

# Interrogating Hybridity: Approaching Identity Clash in Hanif Kureishi's *My Son the Fanatic*

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## Abstract

This article explores the challenges of assimilating strange traditions into one's identity as depicted in Hanif Kureishi's *My Son the Fanatic* by analyzing the religious conflicts encountered by Parvez and his son, Ali, as they reconcile their Pakistani heritage with the prevailing British influence and identity challenges. Kureishi's short story illustrates the intricacies of merging many cultures and customs via the characters' experiences and struggles to attain a sense of belonging. The study sheds light on the burden of reconciling cultural identities and the tensions that emerge between personal liberty and societal conventions. Furthermore, it explores the political ramifications of hybridity by emphasizing its importance in transforming identity and culture within a global context. Kureishi employs narrative techniques and symbolic imagery to scrutinize diversity, contesting rigid generalizations and advocating for a nuanced perspective on identity. This study underscores the transforming potential of embracing influences.

**Keywords:** Hybridity, assimilation, cultural boundaries, diversity, belonging

## 1. Introduction

Hanif Kureishi is an influential British writer of Pakistani origin interested in highlighting the interrelation between culture and identity in his novels and short stories. He tackles problems the second-generation immigrants face in the British community despite all their trials to assimilate into it. In his *My Son the Fanatic* (2009), Kureishi tends to portray the characters of Parvez, a driver, and his son Ali. Both characters represent the cultural conflict over the conception of hybrid identity. In this short story, Kureishi sheds light on the dilemma of integrating cultural traditions with foreign influences and focuses on individual self-realization.

In his short story, Kureishi introduces his readers to the character of Parvez, who reflects the multifaceted challenges of assimilating Eastern traditions with his newly constructed identity, which imitates the Western one. Parvez faces difficulty aligning his principles with his son's since Ali suddenly demonstrates an intensive commitment to religious tenets. Thus, Kureishi's work approaches the conflict that results in discrepancies between cultural and religious attitudes. Kureishi uses detailed character portrayals and meticulous language to convey the complexities of hybridity and its influences on interpersonal relations.

However, literature explores hybridity's repercussions since it helps readers perceive complicated cultural and religious identities. In *My Son the Fanatic*, Hanif Kureishi depicts the complex boundaries of belonging. His short story handles diverse background characters. Thus, analyzing it helps one better understand how an individual navigates his life through his identity among the various social frameworks and rejects notions of cultural purity, accepting the interlinkages of varied cultures. *My Son the Fanatic* demonstrates Parvez's struggle against religious tenets while embracing the Western impact of a diverse social structure based initially on challenging the traditional norms of identity purity. Hanif Kureishi skillfully navigates his characters' conflicts and doubts to portray the challenges of straddling two cultures.

This study tends to probe into the idea of hybridity in Hanif Kureishi's *My Son the Fanatic*, shedding light on the challenges of assimilating strange traditions into one's identity. The short story's plot portrays the conflict between Parvez and his son Ali over Ali's identity's transformation toward religious commitment, which led to discord in their family structure. It focuses on Parvez's response to Ali's transformation while remaining faithful to his convictions. The study highlights the tension arising when different cultural traditions and religious beliefs intersect. In addition, it traces Kureishi's characters' evolution throughout the story and the deliberate language choices to portray the intricacies of identities and their effect on interpersonal relations. This study aims to understand the process of identity formation and question standard notions of identity. It also highlights how cultures intersect within a specific context. It studies Kureishi characters and storytelling techniques to enhance our comprehension of identities and their broader impact on society.

## 2. Hanif Kureishi's Hybrid Identity and its Challenges to Traditional Cultural Boundaries

Hybrid identity represents a multifaceted notion encompassing various cultural, religious, and social components (Hockensmith & Lyle,

2020; Jones, 2022). It arises from social hybridization processes, which include migration, globalization, and the integration of multicultural perspectives (Hockensmith & Lyle, 2020). This issue is especially significant for immigrants and their offspring, who frequently face challenges in harmonizing their ancestral legacy with the contemporary cultural context in which they find themselves (Neelam, 2023). Hybrid identity is exhibited in multiple manifestations, including national minorities, migrant diasporas, and virtual communities (Hockensmith & Lyle, 2020; Elaref & Ahmed, 2024).

Among other organizational contexts, family is a perfect example of a hybrid-identity organization that can easily connect and merge aspects of family relationships while retaining specific and unique identities from each other (Boers & Nordqvist, 2011). The notion of hybrid identity prompts inquiries regarding its prescriptive function in the context of religious self-perception (Jones, 2022). It underscores the persistent phenomenon of hybridization within contemporary institutional interactions (Lam, 2020).

Hanif Kureishi's *My Son the Fanatic* discovers the complex notion of hybrid identity in a postcolonial context: the predicament of characters torn between assimilation and cultural maintenance (Alshammari, 2018). The short story depicts the tension between complete adoption and rejection of dominant cultures, creating an in-between space for ambivalence in identity called the liminal space (Dohan, 2023). This hybridity is apparent in the modes of mimicry and ambivalence, respectively, in the persons of Parvez and Ali (Waworuntu & Arianto, 2019). The story demonstrates how immigrants have the hardest of times holding on to anything reminiscent of belonging in a society configured via the discourses of race (Alshammari, 2018). Identity is an especially highlighted concern in postcolonial literature; thereby, a comparison of Kureishi's work against other works of literature reveals how the superior position of the West over the East contributed to the shaping of postcolonial identities (Alzouabi, 2022; Wagner, 2016). These studies highlight the continuing battle between Eastern and Western identities within Western hegemony.

