

**Mimicry and Confused Identity as Represented in Ayad Akhtar's
Disgraced**

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Abstract:

The objective of this paper is to represent how Muslim immigrants in the United States are placed within two different cultures leading them to have confused identity. This is represented through the analysis of the Pakistani American play *Disgraced* (2012) for Ayad Akhtar (1970-). The play depicts the journey of the protagonist Amir who struggles to overcome the pressures of the clash between the Eastern and Western cultures through "mimicry" which is manifested through the process of assimilation but actually it results in confused identity because of living in this 'in- between' space. The analysis of this paper depends on the theories of Homi Bhabha which discusses 'mimicry', ' ambivalence' and 'third space' to examine the contradictions inherent in colonial discourse which forces the colonized to have confused identity.

Keywords: Muslim immigrants; Pakistani- American theatre; Ayad Akhtar; mimicry; identity- confusion

Introduction:

This paper aims to show how far Muslim immigrants in the United States are placed within two different cultures leading them to have confused identity. This is explained through the analysis of the Pakistani-American play *Disgraced* (2012) for Ayad Akhtar (1970-). The protagonist, Amir, struggles to overcome the pressures of the clash between the Eastern and Western cultures through "mimicry" which is manifested through the process of assimilation but actually it results in confused identity because of living in this 'in- between' space.

In the analysis of this paper, the researcher is guided by the theories of the Indian- English scholar Homi Bhabha's (1949-) who is considered to be a leading voice in post-colonial studies. In his book *The Location of Culture* (1994), he discussed the concepts of 'mimicry', 'ambivalence' and

'third- space'. These concepts are crucial to examine the contradictions inherent in colonial discourse which forces the colonized to have confused identity.

This paper is divided into two sections. The first section provides a brief background to the conditions of South-Asian and Muslim immigrants in the United States which changed greatly after 9/11, showing how these conditions are crucial to understand how Muslim immigrants' identity is constructed. The following part examines the Pakistani-American theatre which is classified as a post-colonial theatre. This is followed by an account to Ayad Akhtar's life and works as well as a synopsis of the discussed play.

The second section examines *Disgraced* through the lens of Bhabha's concepts of 'mimicry', 'ambivalence' and 'in- betweenness' or 'third space' through the character of Amir who reflects the confused conception of identity of immigrants in the post 9/11 era.

This paper aims to answer several questions: How did the conditions of Middle East immigrants in the United States create identity problems? How far did mimicry and assimilation lead to the feeling of displacement? What kind of problems did the confusion between the two cultures create?

The Conditions of Muslim Immigrants in the United States:

Following the myth of American dream, immigration to the United States increased rapidly during the twentieth century. Since about 1970, the increase of immigration of people of color from Latin America, Asia, and the Caribbean "has changed the demographic makeup of the United States society in a more populous and racially and ethnically diverse direction" (Feagin 307). In fact, immigration produced multi- racial citizens who did not "melt" into the American pot. According to Erik Love, most of these immigrants were not able to assimilate or to live as real American citizens (63). They were rather transformed into new social forms based on political interests rather than on culture or heritage (Omi and Winant 18).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the number of Muslim immigrants in the United States increased due to political and economic reasons. They "were socially invisible" so they never identify themselves ethnically or religiously in order to be accepted more easily in the United

States" (GhaneaBassiri 41,136). The dilemma of immigrants who came from Middle Eastern or South Asian countries is that they have always been ascribed with negative stereotypes which expands and contracts all the time (Love 70).

On 11 September 2001, the destruction of the World Trade Center negatively influenced the life of both the first- and second- generation of Muslim immigrants. In the aftermath of 9/11, anti-immigrant hysteria was considered to be the greatest in the American history. It is directed largely at Muslim immigrants or those associated (correctly or not) with Islam, especially immigrants from the Middle East and South Asia (Oppenheimer et al. 1). Immigrants who came from Middle East and South-Asia, were ascribed with the same racial category "Oriental" or 'Muslim' despite of their ethnic and religious diversity (Love 78,93). Thus, Islamophobia which is defined according to *The Runnymede Trust* report as "unfounded prejudice and hostility" against Islam (4), has increased greatly after the events of 9/11. Islamophobia considered all Muslim immigrants as threatening groups, nullifying racial, ethnic, and cultural differences. Consequently, the situation of Muslim Americans in the United States is influenced by many factors as stereotyping and attributing Islam to terrorism which make Muslim immigrants face racial discrimination (Yulianto112). On the other hand, it is based on "a clash-of-civilizations lens that promotes bigotry and animosity toward Muslims" (Bazian 68).

