



VIOLENCE AS A TOOL OF RESISTANCE IN THE FICTION OF MOHSIN HAMID

Aatirah Hameed

Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Leads University, Lahore

Abstract

*This study, situated within Postcolonial Studies, examines the dynamics between colonizers and colonized, with a focus on violence as a tool of resistance, as narrated by Frantz Fanon in his book *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). Using Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), *Moth Smoke* (2000), and *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* (2013), it explores how, even after decolonization, violence persists when the bourgeoisie replace the colonizers, exploiting resources and provoking unrest. The research also addresses the "war on terror" discourse to some extent and the challenges of making globalization acceptable in such an atmosphere.*

Introduction

Since the dawn of humanity, relationships of subjugation and invasion have existed, driven by the urge to dominate the weak. Over time, this desire expanded beyond families, with invaders imposing rules based on their claimed superiority, enslaving and colonizing people of different races, cultures, and civilizations. The colonizers developed governing codes for the dominated, a process known as colonization and colonialism.

In the modern context, starting from fifteenth century, many Western/European powers colonized several Asian, African, and Latin American countries. Young (2003) notes that 19th-century imperial expansion of European nations gave them control over most of the world's land, reinforcing the divide between the "west" and the "rest": colonial rulers portraying the colonized as inferior, unsophisticated, and dependent, justifying their domination as a paternal duty.

This study, grounded in Postcolonial Theory which emerged in the late twentieth century in order to study and examine the third-world countries after decolonization, explores the role of violence in resistance, and enduring impact of colonialism with special reference to Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). Fanon argues that colonialism is inherently violent, where the colonized is dehumanized, and then for the colonized, violence and resistance against the colonizer becomes a necessary means of reclaiming his dignity and autonomy. However, Fanon also warns that after independence, native bourgeois elites often replace the colonizer, continuing cycles of exploitation and unrest.

This research examines how these dynamics are reflected in three novels by Mohsin Hamid: *Moth Smoke* (2000), *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), and *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* (2013). Through these texts, Hamid critiques both external imperial forces and internal class structures that perpetuate inequality in postcolonial societies, particularly in Pakistan.

Set against the backdrop of globalization and the post-9/11 "war on terror," the study also questions whether modern Western interventions serve as a new form of imperialism, undermining the sovereignty and stability of developing nations. By connecting Fanon's theory with Hamid's fiction, the research highlights how colonial legacies continue to shape identity, violence, and resistance in the contemporary world.



Keywords: Postcolonialism, Resistance, Violence, Colonizer, Colonized, Decolonization, Bourgeoisie

Objectives

1. To explore Fanon's theory of violence in the context of colonial and postcolonial resistance
2. To analyze depictions of oppression by colonial and local elites in Hamid's novels
3. To examine post-9/11 Pakistan's socio-political context through Hamid's fiction

Research Questions:

1. How does Frantz Fanon's theory of violence relate to the themes and characters in Mohsin Hamid's novels?
2. In what ways do Hamid's novels reflect postcolonial struggles, especially the rise of the indigenous bourgeoisie after decolonization, and the resulting chaos?
3. How do Hamid's works critique Western narratives of globalization in the post-9/11 world?

Methodology

Postcolonial theory has been used for this research, especially the theory of violence presented by Frantz Fanon in "*The Wretched of the Earth*" (1961), its psychological impact and its role in reclaiming dignity by the colonized. Postcolonial themes such as hegemony, hybridity, otherness, displacement, identity, and resistance, will also be explored in order to examine Pakistan's postcolonial condition in selected texts. It will also be analyzed with the perspective of Post-colonial thinkers how these attitudes are affecting the cause of globalization.

Theoretical Framework

This research examines the impact of post-9/11 global politics on third-world nations through the lens of Mohsin Hamid's fiction under the vast umbrella of Postcolonial theory. It aims to analyze the colonizer-colonized dynamic, apply Frantz Fanon's theory of violence as a means of liberation, and assess ongoing postcolonial oppression in Pakistan by both global powers and local elites. Focusing on Hamid's fiction, the study investigates how these works align with Fanon's ideas. It also validates the universality of colonial response and addresses Western narratives of violence and globalization. The study's significance lies in its unique application of Fanon's theory to Hamid's novels, revealing common postcolonial patterns of resistance and psychological struggle.

Literature Review

Much has been written on *Moth Smoke* (2000) especially with reference to class discrimination. A lot of research has also been carried out on *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) as it presents the most current and prevailing social, political and economic issues. *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* (2013) inspired wonder on its stylistic technique, yet no particular research has been carried out with relation to the theory of violence that has been focused in this research.

