Deconstructing 'Deconstruction': Postcolonial Theory, Postmodernism and Poststructuralism

*Faisal Nazir**

Postcolonial theory is often described as derived from or at least heavily influenced by poststructuralism.[1] Particularly, in the seminal work of Homi Bhabha, the close association between postcolonial theory and poststructuralism is clearly noted. This article contends that Bhabha's centralization of the experiences of exile and migration in his version of postcolonial theory aligns postcolonial theory not with poststructuralism but with postmodernism. Referring to the poststructuralist work of Derrida, de Man and Foucault and critically evaluating Bhabha's approach in its light, the article critiques the postmodernist turn in postcolonial theory by focusing on the use of the term 'deconstruction' in postcolonial criticism. The article refers to critical readings of Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* to illustrate how the reading strategy of deconstruction, originally derived from post structuralism, has been given a postmodern inflection in postcolonial theory. The article is divided into three sections. Section 1 describes the dominance of cultural theory in literary studies and the appropriation of 'deconstruction' by cultural theory. Section II critiques this appropriation of deconstruction by cultural theory by establishing that cultural theory derives the understanding of deconstruction from postmodernism and not from poststructuralism. Focusing on the postcolonial theory of Homi Bhabha, the section differentiates between poststructuralism and postmodernism and shows Bhabha's theory as more postmodernist than poststructuralist in nature. Section III discusses how deconstruction is used as a concept in the critical reading of Hamid's novel in relation to post-9/11 global cultural politics and not as a reading strategy highlighting the contradictions within the narrative. The article ends with an emphasis on using deconstruction in its poststructuralist sense of reading practice and not in its postmodern/postcolonial sense of a concept illustrating a cultural/political situation.

* Assistant Professor, Department of English, University of Karachi

The Dominance of Cultural Theory in Postcolonial Literary Studies

Deploring the current state of literary criticism in Pakistan, the novelist Shazaf Fatima Haider in her article, published online in *The News on Sunday* on 21 July 2013 with the title "In Search of a Critic," says, "In the world of sales and best-seller lists, the distinction between literature and potboilers is being blurred. It is up to the critics to help the public distinguish between the two."[2] From this statement it appears that the author believes that there is a distinction between "literature" and "potboilers", between what is considered as literary fiction and what as popular fiction and that it is important that this distinction must be preserved. She also assigns this task of keeping literary and popular fiction apart to critics.

It is interesting to note that this call for criticism has come not from academics but from a writer whose first novel became very popular among literature readers in Pakistan and abroad. As a former and a formal student of literature, Shazaf Fatima Haider probably feels that her reputation as a novelist should not be based solely on popularity and magazine reviews but on more solid grounds such as academic approval. More than that, she wants to ascertain her place and that of the other already established and emerging English language writers from Pakistan within or with reference to the "Pakistani literary tradition". She writes:

There are many valuable questions that just aren't considered in sufficient depth: questions such like — whether Pakistani writing in English is a breach from or continuum of our tradition of Urdu writing; *whether writers are producing art or 'kitsch'*; whether the writing has integrity, whether it is 'Pakistani' enough and should it even be constrained by artificial limitations such as geographical boundaries; or where our identity really comes from[?][3]

Pakistani English fiction has received considerable critical attention in recent years but this criticism has hardly paid attention to the questions that are important for this emerging young novelist. Most of the books and journal articles written about Pakistani English fiction discuss the fiction in relation to issues in global politics such as fundamentalism, terrorism, and women's rights. These are important issues in their own right and Pakistani English fiction does reflect on them in various ways as noted by the critics. This is also very much in line with global trends in literary criticism in which the dominant concerns are derived from theoretical discussions around the topics of violence, identity, gender, and power. For a long time in the study of literature, 'theory' has been setting the agenda and providing

the framework for critical reflection on literary works. Literary criticism, particularly the one concerned with Pakistani English fiction, has largely performed the task of a bridge between theory and fiction, by reading literary works in the light of theoretical concepts so as to identify how a literary work engages with a certain concept defined by or in theory.