In the first two years after September 11, the United States has developed a corpus of immigration law and law enforcement policy that by design or effect applies almost exclusively to Arabs, Muslims, and South Asians (Ahmad 1262). In other words, the United States has pursued anti- immigrants' policies by bringing the full force of the American penal system to bear on noncitizens. In the wake of the attacks of September 11, 2001, immigration laws were employed to contain the perceived threat posed by Arab and Muslim extremists, leading to the arrest and detention of nearly 5,000 immigrants (Cole). Moreover, migrants who seek asylum or individuals contesting deportation are today routinely held in an elaborate network of deportation centers and county jails, in the latter case alongside criminal offenders. Highlighting the extent of the state's coercive enforcement, in fiscal year 2007 the

Department of Homeland Security reports that it detained 311,213 immigrants in total, for reasons that included minor violations or even administrative mistakes (Bernstein). These policies complicated the lives of the second and third generations immigrants of South Asian and Middle Eastern more (Liao 6). On the other hand, this racial profiling has deprived Muslims who live in the United States from their rights as American citizens as they have been associated with terrorism (Chaki 43).

According to Homi Bhabha in his essay 'The World and the Home', these immigrants suffered from the feeling of being 'unhomed' not because they were 'homeless', but, because, of their 'freak displacements' as a result of political and cultural conflicts (141,146). This feeling of displacement increased due to 'US' homeland security policies which creates a sense of insecurity for South Asian immigrants particularly and Muslims generally. Thus, the American identity became in opposition to the Oriental 'Other' (Liao 88). This opposition contributed to the identity confusion of these immigrants.

The dilemma of the second and third generations of these immigrants has been simply that they are "torn between their parents' cultures and what they are told by the mainstream is their culture" as they were trapped in the conflict with their racial and ethnic difference and the pressures from the mainstream that they have to cope with. (Chatterjee 111-113). South Asian immigrants to the United States are one of the most sectors who were influenced by racial discrimination as a result of Islamophobia and cultural clash between the Eastern and Western culture. As Gargi Bhattacharyya mentions in 'South- Asian Cultural Studies', that although before September 11th the brown skin was considered uncomfortable and endangering the events of 9/11 recalls the old colonial rhetoric which results in racial discrimination of people who came from South Asia without consideration to their occupation or background (3-11).

The Pakistani- American Theatre:

In fact, Pakistani American literature forms an essential part of the postcolonial South -Asian American literary scene. The first-generation

South Asian immigrants were eager to establish their own identity so they choose theatre, film, and the arts as their medium of expression. The emergence of a number of influential literary voices in the last few decades, particularly after 9/11, has increased the attention to this kind of literature. The tenet of Pakistani- American literature comprises works published in the 1980s and 1990s by the first generation of immigrant writers, such as Sara Suleri, Bapsi Sidhwa, or Zulfikar Ghose, and later by the second generation of American born writers of Pakistani descent, such as Daniyal Mueenuddin or Nafisa Haji (Benena 51).

Drama as a literary genre, takes much time to flourish. The South Asian American theatre came into academic canon within various minorities so it suffers from marginality (Chaki 29). However, South Asian American drama has suffered “a double minority” inside the larger minority represented by Asian American theater (Chatterjee 115). In the early to the mid-20th century, there were very few recorded South -Asian theatre performances which later developed with the increase of the wave of migration in the 1960s, which was accompanied with some performances and productions in the perform on Salaam Theatre in New York (Bose 9). The category of South Asian diasporic theater, which includes various ethnic, religious, and linguistic backgrounds, has been equated with India which makes Pakistani American theatre hold position of marginality within South-Asian canon. According to Basu, South Asian American drama has received limited scholarly attention in comparison to the novel, however, in the aftermath of 9/11, this genre has been taking artistic risks and engaging audiences in questions of national belonging and the limits of United States multiculturalism (*The American Nation, and Its Others after 9/11...* 13). However, the dramatic and theatrical production by South Asians has developed slowly (Bose 9).

Most of the themes of South- Asian American theatre before 9/11, particularly Pakistani- American, has always been concerned with "personal or family histories" which is always interweaved with the political history of Pakistan and the United States. As most communities who live in the diaspora, cultural organizations throughout the United States have literary productions to fill their leisure time with

performances, involving music dance and dance drama. Thus, the diasporic community in its formative first generation failed to see itself within the mainstream, and all that is left is to create a simulacrum of a nostalgic past (Chatterjee 111). Iftikhar Dadi describes this theatre as "multilayered" and as part of "a ceaseless and restless movement in and out of the triangulated space demarcated by the tropes of 'South Asia,' 'Islam,' and the 'West,' understood in their entire baroque, over determined significations." (42). Bose states that "the theater of the South Asian diaspora reflects a highly diverse set of sociopolitical and aesthetic concerns such as the engagement with classics of various forms as well as explorations of questions of the "homeland"(Bose 6).