In his *The Location of Culture* (2012), renowned scholar Homi K. Bhabha profoundly theorizes about the concept of hybridity. According to him, hybridity disrupts dominant discourses and binary structures, arguing that intercultural contact creates a new and often tenuous site for cultural negotiation. This tension is seen in Parvez's negotiation between South Asian heritage and Westernized identity. Integration in British society through many dimensions of work, social life, and routine puts him in a position in what Bhabha describes as 'the third space,' a site in which cultural identities encounter one another yet become unresolved. However, this site of hybridity turns out to become a site of contest when Ali rejects Western values, and a tension between assimilation and maintenance of cultural identity is revealed. Parvez's tension and dis-ease about Ali's rejection of hybridity work to serve as an affirmation of Bhabha's claim that a site of a hybrid individual occupies a position that is neither assimilated nor disconnected but in a constant negotiation between cultures. Moreover, various studies tackle the concept of hybridity in literary texts that incorporate details. In his work, Bhabha examines works that depict people negotiating through dimensions and how such works detail the losses and opportunities of assuming hybrid identities.

In the study of identities, hybridity is discussed in relation to the blending of ethnic or social traits, which results in the creation of new identities. Hybridity disrupts rigid and essentialized understandings of identity by demonstrating the dynamic and interconnected nature of cultural influences. It recognizes that individuals and groups are actively negotiating and adapting their identities within specific cultural contexts. Stuart Hall's theory of hybridity greatly expands this comprehension. In his *Cultural Identity and Diaspora* (2015), Hall describes how one constructs an identity in a diaspora through combining factors in the country of origin's culture. Hall theorizes that such mixed identities are not characterized by fixity but by fluidity, changing in specific contexts. An ideal example of such a theory can be seen in *My Son the Fanatic*, with Parvez providing an exemplary case for Hall's theory of a hybrid identity. After immigrating to Britain, Parvez incorporates many parts of Western life—driving a taxi, consuming alcoholic drinks, and having friendships with Westerners—illustrating an identity derived through environment contact.

In contrast, Parvez's son, Ali, rejects such a contact and reveals the complications involved in a hybrid identity. Ali's dedication to purity and distance from Western values challenge Hall's theory, suggesting that hybridity tends to cause tension in family ties and between generations. The conflict between Parvez and Ali reinforces Hall's theory that cultural identity is ever-changing, reworked at each stage of development through experiences and confrontations.

The notion of hybridity contests the conventional ways of viewing identity, culture, and belonging. The mixed origins of the characters tear down the boundaries between cultures and ideologies. The identity construction process in Hanif Kureishi's *My Son the Fanatic* reflects how the bicultural origin of the main character negates conventional categorization and raises questions about cultural authenticity and integration challenges. Kureishi uses several storytelling techniques: shifting between languages, minute delineation of characters, and plot details, all attest to hybridity in the telling. This says something about the complications and contradictions within that concept.

Hybridity represented in *My Son the Fanatic* summons back the concerns of multiculturalism and integration into a critical evaluation of fixed notions of culture and identity in today's world. Kureishi believes that the motive of assimilation in *My Son the Fanatic* uncovers the protagonist's attitude toward his mixed cultural heritage. His identity questions views on culture and religion and highlights nuances of belonging. Drawing from linguistic choices and plot development, amongst other narrative strategies, the author adequately illustrates this amalgamation, which enriches the importance of the work. It portrays the main character's challenges of harmonizing his diverse religious heritage, mirroring broader societal dialogues on multiculturalism and assimilation.

The pivotal challenge of traversing inter-religious and inter-cultural boundaries is found in Ali's character in *My Son the Fanatic*, struggling between two opposing forces of cultural influences and opposing a perceived decline in moral standards in the West. Contrary to his father, Parvez, who has embraced British secularism and indulges in the pleasures of Western ways, Ali self-consciously disavows

hybridity in favor of a strict, monolithic identity based on religious fundamentalism. This disavowal should not be taken to be a question of individual preference; more appropriately, it is a response to his father's compromising position, one that reveals the generation conflict that occurs in diasporic groups when cross-cultural hybridity is unaddressed (Chafetz & Ebaugh, 2000).

Kureishi utilizes narrative devices such as dialogue, juxtaposition, and symbolic imagery to shed light on Ali's intra-psychic struggle in defining his Muslim identity in a Western society. The conflict between father and son is a microcosmic reflection of the wider multiculturalism and belonging discourse, in which Parvez sees Western assimilation as a path to material and social security, in contrast to Ali's vision that sees it as a sacrifice of ethical and cultural values (Akhtar, 2024). Ali's failure to synthesize his multilayered identity extends beyond personal consequences to capture profound political issues related to religious and cultural authenticity debates in postcolonial Britain.