A brief survey of books and articles that discuss Pakistani English fiction will provide sufficient evidence. In 2011, *The Journal of Postcolonial Writing* took out an exclusive issue on Pakistani English fiction with the title, "Beyond Geography: Literature, Politics and Violence in Pakistan." The "five scholarly articles" in the first half of the journal, according to David Waterman, cover such issues as Muslim identity and comparative representation of Islam in fiction by Muslim writers from around the world (Claire Chambers), the deconstruction of binary oppositions of 'us' and 'them' arising out of the 9/11 attacks (Peter Morey), Kamila Shamsie as a writer of political fiction (Bruce King, Caroline Herbert), and cultural heritage of Pakistan and Islamic identity (Ananya Jahanara Kabir).[4] Apart from these 'scholarly articles', the recent books published on Pakistani English fiction discuss similar issues. Aroosa Kanwal's *Rethinking Identities in Contemporary Pakistani English Fiction: Beyond 9/11* focuses on the way that notions of home and identity have changed for Muslims as a result of international 'war on terror' rhetoric.[5] Madeline Clements' *Writing Islam from a South Asian Muslim Perspective* investigates how South Asian writers of Muslim background have responded in English to the challenge of writing about Islamic faith ties in the aftermath of the 2001 World Trade Centre attacks and the ensuing 'War on Terror'.[6] Cara Cilano's *Contemporary Pakistani Fiction in English: Idea, Nation, State* explores the theme of 'collective belonging' and goes on to "look at the literary devices and themes used to portray idea, nation and state as a foundation for collective belonging".[7]

This shows that Pakistani English fiction is read in relation to ongoing debates in critical and cultural theory that focus on issues of identity, representation, and global/national politics. This 'application' of theory has led to a situation in which literary texts are considered as mere illustrations of various critical and cultural theories. According to Patricia Waugh, "Without the … close and careful reading of the text against its theorizations, there is that wearisome sense that one knows what one is going to say about the text beforehand, with the result that, instead of reading, engagement consists simply in looking for suitable illustration for an argument and interpretation that is already written."[8] Waugh says this

while discussing Paul de Man's essay, "The Resistance to Theory" in which de Man has identified two kinds of resistances to theory. One kind of resistance is external and largely comes from the practitioners of traditional literary criticism for whom theory has been detrimental to literary studies. The other kind of resistance, according to de Man, is internal to theory itself and manifests itself in resistance to easy theorization. It is this resistance which, according to de Man, is impossible to overcome "since theory is itself this resistance".[9]

The kind of theory de Man has in mind is commonly designated as 'deconstruction'. From the above discussion it emerges that 'deconstruction' is just one of the theories of or approaches to literature currently present in the academy. There are a number of other approaches to the study of literature which, judging by their 'application' on literary works and in literary criticism, seem to have displaced deconstruction from the central place it had come to occupy in, at least, American literary criticism in the 1970s. Since the 1980s, Marxist and historicist approaches to literature have become more influential in literary studies. According to Hillis Miller, "In fact there has been a massive shift of focus in literary study since 1979 away from the 'intrinsic,' rhetorical study of literature toward study of the 'extrinsic' relations of literature, its placement within psychological, historical, or sociological contexts." While Miller acknowledges that "the study of literature has a great deal to do with history, society, the self", he insists that "this relation is not a matter of thematic reflection within literature of these extra-linguistic forces and facts but rather a matter of the way the study of literature offers perhaps the best opportunities to identify the nature of language as it may have effects on what de Man calls the 'materiality of history'." On the other hand, "Sociological theories of literature which reduce it to being a mere 'reflection' of dominant ideologies in fact tend to limit its role to that of passive mirroring, a kind of unconscious anamorphosis of the real currents of power." The result of studying literature in this 'sociological' way is that the "study of literature would then tell readers something they could probably learn better elsewhere, by direct study of historical documents, for example."[10]

However, it is not that cultural theory has completely ignored deconstruction, as Miller seems to suggest. In fact, deconstruction has been extensively used in at least one kind of cultural criticism designated as postcolonial criticism. In the writings of Homi Bhabha and Gayatari Spivak, the deconstructive thought of Lacan and Derrida has been related to the study of colonial and postcolonial literature. Bhabha, in particular, has

championed indeterminacy, uncertainty, in-betweenness and ambivalence as far as the question of postcolonial cultural identity is concerned. His concept of 'hybridity' as the central concept of postcolonial theory, or, as he puts it in "The Commitment to Theory," "as the paradigmatic place of departure,"[11] has been very influential, leading many postcolonial critics to 'apply' this concept in their reading of specific literary texts. Bhabha may, however, be found guilty of suggesting that 'hybridity' as a textual element, derived probably from Derrida's 'trace' as the inescapable condition of all writing, is actually a 'reflection' of the real state of cultural identity in the postcolonial 'world'. In other words, Bhabha may be seen as confusing "the materiality of the signifier with the materiality of what it signifies."[12] What is to be asked is if hybridity, in-betweenness, ambivalence are 'facts' of a given cultural situation or if they are 'effects' of reading, a certain kind of reading known as 'deconstruction'. The postcolonial criticism inspired by Bhabha's making of 'hybridity' as the 'paradigmatic place of departure' reads postcolonial literature as a reflection of postcolonial realities, realities which can be best understood through the concepts of hybridity, inbetweenness and ambivalence. Thus, various writers and texts are praised for 'deconstructing' national, cultural and religious identities which are seen as forced constructions of the ideologies of nationalism, ethnicity and dogmatic beliefs. The textual and the 'real' are in this way collapsed in such readings of postcolonial literature and the gaps and fissures that a deconstructive reading identifies in texts are seen as reflections of the reality of cultural life. Texts, in such readings, derive their value from being accurate representations of reality, more accurate than those available in other discourses and media, "confusing" according to de Man, "it [literary text/language] with a reality from which it has forever taken leave."[13]