Post 9/11 era has witnessed "a powerful rebirth of drama among South Asian and Arab American theater communities"(Basu *The American Nation, and Its Others after 9/11...* 15). That is because, the theatre has a role as "a rich source for increasing the visibility of communities generally perceived by others as minorities, or those who see themselves as such" and how it is "so sensitive to the issues of troubled and conflicted identity and able to give them a universal resonance" (Gonzalez 1). On the other hand, 9/11 created the interest in anything related to Islam, so Pakistani American theatre began to be focused upon within American cultural discourse. According to Basu, in the aftermath of 9/11, South Asian drama has been "engaging audiences in questions of national belonging and the limits of United States multiculturalism" (*The American Nation, and Its Others after 9/11...* 13). According to Claire Chambers, it is unsurprisingly," that "in the wake of 9/11, 7/7, and the Afghan and Iraq wars a number of Pakistani writers chose to explore the relationship between Muslims and the west"(5). Their aim is to present "the diversity of South Asian Muslim affiliations and affinities and the richness of Islamic culture's intellectual and aesthetic inheritances", which was misrepresented greatly (Clements 22).

Therefore, in the aftermath of 9/11, Pakistani American writers began to create channels to produce their works. Parwaz Playhouse, the first Pakistani American theater company in the United States was founded by Imran S. Javaid and Imran W. Sheikh in the fall of 2009, to join the ranks

of previously established South Asian American groups such as Rasaka Theatre Company in Chicago or Desipina & Co. in New York (Benena 53). As Sudipto Chatterjee notes, the success of such playwrights as David Henry Hwang (1957-) led to the fusion of Asian -American theater with plays by East Asian American authors, which portrays only a certain side of the Asian American experience (114-115). There are many other prominent Pakistani plays as Rehana Mirza's *Play Barriers* (2002) which portrays the upheaval post 9/11. In addition, Wajahat Ali's *The Domestic Crusaders* (2004), that traces the conflict of generations within Pakistani American family in the aftermath of 9/11 (Basu *The American Nation, and Its Others after 9/11* 15).

The main themes of Pakistani-American theatre after 9/11, revolve around assimilation to the American society "the forging of new, hybrid selves in the host country", and identity crisis of the immigrants who live in this new society particularly "their dissociation from the ethnic and religious background of their immigrant parents" (Benena 51-2). Most of Pakistani American plays focus on the dilemma of the protagonists to identify their place in the American society and their struggle in this 'in-betweenness' place as they are mostly victims of this cultural clash (Chaki 57). On the other hand, most of the literary works at that time, has taken into consideration the complicated relationship between the United States and sheds light on the war of terror which summons" the ghost of colonization" (Desai 88).

Ayad Akhtar: Staging Pakistani- American Experience:

Ayad Akhtar is a leading Pakistani American writer, who has contributed to many genres, such as novels, films, and drama within the area of South -Asian American diasporic cultural production. Ayad Akhtar is considered to be the first South- Asian playwright to achieve international success following the success of his play *Disgraced*. His dramatic contributions reinforced the position of Pakistani American theater on the emerging South Asian American theater scene, as it is characterized by "a new kind of critical and experiential interculturality" (Chatterjee 114). His well-known play *Disgraced* became the most produced play in the 2015-2016 season. The play won the 2013 Pulitzer Prize for Drama and 2013 *Obie Award* for Extraordinary Achievement (Basu *The American Nation, and Its Others after 9/11...1*).

His novel, *American Dervish*, has been "published in more than 20 languages worldwide and a 2012 Best Book of the Year at *Kirkus Reviews*, *Toronto's Globe and Mail*, *Shelf-Awareness*, and *Oprah Magazine* (Ayad Akhtar, Bio). In fact, *Disgraced* was followed by two other plays in the same year namely *The Who & The What* (2012), and *The Invisible Hand* (2012).

Ayad Akhtar was born in New York in 1970 and raised in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, as the son of doctors who had emigrated from Pakistan in the late 1960s. Ayad's parents expected him to follow them and become a doctor. Instead, he studied theatre at Brown University and film directing at Columbia University's School for the Arts (Benena 54). His multi-cultural and different religious background inspired his works. His father was a secular figure, so he was detached from any form of religious faith, while on the other side his grandmother was extremely religious that "she lowered her eyes every time the prophet was mentioned" (Levingstone).