In contrast, though externally perceived to be successful, Parvez's hybrid identity is insecure and volatile. He embraces British traditions—including drinking alcohol, befriending white people, and engaging in Western social traditions—yet his son's disaffiliation with such a way of life forces him to face up to the volatility of his position. The father-son relationship is one of tension, in which hybridity is accepted (by Parvez) or disaffiliated (by Ali), evidencing diverse coping strategies used across generations in different contexts (Chafetz & Ebaugh, 2000). Parvez's embracing of hybridity is socially and economically driven. At the same time, Ali's disaffiliation is a deep-seated conflict over identity, evidencing how those with hybrid identities feel trapped between two worlds without belonging.

Through the broad view encompassing Ali and Parvez, *My Son the Fanatic* presents a multifaceted analysis of the impact of hybridity across generations. Ali's radicalization highlights the perils of dismissing hybridity in its entirety, while Parvez's struggles suggest that hybrid identities are unstable and subject to social pressures and personal needs. Ultimately, Kureishi's portrayal of these two characters shows that hybridity is not a static solution but a continuing negotiation, tension, and redescription process in an increasingly globalized society.

Hybrid identities challenge traditional cultural boundaries by blurring, transgressing, and brokering knowledge domains (Lam, 2020). These identities are characterized by ambivalence towards boundaries, contradicting the notion that cultural boundaries are inherently problematic (Marotta, 2008). While hybridity can disrupt social boundaries, it also creates internal identity conflicts that individuals must navigate (Lam, 2020). Though useful in challenging static notions of ethnicity and identity, the concept of hybridity presents conceptual difficulties and may inadvertently gloss over existing cultural hierarchies (Anthias, 2001). Organizations with hybrid identities face challenges in managing multiple dimensions of identity, which can form high- and low-status factions among members, affecting their identification and loyalty (MacLean & Webber, 2015). These complexities highlight the need for nuanced approaches to understanding hybrid identities and their impact on traditional cultural boundaries, such as the concept of translocational positionality (Anthias, 2001).

Rigorous deconstruction of rigid cultural delineation is inevitable while approaching *My Son the Fanatic* by Hanif Kureishi. The mixed identity of the protagonist resists the traditionally perceived notion of culture and religion, which calls for reassessment. In this regard, disturbance in the continuum of the incidental conception revealed an intricate process of belonging or fluidity of the identification process within a multicultural backdrop. Kureishi has applied various narration techniques, such as linguistic characterization and plot movement, to show and locate the concept of hybridity in the short story. It helps to know the contradictions inside and outside the protagonist. The narrative explains a wide range of broader socio-political issues concerning multiculturalism and its integration within contemporary society through a schema of strict cultural categorization analysis using the lens of hybridity and then upon the convolutions that must be negotiated (Rehana, 2009).

Given the intricateness of cultural stereotypes in contemporary society, their subversion thus becomes the key feature of the literary analysis of works such as those by Hanif Kureishi and *My Son the Fanatic*. Kureishi deconstructs preconceived traditions with the help of the portrayal of hybrid identities, challenging the notion of static culture. In this regard, the hybrid identity of the protagonist helps question the cultural stereotype analysis of belonging in a globalized context. Kureishi thrusts readers into an analysis of cultural authenticity and how individuals create strategies to juggle themselves, challenge traditional labels, and embrace the fragmentation of identity (Bista, 2023).

Hybridity in *My Son the Fanatic* contests the limits of the prevailing cultural and religious boundaries. It is with the central character, Parvez, that hybrid identity contests the traditions of belonging and identity. The multicultural background of Parvez and the diverse influences of culture blur the stark dichotomies between Islam and secularism, East and West, to insist upon the complex and mobile nature of cultural identity. He challenges the limitation to any one category by participation and movement across different cultural identities; this asserts his position as an active agent in defining his identity. Hybridity, as lived, is thus a form of resistance against the reductive and homogeneous conceptions of cultural identity and offers a complex multi-layered perspective of the axes of belonging as filled out in a globalizing world (Alshammari, 2018; Dohan, 2023).

In Hanif Kureishi's *My Son the Fanatic*, the question of hybrid identity can be a site of conflict; thus, the fight with his hybrid identity, along with that of the conflict between his Pakistani cultural identity and his assimilated British identity, forms much of the struggle that the protagonist Parvez will endure. Therefore, the friction intrinsic to both cultural identities is a source of interior and exterior conflict with Parvez until he finds his place and recognition inside both cultural worlds. Indeed, through its mere existence, Parvez's richly ambiguous hybrid identity beats any stereotypical definition of cultural and religious differences, bringing fluidity and complexity into the

processes of identity formation within a paradigm that admits pluralism. It reflects the big socio-political challenges of multiculturalism and assimilation since his struggles mirror those of many in tussles between multiple cultural identities in an ever-shrinking world (Stegmann, 2010).