The 'scholarly' articles mentioned above may be seen as examples of this kind of valuation of literary texts. Peter Morey praises Mohsin Hamid's novel for deconstructing the 'us' and 'them' binary opposition on which the 'clash of civilizations' thesis is based. The idea is that the fictionality of the 'hoax confession' calls into question the sincerity and genuineness all confessional narratives, and thus fiction provides a deeper insight into 'reality' than the narratives which are supposed to be genuine representations of reality. "I wish to argue" writes Morey, "for Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* as an example of a sort of deterritorialization of literature which forces readers to think about what lies behind the totalizing categories of East and West, "Them and Us" and so on – those categories continuously insisted upon in "war on terror" discourse".[14] This reading of

Hamid's novel identifies and appreciates the strategies used by the writer to 'deconstruct' binary oppositions deployed in the 'war on terror' discourse. However, deconstruction here is taken as a narrative strategy used by the writer to make a political point. Textual indeterminacy is taken to be a representation of political indeterminacy – a clever and deliberate strategy of avoidance of taking sides in the 'war on terror'.

A deconstructive reading, however, does not usually lead to this smooth transition from literature into politics. In fact, deconstructive readings often disclose the impossibility of such a smooth transition. How, for example, is one to interpret the opening of the novel: "Do not be frightened by my beard: I am a lover of America" (Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*)? Read according to the model Morey has suggested, these opening words are to be taken ironically, that the speaker is, in reality not, or at least, no longer, a lover of America. And yet, love is one of the feelings extensively evoked in the novel – the love Changez feels for Erica. From a deconstructive perspective, the slipping and sliding of Changez's discourse is not due simply to the cleverness of the writer. It is rather due to contradictory desires, simultaneously existing in the narrative, desires which may more prominently be identified not in the use of 'fundamentalism' in the novel but in the use of 'love' which apparently seems of secondary and only 'personal' importance in the novel, that make the narrative deconstructive in nature. The presence and the nature of these contradictory desires is explained by Anna Hartnell in her article "Moving through America: Race, place and resistance in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*". Describing the novel as the author's "self-described 'love story' about America" and as "a complex interrogation of American nationalism and US spaces in the aftermath of 9/11 and the onset of the so-called war on terror" Hartnell argues that "Hamid's perspective seems to be much more convoluted and conflicted than [a] simplistic rendering of American state power. Indeed, though increasingly marginalized within the post-9/11 US milieu, Hamid's Pakistani migrant protagonist is not simply alienated but also simultaneously drawn to the isolationist and exceptionalist currents of the American national narrative." For Hartnell, "This, I suggest, is the paradoxical premise that conditions *The Reluctant Fundamentalist's* resistance to the racism and national triumphalism that fuelled the Bush administration's 'war on terror'."[15]

Hartnell's reading of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is a better example of deconstructive reading than Morey's. Hartnell identifies a paradox at the heart of the narrative which remains unresolved at the end of the novel.

Morey, on the other hand, takes all the ambiguities and paradoxes in the narrative as deliberately planned by the writer to make a political point. This is the way most postcolonial literature is frequently read by the critics and commentators. Hybridity, inbetweenness, indeterminacy have become characteristic features of postcolonial literature, and having become themselves the "paradigmatic place of departure" in postcolonial analyses, need to be seen as constituting a 'discursive formation' which itself needs to be deconstructed. In other words, when not discovered or identified through a reading of the text, but taken as a model or framework for reading postcolonial literature, hybridity loses its deconstructive potential and instead becomes a 'deconstructive formula' – an oxymoron.

Poststructuralism, Postmodernism and Postcolonial Theory

The centrality of hybridity, migrancy and inbetweenness in postcolonial theory has, however, not gone unchallenged. Marxist critics have always been critical of the incorporation of poststructuralist strategies in postcolonial theory. Benita Parry has questioned the usefulness of deconstructive readings of colonial and postcolonial writing for the political agenda that postcolonialism supposedly aims to follow. Her main point is that postsructuralist reading strategies are unhelpful in pursuing the political objectives of postcolonialism. According to Parry, "The postcolonialist shift away from historical processes has meant that discursive or "epistemic" violence has tended to take precedence in analysis over the *institutional* practices of the violent social system of colonialism. Similarly, cultural resistance has been privileged in analysis over diverse oppositional political expressions, while the intrinsically *antagonistic* colonial encounter has been reconfigured as one of *ambivalence* and *negotiation*" (Parry, 75; italics original). The result of this critical shift is that "a historical project of invasion, expropriation, and exploitation has been reconstituted as a symbiotic encounter; the contradictory, volatile, but all the same *structural* positions occupied in analysis by the oppositional conceptual categories of colonizer and colonized have been displaced by categories of complicity, mutuality, and reciprocity; and the conflicting interests and aspirations immanent to colonial situations have been dissolved into a consensus" (Parry 76; italics original).[16]

