

Displeasures of Cultural Diversity and Diasporic Hybridity in *Almost English* by Charlotte Mendelson

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ABSTRACT

The research explores the strands of cultural hybridity and diaspora compromise that Mendelson has introduced in her novel, *Almost English* (2013). The research has analyzed the diasporic community as victim of cultural diversity and ambivalence. It focuses on the significance of cultural choices to establish one's identity; we see identity as a process of negotiation and of articulation of cultural differences. It explores the ways in which Mendelson addresses the hybrid world, a world in which no culture and identity is pure or essential. Homi K. Bhabha's critical approaches serve as the theoretical framework of this research. His concepts of cultural hybridity, ambivalence, third space and mimicry are of prime interest for the study of this novel. This work highlights the appropriation of Bhabha's concepts and their application in postcolonial context considering *Almost English* (2013), for which main motifs include: challenging fixity in one culture, awareness about other existing cultures, and a contestation of view which privileges one culture above other, skirmish realities which finally produce multiple meanings, and values and identities. Finally, the research demonstrates that diasporic communities face displeasures of identity and language while living in a hybrid world. A world where third space is not productive enough for diasporic communities because of which they become conscious of their own identities and place in the society.

Key words: Ambivalence, Cultural Diversity, Diaspora, Hybridity, Mimicry, Third Space

INTRODUCTION

In the present world intellectuals are talking about the transient nature of human life but what has confused the scholars of the present era is the transient nature of identity. Post-colonial people are living in a moment of transit, they are living in the world where increasing number of migration of people across different continents have shaken old views of home, borders, cultural identities and resultantly the world becomes confused. "We find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion." (Bhabha, 1994, p.1). In this present time, we are unable to solve the riddle of cultural identity, in such a situation what may come to save modern men and women is a slogan of hybridity.

Almost English (2013) by Charlotte Mendelson is a self-explanatory work to analyze the effects of cultural hybridity. Charlotte Mendelson herself is an embodiment of all the features of hybridization. Mendelson is clearly revisiting her background and taking us to the heart of close-

knit Hungarian family who is living in London. Charlotte Mendelson is a well-known British novelist and editor. Her maternal grandparents were in her words "TransCarpathian-Ruthenian" (Mendelson, p.385, 2013) former subject of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, who were born in what is now Ukraine, learned their sums in Russian, spoke Hungarian together yet considered themselves Czech. In an interview she says.

"Yes, someone once said to me that I always used to refer to myself as foreign and they thought it was a bit of a pose and then they met my grandmother! I do not feel English. I've got the insecurity of the immigrant even though I'm two generations away..." (Interview with Alex Peake-Tomkinson, 2015)

Charlotte Mendelson's *Almost English* (2013) has been selected for study for two reasons 1- As a writer she herself is an embodiment of all the features of post colonialism. 2- She envisioned her work in the backdrop of cultural identity crisis created by postcolonial circumstances. *Almost English* (2013) is a distinctively unique literary piece that affectionately portrays a fictional family, the Hungarian Roszi, her sis-

ters, English daughter-in-law Laura, granddaughter Marina and other relatives and friends. Novel revolves around a dysfunctional mother-daughter relationship. Marina the 'almost' English girl of title is at Combe Abbey, a boarding school; she feels as an isolated and foreigner in this school's English setting. Due to some financial problems, she is in the school on borrowed money and strictly instructed to get admission into Cambridge and become a doctor. In the school, she is friendless, homesick and unable to tell her mother about her condition. In London Laura yearns for Marina, longing for the smell of her hair. Marina never wants to reveal her Hungarian identity in front of other people. With the passage of time, she develops an identity crisis, and she feels like an alien in the English setting. Marina's boyfriend Guy Viney is from a year below. His father Alexander Viney knows about the culture and history of Hungarians. Alexander Viney is the villain of the novel as well.

Both Marina and her mother Laura are anxious, worried, nervous, over scrupulous, and secretly envious of Hungarians who have incapacity for embarrassment. Both Laura and Marina are alienated, to varying degrees, from their community, revealing upon different levels of assimilation in one family unit. Both remain at an ambivalent position. Laura's husband Peter is back in her life again. Throughout the novel she is unable to decide whether to tell her family about Peter or not. By the end of the novel both characters are able to decide about their futures.

The query of identity is present throughout the novel Marina suffers through identity crisis from the very beginning of the story till the end. Laura is a globalized character in the novel; she appears to be less patriotic to her own homeland and more sympathetic and humanly in her position. She is an English lady but as she is living in Hungarian family and supporting them by all means, she reduces her own original identity and during the course of her life she tries to run away from the dehumanizing effects of identity crisis.

The title of the novel *Almost English* (2013) is quite significant and it can be regarded as one of the important motifs of the novel. It associates the characters of novel with an on-going process of hybridization that is never complete. All the Hungarian characters living in hybrid world try to imitate the language and cultural values of the English state. Marina tries to become a civilized English girl throughout the novel; she desires to forget her Hungarian background, but the fact is that the more her diasporic-hybrid state in the society remind her of past. Hungarian aunts are also trying to be like English ladies and at the same time also cherishing their own traditions. These Hungarian characters are almost the similar but not white, this incompleteness creates inferiority complex within them. Mr. Viney from the very beginning of the novel appears to be almost English character of the novel, in spite of being a Hungarian.

The exchange of culture through the exchange of language is another important theme of the novel. Marina, Hungarian aunts, and Laura all these characters are multi-lingual who are in love of learning unknown languages. It is quite clear in the novel that they are never comfortable while uttering the words of the foreign languages, but they do so as to

become almost English. In case of Laura one can say without any kind of hesitation that she is pure English woman but on the other hand as she is learning Hungarians words, she also becomes the almost English mother of Marina.

Almost English (2013) is a self-explanatory work to analyze the effects of Cultural hybridity upon the identities of main characters. Marina and Laura feel alienated from the rest of world as they try to escape from the present world. Issue of identity is present throughout the novel. The purpose is to explore the ways in which Mendelson addresses the problems faced by the diasporic community regarding the effects of cultural hybridity on identities. The researcher would narrow down the topic to the ordinary Hungarian women who have left their cultural roots and encountered cultural issues to form their identities. By focusing upon Charlotte Mendelson's delineation of post-colonial identities, as a literary critic, the researcher combats her effort as skillfully launched in the backdrop of Bhabha's cultural hybridity.

Cultural diversity haunts and creates dissatisfaction among the diasporic communities. Consciousness about one's identity that exists on the borderlines of culture can bring self-realization and self-assertion. *Almost English* (2013) by Mendelson endeavors to unearth the displeasures of a hybrid community and unveils problems hidden under it. This study aims to develop a better understanding of the effects of cultural hybridity on identities as well as to highlight its dangers and productivity and to bring forward the varied dimensions of a complex interplay of multiple identities in Charlotte's fictional narrative. This research is aimed at judging how the procedure of assembling hybrid identities result in violence, trauma, and unease. As *Almost English* (2013) is about being separated from a homeland or culture so the study explores the idea of home and identity. Usually, home is defined as a place where people feel most comfortable, loved, and accepted. The purpose of research is to demonstrate that identity is not given rather a product of lived reality, something always in process in a hybrid world. The aim of this thesis is to establish an understanding of the fact that why it becomes necessary for displaced population to weave out its ways through mimicry and ambivalence.