### 3. Narrative Techniques Employed by Kureishi

Language is an essential tool for depicting hybridity since it mediates the articulation of the elaborate position of the protagonist, entailing analysis of latent tension. Thus, Kureishi uses language not merely as a communication medium but also to express his protagonist's psyche, which is pulled at by two conflicting cultural forces. For example, hybrid languages, such as English intermingling with Urdu and Punjabi, symbolize the protagonist's dual identity and will point to the complications inherent in negotiating many cultural domains. Kureishi is good at capturing the subtlety of hybridity by using language judiciously; hence, great insight into the inner struggle of the protagonist and the complexity of his outward position is provided. This makes language a solid narrative device, complementing the expression of hybridity in the text (Rubdy, Alsagoff, 2013).

This is where the hybrid individual occupies that unique space at the juncture of many cultures, often resituating conventional notions of identities and belonging. Among the major themes in this short story is the main character's hybrid identity. In *My Son the Fanatic*, Hanif Kureishi complicates the traditional bounds of cultural and religious allegiance. Such is the story that forms the basis of this complicated narrative, in which the protagonist navigates through many cultures, creating tensions in his experiences and interactions with other characters. Kureishi portrays the protagonist as a hybrid figure, examining the amorphous nature of identity and the strategies individuals deploy to negotiate their heritage with rapid change. This representation of hybridity highlights the intricate nature of belonging and the challenges associated with harmonizing conflicting cultural values within an individual (Guo et al., 2023). Kureishi's utilization of narrative strategies to explore themes of cultural identity and hybridity is in line with the literature's function of developing intercultural competence, as explained by Sharma et al. (2023). Literature facilitates intercultural competence in that it makes different outlooks and adaptations understandable; *My Son the Fanatic* depicts hybridity as a point of conflict as well as accommodation in that Parvez's and Ali's experiences capture the challenges that arise in dealing with multiple frameworks in a more globalized society.

Through the unfolding of the story in *My Son the Fanatic* by Hanif Kureishi, the hybrid experiences of the protagonist are dramatized amidst dealing with both the internal confusion and the external challenges of coming to terms with the two cultures. The story unfolds with intact interior disorder and tension instigated by the protagonist's conflicting cultural allegiances. The protagonist's development in Kureishi's portrayal of hybridity thus becomes quite elaborate. It does not spare the reader from participating in the complex interlinks of cultures and the problems of reconciling the varied poles of one's identity. Amidst the thick texture that weaves the story along with the hybrid experience of the protagonist, he elaborately outlines the problems and discrepancies in hybrid identities while negotiating the multicultural matrix (Chen et al., 2024).

Symbolism and imagery are necessary to enhance the theme of hybridity in the story *My Son the Fanatic* by Hanif Kureishi. Symbols used, such as a mosque and a Pakistani community, and the character of Parvez personifying it, help Kureishi portray the chaos individuals face while trying to balance between cultures. Using imagery, for instance, the contrast between traditional Pakistani food and the commodities of the West or the conflict between religious beliefs and secular values. The metaphorical elements raise the reader's awareness of hybridity within a larger framework of socio-political issues relating to multiculturalism and integration in today's world. Kureishi is innovative at rendering subtlety and nuance of combined identities. It investigates how people position themselves concerning culture through different literary strategies in light of contemporary globalization (Rubdy, Alsagoff, 2013).

### 4. Interplay of Hybridity and Belonging

Hybrid identity, as developed by Hanif Kureishi through *My Son the Fanatic*, portrays an aspect wherein one cannot live with these differing cultural and religious identities. This reflects the pursuit of acceptance that defines hybrid identity-related complexities, which dare the understanding of rigid boundaries and classification. A hybrid himself, he raises questions about the normative and calls upon the reader to revisit cultural authenticity and religiosity assumptions. Through the investigations into hybrid identity within the narrative, Kureishi refuses any essentialist cognition on culture or religion, underlining the fluidity and multiple dimensions of identity construction. The protagonist's search to come to terms with his hybrid identity poignantly outlines the nuances and complexity of belonging to a society that often demands an individual to fit into one particular cultural or religious paradigm or another. Consequently, Kureishi's story portrays a complication of the hybrid identities managed through a multicultural society." (Smith & Leavy, 2008).

*My Son the Fanatic* tackles the most decisive themes: alienation and acceptance within a hybrid context. To begin with, Parvez already has a hybrid identity since he comes from a mixed cultural background and has conflicting values. It is in these very attempts at balancing his selves between British and Pakistani communities that lead him to be alienated, neither of which wholly accepts him. This is perpetuated even more so with the son's radical conversion to fundamentalist Islam, challenging the beliefs and values of Parvez, therefore emphasizing that the question of hybridity regarding societal norms and cultural expectations can be incredibly problematic. However, as the story unfolds, Parvez eventually finds a path toward self-acceptance, with which he can come to terms with his hybrid identity and, therefore, provides an opportunity for harmony to mitigate this cultural conflict and tension (McCartan, 2022; Alshammari, 2018).