Yet, as the above discussion of Bhabha's theorization of postcolonialism shows, critics have found deconstruction a useful practice in postcolonial writing and reading, leading to a politics of emancipation and freedom. According to Margaret Scanlan, certain postcolonial writers, finding themselves standing "on the treacherous fault-line between the binaries of

terrorist discourse," have "transform[ed] that fault-line into a living, breathing space in which the human consequences of rigid and lethal polarities become visible."[17] The continued celebration of hybridity and inbetweenness in postcolonial criticism is, as can be seen through Scanlan's words, due to their potential for creating a 'third space,' a space which cannot be located or demarcated anywhere once and for all but emerges at the borderline of polarities whenever and wherever they are constituted. In other words, postcolonial criticism celebrates the dislocation particularly associated with migrancy and hybridity since this dislocation permanently defers any relocation in such totalizing discourses as nation, culture, race etc.

However, it is significant to note that in postcolonial criticism two kinds of dislocations and indeterminacies are often confused, the textual indeterminacy and the cultural indeterminacy. It is my contention that while the concept of textual indeterminacy has its roots in poststructuralism, the idea of cultural indeterminacy is derived from postmodernism, and while there are similarities between poststrucutralism and postmodernism, they are not the same. According to Simon During, postcolonial theory "which fused postcolonialism with postmodernism in [its] rejection of resistance along with any form of binarism, hierarchy or telos … came to signify something remote from self-determination and autonomy. By deploying categories such as hybridity, mimicry, ambivalence … all of which laced colonised into colonising cultures, postcolonialism effectively became a reconciliatory rather than a critical, anticolonialist category."[18] According to Ato Quayson, "… the discussion of what constitutes postmodernism often highlights borrowings from linguistic metaphors and their application to social and cultural discourses. Indeed, easily traceable to the theoretical genealogy of postmodernism has to be the poststructuralism(s) that proliferated in the 1960s. In fact, for some, postmodernism is the operationalization of concepts developed initially within poststructuralism."[19]. Without engaging in the chicken and egg debate, it may be gathered from Quayson's words that both postmodernism and poststructuralism are developments out of the 'linguistic turn' that occurred in philosophy and related disciplines in the 1960s.

However, Hans Bertens in his book *The Idea of the Postmodern: A History* has described a different 'genealogy' of the two approaches and has expressed his preference for keeping them separate. According to Bertens, there are two moments of close interaction between poststructuralism and postmodernism:

In the course of the 1970s, postmodernism was gradually drawn into a poststructuralist orbit. In a first phase, it was primarily associated with the

deconstructionist practices that took their inspiration from the poststructuralism of the later Roland Barthes and, more in particular, of Jacques Derrida. In its later stages, it drew on Michel Foucault, on Jacques Lacan's revisions of Freud, and, occasionally, on the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. The translation of Jean-François *Lyotard's La Condition postmoderne* (1984; original edition 1979), in which a prominent poststructuralist adopted the term postmodern, seemed to many to signal a fully-fledged merger between an originally American postmodernism and French poststructuralism.[20]

In its first phase or moment ("1970s and the early 80s"), poststructuralist postmodernism, derived from Barthes and Derrida, remained "linguistic, that is, textual in its orientation" and "[i]ntent upon exposing the workings of language—and especially its failure to represent anything outside itself, in other words, its self-reflexivity—this Derridean postmodernism largely limited itself to texts and intertexts."[21] For Bertens, this postmodernism did not engage with the "questions of subjectivity and authorship" which it had itself given rise to and emphasized:

If representations do not and cannot represent the world, then inevitably all representations are political, in that they cannot help reflecting the ideological frameworks within which they arise … In the absence of transcendent truth it matters, more than ever, who is speaking (or writing), and why, and to whom. Deconstructionist postmodernism largely ignored these and other political questions that the demise of representation had given prominence to. As a result, with the increasing politicization of the debate on postmodernism in the early 1980s, its textual, self-reflexive, orientation rapidly lost its attraction.[22]

The second phase or moment in the close interaction between poststructuralism and postmodernism came about in the 1980s with the greater influence of the poststructuralist work of Michel Foucault on theorists of postmodernism. Though this Foucauldian postmodernism, like the Derridean one, also addresses the questions of textuality and representation, it goes further and engages with questions of power and authority. According to Bertens,