As most immigrants, Akhtar experienced a displacement and confusion towards American society that refused his desire and attempts to be assimilated. In an interview with Jeffrey Fleishman he notes: "I felt at certain times perhaps invisible. But I wouldn't say I felt actively excluded. By invisible I mean in subtle ways" (Fleishman). After studying theatre at Brown University, Akhtar traveled to different countries in Europe to study acting under the supervision of the actor and director Jerzy Grotowski. At that time Akhtar was not ready to represent his heritage or culture through his work. For example, his first novel, revolves around a poet who works at Goldman Sachs, only tangentially related to Islam and failed to secure a publisher or literary agent. At the time Akhtar enrolled in Columbia University as a graduate film student in the 2000s, he was ready to confront his identity. With two fellow students, Akhtar co-wrote a screenplay entitled *The War Within*, focusing on a radicalized Pakistani student who plans on carrying out a suicide bombing in New York's Grand Central Station. The film, released in 2005, proved to be a creative turning point for Akhtar (Asif 8). In his interview with Levingstone, Akhtar notes that "It was part of a process of coming out in some way. It was me fully accepting that I was going to represent myself as Pakistani, as Muslim." (Levingstone).

On the other hand, Akhtar was influenced by his religious background and social experience as well as his personal experiences in America in a way that he reflects ideas and thoughts through investigating sensitive issues which encountered Muslim immigrants. His works, as he admits, are essentially a portrait of himself as he admits in his interview with Robert Trussell, Ayad notes that everything he writes "is some version of autobiography", and that he prefers to see himself as a "narrative artist" whose literary works are extensions of his existence. His own narrative as he mentions is "often a deformed version of autobiography," he insisted in the same interview, as everything he writes "is drawn from personal experience, whether it's observed or lived." (Trussell).

As mentioned before, the events of 9/11 forced Muslim writers to express the other point of view of Muslims who have become misrepresented in all cultural canons. As Akhtar is a descendant of Pakistani immigrants to the United States in the late 1960s, he is like other writers of the South-Asian American diaspora like Jhumpa Lahiri (1967-) and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni (1956-). He expresses the same themes of Pakistani American writers who wrote in the aftermath of 9/11 (Basu *The American Nation, and Its Others after 9/11*... 11). Akhtar is one of the writers who did not write in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, rather he describes post-memory of the actual trauma (Basu *The American Nation, and Its Others after 9/11*... 9,10). As D. Smith observes in *The Washington Post* "Akhtar's poignant and wise debut announces the arrival of a generous new voice in American fiction" (Smith). His works engage deeply with questions of Islamophobia and the new racialization of Muslims and Arabs as a Muslim writer. Akhtar is deeply concerned of portraying "the racialization of Muslims in the post 9/11 context" (Basu *The American Nation, and Its Others after 9/11*... 12). Thus, as a Pakistani immigrant, Akhtar, tackles the troubles encountered by the Muslim immigrants who live in the United States. He is deeply concerned with representing his community at this critical time, as most representations are limited to the white non-Muslim Americans who control media representations of Muslims and South-Asian immigrant communities (Basu *The American Nation, and Its Others after 9/11*... 25).

He reflects in his works identity confusion of immigrants. In his interview with *Guernica Magazine*, Akhtar said " if you're a writer of color or if you're a woman. Because if you fall into either of those categories, you're expected to be writing of your experience. But if you're not, then you can write about anything." (*Guernica Magazine* online). Akhtar's works purposely play upon American fears and anxiety in regard to Islam. He portrays the American Muslims' life through revealing the Western perspective that attributes Islam with hostility, terrorism and aggression, through his works (Chaal). For example, *The Who & the What* (2012), is an inquiry into the challenges faced by Pakistani American woman who writes a controversial novel about the Prophet Muhammad. *The Invisible Hand*, recipient of the 2015 Obie Award for Playwriting, examines a contemporary terrorism and global financial market through the story of the kidnaping of an American financial trader by an Islamic terrorist organization (Benena 57).

This paper focuses on one of the most important works written by Akhtar namely *Disgraced*. This play is considered to be one of the most famous plays which reflects the political climate in the United States in the aftermath of 9/11 and discusses how immigrants are undermined. *Disgraced* was the most-produced play in the United States during the 2015-16 season, according to American Theatre magazine which promoted this one-act play to win the "Pulitzer Prize" for drama in 2013. It features characters whose racial and ethnic diversity often heralds what is great about America. Although it was written after 9/11, it examines the racialization of Muslim South Asian Americans and the racial ideology which dominates the American society post 9/11. In his article, "*Between Performativity and Representation*" "Post-9/11 Muslim Masculinity in Ayad Akhtar's *Disgraced*", Basu argues that the play reflects "South Asian Muslims as unable to reconcile their cultural and religious identities with American civil and political life"(84). The play aims to confront "what it means to be Muslim in the United States and to expose which racial groups possess hegemony at the expense of others" (Neel 59). *Disgraced* is a good representation of the dilemmas faced by South Asians immigrants who live in the United States after 9/11 as the traditional mythology of success of immigrants in the new land is undermined (Basu *The American Nation, and Its Others after 9/11*...27).