Aspden (2011) wrote in her review that Hamid's celebrated novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) is the story of an ambitious Pakistani emigrant who finally rejects the corporate system of American capitalism. She also mentions *Moth Smoke* (2000), which depicts the collision between cultures in its portrayal of a society which is aggressively divided within itself in terms of classes.

Anita Desai (2000) discusses in detail the 'power structure' of Pakistani society, shifting from 'the old feudalism, based on birth, to the new Pakistani feudalism based on wealth' (p.2).

Same issue has been discussed by Lahiri (2000) when he says: 'Hamid probes the vulgarity and violence that lurk beneath a surface of affluence and ease.'

Ahmed (2009) has given wholesome thought to the postcolonial elements in *Moth Smoke* (2000), corroborating with Fanon's theory of Violence (1961) to a large extent. He says that the novel also criticizes 'neo-colonialism' (p. 209) which prevailed immediately after the partition; and in the novel, Hamid portrays that Pakistani elite class controls its economy and power structures. Ahmad Further says: 'much of the cultural attributes that Hamid highlights among Pakistani elite are commonly found in most developing countries' elite' (p. 212).

Zia Ahmed (2009) discusses the condition of woman as depicted in Pakistani fiction. He talks about *Moth Smoke* (2000) in which Mumtaz, Ozi's wife, as being colonized and marginalized by the neglect of her husband feels the need to break away to start working independently.

Paul Jay (2005) discusses globalization in the modern world perspective and violence as 'backlash' (p. 64) to the system of exploitation carried out by the affluent and privileged of the country. Jay also discusses that transition in literature took place when it shifted its focus from being Eurocentric to globalized, with special reference to Mohsin Hamid.

In her review of the book, Carballal (2011) writes in her analysis of *Moth Smoke* (2000):

Hamid's novel, written from what he calls a "post" postcolonial generation perspective, establishes the relationship between colonialism and globalization in a society in which the first has disappeared but where corruption and lack of resources are paving the way for the second. (p. 3)

Cilano (2013) analyses how some literary texts connect past, present and future, by depicting different events from the history of a country, and in this case particularly, Pakistan. She asserts that, '*Moth Smoke* (2000) represents zamindar power as expansive and extreme' (p. 183).

Madeline Amelia Clements (2013) writes that the literary texts of the contemporary Pakistani English writers show the expansion of the zamindar's power from the rural areas to the urban and the extension of its authority to embrace other members of the elite.

Raza (2014) discusses *Moth Smoke* (2000) in the Marxist perspective. He says that when the rich of a country keep the poor in abject poverty, many members of the deprived class rebel. Raza, however, has not discussed, or applied, Fanon's theory of violence on this situation.

Perner (2010) sees Changez's shift to fundamentalism in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) as a form of reactive aggression stemming from a loss of personal control. She urges deeper reflection on the roots of resentment that lead to fundamentalist violence.

Ayub Jajja (2013) explores the theme of identity in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), linking it to the post-9/11 climate of mistrust between America as a neo-colonizer and Pakistan as the still-colonized. Through Changez, the novel critiques American policies and challenges the idea that countries like Pakistan promote fundamentalism, suggesting instead that America's neo-colonial behavior also contributes to the rise of hatred and extremism.

Hayati (2011) expatiates the issue of clash of identity, making Changez appear a 'glocal' character i.e. 'A mixture of global and local' (Abstract). He also discusses 'cultural predicaments, and contradictions threatening... [People's] identity' and shows 'laments of the author for the terrorist label ascribed to Muslims' (Abstract).

Olson (2011) has also explored the issues of identity based on appearances. Referring to the transformation in Changez, and the outcome of his bearded appearance, she writes: 'The beard would then stand for an open protest, an ostentatious dissociation from the U.S' (p. 12).

Darda (2014) argues that globalist literature emphasizes a shared future and collective responsibility. He asserts that *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) exemplifies globalist fiction, as Hamid critiques nationalism and promotes international solidarity. Darda challenges America's role in the war on terror, suggesting that true global change requires confronting all forms of organized violence—not just that of the U.S.—and recognizing shared human vulnerability.

Wheavil (2011) declares War on Terror (WOT) as a complete 'discourse' in itself, carried out by 'Bush administration' (p. 5). Referring to the speech of George W. Bush, he says that

While this is only a brief excerpt of the WOT discourse, it is adequate in demonstrating how Bush portrayed the post-9/11 world order as a binary opposition of Good versus Evil, or 'Us' and 'Them' with no room for shades of grey, othering all non-Americans as anti-American. (p. 8)

Hartnell (2010) writes that *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) although partly claims that US is the modern day imperial power and is the descendant and heir of heritage of the colonizer Europe, yet it also suggests that America is the perpetrator and investor of the possibility of the supremacy and enhancing of racial differences in the world.