This postmodernism interrogates the power that is inherent in the discourses that surround us—and that is continually reproduced by them—and interrogates the institutions that support those discourses and are, in turn, supported by them. It attempts to expose the politics that are at work

in representations and to undo institutionalized hierarchies, and it works against the hegemony of any single discursive system—which would inevitably victimize other discourses—in its advocacy of difference, pluriformity, and multiplicity.[23]

Particularly relevant here is the influence this postmodernism has had on postcolonial theory and criticism. According to Bertens,

Especially important are its interest in those who from the point of view of the liberal humanist subject (white, male, heterosexual, and rational) constitute the 'Other'—the collective of those excluded from the privileges accorded by that subject to itself (women, people of color, non-heterosexuals, children)—and its interest in the role of representations in the constitution of 'Otherness'.[24] (Bertens 7-8)

For Bertens, it is this Foucauldian poststructuralist postmodernism that has been extremely influential on such literary-political discourses as "feminism and multiculturalism."[25]

In concluding his discussion of the relationship between (French) poststructuralism and (American) postmodernism, Bertens argues for keeping the two concepts separate. The main difference he identifies between the two is that questions of subjectivity and authorship, questions which Derridean poststructuralism ignores or does not engage with, are central to postmodernism. This, for Bertens "is enough to suggest a substantial distance between postmodernism and poststructuralism."[26] According to Bertens, "The postmodernist *Weltanschauung* borrows freely from all available poststructuralist positions but cannot be identified with any single one of them, transcending them in its openly political orientation."[27]

The above discussion shows that deconstruction as a specific variant of poststructuralism has remained engaged almost exclusively with the 'linguistic turn' and though it may be seen as problematic to reduce every phenomenon, be it cultural, political, economic, to the textual, this is what deconstruction has continued to do (and has been accused of doing) since the foundational work of Derrida. What Parry and other Marxist critics question is the usefulness of the textual approach for the emancipatory project of postcolonialism. However, deconstruction, or a 'hermeneutics of suspicion' as Ricouer calls such approaches, remains suspicious of all kinds of totalizations be they in the name of imperialism or in the name of nationalism. History of the postcolonial states shows that this suspicion is

not misplaced – the emancipatory discourse of nationalism itself became a highly tyrannical discourse in postcolonial states right after the achievement of freedom, leading to the oppression of many marginal groups within the newly freed nation states, a fact well demonstrated by the writings of postcolonial writers and critics.

It is in the light of these developments that a disappointment with the experience of national freedom and the ensuing dislocations and relocations caused by migration, forced or voluntary, led to the formulation and deployment of the concepts of postcolonial hybridity and migrancy in postcolonial theory and criticism. However, as it happens with concepts and theories generally, hybridity and migrancy have themselves become a 'discursive formation' in their turn and have lost their deconstructive potential. This has happened due to close alignment of postcolonialism with postmodernism. In postcolonial theory, the experience of migration and dislocation has been read through the framework of postmodern nomadism. The close association of the postmodern with the postcolonial can be seen in the chapter on "The Postcolonial and the Postmodern: A Question of Agency," in Bhabha's *Location of Culture*. After stating that 'contingency' and 'indeterminism' are "the mark of the conflictual yet productive space in which the arbitrariness of the sign of cultural signification emerges within the regulated boundaries of social discourse," Bhabha goes on to argue:

In this salutary sense, a *range of contemporary critical theories* suggest that it is from those who have suffered the sentence of history - subjugation, domination, *diaspora, displacement* - that we learn our most enduring lessons for living and thinking. There is even a growing conviction that the affective experience of social marginality - as it emerges in *non-canonical* cultural forms - transforms our critical strategies.[28]

A few lines later, displacement, migration and diaspora become for Bhabha the exclusive sources of postcolonial culture:

Culture as a strategy of survival is both transnational and translational. It is transnational because *contemporary postcolonial discourses are rooted in specific histories of cultural displacement*, whether they are the 'middle passage' of slavery and indenture, the 'voyage out' of the civilizing mission, the fraught accommodation of Third World migration to the West after the Second World War, or the traffic of economic and political refugees within and outside the Third World. Culture is translational because such spatial

histories of displacement – now accompanied by the territorial ambitions of 'global' media technologies - make the question of how culture signifies, or what is signified by culture, a rather complex issue.[29]

Furthermore,
The transnational dimension of cultural transformation – *migration, diaspora, displacement, relocation* - makes the process of cultural translation a complex form of signification. The natural (ized), unifying discourse of 'nation', 'peoples', or authentic 'folk' tradition, those embedded myths of culture's particularity, cannot be readily referenced. The great, though unsettling, advantage of this position is that it makes you increasingly aware of the construction of culture and the invention of tradition.[30]