In *My Son the Fanatic* by Hanif Kureishi, the state of hybridity is treated more philosophically as a means through which the protagonist, Parvez, gains empowerment to negotiate and reconcile multiple layers of cultural and religious identity. Thus, the hybrid identity of

Parvez challenges traditional notions of cultural and religious boundaries, underlining the fact that fluidity and complexity are characteristic features of constructing identity within a multicultural framework. Through his relationship with his son Ali, Parvez must confront the conflicting demands of two cultures and suffers a dislocation from both the British and the Pakistani communities (Hitch, 2019). It is, however, in the same mixed cultural forces that Parvez finds independence and can reconstitute an entity in terms of his definition. Ultimately, hybridity furnishes that machinery of empowerment through which Parvez may transcend fixated cultural definitions and breach particularities toward the demanding currents of civilization in modern times (Achera òu, 2011; Sutrisno, 2023). Parvez's assimilation into British society and Ali's struggle for religious authenticity exhibit a dominant thematic concern in literature that is typified by the struggle of individuals to gain entry to a new world. The matter is explored elaborately in Sharma's comparative analysis of Melville's *Moby Dick* and Narayan's *The Man-Eater of Malgudi*. In a process similar to that of Ahab's and Vasu's transformative odysseys—one motivated by a quest for revenge on nature and the other to rule society—Ali and Parvez pursue different ideological pursuits. This indicates a recurring tension between individualism and cultural determinism in their respective settings (2023).

This multilayered process often undertakes the challenge of granted norms and boundaries. The protagonist of the story *My Son the Fanatic* by Hanif Kureishi cannot be attributed as one or the other since he stands precisely in between the two oppositions of Western modernity and Islamic heritage as suggested in Sharma's "Memory, Media, and Modernity in Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*: A Twenty-first Century Perspective" (2023). Identity in diversity inherently complicates perceptions and identifications of self and belonging and thus stresses the dynamic changeability of identity in the globalized world. Kureishi's richly nuanced rendering of hybridity brings into light the complex negotiations required of any individual navigating through varied cultural and religious landscapes, further underlining the problematics involved in identity formation in today's interlinked world. The protagonist's effort to bring together the disparate constituents of his identity symbolizes the greater challenges faced by any individual negotiating multiple identities within the globalized backdrop (Laurencin & Roy, 2014; Alenizi & AbuSa'aleek, 2022).

## 5. Hybridity and Religious Discourses

One of the major themes in *My Son the Fanatic* by Hanif Kureishi is religious syncretism. The protagonist, Parvez, works out some complications about his identity, complexly constructed in himself as being a Westernized Pakistani Muslim. The plot focuses on the conflicting religious beliefs and customs within his family; his son's embracing of fundamentalist Islam challenges the customary ways of looking at the meaning of cultural and religious boundaries (Matemba, 2023). This dynamic use of religious syncretism underlines the liquescence and complexity of identity within a multicultural framing, showing how indistinct the borders between faiths are and the mechanisms people use to tackle their varied cultural affiliations within an increasingly globalizing world. By deconstructing the case of religious syncretism, Kureishi effectively investigates the convergences between tradition and modernity, pointing to some of the ambiguities inscribed within belief systems and the forms the creation of hybrid identities takes on in both individual and mass interrelations.

In Hanif Kureishi's *My Son the Fanatic*, there exists a very strong context of syncretic religious beliefs and practices, whereby the protagonist, Parvez, works out the problem that arises between his Westernized way of life and the embracing of fundamentalist Islamic principles by his son. Thus, it reflects the fusion of Western consumer culture with the conventional religious attitudes of the East, showing the complexity accompanying identity construction in a multicultural setting. Parvez's attempt to bring all of these incommensurable influences together shows the broader tensions between cultural heritage and modernity, which determine the complexity of living with hybrid religious identities in today's world of rapid changes. By carefully considering the challenges of hybrid religious practices and beliefs, Kureishi expresses the continuous struggle between tradition and modernity in contemporary multiculturalism (Zumara, 2020).

A reading of religious fundamentalism through the optic of hybridity in *My Son the Fanatic* suggests that the central character reconciles his Pakistani background with British identity. The representative of hybrid identity resists the stern dichotomies that religious fundamentalism often poses as purity and exclusivist symbols of cultural and religious identities. The ideological conflict between Ali and Parvez in *My Son the Fanatic* is also apparent. In a style that reminds one of Hawthorne's criticism of Puritanism's oppressive strictness in imposing morals in *The Scarlet Letter*, which forces conformity and punishes dissent (Sharma, 2023), Kureishi portrays Ali's strict observance of Islam as a countering force to Parvez's secularism, causing conflict between generations and fragmentation of identity. This is used to support the dominant theme of religious and cultural dominance, in which the freedom of the individual is often in conflict with collective expectations. Parvez's hybridity allows him to pass through various cultural territories, which underlines the elaborate and dynamic process of identity construction (Yonah, 2023). This analysis of religious fundamentalism within the concept of hybridity underlines the limitations and hazards of essentialist thought in its attempt to homogenize cultures and suppress all individual freedom and free thinking. Through discussing the protagonist's complex identity, Kureishi reveals the repressive features of religious fundamentalism and the potentially liberating aspects of accepting diverse cultural influences.