The story of the play, which is told in four scenes, is about Amir, an American-born, Muslim-raised, Manhattan lawyer and his Caucasian wife, Emily. Amir, is a successful Pakistani American lawyer who lives in New York. He has been hiding the truth of his Pakistani identity for a long time, changing his last name from Abdullah to Kapoor and creating the illusion of being a Hindu from India, instead of a Muslim from Pakistan to avoid discrimination. Abe Amir's nephew who seems to be assimilated, is a Pakistani-American, who arrives at the apartment in the hopes of convincing his uncle to come to the aid of a local Imam who has been imprisoned on charges of financing terrorist groups. Emily convinces her husband to support the Imam as Abe believes to be a victim of Islamophobia in the aftermath of 9/11.

They host a dinner party as they invited Jory, an African-American work colleague of Amir's, and her husband Isaac, a Jewish curator at the Whitney, at their home. This casual dinner talk leads to heated arguments on Islam, the Quran, race and anti-Semitism. The night becomes more heated when Amir discovers that Jory has been made partner at the law firm surpassing him, supposedly due to the other partners' suspicions that Amir misled them when he was hired and due to his relation to the Imam's case. In addition to his discovery that his wife had an affair with Isaac. Finally, his wife left him and he lost his job.

Mimicry as represented in *Disgraced*:

In *Disgraced*, Akhtar introduces a world where white is automatically given prominence over minorities in the global society so these minorities try to imitate them in order to be accepted. Akhtar presents Amir as a mimic man who imitates the colonizer in all aspects of life. Throughout the first part of the play, Amir imitates the American lifestyle and tries to behave accordingly in order to fit and have access to power. Amir starts to "mimic" the attitude, styles, and behavior of the other culture.

This imitation of the other represents one of the most important concepts of Bhabha which is 'colonial mimicry'. According to Bhabha it "is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (*The Location Of Culture* 122). In other words, David Huddart argues that mimicry is "an exaggerated copying of language, culture, manners, and ideas. This exaggeration means that mimicry is repetition with difference, and so it is

not evidence of the colonizer's servitude"(39). He also states that "colonial discourse wants the colonized to be extremely like the colonizer, but by no means identical" (Huddart 40).). In the context of immigration, mimicry is seen as a pattern of behavior. The immigrant copies the person in power, because he hopes to have access to that same power and position one day. However, while copying the master, the immigrant has to intentionally suppress one's own cultural identity (Singh).

In the first part of the play, Akhtar introduces Amir as a typical immigrant and member of colonized societies who imitates the colonizer in his language, dress and cultural attitudes. He rebels the traditional representation of South Asian immigrants so Amir tries as much as he can to imitate Americans in order to be assimilated into the American melting pot. Amir, the Pakistani -American lawyer, rejects the idea of belonging anywhere else other than the United States. He tries to live his own version of the American dream of wealth and professional success in his decorated New York apartment, with his white American wife, Emily. In the stage directions, Akhtar introduces Amir as a man who wears "an Italian suit jacket, with a crisp, collared shirt" and who speaks "with a perfect American accent" (1.1.8) and reminds Emily, his wife, and others, that he is not "one of his own people" (1.4.71). His apartment is a reflection to this dual life as it is "with subtle flourishes of the orient" but with "a small table on which a half dozen bottles of alcohol sit" (1.1. 7). In fact, "he wants to drink wine and eat chorizo and embody the western world's vision of success" (Soloski). He believes that his family immigrated to the United States "to make a better life for themselves and their families" (1.4.49), so he tries to get the fruits of this experience. This blind imitation echoes what Bhabha writes about mimicry that it "repeats rather than re-presents" (*The Location of Culture* 86).

Amir's attitude could be interpreted according to Frantz Fanon who states in his book *Black Skin White Masks* that:

In the presence of the oppressor, the colonized assume that the colonizer culture is superior because their native language is so dissimilar from the new dominant population, they are intrinsically inferior. The native constantly compares and

analyzes his ability to speak like the colonizer and dominant culture (2).

Amir's choice of a white American wife can be interpreted as a strategy to facilitate his integration into upper-middle-class American society as Isaac mentions that "the slave finally has the master's wife" (1.3.45). However, Amir knows deep inside that the American society will consider him as a slave so he tries as much as he can to struggle this image. For example, the portrait of "Juan de Pareja", is a recurring element which emphasizes that Amir is wearing the master's costume because he is living in the United States.