CONCEPTION OF CULTURAL HYBRIDITY

Hybridity is one of the major key terms that affect the post-colonial discourse. Hybridity, therefore, is gradually gaining currency in the academic realms of literary and cultural studies. It simply means mixing of two different cultures or formation of new transculture forms within the contact zone produced by colonization. Hybridity is a broader term covering up the development from biological to cultural discussions. As an explicative term, hybridity became a helpful tool in forming an apprehensive discourse of racial mixing that arose toward the end of the 18th Century. Hybridity basically affects the conflict of the colonizer and the colonized and how colonizer and colonized interact. The entire post-colonial diasporic literature exhibits mixed feelings through the vital dichotomies marking the lives of émigrés such as love-hate relationship, opposition between self and other,

hybridity, homesickness, mimicking inclination, sense of loss and alienation and ultimate disillusionment.

Critics Related to the Idea of Cultural Hybridity

Robert Young in his book, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in theory and Culture and Race* (1995) traces the origin of the term hybridity in the racialized discourse of nineteenth century evolutionism. The Latin roots of the word are discovered as referring to the offspring of a tame sow and wild boar:

... provides a significant framework for that other work by emphasizing that all perspective on colonialism share and have to deal with a common discursive medium which was that of colonialism itself... colonial discourse analysis can therefore look at the wide variety of texts of colonialism as something more than mere documentation or evidence (Young, 1995, p.163).

For Young hybridity is a space of new stability and self-assurance. He says that in the modern world our identities are constructed as a result of cultural exchange and diversity. For Young one cannot separate cultural discourse from the racial categories of past, in which hybridity possess a clear racial meaning. Thus, if we are deconstructing such essentialist ideas of race then it does not mean that we are distancing ourselves but rather repeating past. Young writing on the third space describes this space as "a site of production" (Young, 2008, p.82). Young suggests that one can easily find 'void' everywhere and the actual problem about the third space is that it is a 'void', i.e., no place or nothing and it is here in such a non-space that migrants find themselves.

Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin in their collective work *Post-colonial Studies* (2000, p.109) take view of hybridity as an important term in postcolonial context; it simply refers to the cross-cultural exchange. This term highlights the negating and neglecting inequality of the colonial power. Hybridity underlines mutuality of cultures in the various processes like syncretical, cultural synergy and transculturation. Mutuality denies the hierarchical nature of the imperial process or that it involves the notion of equal exchange.

The use of hybridity as a form of cultural exchange sprang from the linguistic model introduced in 1930s by Mikhail Bakhtin. In his essay '*Dialogic Imagination*' (1981) Bakhtin presents hybridity as double natured: organic and intentional. Organic hybridity refers to the language fusion, natural ability to fuse idioms shared by all linguistic expressions, on the other hand intentional hybridity is not about the fusion of language but an arena of contestation-"collision between different points of view on the world" (Bakhtin, 1981, p.360).

The hybrid is conveniently slippery category, purposefully challenged and deployed to claim change. The term is quite productive as one notes its origin in biology and botany, its interlude as the weightier syncretism to its retrieval in the work on diaspora by the authors such as Paul Gilroy, Stuart Hall and James Clifford. Gilroy in his book *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993) elaborates a richly challenging critique of cultural nationalism, against which he suggests black diasporic cultural and intellectual

production. Gilroy demarcates a distinctively modern, cultural-political space that is not precisely African, American, Caribbean, or British, but is, rather, a hybrid mix of all of these at once. Consequently, Gilroy represents a specifically modern cultural-political formation that was brought by the experience and inheritance of the African slave trade and the plantation system in the Americas, and which exceeds both the nation state and ethnicity. He argues that Du Bois's idea of 'double consciousness' of blacks is very important for understanding multinational experiences of the individuals of the black diaspora as blacks on the one hand were expected to follow to their national worlds but on the other hand, they were instantaneously isolated from them through their shared experience of the fear of slavery. He uses the idea of double consciousness to show black hybrid culture, as he displays that Black Atlantic is striving to be both European and Black at the same time, through their relation to their mother land as well as to ethnic absolutism to be transformed.

Gilroy finds hybridity helpful in the field of the cultural production, where he observes that "the musical components of hip hop are hybrid form nurtured by social relations of the South Bronx where Jamaican sound system culture was transplanted during the 1970's" (Gilroy, 1993, p.33). He clearly identifies that there is no purity left and the use of hybridity suggests, counterfactually, a stable and prior non-mixed position to which one may return. He continues to suggest that "Whether the process of mixture is presented as fatal or redemptive, we must be prepared to give up the illusion that cultural and ethnic purity has ever existed" (Gilroy, 2000, pp.250-1).

James Clifford in his book *Cultural Anthropology* (1994) uses the term hybridity to define identity; identity is taking the form of resistance in the present world either as a nostalgic form of traditional survival or mixed in a new world that is hybrid. To him, hybrid is "A discourse that is travelling or hybridizing in new global conditions" and he stresses "travel trajectories and flow" (Clifford, 1994, pp.304-6). Clifford is of view that self-identity is a complex cultural problem in the modern world as no community is able to preserve its own authentic culture and he too conceives collective identity as hybrid. Cultures appear not as a tradition to be protected but as an assembled ciphers and structures that are always defenseless to critical and creative recombination.

Clifford points that if we are thinking of purity in any culture or art than its mean that we are throwing ourselves in doubt. In his article "*Diasporas*" (1994) Clifford addresses the issues that can arise when trying to outline diaspora that has developed as a traveling term in fluctuating global conditions. He feels that "the term diaspora is a signifier, not simply of transnationality and movement, but of political struggles to define the local, as distinctive community, in historical contexts of displacement" (Clifford, 1994, p.308). He examines the use of diasporic language in the framework of 'tribal' and native people as he is clear to point out, "tribal cultures are not Diasporas; their sense of rootedness in the land is precisely what diasporic peoples have lost" (Clifford, 1994, p.310).

Gabriel Sheffer in his book "*Diaspora Politics: At Home Abroad*" (2003) is of view that cultural hybridity has been ap-

plied to ethnic groups and ethno-national diasporas. The idea of hybridity holds that ethnic identities are created through negotiation of differences and the contradictions among different cultures in a community is not a sign of weakness or failure. The concept of hybridity makes it clear that identities are not generated by mechanical fusion or amalgamation of different elements but results from the social exchanges between different cultures and people.

Stuart Hall in his book *Cultural identity and Diaspora* (1990) finds that hybrid social forms result in interculturality and diasporic relation, he regards hybridity as cultural diasporization, also states that these indicate new forms of identity. In hybrid world old identities transcends the borderlines or ethnicities and formation of transgressive cultural forms and identities take place that scatters the fixity of location. For Hall, the term hybridity is mainly linked to the idea of new ethnicities, hybridity offers a non-static and non-essentialist attitude to ethnic culture. Hall pinpoints that "History have real meaning, material and symbolic effects, these histories relate to the recognition of necessary heterogeneity and diversity and identities lives with and through, not despite, difference by hybridity" (Hall, 1990, p.226).