In *My Son the Fanatic* by Hanif Kureishi, spiritual hybridity is revealed as a source of personal liberation for the protagonist, Parvez. By synthesizing elements from the traditional Pakistani setting and the Western cultural environment, the character learns to deal with their puzzles while simultaneously challenging the idea of fluid cultural and religious boundaries. The adoptive embrace of a hybrid spiritual identity by Parvez subsumes the exclusivist affiliation into a space for the agency in self-determination and the construction of his very specific system of belief. The freedom that spiritual hybridity affects underlines the dynamism of the transformative potentials of hybrid identities in negotiating the intersections between culture and religion. It further highlights the empowering characteristics inherent in

accepting diverse facets of an individual's identity, serving as a vehicle for self-expression and personal empowerment (Anwar et al., 2021).

## 6. Psychological Dimensions of Hybrid Identity

The most striking themes in *My Son the Fanatic* by Hanif Kureishi are the crisis of identity and hybridity in which Parvez must balance between two diverse cultures and religious identities. This situates Parvez's hybrid identity between his Britishness and Pakistani heritage, considering questions about place in society and general belonging. The identity crisis indicates the complex navigation of multiple cultural affiliations in the emerging global village, which challenges the traditional notions of homogeneous cultural identities. The hybridity of Parvez points to the tension between the assimilation of cultures and the need to survive with their own cultures in the modern contexts of multiculturalism. An investigation into the hybridity of identities by Kureishi within the narrative looks at the fluid and dynamic nature of making an identity. This primarily reveals complexities in negotiating many and often conflicting cultural belongings (Navarrete & Horan, 2016; Bhabha, 2012).

The psychological connotations elaborated in managing multi-identities within Hanif Kureishi's *My Son the Fanatic* are elaborate and multifarious. In the protagonist's struggle to balance his Pakistani roots with his British identity, this tension underlies the psychological stress of living across two polar cultures. This can further be manifested through alienation, confusion, and identity crises in which different cultures' conflicting ideals and expectations tear the individual apart. The short story, with the different identities of the protagonists, points to the social and psychological problems faced by people in multicultural societies, where the line that divides people into certain different cultural groups is always blurry. The hybridity theme in the story is a powerful echo of people's problems and emotional pain while suffering different cultural identities. (Marotta, 2008; Adi & Al-Shetawi, 2018).

This idea of hybridity elaborates with deep-reaching ramifications for psychological well-being in *My Son the Fanatic* by Hanif Kureishi. The cultural boundary is crossed, and Parvez appears to be the prototype of confused people torn between their traditional Pakistani background and the allure of the West. The existing tension can significantly impact mental health, resulting in experiences of alienation, disorientation, and a lack of belonging (Marotta, 2008; Anwar et al., 2021). Conversely, accepting a hybrid identity may provide avenues for personal development, creative expression, and greater adaptability, thereby improving mental well-being (Marotta, 2008). The complexity of hybridity in literature and real-life experiences needs to be explored to understand how it affects one's mental health (Yahya et al., 2022).

Hybridity as self-discovery treads into the core of *My Son the Fanatic* by Hanif Kureishi, a story about Parvez's struggle to fight his bicultural being, that of a Pakistani-British person. Thus, in his confrontation with his son Ali, who undertakes a fundamentalist form of the Muslim creed, Parvez is pressed to confront the complexities in his identity against the perceived boundaries of cultures and faiths. This journey of self-discovery through hybrid experiences thus not only challenges conventional notions of the stiffness of culture and religion but highlights identities as dynamic and varied in a globalized world. (Bhabha, 2012; Schoene, 1998).

## 7. Situating *My Son the Fanatic* in a Broader Literary Context

The concept of hybridity in postcolonial and diaspora fiction often comes about through tension between generations, with parents and offspring grappling with conflicting cultural claims, changing identity, and ideological contention. Hanif Kureishi's *My Son the Fanatic* (1997), Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* (2004), and Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* (1966)—all explore the complications specific to hybrid identity, but in different cultural, generational, and historical settings. While Kureishi and Lahiri explore the tension between familial relations in the diaspora and intergenerational difficulty in assuming identity, Salih approaches hybridity by considering a colonial heritage that erodes individuality but not family structures. A comparison between these novels discloses that hybrid identity is not a simple matter of cultural negotiation but a site characterized by generational tension, ideological contention, and, in some cases, profound disconnection.

Kureishi and Lahiri explore the tension from such hybrid experiences lived out in immigrant offspring growing up in Western cultures. In *My Son the Fanatic*, Parvez, a first-generation Pakistan-born immigrant living in Britain, embraces an identity of assimilation and secularism. In contrast, Parvez's son, Ali, rejects altogether the ideal of hybridity and turns towards a form of religiosity in an attempt to maintain cultural purity. This intergenerational tension is a new development seen in postcolonial migration, in which younger persons, in contrast to Western values, increasingly opt for a stricter form of cultural purity (Alshammari, 2018).

In *The Namesake*, Ashoke and Ashima Ganguli try to transmit Bengali cultural heritage to their American-born Gogol. Unlike Ali, who explicitly rejects values imparted to him by his dad, Gogol experiences a less apparent inner contradiction—trying to erase his cultural identity through assimilation, only to subsequently reconnect with it with a deeper level of understanding (Lahiri, 2004). Where Kureishi portrays intergenerational conflict in terms of a clash between irreconcilable viewpoints, Lahiri portrays it as a developing negotiation, suggesting that hybridity, even in its early contestation, can become reconciled in the long run.