Isaac explained to Emily Amir's attitude in relation to the painting which is overwhelmed with the desire of copying the colonizer: "It's your painting "Study After Velazquez." He's looking out at the viewer- that viewer is you. You painted it. He's looking at you."(1.3.42). On the other hand, this episode reflects that he is not satisfied with the role his wife assigned him to do. He suggested that Emily should ask her ex-boyfriend—black, Spanish, and with a poor command of English to model for the painting which indicates that Amir realizes himself too assimilated to play the role of the cultural "other" (Benena 35).

On the other hand, Emily comments on the incident of the racist waiter who treats Amir with racial prejudice, she believes that Amir is responsible as she tells him: "You made him see the gap. Between what he was assuming about you and what you really are."(1.1. 8). Amir appears as he tries as much as he can to break the fixed stereotyping through mimicry. According to Bhabha, a stereotype has a problem of fixing individuals or groups in one place, denying their own sense of identity, and presuming to understand them on the basis of prior knowledge. Thus, mimicry is a response to stereotyping (*The Location of Culture* 67).

On the other hand, Amir's efforts to imitate Americans are not just limited to appearance, but they are extended to his ethnical and religious origins. Amir, who has Pakistani origins changes his last name from Abdulla to Kapoor, reports his parent's country of birth as he pretends to be Indian Hindu and changes his social security card to distance himself from Muslim identity which represents a source of trouble for him. He justifies for himself that by saying "People do it all the time when they go

identity theft" (1.3. 23). He succeeds in hiding his true identity to the extent that his boss gave him an expensive statue of Siva, one of Hinduism's most famous goddesses:

EMILY. So, he gets you a book. Or a bottle of scotch. Or takes you to dinner. Why'd he get you a statue of Siva?

He doesn't think you're Hindu, does he?

AMIR. He may have mentioned something once...

You realize I'm going to end up with my name on that firm?

EMILY. Leibowitz, Bernstein, Harris, and Kapoor.

AMIR. My mother will roll over in her grave...

EMILY. Your mother would be proud.

AMIR. It's not the family name, so she might not care, seeing it alongside all those Jewish ones... (1.1.10).

Amir, at first, succeeds to hide his Muslim identity to the extent that Isaac tells him "I wouldn't have ever known you were Muslim if it wasn't for the article in the *Times*" (1.3.35). Amir's desire to erase anything that could relate him to the Middle East is not limited to change his name only but to denounce his religion as well as he declares that he is "an apostate" who renounced his faith. According to Diana Benena, Amir's measures to erase any trace of his ethnic and religious background, was not personally motivated rather it was determined by the political climate which follows 9/11 (59).

Akhtar shocks the audience with Amir's views about Islam because it imitates the mainstream opinions of the American society as he reflects superficial understanding to Islam. In the play, Amir restates the American mainstream opinions of Islam which describes Islam as "a backward way of thinking...comes from the desert. From a group of tough-minded" people (1.3. 33). His first shocking attitude appears when he refuses to defend the Imam. Amir believes that this man is "basically an alleged terrorist" (1.2.16). He echoes Abadi's view as he mentions that, "Muslim identity are correlative with a propensity for terrorism" (29); so Muslims are always associated with terrorism because of their religion, race or ethnicity. Amir, believes that "the next terrorist attack is probably gonna come from some guy who more or less looks like me" (1.3.31).

This mimicry leads Amir to have confused identity. This could be explained through the view of Amardeep Singh who explains Bhabha's concept of mimicry. Thus, he believes that through this process of imitation, colonizers have to suppress their cultural identity which leads to their confusion and consequently they are left in this 'in-between' space which is ambivalent and full of contradictions (Singh). The ambivalence of mimicry appears as identity cannot be reduced into single concept because "identity marks the conjuncture of our past with the social, cultural and economic relations we live within." (Rutherford 19).

Confusion of Identity as a Result of Mimicry:

The play insists on proving how far identity of self-perception and self-representation is foregrounded from the very first scene showing how the interweaving of these new concepts creates this ambivalent space. With the development of the play, Akhtar shows that Amir is disillusioned and displaced with his adopted new identity. He seems to fluctuate between two worlds and this mimicry strategy just increases his confusion.

Throughout the play, whenever Amir is forced to see himself outside the American frame and whenever he faced his origins, he is confused. Thus, Akhtar represents how suppressing one's own cultural identity leaves the person in an ambivalent and 'in-betweenness' space. This confusion of identity leads colonized people to live in what Bhabha called 'third space' which he refers to in the first chapter of his book which is a collection of his essays written on colonization. According to him "all cultural statements and systems are constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation" (*The Location of Culture* 55). This ambivalent space appears as a result of the co-existence of two contrary impulses and as a result of the interaction of two or more cultures. Akhtar shows Amir's confusion of identity through two dimensions. The first dimension is revealed through his confused ideas about his ethnical and religious origins and the second one is revealed through his attitude towards the United States.