In the present time hybridity appears as a useful, convenient category or as a point where diaspora meets the host in the scene of migration, Nikos Papastergiadis talks about this at the start of his book, *The Turbulence of Migration: Globalization, Deterritorialization, and Hybridity* (2018) and there he mentions the "Twin process of globalization and migration" (Papastergiadis, 2018, p.3). The book traces the influence of the movement of people, ideas, and capital across the globe. The identity, individuality and experience of the migrant have been changing radically through the history; centuries back people were forced to leave their homeland under colonialism and the peasant were displaced during industrialization. Today there is large number of people on the move, they are uncertain about their destination and their journeys are far more complex than ever before. The cultural dynamics of globalization have offered new challenges to the prevailing models for enlightening the forms of belonging and the patterns of interchange that are happening in the world. It is not possible to understand culture as the distinct and unique manifestation of activities and ideas that happen in certain places as a result of which no culture can exist in isolation.

Floya Anthias in her article *Evaluating Diaspora beyond ethnicity* (1998) opines that hybrid social forms and diasporic relations claim that they have the potential to transcend old ethnicities and that they create transgressive cultural formations. It is not always that culture and identity take an ethnic form, so ethnicities cannot be limited to the question of identity and culture. While throwing light on the idea of diaspora she narrates that in present era two terms have been exclusively related to the diaspora, i.e., immigrants and ethnicity. In literature the interactive aspects of ethnicity have been widely recognized and this aspect abandons the idea that ethnicity is fixed, primordial or just a question of subjective identification. The difficult in studying collective identity is the relationship between having a sense of cultural

identity and at the same time being placed within the social relations of an attributed ethnic group. All individuals have an ethnicity that means even hybrid individuals possess ethnicity and these hybrid individuals certainly affect the ethnic boundaries, a case that must be investigated. She says that the idea of hybridity focuses on the cultural exchange, how a culture becomes separated from existing practices and combines with new forms of new traditions thus identity becomes multi-layered or fragmented.

Immigrant a term that defines a community that has fallen into opprobrium for a number of reasons, Anthias registers two types of immigrants firstly the people who never leave their homeland, but they are the off springs of migrants who belong to no particular area and secondly those who under certain unfavorable circumstances leave their birthplace and settle down in other territories. As hybrid identities are combined with the idea of diaspora it becomes clear that immigrants are not fixed or inert. For Anthias diaspora is a better phrase than immigrant as this term helps in viewing migration not as one-way process with one-way consequences but an on-going process of building links and ideas between different cultures. According to Anthias diaspora requires a concept of basic parent, a father whose seed is dispersed, for diasporic idea, original father land is the point of reference that slides into prehistoric.

Likewise, in the novel Mendelson shares her own experiences as her grandparents were Hungarian, who were born in Ukraine, spoke Hungarian, however considered them Czech. The rich history of that background infuses the novel, as powerful and astonishing as walnut cake. Mendelson's novel inhabits similar terrain to those of Maggie O'Farrell, with the same capability for extreme noticing, the same thoughtful emotional intellect shaping the characters and driving the narrative. But the world that Mendelson makes known to the readers is sharper and her sense of the world is a little more sarcastic. *Almost English* (2013) is still beautifully written, deep, funny, and significant; it can grab an entire part of Europe for itself, a vast empire full of new and fascinating questions about how close, and how far apart, all these post-war worlds have made us.

Kaye (14 August 2013) highlights that Mendelson's novel deals with the topic of immigration from an interesting standpoint, she does not discuss the recent migrations from Eastern Europe but about those people who were escaping from Hungary many, many decades ago. It is quite appealing that the old Hungarian Aunties and their several friends adhere to their old ways despite having lived in London for so many years.

Bhabha's Notion of Cultural Hybridity, Ambivalence, Mimicry and Third Space

Bhabha theorized Hybridity as cultural exchange, a way in which forms become separated from existing practices and recombines with new forms of new practices. For Bhabha, hybridity refers to the mixing of two different cultures as a result of which no culture remains pure. It is debatable to say that any culture or identity is pure; he says that cultures are not discrete phenomena, rather always being contaminated

with each other. All forms of culture are in a process of hybridity and Bhabha calls on-going process of hybridity as hybridization.

Bhabha defines hybridity as “hybridity is camouflage” (Bhabha, 1994, p.193), “hybridity as heresy” (Bhabha, 1994, p.226). Hybridity is a disruptive and productive category it is “how newness enters the world” (Bhabha, 1994, p.227). There is a desire for recognition, to be recognized as something else or somewhere else as a result of which one moves across the border. Bhabha points that even Fanon recognizes that subordinate people are engaged in a process of negative activity, the intrusion of beyond, a bridge is made between the home and the world, as a result of which cross cultural exchange begins and becomes hybrid. Fanon is of view that:

I should constantly remind myself that the real leap consists in introducing invention into existence. In the world in which I travel, I am endlessly creating myself. And it is by going beyond the historical, instrumental hypothesis that I will initiate my cycle of freedom (Bhabha, 1994, p.8).

Bhabha in his essay *Signs Taken for Wonder* (1994) says that hybridity, stands as a symbol to produce colonial power, for the reversal of practice of domination through disavowal. Hybridity reconsiders the postulation of colonial identity through the recurrence of discriminatory identity effects. It exhibits the deformation and dislocation of all the sites of domination. For Bhabha hybridity is not a third term that resolves the tension between two different cultures, hybridity is actually a name given to such displacement of value from symbol to sign. Displacement from symbol to sign creates crisis in any dominant system or authority, a system that is considered transparent and recognizable. Such a system is always split- a system that is always a split screen of self and its doubling the hybridity. Colonial hybridity is not a question of pedigree or cultural differences between two different cultures, these problems are resolved by an idea of cultural relativism. Colonial hybridity is a problem of colonial representation and the individuals who turn around the effect of colonialist disavowal.

Liminality

Bhabha uses hybridity as an ‘in-between’ space, the space of liminality, of ‘no place’ or of the buffer zone of ‘no man’s land’. Bhabha employs that liminality is the “inter”, “the cutting edge of translation and negotiation”, the in-between space. (Bhabha, 1994, p.38). Bhabha throws light on third space as, “For me the importance of hybridity is not able to trace two original moments from which the third space emerges, rather hybridity to me is the ‘third space’ which enables other positions to emerge” (Rutherford, 1990, p.211). Bhabha urges us into third- space to open the idea of a global culture, a culture that is not based on exoticism or cultural diversity but on the inscription and verbalization of culture’s hybridity. Bhabha is quite hopeful that in the third-space one can easily find the words to define themselves and others. Liminality is an indeterminate state, a hazy period characterized by meekness, isolation, tests, sexual vagueness, and communicants.

Bhabha proposes liminality as a model or as a space that does not separate but somewhat mediates their mutual exchange and relative meanings. The theorists cannot select between the politics and theory as they overlap each other and the tension that exist between them produces hybridity. Bhabha throws light on the fact that when subordinate generation is unable to take pride in their cultural roots then they cross the borders, move beyond their specific limits, and expands in a space that is new for them, where cultural exchange takes place and new identities come into view. In this new space which he terms as Third-Space, borders between home and world become bemused and strangely the private and public become the part of each other. Bhabha in his book *The Location and Culture* (1994) cites an example of Tagore’s novel *The Home and the World* (1916) in which protagonist Bimala is confined within the walls of zenana, the secluded women’s quarters but as she moves beyond these confined walls into the realm of public affairs, she develops a new identity for her, creating a new space within which she can go forward.