In contrast to Kureishi and Lahiri's narratives, Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* does not confront a patrilineal conflict over several generations. Instead, it explores the consequences of hybridity as a cause of psychological and ontological anguish. The figure of Mustafa Sa'eed, a Sudanese scholar trained in Britain, embodies the colonial subject trapped in a state of doubleness, both an insider and an outsider, neither capable of assimilating Western society nor effectively re-appropriating an authentic Sudanese identity (Salih, 1966).

His eventual fate—marked by a mysterious disappearance or suspected suicide—suggests that hybridity, rather than manifesting in a patrilineal form, can become an inescapable burden that irreparably shatters one's view of identity (Alzouabi, 2022).

Unlike Kureishi and Lahiri, who present hybridity as a fluid construct negotiated in familial contexts, Salih views it as an individual and regrettable inheritance shaped by historical oppression and not intergenerational differences. As such, Mustafa Sa'eed is a deeper expression of hybridity—a character trapped between two worlds, unable to claim allegiance to either.

The expressions of hybridity within the works of Kureishi, Lahiri, and Salih exhibit a range of responses, including negotiation, flat-out rejection, and alienation. Kureishi's Parvez, as well as Lahiri's Gogol, attempts to find a sense of harmony with their hybrid selves; however, both characters face significant difficulties in balancing the cultural demands placed upon them by their families and society. In contrast, figures like Ali in *My Son the Fanatic* and Mustafa Sa'eed in *Season of Migration to the North* categorically reject any possibility of hybridity. Still, for essentially disparate reasons: Ali sees Western influence as degrading, longing for a single and unambiguous identity, whereas Mustafa sees hybridity as a postcolonial strategy of seduction and defiance, eventually falling prey to its internal fragmentation. Lahiri's work, on the other hand, presents a more complex transformation, in which Gogol rejects and subsequently adopts a more integrated mode of hybridity, thus finding a reconciliation between complete assimilation and the rejection of cultural identity.

By limiting hybridity to familial conflicts and ideological differences, it can be seen that Kureishi and Lahiri understand hybrid identity in terms of negotiation between family life. In contrast, for Salih, hybrid identity is understood in terms of the aftermaths of colonial trauma and its deep existential implications. In *My Son the Fanatic*, intergenerational hybridity creates an irreconcilable tension, but in *The Namesake*, it makes a slow negotiation towards acceptance. In contrast, *Season of Migration to the North* speculates that hybrid identity could be an inherently unsustainable state, one that creates a state of alienation and not productive negotiation.

This comparison situates Kureishi's work within a larger discussion about diasporic identity formation. It argues that specific types of hybridity can be effectively negotiated through family structures. Still, others will break down when subjected to the weight of colonial heritage and cultural tension.

## 8. Cultural Hybridity, Global Citizenship, and the Digital Age

Hybridity has become a key analytic for studying global citizenship, challenging essentialized understandings of identity and reimagining cultural affiliation in a hyperglobalized era. Hanif Kureishi's *My Son the Fanatic* (2009) is one of the first fictions to explore hybridity, shedding light on its contradictions in diaspora communities. Parvez and Ali's assimilationism and outright rejection of hybridity in the novel foreshadow present-day identity crises experienced by second-generation immigrants, with cultural negotiation compounded through both the impact of globalization and virtual networks (Kraidy, 2006; Hall, 2015). In its depiction of salient hybridity in a pre-digital era of migration, Kureishi's work cannot capture the lives of today's diasporan citizens, whose lives are increasingly impacted through social media, transnational virtual communities, and virtual discursive spaces, creating what Appadurai (1996) describes as a global ethnoscape.

In the current era of globalization, virtual spaces have profoundly impacted hybridity, specifically for youth in diaspora communities (Georgiou, 2013; Kirmayer et al., 2011). In contrast to past times when experiences of such hybridity in diaspora communities involved geographical migration and direct face-to-face contact (Zainab, 2024), diaspora youth today move through virtual spaces in which cultural identity is performed, negotiated, and reworked (Unger, 2012). Online spaces such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube enable a vibrant, hybrid sphere in which immigrant offspring combine cultures of origin with Western cultural elements, producing Hall's (2015) "new ethnicities" that challenge the assimilation and purity of cultural frameworks (Ahmad & Arif, 2023).

Investigations into diaspora in virtual spaces reveal that youth in such settings actively build composite identities through blending and weaving together multilingual contexts, reinterpreting traditional markers in relation to emerging trends, and participating in political actions in virtual spaces that contest cultural narrative legitimacy (Madianou, 2013; Leurs, 2015). Such a practice reflects Bhabha's (2012) theory of the 'third space', in which cultural identity is not locked into a bounded classification but reinterpreted in transnational virtual spaces (Kraidy, 2006). As such, social media become spaces for cultural negotiation and incorporation, allowing for individual development and expression of multidimensional identities that transverse national and age categories (Georgiou, 2013).

