially challenging circumstances, suggests a resignation to the existing power dynamics and an acceptance of the risks associated with asserting independence. It exposes the harsh constraints imposed on women and their constrained mobility and autonomy within the community.

"Once it was clear to the girls and the clients that I was in charge, he died. Some people said I poisoned him." (Moth Smoke, p. 48)

From a postcolonial feminist perspective, the statement implies a disruption of power dynamics and challenges to traditional gender roles within a patriarchal culture influenced by colonial legacies. Dilaram's assertion of control and authority over the young girls and clients suggests a subversion of traditional gender norms that typically place women in subordinate positions. By assuming a central, influential role, the speaker challenges the established power dynamics, disrupting the patriarchal order that has historically been imposed. The notion that certain individuals accused her of harming him reflects the deep-seated resistance and hostility that arises when women challenge existing power structures. The accusation of wrongdoing highlights the cultural backlash faced by women who assert themselves and challenge male-dominated spaces. It represents efforts to undermine and discredit the speaker's position, revealing the patriarchal resistance to women assuming influential positions and agency.

Furthermore, the passage suggests the presence of covert power dynamics operating within the context of colonial legacies. It suggests that the speaker's power may not be directly acknowledged or accepted, as evidenced by the need for her position to become apparent to the young girls and clients. This implies the existence of social and cultural norms that resist women's leadership and uphold

traditional gender roles, perpetuating the power imbalances inherited from colonial rule.

"The balancing of scales awaits, Milord; redress for wrong is come... The law licks its lips at the prospect of punishing such a one, and justice can shut its eyes today, so easy is its task." (*Moth Smoke*, p. 12)

The excerpt explores the concept of justice and accountability, suggesting the postcolonial system's capacity to address historical injustices and its power to deliver fairness. In postcolonial contexts, the legacy of colonialism often leaves behind a complex web of power dynamics and past injustices. The phrase "balancing scales" implies a desire for equity and reform, indicating an acknowledgment of the need to rectify past wrongs suffered by marginalized communities, including women. The expression "redress for wrong is come" conveys a sense of obligation and the expectation that the postcolonial system will take action to correct past injustices. This can be seen as a response to the power imbalances and mistreatment prevalent during the colonial era, which often resulted in the oppression and subjugation of women.

The mention of the law "licking its lips" and the ease with which justice can be delivered reflects the power dynamics inherent within the postcolonial legal system. It suggests that the system is poised to wield authority and punish those who have committed wrongs. However, it is important to recognize that power dynamics within the legal system can perpetuate existing imbalances and may not always result in equitable outcomes, particularly for marginalized groups.

"He felt that the cars and clothes and dinner parties made him a good husband, and he resented her inability to demonstrate gratitude through obedience as his wife." (*Moth Smoke*, p. 95)

This excerpt illustrates the power dynamics within a marital relationship, where the husband demands obedience from his wife based on the privileges, he enjoys due to his social standing and material wealth. The legacy of colonialism frequently shapes cultural norms and expectations, including gender roles and power dynamics within relationships. The husband's belief that his material possessions and economic prosperity qualify him as a good spouse reflects the influence of colonial legacies, which prioritized the accumulation of wealth and the flaunting of material abundance as symbols of social standing and achievement.

Additionally, the husband's disdain towards his wife's perceived "failure to demonstrate gratitude through obedience" mirrors the entrenched patriarchal assumptions and gender norms rooted in colonial ideologies. In postcolonial settings, these assumptions often persist and solidify, placing women in subordinate positions and constraining their agency and autonomy within marital unions.

From a postcolonial feminist perspective, this statement invites critical examination of the power dynamics within relationships and the ways in which colonial legacies continue to shape gender roles and expectations. It underscores the unequal distribution of power and privileges, with the husband asserting his dominance and expecting obedience from his wife as a form of gratitude for the material comforts, he provides.

By interrogating these power dynamics and challenging the notion that material possessions define one's worth as a partner, a postcolonial feminist perspective aims to critique and dismantle the patriarchal norms and patterns that perpetuate gender inequality within postcolonial societies.

The text highlights the power dynamics within a marriage, where the husband expects obedience from his wife as a result of the privileges, he enjoys due to his social status and material possessions. The legacy of colonialism often influences societal norms and expectations, including gender roles and power dynamics within relationships. The husband's belief that material possessions and social status make him a good husband reflects the influence of colonial legacies, which emphasized the accumulation of wealth and the display of material wealth as indicators of social status and success.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1 Findings

This research delved into the exploration of gender oppression within selected Pakistani novels, aiming to analyze the representation of female characters in Pakistani English literature. Hamid Mohsin's "Moth Smoke" was chosen. The focus was on dissecting gender representation and oppression in "Moth Smoke" by Mohsin Hamid.

The primary inquiries posed in the initial chapter revolved around gender issues from a post-colonial feminist perspective. The question addressed gender issues within Pakistani society as depicted in "Moth Smoke."

In particular, the character of Mumtaz was extensively examined through the lens of post-colonial feminism in this study, shedding light on gender issues in Pakistani English society. The study aimed to explore how Hamid portrays women seeking strength and independence in a patriarchal society. Mumtaz's hybrid character represents a rebellion against social and patriarchal norms, as she defies traditional gender roles through her actions, such as socializing openly with male characters, smoking, and her choice of attire. Despite this, she also embodies the struggles of women in a post-colonial setting, often being objectified by male characters.

The analysis also delves into the dynamics of marriage, where Mumtaz's husband expects her submission based on his social status, reflecting the influence of colonial legacies on gender roles in patriarchal societies. Mumtaz's character signifies the fundamental issues and pressures faced by women, displaying resistance against the suppression of truth and honest communication. Her actions serve as a form of resistance against the silencing and marginalization of women's voices, emphasizing the importance of asserting agency.

4.2 Future Recommendations

The present study focused on analyzing a novel by Pakistani English writer through the lens of Post-Colonial Feminism. After a detailed analysis, the researcher provides several recommendations for future research:

1. Critical Stylistic Analysis: Conduct a study on the same novels using a critical stylistic lens, focusing on language structure. This would shed light on the language, vocabulary, and sentence constructions used to represent women in post-colonial settings.
2. Corpus Study: Delve deeper into the analysis of language by conducting a corpus study to analyze adjectives and nouns used for women and men in the novels. This will explicitly highlight whether male or female characters are represented more strongly in the text by male and female writers.

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