Mimicry and ambivalence

The term ambivalence was firstly used in psychoanalysis to explain frequent oscillation between wanting one thing and other. Bhabha (2002) describes this term in colonial discourse as a complex mix of attraction and repulsion that characterizes the relationship between colonizers and colonized. Bhabha makes an important argument that discourse of colonialism never achieves its purpose, because it is always pulling in two opposing directions at once.

In Bhabha’s theory ambivalence throws into confusion the simple relationship between colonizers and colonized as result of which the colonial domination becomes disrupts. Therefore, ambivalence is never a welcoming characteristic of colonial discourse for the colonizers. Colonial discourse is problematic as it wishes to generate colonized as compliant subject that will reproduce its assumption, behavior, lifestyle- that is to mimic the colonizers. Instead of producing a compliant subject it produces ambivalent subject whose mimicry is never far from mockery. For Bhabha the process of ambivalence is central to the use of stereotypes, vigor of ambivalence gives colonial stereotypes its prevalence. “For it is the force of ambivalence that gives colonial stereotypes its currency: ensures its repeatability in changing historical and discursive conjunctures, informs its strategies of individuation and marginalization” (Bhabha, 1994, p.66).

Bhabha adds that one can easily find ambivalence between the symbols of English imperialism because of which these symbols remain, no more universal. The ambivalence of English symbols conveys the hollowness that exists within the mindset of English people in thousand different forms. To provide clarity to his view of ambivalence of English symbols he quotes Rudyard Kipling and E.M Foster novels, how Kipling protagonist Kim is engaged in mimicking the Indian culture and language and at the same time ridiculing the Indians who are wearing English dress. Such English books become signs of discontinuous history, an estrangement of English book. They specify the disturbance of its

authoritative representations by the strange forces of race, sexuality, brutality, and cultural differences that emerge within the colonial discourse as the mixed and split text of hybridity. As English book appears to be or read to be the production of cultural hybridity than such book can longer stand as a symbol of power.

Young suggests that theory of ambivalence is a Bhabha's way of turning the tables on imperial discourse. The periphery, that is regarded as "the borderline, the marginal, the unclassifiable, the doubtful", by the center, responds by constituting the center as an "equivocal, indefinite, indeterminate ambivalence" (Bhabha, 1995, p.161). But this is not simply the reversal of binary, Bhabha employs that both colonizers and colonized are subjected to the ambivalence of colonial discourse. While relating mimicry, Bhabha throws light on ambivalence innate in the colonial imitation. In colonial context, mimicry's effectiveness depends on its slippage. Jacques Lacan, in his essay *The Line and Light*, sums up the concept of mimicry as:

Mimicry reveals something in so far as it is distinctive from what might be called itself that is behind. The effect of mimicry is camouflage...It is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled- exactly like the technique of camouflage practiced in human warfare (Bhabha, 1994, p.85).

Bhabha defines mimicry as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge. So Bhabha sees mimicry as a sign of double articulation, it is a composite approach of reform that appropriates the other as it visualizes power. Bhabha argues that mimicry is "the desire for reformed, recognizable Other, as subject of difference that is almost the same but not quite" (Bhabha, 1994, p86). Colonizers wish to improve the other and to make that other like him, but in a way that maintains a clear sense of difference. It means that though the colonized or the other becomes 'almost same' as the colonizer, but never able to fit within the hegemonic cultural and political system. For Bhabha ambivalence of mimicry transforms the colonial subject into a partial presence. Bhabha argues that colonial discourse is ambivalent, as it never really desires colonial subjects to turn into the exact replica of the colonizers.

Bhabha examines that English book serves as a center of authority and ambivalence, ultimately becomes an unintentional medium of hybridization and resistance. He highlights several scenes from postcolonial literature where the native has the "sudden, fortuitous discovery of the English book" (Bhabha, 1994, p.29). Bhabha initially seems to suggest that the *fetishized* book represents the fixed nature of colonial rule (i.e., Truth and Light) and its discursive power to 'narrate' and circulate European culture. But this initial culture experience changes as it undergoes *Entstellung* – "a process of displacement, distortion, dislocation, repetition" (Bhabha, 1994, p.105). Ironically, the books become an emblem of colonial ambivalence, a book that no longer remains a sign of European dominance but rather becomes a symbol of the weakness of colonial discourse due to its propensity to "mimesis" (Bhabha, 1994, p.107). Bhabha concludes that "Consequently, the colonial presence is always ambivalent,

split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference" (Bhabha, 1994, p.107).

Bhabha suggests that today we are living in modern era that is termed as modernity and the remarkable fact is that modernity and post colonialism are ineluctably connected. Further he makes clear that modernity has repressed its colonial origins. The postcolonial power of translating modernity rests in its performative, deformative structure that does not merely revalue the contents of a cultural tradition or rearrange values "cross-culturally" (Bhabha, 2006, p.213-223). No doubt modernity deals with the cultural legacy of slavery and colonialism to resolve its historic differences into new totality, nor to copy tradition. It introduces another space of writing and intervention, another hybrid site in which temporal splits. So as of result of this modernity is seen as something hybridized.

Bhabha is a well-recognized man of learning in cultural studies and theories regarding colonialism and post colonialism. He portrays a picture showing that how oppression, sufferings, subjugation, traumatic colonial feelings produce another culture's creeds, behavior, and lifestyle. In the selected novel *Almost English* (2013) by Mendelson researcher has analyzed the effects of dominant cultures on identity, guided by Bhabha's idea that no culture or identity is pure. In the novel when different cultures come as one, a space is created that Bhabha terms as third space of enunciation. So, the researcher has applied Bhabha's theory of cultural hybridity and shows how hybridity is defined in interaction with related concepts such as Ambivalence, Mimicry, and Third space. Being an expressive and interpretive research, it falls underneath qualitative paradigm. The content of *Almost English* (2013) is read under Bhabha's critical postulations formulated in *The Location of Culture* (1994), it helps the research to find out in the novel that how one cultural is the product of other, what happens when cultures and identities become hybrid.

Almost English (2013) seems to be a confirmation of cultural hybridity as advocated by Bhabha. The novel portrays ample of examples, notions, and illustrations to show that in the present world identities and cultures are becoming multiple and fluid and that the mingling of different cultures opens a new space of interaction and cooperation. The researcher's deep insight into the text of the novel with the spectacles of Bhabha's cultural hybridity resulted in the following features to be analyzed:

1. Cultural diversity haunting diasporic community
2. Immigrants cultural hybridity
3. Hybridity of language
4. Productive/non-productiveness of third space
5. Ambivalence in native and non-native communities
6. Socio-economic concerns of diasporic community

CULTURAL DIVERSITY HAUNTS DIASPORIC COMMUNITY

First chapter of *Almost English* (2013) describes the fears of residents of Westminster Court (the place where Marina and her family is living) concerning security which voices

the scenario of diasporic community regarding their place in society, they have to make constant struggles in order to keep themselves safe in a non-native land.