While *My Son the Fanatic* engages with intergenerational tension regarding bodily migration, its theoretical underpinnings apply in terms of modern-day digital hybridity. Parvez is a model of traditional hybridity, with his identity constructed through a desire for assimilation and concrete integration into Western society (Alshammari, 2018). By contrast, Ali's rejection of hybridity reflects current discursive trends in terms of cultural purity, a reflection of the fact that diaspora communities often have competing demands placed upon them by their respective ethnic communities, nations of residence, and virtual communities (Madianou, 2013; Ahmed, 2009).

In modern society, youth manage complex identities concerning virtual selves, marked by cultural governance and technological malleability (Leurs, 2015). According to studies, youth in diaspora communities often face disapproval in both countries of origin for appearing too 'Westernized' and in hosting countries for facing marginalization (Unger, 2012). Conflicts over virtual identity resonate in the dynamics between a father and a son in *My Son the Fanatic*, suggesting that hybridity is a disputed field in real-life diaspora relations and virtual spaces (Kraidy, 2006; Madianou, 2013).

As globalization and virtual networks increasingly erode traditional cultural borders, hybridity catalyzes transnational virtual selves,

homelands, and host cultures (Appadurai, 1996; Georgiou, 2013). Kureishi's works foreshadow these future tensions, representing hybridity as a glorification of cultural mixing and an iterative negotiation between assimilation and resistance (Alshammari, 2018). In actual migration settings, such as in the case of Parvez and Ali, new types of hybrid selves develop in virtual spaces, in which new media, virtual communities, and processes of globalization redefine affiliation terms (Madianou, 2013; Leurs, 2015).

By analyzing multicultural fiction using digital hybridity, *My Son the Fanatic* continues to serve as an essential forerunner to the identity dilemmas of the age of new technology. It illustrates how hybrid selves—in real-life settings or fabricated in virtual communities—repeatedly transform in response to transnational cultural shifts and processes of technological globalization (Kraidy, 2006; Madianou, 2013; Sharma, 2024).

## 9. Conclusion

In *My Son the Fanatic*, significant insights regarding hybridity contest conventional understandings of cultural and religious demarcations by examining the protagonist's intricate identity. The character's hybrid characteristics undermine static classifications, underscoring the variability and interrelation of cultural identities. Kureishi utilizes narrative techniques, including linguistic choices, character evolution, and structural organization of the plot, to illustrate the concept of hybridity within the narrative. The above methods help explain the story's broader meaning because they demonstrate how the protagonist tries to navigate two culturally conflicting worlds. The hybridity issue in *My Son the Fanatic* reflects broader sociopolitical issues of multiculturalism and integration into contemporary society, thus deconstructing the complexity and challenge of belonging in a world of diverse cultural backgrounds moving across each other's boundaries. (Kureishi, 2009).

These results are important in understanding the meaning of cultural identities within the context of *My Son the Fanatic* by Hanif Kureishi. This will be based on the hybrid identity of the protagonist, as well as challenging the common observations of cultural and religious boundaries to the complications of belonging in a multicultural setting. The article brings forth the importance of the narrative strategies employed by Kureishi in demonstrating hybridity, things like language, characterization, and plot development, to understand how these techniques enhance the overarching significance of the text. Furthermore, hybridity in *My Son the Fanatic* represents broader sociopolitical interests, such as multiculturalism and assimilation, within a contemporary framework. This highlights the challenges when trying to broker the different cultural identities of individuals in an ever-growing global community.

Future studies in the field of hybridity in literature may center on analyzing the intersection of hybrid identities and how power aligns across different cultural contexts. In such contexts, how power structures impact and inform individuals' hybrid identities within a text can be a great way to understand the complexity associated with identity formation and negotiation. Moreover, subsequent critical studies might examine the function of language in depicting hybrid identities and the influence of language selection on the representation of cultural hybridity within literary works. Through thoroughly analyzing these elements, researchers can enhance their comprehension of how hybridity is illustrated and navigated in literary narratives, illuminating the subtleties of cultural diversity and identity construction in modern society.

Going through hybridity in Hanif Kureishi's novels-or even more in *My Son the Fanatic* requires one to consider how he steps out of the frontiers of cultural and religious limits by using the hybrid identity of his protagonist to challenge his audiences to redefine problematics of belonging and processes of identity construction in today's globalized world with fixed beliefs and fast-enclosing categorizations. This notion of hybridity is elaborated on in the novel through linguistics, character development and growth, plot, and several other narrating modes employed by Kureishi. It is for this reason that this text becomes highly applicable. Using all these various literary devices, Kureishi presses readers to think about larger socio-political issues like multiculturalism, assimilation, and negotiation of diverse cultural identities within contemporary civilization. These three factors, therefore, mean that this investigation into hybridity in Kureishi's work offers salient insights into the complexity of cultural identity and the challenges involved in treading diverse cultural landscapes.

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## Authors' contributions

**Abdelnaeim Elaref** designed the study, conducted the literature review, and wrote the initial draft. Abdelnaeim Elaref, an ambitious researcher in literary studies and criticism, is interested in critical discourse analysis, identity, diaspora studies, and power. Abdelnaeim is currently working as an assistant professor of literature in the Department of English at Majmaah University, Saudi Arabia.

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