Thus, in a matter of a few paragraphs, Bhabha has reduced the postcolonial exclusively to the transnational. What is forgotten in this reduction is the local and the indigenous. However, in Bhabhaesque postcolonial theory, the migration and/or displacement need not be actual or material, it may even be mental or 'intellectual'. This is the way the intellectual has been characterized in postcolonial theory, as an exile or migrant, even if living within his/her nation or society. In this reduction of postcolonial experience to transnational movement and crossing of borders, actual or mental, postcolonial theory has found the postmodernist discourse of nomadism very attractive. Migrancy, dislocation and exile are the cultural formations privileged in postmodern discourse. Dick Pels describes his aim in writing the article "Privileged Nomads: On the Strangeness of Intellectuals and the Intellectuality of Strangers" as follows:

In this article, I will be especially concerned with the way in which this discourse of nomadism has recently turned into a cognitive plaything of the educated elite, into its newest fad in self-stylization and self-celebration. It hence takes issue with a powerfully suggestive, but also risky and misleading set of metaphors which celebrate the traveller, the migrant, the exile, the stranger or the nomad as the quintessential postmodern subject, and especially, as the quintessential role model of the [post] modern intellectual.[31]

What Pels further says about the postmodern intellectual can, without much alteration, be applied to the postcolonial intellectuals as characterized by Bhabha above:

Typically, (post)modern intellectuals like to think of themselves as `on the move' (towards a `place called elsewhere'), `in transit', `moving

across frontiers', `in a state of *diaspora'* or `*living between* worlds'. They tend to sacralize the desirable state of `*ambivalence*', `*contingency*', `diffraction', `*hybridity*' or even `monstrosity' (in the sense of combining unfitting, disparate identities) (see Haraway, 1991, 1992; Law, 1991), and preferably adopt the pose of the *dislocated* `traveller', `tourist' or `ethnographer' (who Levi-Strauss already described as a `professional stranger'). Nothing worse than being suspected to be `native', `sedentary', `rooted' or `immobile'.[32]

The italicized words in the above quotation show how similar is the vocabulary of the two apparently dissimilar approaches to two sets of dissimilar experiences – the Third World migrancy and the First World nomadism.

This conflation of postcolonialism with postmodernism in the works of the major theorists of postcolonialism, no matter how careful these theorists have been of giving rise to generalizations, has created a situation in literary criticism in which these concepts are applied to literary works in a ready-made fashion. As Elleke Boehmer has pointed out, this has led to a privileging of postmodernist literary works in postcolonial literature, and to a disparagement of the realist or 'traditional' literary works'.[33] Such narrative strategies as magical realism and the writing of non-linear narratives, mixing of genres, parody and pastiche, are considered to be exemplary postcolonial narrative strategies, strategies that exclusively can do justice to the postcolonial experience.

This is where a difference may be noted between poststructuralism and postmodernism. While poststructuralism remains committed to linguistic analysis and the act of reading, and remains wary of all frameworks and generalizations, postmodernism has become a general framework, a *Weltanschauung* as Bertens defines it, for emancipatory politics in the academic and the literary world. Deconstruction is taken as a tool which can be used to identify blind spots in various discourses. On the other hand, the texts that are seen to 'self-deconstruct' themselves, texts in the genre of parody, magical realism, and absurdism, are privileged as exemplifying the insights of deconstruction and poststructuralism. What is ignored in such celebrations of deconstructive work is that it is a double edged sword and, when done carelessly, often leads to what Paul de Man has identified as the critics' blindness towards his/her own claims and biases.[34] Describing the modern critics' appreciation for the author who self-demystifies his fiction, de Man identifies their preference for the "literary mind [that] espouses the

pattern of a demystifying consciousness; literature finally comes into its own, and becomes authentic, when it discovers that the exalted status it claimed for its language was a myth. The function of the critic then naturally becomes coextensive with the intent at demystification that is more or less consciously present in the mind of the author."[35] This is the kind of criticism that Pakistani English fiction has been receiving in recent times. The critics merely have to underline the demystification already at work in the works of Pakistani writers, and so Mohsin Hamid appears to deconstruct 'clash of civilization' narratives, and Kamila Shamsie appears to display a post-migratory imagination.