“Marina is not good at being insulted; she goes stiff; if anyone teases her, she is frozen for days” (Mendelson, 2013, p.27). Marina’s personality has been described to go not well with insult; it can be interpreted in a way that immigrants go stiff on many matters because they have baggage of insecurities of their own. Marina, when goes to Combe, she, at first struggles with many a problem. The hardship that she goes through are talked by Mendelson in chapter 5 where she writes that “All the fears of childhood have come back with new vigor now that Marina is too far away to protect them from intruders, race riots, Spanish flu, nuclear winter, IRA bombs” (Mendelson, 2013, p.49). It shows that no matter how long those diasporic communities have lived in non-native lands while mimicking their culture, they will always be haunted by numerous fears of survival. In this respect V.S Naipaul makes a very significant remarks in his novel *The Mimic Men*, “We pretend to be real, to be learning, to be preparing ourselves for life, we mimic men of the new world, one unknown corner of it, with all its reminders of the corruption that came so quickly to new” (Naipaul, 1967, p.416).

Another incident narrated in the novel accounts for Marina being victimized by native people where Mendelson writes “Whats up?” says Rorg Kingsly. ‘You look like a flid’. Two blonde girls from the year above giggle. ‘Shut up Kingsly’, says Elare Laker. ‘You sound like a knob’ and she mouths at Marina ‘pitiful’” (Mendelson, 2013, p.59). This passage tells us that wherever immigrants move in society, they are welcomed nowhere. Immigrants’ always being joked at is obvious irrespective of the gender of the one who is laughing at them, it makes them completely helpless in a foreign society and no matter how long have they lived in those countries, they become more and more alien in these societies. Moreover, they will never get enough courage either from society or from their inner selves that they can be parts of those new cultures, they will always be considered as ‘others’. Edward Said in his book *Orientalism* (1994) is of view that Orient is always regarded as the other, as something that the West is not, and it has been internalized by the generations of Orient despite that fact that are not degenerate types.

In chapter 6, Laura goes in nostalgic stage while thinking about the past of her in laws. The women of this family used to be happy and adventurous and men were manly enough to rule a woman’s heart. But now it’s all gone and what lingers is just disappointment and dissatisfaction. At school, Marina gets so small a role in play Merchant of Venice that it is humiliating for her. Even though she has read every Shakespearean play, Marina gets this small role because she is considered inferior, because she is not English. According to Bhabha Colonial masters desire to see colonized as mimicking their cultural values but at the same time having the fear that they might become civilized enough to compete them (Bhabha, 1994, p.122).

Though Marina is not a bright student at Combe because there she is never appreciated by her teachers, but Miss Tyce, a former teacher of Marina tells Laura that she was a ‘Bright

girl’ in her junior school. Her junior school was one where children from familiar cultural background as Marina used to study. It proves that it is not Marina’s intellect that comes as a hurdle at Combe, rather it is the people who are native and do not accept immigrants like Marina to be part of their own culture. As Bhabha points out that “Cultures are never unitary in themselves, nor simply dualistic as in relation self/other” (Bhabha, 1994, p.36).

MENDELSON EXPOSES SOCIAL FABRIC WHICH MARGINALIZES THE ‘OTHER’

Immigrants’ Cultural Hybridity

The first chapter reads “at least, that is how they think they seem” (Mendelson, 2013, p.5). It means that immigrants do not think of themselves the way they actually are, rather they think the way they like no matter its true or not. It makes them neither what they actually are nor what they think that they are, a perfect example of cultural hybridity. For Bhabha cultural identity always come forth in an ambivalent space that makes the claim that no culture is pure, and this identification helps to overcome the exoticism of cultural diversity by acknowledging hybridity that allows cultural differences to operate. At party, Marina’s family has prepared a number of Hungarian foods and not English ones which shows their liking towards their own cultural foods. Hungarian people are considered to be food lovers, at party, the immigrants have shown the most of their attention to the food. But at the same time Hungarian aunts try their best to appear as civilized English women in front of the guests. In this way they are showing hybridity because living in London, they are preferring their own traditions as well as trying to adapt English values. Bhabha posits such kind of scenario in his essay *Signs Taken for Wonders* (1994) hybridity stands as a sign that reflects the productivity of colonial power, its slipping forces, and fixities; it is a name for a reverse process of domination through disavowal.

Hybridity of one’s existence makes a mark with a line from the novel that “fortunate, to live with others, but lonely. So, I know” (Mendelson, 2013, p.5). These are the words of Laura who is living with her Hungarian in laws, abandoned by her husband years ago, claims that she is lonely because among three Hungarian women she herself is English. Hybridity of self too is presented in Laura’s character which we come to know about in a paragraph that says “problem is that they think they know her. They do not realize that, however sweetly Laura smiles, however demurely she answers, there is somewhere she would perfect to be doing. And someone, of course, which nobody else must know” (Mendelson, 2013, p.5). This paragraph gives us the details about Laura’s hybrid self, it informs that she is not what she looks to be. In *Location of Culture* (1994) Bhabha surmises that during the colonial encounter it is not only the colonized nations who are subjected to the western styles; to a certain extent the colonizers are also transformed. Marina’s personality is hybrid, despite being innocent; she has an adult love interest. The hybridity of this aspect of Marina’s personality is apparent in the text:

These things are too shameful to be spoken of. She keeps them in her rotten heart. On reflection, it occurs to her now, may be her heart is the problem. For, although technically quite innocent, Marina has a very adult love a world away in Dorset, the boy she longs for — Simon Flowers, senior music scholar, day boy, bound for Cambridge this very October — is attending polite little family gatherings, packing his physics notes for the new term, writing essays with the clarity of the pure heart. Nobody knows for her passion (Mendelson, 2013, pp.17-18).

Marina goes through identity crisis a lot of times in the novel, to maintain herself as an identifiable person. Bhabha in his book *The Location of Culture* (1994) is greatly influenced by psychoanalytical notions of Freud-oedipal complex and Lacan-the other, considering the oedipal stage the subject simultaneously loves and hates the object with whom it wishes to identify. It is quite easy to find Marina in Combe who at the same time hates and tries to identify with her cultural roots and colonizers. In the novel, in chapter 4, everyone in the house is trying to remember her own cultural roots which means that they will hold on to their own native identities, if their life situations do not force them, they will hold tightly to their roots e.g., Rozsi and Zsuzsi or a native e.g., Laura.

In an incident narrated in the novel, when it comes to deciding a school for Marina, her great aunts pick Combe out of four choices they have. They choose Combe because it has a moderate status. It confirms in a way that immigrants aim not for the finest of goals rather they look for settling down for the moderation which brings them no good than a hybridized life with ambiguous ideas about their identities. Bhabha points out that hybrid agency does not only mean the plurality of various cultures, it generates a community that guarantees and encourages spaces in which different communities can develop at their own pace (Bhabha & Parekh, 1989, p.27). Hungarian aunts' selection of Combe a well-known English school for Marina justifies Bhabha's point that yes indeed hybrid agencies allow different communities to grow.

In chapter 9, Mendelson reveals to her readers that Laura did not decide to live with Hungarian aunts because she wanted it, rather she just started living with them because she had no money to go elsewhere. It means that cultural hybridity mostly takes place when the members of both the cultures are forced to live with each other. Otherwise, no one wants to make his/her culture go un-pure. Bhabha in his essay *Culture Diversity and Culture Difference* (1995) stresses that it is fact that the colonizer and colonized are interdependent on one and other, same is the case with Laura and Hungarian aunts they depend on each other.

When Marina visits Guy Viney's house it all becomes as a beautiful dream to Marina. She gets unexpectedly good treatment because she has come to their house not with the label of an immigrant but as a close friend of Guy. It means that if people throw away their mental stigmas associated with different things; the world would be a lot better place for everyone to live. Bhabha points out that all the cultural machinery and statements are assembled in a space termed

as 'Third space', he hopes that here we will find those words with which we can speak of ourselves and other.