Scanlan (2010) says that in the aftermath of 9/11, when the name of Islam got synonymous with that of terrorism, novelists such as Kiran Desai, Mohsin Hamid, and Hisham Matar were among the few who have offered 'a postcolonial perspective on revolutionary violence' (Abstract); and that their depiction of experiencing the situation first hand by their characters makes the violence at least comprehensible.

Thus, many scholars have written enlightening articles focusing on *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) as a narrative of Resistance but have not particularly paid attention to the aspect of violence as is being presented in this research.

Mohsin Hamid's third novel, *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* (2013) has violence as one of its dominant themes but not much explored scholastically.

Srinivasan (2013) explains in an interesting analysis of the *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* (2013) that the capitalist uses violence in self-defence in order to maintain his supremacy. She appreciates Hamid on precisely portraying the strive-story of millions of people whose struggle in order to get rich is just another 'cruel mechanism' of the unfairness of capitalism.

Forbes (2013) expounds on the same argument when he says: "Be Prepared to Use Violence." He paints a grim picture of the threats, casual brutality and armed security necessary to both stay afloat and alive amid cut-throat competition' (p. 1).

Sehgal (2013) observes that in *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* (2013), Hamid explores the mutual fear and suspicion between the USA and Muslims, focusing on the roots of extremism and global economic inequality. He notes that Hamid portrays characters through their struggles to survive, highlighting their histories of violence, financial hardship, and systemic injustice, thus emphasizing the harsh realities behind individual lives.

Research Gap

Mohsin Hamid's works have been explored by many critics, yet no critic has investigated these literary texts with reference to the theory of Violence of Frantz Fanon (1925-61). This study focuses on the post-colonial Pakistan, still colonized by the neo-imperialists such as the US and the West, as well as the bourgeois, usurping the resources of the country, eventually resulting in



unrest and a war-like situation. This study depicts the role of violence during all these phases, which has never been explored previously.

Discussion

VIOLENT DISENTANGLING FROM THE COLONIZER

Fanon argues that while colonized people are dehumanized, therefore they are not bound by the colonizer's moral codes and may justifiably use violence in their struggle for freedom. Mohsin Hamid (born 1971) in his fiction presents various situations in which his characters suffer oppression and inhuman treatment by the modern-day colonizers- the bourgeois and the elite- and ultimately break free by making use of violence.

In *Moth Smoke* (2000), Daru embodies the colonized, growing resentful of Pakistan's elite who monopolize resources and power. Excluded and patronized by his wealthy friend Ozi, Daru's bitterness intensifies after personal and professional losses. Witnessing Ozi's cruelty in a fatal accident sparks his violent break from dependence on the elite, marking his shift toward defiance and self-determined rebellion. Shut out of jobs for lacking elite connections, he turns to drug dealing and, ultimately, to violent rebellion: robbing a boutique for the rich, killing in the process—an act echoing Fanon's view of the colonized breaking free through violence.

Mumtaz, dissatisfied with her life under her husband Ozi's control, gets into a loveless affair with Daru in the guise of learning boxing, thus asserting her independence, and eventually having a violent break from her “colonizer” husband and the patriarchal marriage.

Hamid's depiction of Pakistan's 1998 nuclear explosion symbolizes the colonized's violent break from Western imperialism, echoing Fanon's view that violence restores dignity and self-respect. In *Moth Smoke*, Daru feels pride and empowerment from the event.

In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), Changez transforms from a self-proclaimed “lover of America” (*The Reluctant Fundamentalist*: p. 1) to a Pakistani fundamentalist, his hostility fueled by experiences of racism, America's violent global dominance, and its hypocrisy toward Pakistan. The 9/11 attacks evoke in him a moment of satisfaction at seeing America humbled. However, subsequent humiliations, U.S. violence in Afghanistan, and indifference to Pakistan's security deepen his resentment, culminating in the violent symbolic resistance of growing a beard-marking his defiance and Muslim identity. Finally, after being likened to “janissaries” (*TRF*: p. 91), Changez realizes he has been serving the American Empire. This prompts his decisive break: he rejects America's self-serving “fight against terrorism,” and returns to Pakistan, committed to freeing his country from America's economic, religious, social, and cultural grip, engaging in ferocious and violent resistance to U.S. influence—actions that earn him the label “anti-American” (*TRF*: p. 108), and align with Fanon's vision of the colonized breaking away through violence.