Akhtar represents Amir's greatest conflict which revolves around his relation with his religious origins. Through several incidents in the play, Amir seems to be in this liminal space concerning his religious identity as Abe mentions that Amir was "a good Muslim" when he was a kid but he "had to go the other way for a while" (1.1.12). Amir refuses to stop the

conversation with Emily when she insists that he is a part of the Muslim community which seems as a strategy of escaping from confrontation. At first, he refused to help the Imam, denouncing himself from anything related to Islam, but later, Amir becomes involved in this case of the Imam which is a very controversial case. This was the reason behind the starting point of the destruction of his career and his socio-economic life. Amir reluctantly agrees to appear in court as an unofficial counsel for the defendant to support him. When the media reported that Amir was the defending attorney of the Imam, Steven's, the head of the firm, changes his attitude towards Amir, and consequently, he was not promoted. This incident reveals Amir's failure to be assimilated in the American society.

Amir's confusion reaches its peak when he has to confront his religious identity during the dinner party. Islam remains a part of his "repressed cultural identity"(Basu *Between Performativity and Representation* 94-95). Throughout the dinner party, Amir's debate with Isaac reflects in a way or another that he still preserves his Muslim identity deep inside. His hidden sympathy with Imam is revealed when he declares that he feels pride for "those folks in Middle East dying for values you were taught were purer-and stricter- and truer... you can't help but just a little a bit of pride" (1.1. 38). This attitude could be interpreted according to Bhabha's view that "the colonial presence is always ambivalent, split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference" (*The Location of Culture* 107).

Whenever Amir remembers his mother, he knows quite well that she is not proud of him because of his partnership with a Jew. He believes that she "will roll over in her grave"(1.1.10). In his interview with Anita Montgomery, Ayad Akhtar refers to the fact that immigrants usually struggle with what concepts to live with and what opinions to discard. In this concern, he says, "I think every immigrant community, whether they're defined by their faith or by their national identity, goes through this process of wrestling with what to hold on to and what to leave behind." (Akhtar).

Amir's attitude toward the United States represents another side of his confusion. Amir has contradictory feelings of love and hatred towards the United States. Although he appears to admire the American life style, during the dinner party he reveals controversial sentiments towards the

United States and its policies. Amir mocks the security procedures of the United States against Muslims, believing that it is 'nightmare' "On top of people being more and more afraid of folks who looks like me, we end up being resented" (1.3. 31). He is against his wife who agrees with these procedures believing that it is "unmitigated passive- aggression"(1.3.31). These contradictory feelings are what Bhabha refers to liminality as a transitory, in-between state or space, which is characterized by indeterminacy, ambiguity, hybridity, potential for subversion and change (*The Location of Culture* 4).

Amir unconsciously uses the collective 'we' for several times throughout the play which implies his declaration that he is part of the Muslim community after several declarations that he is not a Muslim: " I am not one of his people" (1;15). For example, he re-identifies himself as a Muslim and a Middle Eastern, who felt the proud of being superior to the United States for once on September Eleventh. Amir, who was born in the United States, felt pride when the two towers collapsed. He was actually confused between what he really feels and what he has to feel:

ISAAC. Did you feel pride on September 11th?

AMIR. If I'm honest...yes.

EMILY. You don't really mean that Amir.

AMIR. I was horrified by it, okay? Absolutely horrified.

JORY. Pride about what? About the towers coming down? About people getting killed?

AMIR. We were finally winning (1.3.39).

Amir reveals through his words that it is very difficult to denounce his ethnical origins because " it is tribal" and " it is in the bones" so it is really hard "to root that shit out" (1.1.39). At that moment, Amir feels confused because of being homeless as he seems con. As Bhabha has stated, the borders between home and world becomes confused; uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting (*The Location of Culture* 9).

Amir realizes quite well that the American society will consider him as a Muslim even if he denies this reality with all its consequences. At this point, he realizes the fragility of his American dream. He uses the

collective pronoun 'we' in other occasion when he describes his position in the firm as he believes that Muslims are "the new Jews" (1.3.26). He knows that as an immigrant he will not hold a better position; "That firm will never be ours. It's theirs. And they're always going to remind us that we were just invited to the party (1.3. 26). When he confronts Jory who took his position in the firm, she faces him with his duality:

Your dear friend Mort is retiring and guess who's taking over his case load? Not you. Me I asked him "why not Amir/" He said something about you being duplicitous. That it's why you're such a good litigator. But that it is impossible to trust you (1.3.44).