Hybridity of Language

Rozsi, Marina's grandmother presents perfect examples of linguistic hybridity. Though she speaks English, she speaks it with certain mistakes in pronunciation e.g., dar-link for darling, vest-minstair court for Westminster Court and constructs grammatically incorrect sentences. Mendelson here shows that English remains no more the property of colonizers, it becomes a global language that has mammoth aptitude to adjust different cultures and languages in it, and it becomes hybrid. In easy *Of Mimicry and Man* (1994) Bhabha says that when the colonized people start imitating the language and values of colonizers, it become a threatening situation for them "it is the area between mimicry and mockery, where the reforming, civilization mission is threatened by the displacing gaze of its disciplinary double..." (Bhabha, 1994, p.86). Bhabha gives an example of Charles Grant who is civilizing mission becomes a partial reform he teaches Christianity and English language to the Indians but at the same time having the fear that Indians might stand up for their liberty "partial reform will produce an empty form of imitation of English manners which will induce them to remain under our protection" (Bhabha, 1994, p.87). Such an example of partial reform is present in the novel, as Combe an English school provides chances for Marina a Hungarian girl to mimic the English language and culture and become an English lady but at the same time she is regarded as other by the English social fabric. She speaks English correctly and fluently, but the problem is that she has always been regarded as inferior being who must remain under the protection of English school.

Old ladies in Marina's house speak Hungarian every now and then which informs us about their strong ties with their native languages and tells in a way that though they have immigrated to a foreign country for good, they will not abandon their language to be completely English. Whenever Zsuzsi speaks, she portrays the best examples of linguistic hybridity with its incorrect English pronunciation or incorrectly formed grammatical sentences.

Chapter 5 narrates that "Rozsi is not comfortable with writing, at least in English. Her handwriting suits Hungarian better" (Mendelson, 2013, p.55). It means that even though Rozsi has been living in London so long, but its language has not been able to attract Rozsi's attention and comfort. Even now, she feels comfortable with Hungarian language writing. According to Bill Ashcroft and other theorists the hybridity of language destabilizes the binary relation between English, the language of erstwhile imperial center, and English the language which has been transformed and subverted into several distinctive varieties throughout the world.

When Laura goes to Hungarian bazaar with aunts, even though she does not understand most of the words of Hungarian immigrant ladies that they utter in their native language, she still tries to pretend that she understands whatever they are saying. And even though these Hungarian ladies do know English, Laura still tries to answer them with lim-

ited Hungarian vocabulary that she has. Here third space is completely hybridized with respect to language. The setting is London but the language being spoken is Hungarian. For Bhabha the figure of mimicry is locatable within what Anderson describes as “the inner compatibility of empire and nation, it problematizes the signs of racial and cultural priority, so the national is no longer naturalized” (Bhabha, 1994, p.87).

Productive/Non-productiveness of Third Space

Socio-cultural approaches are alarmed with the “...constitutive role of culture in mind, i.e., on how mind develops by incorporating the community’s shared artifacts accumulated over generations” (Bhabha, 1994, p.171). Bhabha has applied socio-cultural beliefs directly to the postcolonial tradition, where there lie, “... unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation” (Bhabha, 1994, p.171).

In chapter 2, Marina thinks of her family’s place in society and wonders how non-productive the third place has been for them:

She has powers, although she is not sure how they work. Perhaps a suspicion had always been there, an awareness that all that stands between her relatives and their gradual decline into poverty, starvation, diseases missed by neglectful doctors who laugh at their accents, is six years at medical school and lifelong vigilance (Mendelson, 2013, p.25).

It tells us that Marina and her family are greatly affected by the third space they have been in because even doctors they had gone to had laughed at their non-native English accents which is too shallow an act for them. For Bhabha third space is a field where polarities become hazy and diverse discourses are woven together, hybrid agencies “deploy the partial culture from which they emerge to construct vision of community, and versions of historic memory, that give narrative form to minority positions they occupy; the outside of inside: the part in whole” (Bhabha, 1994, p.27). But in the novel the third space never seems to be quite productive.

“She feels like an old person, watching the days run out, and all her plans for the holidays __ daily sit-ups, reading Ulysses, possibly learning a bit of medicine in case of future emergencies __ have failed it” (Mendelson, 2013, p.35). This sentence informs us that the diasporic community is desperate to do many things but can do very few and they get tired in pursuit of their unreachable goals. Young a post-colonial thinker writes on third space “a site of production” (Young, 2008, p.82), but here in the novel we see that it is not a site of production for the characters rather it becomes a site of tension for them:

Meanwhile in London, Laura exists. She polishes the grill pan until it shines like pearls; she helps Ildi find her lost Italian dictionary; she feeds Rozsi’s jade plant the correct quantity of vegetable water and battles the relentless London dust; she makes up her bed each night on the sofa cushions and falls asleep, eventually, to the perpetual murmur of the World Service, to the snoring and sighing of elderly immigrants and buses hissing past outside. Around and around in her tired head one thought spins, ‘what should I do?’ as if, with five minutes of hard thinking, she will realize that she

has all the solutions already: a good man, close by and single, with whom to fall in love; somewhere affordable to live, where she can eat baked beans and listen to music befitting her age group and walk around in the nude; a professional qualification about which she had forgotten; a nearby day school which her child will consent to attend (Mendelson, 2013, pp.51-52).

In the text given above, ‘Laura exists’ means that in London if any of Marina’s household has an identity of her, it is Laura. This is because Laura is the only native English person in that house. Because she is only notable person in London of that house, Laura does it all for other ladies in the house which mean these ladies who are Hungarian are not able to do anything on their own or they are not worthy enough to be doing anything in a prestigious place like London. On the other hand, in second part of the sentence Laura has been said to be doing nothing that she wants to do rather she has to do opposite of her fantasies. She has no man to love her, no private place to walk around naked and no fascinating food to eat and music to listen. All of this is happening in a place where diasporic and native communities are meeting. In this sense, third space is being qualified as highly non-productive and non-beneficial. According to Bhabha third space is productive and he is hopeful to find in this place those words with which we can speak of ourselves and others, and in this space one can get away from the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of ourselves however in the novel this space never allows the characters to express themselves in fact, they always remain nostalgic about their cultural roots. Non productiveness of third space is also evident in the paragraph where Mendelson talks about Marina that:

... Marina is home at last. She has survived another half term of Combe, despite being practically deranged with homesickness. Now she is ready to fall into her mother’s arms, climb inside her pocket, be swallowed alive like a baby catfish. I will, she vows, never be irritated with any of my family, or the burning radiators or nosy Hungarians asking about my periods ever again. How long does that last? Ten minutes? Five? (Mendelson, 2013, p.238).

This is evident of the fact that third space affects the lives of the diasporic communities so badly that nothing in their lives is supposed to be permanent. Rather, everything is merely a temporary situation.