In *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* (2013), Hamid depicts multiple violent breaks from colonial authority. The “pretty girl,” abused by her father, seizes financial independence through a clandestine relationship with her lover and leaves her family decisively and violently, indifferent to consequences, echoing Fanon's view of the dehumanized colonized. The protagonist's young wife also recognizes her colonized status after continuous neglect, culminating in her demand for divorce. The protagonist himself, poor and without connections at the university, survives under the protection of a violent religious group that shields him from elite dominance. His bearded appearance, evoking fear among wealthy students and corrupt officials, becomes a symbolic act of violent resistance against the colonizer elite's power.

POST-INDEPENDENCE MANIPULATION BY THE BOURGEOIS

Fanon (1961) argues that even after decolonization, violence persists as the foreign elite are replaced by a national bourgeois, continuing oppression under new rulers. The masses reject this and rebel, creating a violent, war-like situation- a pattern repeatedly reflected in Hamid's fiction.

Moth Smoke (2000) portrays the native elite, educated by colonial powers to control the economy for their own gain. Daru observes Ozi's father, Khurram Shah, amassing wealth through corruption, while Ozi's obsession with air-conditioning reflects his selfishness- most starkly shown when he kills a child without remorse. Similar attitudes are demonstrated by all the elite. Daru is told he needs powerful connections to find work, and after being splashed with muddy water by a Land Cruiser, his profane reaction foreshadows his potential for violent resistance.

Fanon further says: 'This class fails to generate new resources, plunging the masses into ethnic and religious discord... and thus leading the country into a state of civil war over its resources...' (*The Wretched of the Earth*: p. 118-119). In *Moth Smoke*, Murad Badshah voices the frustrations of the marginalized, seeing the arrival of yellow cabs as a threat to his survival and responding with violent resistance through robbery. Daru's armed participation in this robbery with Murad reflects the broader social chaos, where the Poor wage war not only against the Rich but fighting a war of survival, a civil war targeting the seizure over the resources of the country.

The Reluctant Fundamentalist (2007) addresses imperialism in the context of the war on terror, highlighting how the world elite exploits the situation, with America and the West consuming the world's resources, leaving poorer nations in frustration and rivalry. The competition for favor and aid from the elite-America pushes countries, notably Pakistan and India, into a near war-like state, highlighting the potential for violent conflict driven by resource exploitation.

How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia (2013) portrays a nation in chaos, where the bourgeois hoard resources, depriving the masses and fueling frustration that erupts into violent looting of the wealthy. In this lawless state, the underworld targets the rich, diverting government forces from their duties in order to protect the elite, while the elite themselves engage in violent wars over 'turf'. The protagonist, threatened by a rival tycoon, hires a criminal faction himself, winning many future battles through murder and bribery. Hamid presents this through the Military Policeman's view this way: "Wealthy civilians... are a subcategory of thief. They have robbed his country blind for generations. But wealthy civilians are also likely to have contacts with generals..." (P. 162).

Finally, only when the protagonist is not wealthy anymore and is without the protective covering, he accurately comprehends the chaos around him. He senses "a rising tide of frustration and anger and violence". (P. 206), because the masses are being robbed blind of the wealth, their right. And that's why, they are in a constant war against the elite, resulting in violent disorder and breaking of law- the law which protects the rich; and deprives the poor of his just rights.

CONCLUSION

The researcher, through this study, has proved that Mohsin Hamid in his fiction has depicted the use of violence in precisely the same way as has been described by Fanon. Fanon first outlined this universal pattern in 1961 through his study of Martinique that colonizer, regardless of place or nationality, employs the tactics of oppression, suppression, and alienation to keep the colonized at a distance. Hamid's conclusions echo Fanon's insights more than fifty years later.



The selected texts, rooted in Third World contexts, reflect Hamid's deep insight into its struggles, particularly Pakistan. He portrays the oppression and multidimensional exploitation imposed by the imperialist West and the bourgeoisie. As depicted in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) and *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* (2013), global capitalist powers maintain economic control over weaker nations, while *Moth Smoke* (2000) illustrates dominance of an imperialist-backed bourgeoisie over resources.

The world's growing awareness of its rights, reflected in Maslow's hierarchy of needs, calls for resistance when people face injustice and deprivation by the ruling elites. Such oppression often sparks violent uprisings, creating national and global unrest. Western capitalist powers, including the U.S., maintain control over global resources, causing frustration in underdeveloped nations and leading to prolonged conflicts. Hamid's fiction calls for a just and equal world where resources are shared fairly and discrimination is eliminated. Therefore, in an era where globalization is portrayed as the future of humanity, all humans need to be treated equally.

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