At the final scene, Akhtar describes how Amir's life is destroyed because of this ambivalence. He describes him in the stage directions as a man whose movement and presence are "muted" and "as if a man chastened by life, perhaps even crippled inwardly" (1.4.46). On the other hand, Abe confronts Amir with the truth as he tells him: "You want something from these people you will never get" (1.4.49). Abe forces Amir to see his position in a society as he will never be accepted:

You'll always turn on your own people. You think it makes these people like you more when you do that? They don't. they just think you hate yourself. They're right! You do! (1.4.49).

The play ends as "he takes a searching long look" at her portrait of him (1.4.51). In 'South Asian Cultural Studies', Bhattacharyya observes that most South Asian immigrants are 'more stuck in the framework of empire, and not yet to imagine a selfhood outside this master– slave relation' (4). Thus, by the end Amir has discovered the juxtaposition of having a slave's face with a master's clothes. The result of this displacement is alienation as the image of self is disturbed and "the crisis of self-image starts to rise" (Ashcroft 9). Amir is finally disgraced, not only by the society but also by himself (Waldmeir 111-112).

Conclusion:

The trauma of displacement has influenced the history of South Asians immigrants who have lived in the United States and their American offspring more than any other group of immigrants particularly after 9/11 as they become under suspicion. This displacement has led these immigrants to imitate blindly the new culture in order to be accepted. In

the process of mimicry, identity is never identical with itself so immigrants have to suppress their true identity. As a result of this confusion immigrants have stood in this 'in-between' or 'third' space.

Ayad Akhtar has written *Disgraced* to serve as an illustrative example whereby neither cultural identity nor racism can be transcended: Amir has failed both at self-acceptance, of reconciling his Pakistani-Muslim identity with his American one, and has unconsciously fallen as a victim to assimilation which leads him to identity confusion that costs him both his job and his wife. Throughout the paper, the researcher manages to show how the confused identity of the protagonist of *Disgraced* has reflected the complex conception of identity of immigrants in the post 9/11 era. Throughout the play, Amir has fluctuated between one identity and the other, and the fusion of the two identities has been shortly lived and finally ends with the ugly truth that he belongs to nowhere as he has felt torn between the two cultures and has never felt comfortable to live in between cultures.

Finally, the research paper's questions that have been raised at the beginning of the paper have been answered through tracing the journey of the protagonist of *Disgraced* for self-identification which represents the dilemma of most Muslim immigrants in the United States. The play demonstrates that in the United States minorities' identity cannot be fashioned because it is always attributed to race, religion or nationality. Akhtar's main aim throughout the play is to show the complexity that arises through the collision of two identities which leads to identity confusion.

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المحاكاة و تخبط الهوية الممثلة فى مسرحية " المنبوذ " لأيدأ أخطار

المخلص:

يهدف هذا البحث إلى استعراض كيف يعيش المسلمون فى الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية بين ثقافتين مختلفتين مما يؤثر سلباً على هويتهم و يجعلها مشوشة و هذا التخبط الانتمائى يظهر جلياً من خلال معالجة الباحثة المسرحية الباكستانية-الأمريكية "المنبوذ" (٢٠١٢) للكاتب الباكستانى الأمريكى أيدأ أخطار (١٩٧٠-).

يوضح الكاتب من خلال بطل المسرحية "أمير" نتائج المحاكاة الكلية للغرب التى تؤدى إلى تخبط كلى فى الهوية طمس هويته الشرقية مما يخلق منه مسخاً غريباً. تنقسم الورقة البحثية إلى قسمين يستعرض القسم الأول من البحث نبذة عن حياة المهاجرين المسلمين كافة فى الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية وخاصة المهاجرين القادمين من جنوب اسيا ثم يتناول التغيير الكبير الذى طرأ على حياتهم بعد أحداث الحادى عشر من سبتمبر . و يتناول البحث نبذة عن المسرح الباكستانى الأمريكى الذى ينتمى إلى مسرح ما بعد الكولونيالية (الإستعمارية). هذا بالإضافة إلى استعراض حياة الكاتب أيدأ أخطار و أعماله و ملخص لمسرحية (المنبوذ).

ويعالج القسم الثانى من البحث المحاكاة و تخبط الهوية لبطل المسرحية "أمير" فى إطار نظرية هومى بابا التى تناقش " المحاكاة " و "تخبط الهوية" حيث أن شخصية "أمير" تعبر عن معاناة المهاجرين المسلمين الذين يعانون من تخبط الهوية بعد أحداث الحادى عشر من سبتمبر. الكلمات المفتاحية: المهاجرين المسلمين, المسرح الباكستانى الأمريكى, أيدأ أخطار, المحاكاة, تخبط الهوية.