Ambivalence in Native and Non-Native Communities

Living in a culturally diverse space is patented by fundamental affecting ambivalence. On the one hand, there lies existential uneasiness notwithstanding cultural abnormality which is related to human dependence on common sense. The common context of understanding which we originate ontological safety about the universe and our own habitation in it. Through cultural interaction, ‘common sense’ drops something of its obvious charm and inevitabilities about what is usual are put to the test, on the other hand, connection with unacquainted practices and procedures of manifestation can similarly give rise to optimistic feelings of marvel and captivation as in urban context. This type of af-

fective ambivalence branches from an existential absurdity: the experience of mutual meaning and absence of meaning are reliant on contact with supreme realities, in other words, certainties that cannot be entirely incorporated within one's cognitive and manipulative prospects. According to Bhabha after colonization whatever the changes are taking place in any cultural system are ambivalent and hybridized.

In the second chapter of the novel, Mendelson provides a streak of Marina's personality which is a sheer example of an ambivalent person. Mendelson writes about Marina that "she knows __ she thinks she knows __ how bad she looks, so why does she keep expecting someone's handsome grandson to turn up and fall in love?" (Mendelson, 2013, p.15). Marina knows that she is not beautiful and with that knowledge expecting a handsome guy to fall in love with her is either the denial of her own self or that she underestimates others for her own interests. In both the cases, Marina is seen as having an ambivalent personality. Throughout the novel Marina is copying the western culture and style, trying her best to appear as almost English but at the same time she feels that she is not comfortable in mimicking the English values. For such situation Bhabha posits a term ambivalence, a hybridized situation that creates ambivalence condition- a condition in which people feel that their values, norms, and habits belong to no one's land.

Ildi, the Hungarian aunt's lifestyle has been portrayed to be very happening while her personal life is the opposite of it. It signifies that immigrants have ambivalent selves in the communities they live. Laura, in chapter two says to herself, "is it normal to be simultaneously so self-conscious and so prickly?" (Mendelson, 2013, p.22), it characterizes the ambivalent aspect of Laura's personality. Marina too shows the ambivalent behavior in her personality in chapter where she hopes that "they would recognize her unusual sensitivity, her hitherto unsuspected beauty, and they would welcome her" (Mendelson, 2013, p.23). Here Marina, a diasporic individual, wishes that whoever she is as a person, the people she is going to, will welcome her. It is another example of ambivalence, because she knows lack of her personality, yet she expects everything to go well. These individuals try to coalesce two cultures and languages without abandoning any one of them; they have double consciousness, at the same time striving to be both European and Hungarian. Meena Alexander in her book *The Shock of Arrival* (1996) writes:

Coming to America, I have felt on my own heart what W.E.B Dubois invoked: 'two souls' two thoughts... in one dark body'. But now at the tail end of century, perhaps there are many souls, many voices in one dark body (Alexander, 1996, pp.1-2).

Marina, the protagonist of the novel and her mother Laura both are sexually active women. In a kind of situation when they are not supposed to be having physical relationships. Marina is romantically involved with a fellow student at Combe while she is still considered a virgin back home. Laura, on the other hand, had been left by her husband long ago and since then, she has maintained a modest imager of her, is having an adult affair with a married man. Both of Marina and Laura want these men desperately but do not

tell their family about it which represents the ambivalence of character in the two most important characters in the novel.

At Combe, there is a tradition of nicknaming the students by other students which depends on their caste and appearance. It means that in London there exists class distinction, people especially colonizers are very much conscious of class and status. English students give various nicknames to their fellows that help them to identify individuals belonging to various races. A student who belongs to inferior race will be named in bad terms. Marian is not comfortable with any of possible nicknames for her. It is because neither does she belong to a high social class, nor is she very beautiful. This deprives her of even thinking about a good nickname. But there is another problem too, in school, if you do not have a nickname, you are invisible. This phenomenon makes her very confused about whether she should have a nickname or not and it characterizes Marina's ambivalent personality. Besides Bhabha's argument is that colonial discourse is also ambivalent because they never really want to see colonial subjects as the exact replica of their own selves, as it would be too menacing. English students allocate identity to the other students but keeping in view that only to define the others in inferior terms.

Marina stands at an ambivalent stage in her life when she must decide whether to go to school or not. Unlike the children of native carefree folks, she does not have very ambitious future plans for her professional life. She just wants to escape from her poor and boring household. But, at the same time she thinks of homesickness which will haunt her for long times. She at last decides to leave her house to go to a school which comes as a decision just because Marina is running in pursuit of her new identity, the identity that will allow her to lead her life without being conscious about what and where to say, about what to wear and not being fooled, about speaking fluently and not being interrupted and laughed at because of her different accent or pronunciation. So, Marina can be assumed to have moved out of her house just to have a definite identity and not a career. This explains that how diasporic communities have to go through identity struggle where natives enjoy the innumerable facilities in lands of their own. In Bhabha's words it produces Marina as an ambivalent subject whose mimicry is never far from mockery as Marina disrupts the clear-cut authority of colonial domination by mimicking their language and values. For Bhabha both colonizer and colonized are implicated in the ambivalence of colonial discourses and relates this concept with the hybridity because ambivalence displaces the authority from the very center so that power may also become hybridized between the margins and center.

Laura showcases the ambivalence' presence in her personality when she gets ready to meet the man, she is having an affair with. Laura, knowing very well that she is going to advance her carnal relations with the Hungarian man in this meeting; she makes herself look sex-ready. On the other hand, she does so which makes the coming sexual relation very obvious but, on the other hand she feels ashamed of herself and does not look into the mirror. This incident marks ambivalence of character in Laura who is living with her di-

asporic in-laws. In the same incident, ambivalence of events happens while Laura is about to leave for meeting this Hungarian man, a letter from her long-lost husband comes to her door. According to Bhabha colonial discourse is always ambivalent as the colonizers regard 'others' as outsiders, those who have no place within the western sphere of culture and civilization but at the same time they make efforts to bring the colonized subjects inside their circle of civilization. Laura is an apt example of Bhabha's concept on the one hand she is soothing herself by having an affair with a Hungarian man, bringing him inside her personal life and at the same time she feels dissatisfied because she is an English lady how she can mix up with the Hungarian man to fulfill her carnal desire!

Socio-economic Concerns of Diasporic Community

The first chapter reads that they appear both more formal and more enthusiastic than you might expect, as if you are wandering into a theatre dressing room of the 1950, not a cramped West London basement flat (Mendelson, 2013, p.6). It shows extremely disturbed economic situation of the family because their wardrobe, as per Mendelson, looks decades old but what is actually disturbing is that the writer gives them no better choice to be having a better life because she writes that it looks of 1950 but not related to a 'cramped' flat which means that even if they did not have a 1950's dressing room their cramped flat would not be offering them any fancy clothes either.

There is an issue of privacy at Marina's household. Nothing that the ladies do go passes others' eyes without being noticed. Though Laura herself believes in privacy, even then she almost stalks her daughter. It means that a diasporic community, even being at home, cannot feel at home. They have no privacies of their own; whatever they do is shared with other members of the family which happens because the immigrants have troubled socio-economic lives in those new cultures. It is also a way that Mendelson has adopted to symbolize hard lives of diasporic communities in non-native countries.

When Marina tells her mother that she lost a lens she asks her not to worry but she advises her to be careful. Because they are not economically stable folk that is the reason that Marina is advised for being more attentive. Once Laura wishes to buy something for herself but instead when she visits market, she buys the stuff for elders of her house i.e., her in-laws. It informs us that Laura is going through financial downfall and that she chooses her in-laws over her own.