However, de Man describes this very "conception of literature (or literary criticism) as demystification *as the most dangerous myth of all* ...."[36] Discussing the case of Husserl's blindness towards the application of his own method on himself, de Man states: "Similarly, demystifying critics are in fact asserting the privileged status of literature as an authentic language, but withdrawing from the implications by cutting themselves off from the source from which they receive their insight." Elaborating the "implications", de Man writes: "The self-reflecting mirror-effect by means of which a work of fiction asserts, by its very existence, its separation from empirical reality, its divergence, a sign, from a meaning that depends for its existence on the constitutive activity of this sign, characterizes the work of literature in its essence." According to de Man, "One entirely misunderstands this assertion of the priority of fiction over reality, of imagination over perception, if one considers it as the compensatory expression of a shortcoming, of a deficient sense of reality ... It [literature] transcends the notion of a nostalgia or a desire, since it discovers desire as a fundamental pattern of being that discards any possibility of satisfaction." Referring to Rousseau's admission of finding in himself a "void that nothing could have filled," de Man asserts, "Poetic language names this void with ever-renewed understanding and, like Rousseau's longing, it never tires of naming it again. This persistent naming is what we call literature."[37]

A Deconstructive Approach to Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

It is interesting that Mohsin Hamid's narrator discovers just such a void in himself during the course of his narrative. While thinking of Erica, he comes to the realization that their relationship had failed because he "lacked a stable core" and that he had "nothing of substance to give her".[38] Towards the end of the narrative, Changez shares his understanding of the constitution of the self in the postmodern/postcolonial world of dislocations:

Such journeys have convinced me that it is not always possible to restore one's boundaries after they have been blurred and made permeable by a relationship: try as we might, we cannot reconstitute ourselves as the autonomous beings we previously imagined ourselves to be. Something of us is now outside, and something of the outside is now within us.[39]

In Pakistani English fiction there are few, if any, comparable acknowledgements of the splitting and fissuring of identity due to contact with others, of the divided self which now is constituted by otherness. And this particular realization in this novel comes about through the experience of travel, from the Third World to the First World (and back), and thus Changez's story seems to exemplify the postcolonial/postmodern intellectuals' journeys and their arrival at hybridity, indeterminacy and inbetweenness.

Yet Changez's arrival at the state of hybridity and indeterminacy is not or not solely due to the journey to the First World, but due to the unsettling experiences of other regions of the Third World that he visits as an employee in a multinational company. It is his unsettling experiences in the Philippines and in Chile that mould him into becoming a critic of American financial and economic policies. Towards the end of the novel, Changez is seen as a charismatic teacher, a lecturer, whose public addresses are attended by everyone from the liberal to the conservative people. These elements in the text can lead a reader towards a Marxist interpretation. As Bart Moore-Gilbert states, "…Changez's resistance is linked to the long tradition of leftist pursuit of social and political justice … Hamid's text suggests that it may be premature to dismiss left politics, particularly as a locus of opposition to American-led globalization and its analogues, notably 'the war on terror'."[40]

The irony here is that a Marxist interpretation will not be entirely consistent with a postmodernist-postcolonial interpretation exemplified by Peter Morey above. For the Marxist reader, the text will have to be interpreted as foregrounding a class conflict and the evil elements of a capitalist economy and its cultural theme only an ideological cover over the 'real' issues, while for the postmodernist/postcolonial reader, the class conflict and critique of capitalism will be seen only as a cover to ensnare the careless reader not paying attention to the narrator's hints at his own unreliability. Both interpretations would aim at appropriating the text into the larger frameworks they bring to the text in order to draw favourable

conclusions from the text towards their political claims. Yet the text remains resistant to such appropriations.

Positioned inbetween the Marxist hostility towards American capitalism and the postmodern-postcolonial celebration of a planned textual indeterminacy, the text itself remains a "multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash."[41] (Barthes, Death of the Author, page?). The value of Hamid's novel, therefore, does not reside in its being a Marxist or a postmodernist narrative but rather in being resistant to such readings and to political appropriations. As Paul de Man has said, "When modern critics think they are demystifying literature, they are in fact being demystified by it …" (de Man, Crisis, 18). It is when demystifying criticism is itself read against the text that it attempts to demystify, that the ideological biases of the criticism come out into the open. While Marxist critics are always fairly open about their critical program, the literary text hardly turns out to be the best object to pursue that objective through. The postmodern-postcolonial criticism, though, is more ambiguous about its critical program. However, many critics have identified a cosmopolitan drift in postcolonial theory and criticism. Peter Morey's reading of Hamid's novel as an example of 'world literature' highlights its value for the discourse of cosmopolitanism of which 'world literature' is one source of material. In his reading of Hamid's novel as a hoax confession, Morey does not consider the possibility that the hoax may be the form of parody itself – that the confession may be a genuine one, though reluctantly given in the form of parody.

Conclusion

Deconstructive criticism proper, as opposed to other forms of literary criticism (such as postcolonial criticism) that make use of deconstructive strategies, values literature or fiction because it resists political and/or discursive appropriation. Mohsin Hamid's novel cannot be easily drafted into a Marxist or a postmodernist politics, though a case can be made for both – and that is the contradictory situation it represents. While postmodernist-postcolonial criticism has come to idealize the migrant's position, a cultural phenomenon made into a textual one, and to celebrate all texts that appear to be composed from that position, deconstructive criticism insists on all positions as divided and self-contradictory, and places high value upon those texts in which this division is faced with full force. In particular, it resists making of any paradigmatic place of arrival a paradigmatic place of departure.

ENDNOTES

1- See Benita Parry's "The Institutionalization of Postcolonial Studies" and Simon Gikandi's, "Poststructuralism and Postcolonial Discourse" in Neil Lazarus, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004)

2- Shazaf Fatima Haider, "In Search of a Critic" n.p.

3- Shazaf Fatima Haider, "In Search of a Critic" n.p.

4- David Waterman, review of *Journal of Postcolonial Writing: Special Issue on Pakistan*, ed. MuneezaShamsie, *Pakistaniaat: A Journal of Pakistani Studies* 3.no. 2 (2011): 109-112

5- AroosaKanwal, *Rethinking Identities in Contemporary Pakistani English Fiction: Beyond 9/11*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan) 2016

6- Madeline Clements, *Writing Islam from a South Asian Muslim Perspective*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan) 2016

7- Cara Cilano, *Contemporary Pakistani Fiction in English: Idea, Nation, State,* (New York: Routledge) 2013

8- Patricia Waugh, ed., *Literary Theory and Criticism: An Oxford Guide*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press) 2006, 17

9- Paul de Man, "The Resistance to Theory" in *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*, ed. David Lodge and Nigel Wood, (Delhi: Pearson Education) 2003, 347

10- J. Hillis Miller, "Function of Literary Theory at the Present Time," in *The J. Hillis Miller Reader*, ed. Julian Wolfreys, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press), 2005, 262-264

11- HomiBhabha, "The Commitment to Theory" in *The Location of Culture*, ed. HomiBhabha, (London: Routledge) 1994, p. 21

12- De Man, Resistance, p. 339

13- De Man, "Criticism and Crisis" in *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism,* ed., Paul de Man, (New York: Oxford University Press) 1971, p. 17

14- Peter Morey, "The Rules of the Game Have Changed", *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 47:2 (2011), p. 138

15- Anna Hartnell, "Moving through America: Race, place and resistance in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*", *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 46:3-4, p. 336

16- Benita Parry, "Institutionalization of Postcolonial Studies", in *Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*, ed., Neil Lazarus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 2004, pp. 75-76

17- Margaret Scanlan, "Migrating from Terror", *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 46:3-4 (2010), p. 267

18- Simon During quoted in Benita Parry, "Institutionalization", p. 76

19- A to Quayson, "Postcolonialism and Postmodernism", in Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray, eds., *A Companion to Postcolonialism*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing) 2005, p.90

20- Hans Bertens, *The Idea of the Postmodern: A History*, (London: Routledge) 1995, pp. 5-6

21- Ibid, p. 6

22- Ibid, p. 7

23- Ibid, p. 7

24- Ibid, pp. 7-8

25- Ibid, p. 8

26- Ibid, pp. 15-16

27- Ibid, p. 16

28- HomiBhabha, "Postcolonialism and Postmodernism: A Question of Agency" in *The Location of Culture*, ed., Homi Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 172, italics added.

29- Ibid, p. 172

30- Ibid, p. 172, italics added

31- Dick Pels, "Privileged Nomads." *Theory, Culture and Society*, 16:1 (1999), p. 63

32- Ibid, p. 63, italics added

33- Elleke Boehmer, "Questions of neo-Orientalism," *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 1, no. 1 (1998): 18-21.

34- Paul de Man. *Blindness and insight: Essays in the rhetoric of contemporary criticism.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971)

35- Ibid, p. 14

36- Ibid, p. 14. Italics added.

37- Ibid, pp. 17-18

38- Mohsin Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press) 2007, p. 89

39- Ibid, p. 105

40- Bart Moore-Gilbert, "From 'the Politics of Recognition' to 'the Policing of Recognition': Writing Islam in Hanif Kureishi and Mohsin Hamid", in *Culture, Diaspora and Modernity in Muslim Writing*, eds., Rehana Ahmed, Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin, (New York: Routledge) 2012, p. 194

41- Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author", in *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*, 2nd edition, eds., David Lodge and Nigel Wood, (Delhi: Pearson Education) 2003 p. 149

Abstract

This article establishes clear distinction between postmodernism and post-structuralism and argues that such key terms in Bhabha's theorization of postcoloniality as ambivalence, inbetweenness and hybridity are derived from a postmodernist approach to issues of culture and indent and that this is a move away from the centrality accorded to language and linguistic issues in post-structuralism. Referring to the poststructuralist work of Derrida, de Man and Foucault and critically evaluating Bhabha's approach in the it's light, the article critiques the postmodernist turn in the postcolonial criticism.

Keywords: Post-modernist turn, ambivalence, in betweenness and hybridity, Bhabha's approach.