Laura goes through rough patch of time when she has to arrange money for Marina's studies. She thinks of everyone she could borrow money from but in vain. She, even before asking thinks that those people have already done more than enough for Marina and that she should not ask for more. The situation implies that no matter how these immigrants rely on others, they can never be financially strong enough to be independent:

They all expected Combe to be full of the children of eminent people, not only the kind they have met- someone from the Czech embassy; lady Renate's friends; George Arthur, the unconvincingly British conductor – but also the great-

est excitement for all: aristocrats. Although as a child it has always embarrassed her, now that she is a woman it makes sense. They do not want her to grow up like their neighbor's grandchildren, baking Hungarian biscuits and going to folk-dancing lessons on Saturday mornings, then joining their family's business. They want her to be more than this (Mendelson, 2013, p. 96).

This extract shows that Combe is full of class-conscious people's children. Moreover, Marina has been sent to Combe to be different than other Hungarian immigrants. They want her to do something so big that she becomes able to make her relations and herself worthy enough to be not seen as an inferior in the society. We get to know that Hungarian diasporic community, though hold onto its own cultural roots and tries to do anything that will remove the stigma of inferiority from it.

Chapter 32 is a thorough account of Laura, Marina's mother's distressed self. She is relieved about nothing in her life. She is worried about her daughter who, according to Laura, does not look well, she is worried about her recent physical relation with Peter, and she is tensed about how to tell this to her housemates. Although that meeting with Peter has apparently caused no harm to Laura and among her and her in laws and daughter, even then she is stressed about it. She is worried about Peter's health and is anxiously waiting to hear from him.

In chapter 35, when Marina meets Mrs. Viney, she, despite Mrs. Viney's being very nice and kind to her is very much puzzled and confused. Let alone standing gracefully, Marina cannot even speak in front of Guy's mother properly. Later, in the same meeting, when Laura, Marina's mother, joins them, Marina gets even more uncomfortable. She wants her mother to be silent or at least not speak the way she was speaking. It all happens because of immigrants' inner less confident selves and an implied pressure of being of a certain kind, even if in reality, they are not. This phenomenon makes these diasporic communities less self-confident.

Highly concentrated study and analysis of *Almost English* (2013) shows that Mendelson characters are involved in the process of hybridization, while living in a diasporic-hybrid world. One realizes that the task of constructing hybrid identities is not simple operation; it raises the puzzling circumstances of trauma, restlessness, and violence. Bhabha states in advance that immigrants can demonstrate the dual nature of culture, always situated in the relation to both an original and a new location (Bhabha, 1994, p.194). First generation immigrants no doubt mimic the language, cultural values, and customs of the predominant system but at the time it is difficult for them to be accepted as being British-Hungarian due to their strong love, affiliation and nostalgia for their cultural roots and homeland. Same is the case with the descendants of first-generation immigrant, Marina the almost English girl of novel is confused about her identity, most of the time she feels alienated and cut off from the rest of world.

CONCLUSION

For the past many centuries, the western historical discourses have been concerned with generating and sustaining grand

narratives that provide whole nation a unifying identity. West is dominating over the rest of the world, not only in the present era but one can easily mirror its domination through centuries. History that West has fabricated is all about colonization and their rule over the subordinate countries, how they formed colonies in different regions of the world and forced people to leave their respective homelands.

Much of Mendelson novel addresses the political, social, and cultural problems faced by the immigrants who are living in London as a diasporic hybrid community. Migrants of *Almost English* (2013) brought with them their own culture, language, custom and tradition. Mendelson discovers the problematic and ambiguous development that a migrant undergoes in a process of translation from their respective homelands to west, purity to hybridity, while constructing their identities. Most of the characters present in novel are immigrants from Hungary, who are seen in a struggle to make a new life for themselves in the English setting, which at the same time attempt to determine their cultural identities. Hungarian aunts and Marina remain at an ambivalent position throughout the novel, that to what extent to mimic the culture and language of British and how much to retain their own roots.

Throughout the novel Hungarian aunts are forced to accept by the society that their identities are no longer singular and pure rather than they have become hybrid by imitating the language and lifestyle of English people. At the same time, it is their cultural background that does not allow them to fully enter in the culture of their new home. They are incapable to embrace this newness, as a result of which they remain at an uncertain point and undergo identity crisis. One of the main problems that never allow them to develop a new identity for themselves is the inability to speak English language properly, the language of center. Without any kind of doubt, it is clear that Hungarian aunts do mimic the English language, they often write and utter English words. However, the fact is that they are never at ease while speaking English words moreover they are also regarded as foreigner by the people and they make fun of their English words. Their social circle is confined to few old Hungarian friends; they are unable to mingle with white ladies as they are regarded out-casted by them. They want to socialize with upper class white people, but due to their inferiority complex they are never able to do so, and even if they make an effort they are ridiculed by people.

According to Bhabha the story of the immigrant is a great source of transmission of national traditions into the world literature, it means that the multinational histories of migrants, the colonized, or the political evacuees "may be the terrains of world literature" (Bhabha, 1994, p.17). The subject of Mendelson novel is life, how people while living in a diasporic-hybrid world struggles to live a life at its fullest peak, they face joy and sadness, triumph and defeat, love, and hatred, all these things that are the part of human life.

Mendelson's novel resides upon multi-culturalism as well, that is post-modernist idea that became popular in England in 2000; it portrays a kind of departure from the fixed, singular ideas of culture and identity to cultural diversity and

multi ethnicity. It just requires people belonging to different countries, having different cultures, religion, language, and customs. Same kind of cultural diversity is present in *Almost English* (2013). According to Bhabha something new can emerge when two different cultures are encountering with each other. However, Foucault is of view that social encounters generate not only the tension and chaos but also creative misunderstanding that changes the very structure of social fabric. The notion of third space by Bhabha gives us an understanding that in the third-space one can easily find the words to define themselves and others. For Bhabha when two types of races are living in a similar region then the people that belong to inferior race develops identity crisis and inferiority complexes, at such a moment they are unable to take pride in their cultural roots and then they start transcending the borders, move outside their specific limits, and develops in a space that is new for them, where cultural exchange takes place and new identities come into existence. Mendelson novel is an apt example of all these points except one, the point that must be noted here is third space that emerges by the mixing of Hungarian and English culture is never productive. In the novel readers can find a lot of stances of mimicry, ambivalence and cultural hybridity as advocated by Bhabha but the one can also notice the non-productiveness of third space.

Cultural hybridity has not offered many solutions to much of the postcolonial problems, no doubt cultures are becoming hybrid, people are struggling out of past to construct the future but the process of constructing hybrid identities mostly results in violence, ordeal, and nervousness. When a community is living in a hybrid world then it becomes necessary for them to weave their way through mimicry and ambivalence even if they are not interested, they have imitated the culture and language of the prevailing system because if they are not doing so, they are regarded as inferior being and that is a great psychological trauma one faces in his/her life. Cultural diversity creates dissatisfaction among the diasporic communities as they become conscious about their identities that exist on the borderlines of culture can bring self-realization and self-assertion. *Almost English* (2013) by Mendelson uncovers the displeasures that a hybrid community is facing and exposes problems that they are enduring while living in a third space. We do have different theories and we endeavor to apply them on different works, to check, up to what level there are applicable. Here the research proves that Bhabha's concept of third space is not applicable on each and every individual. As in the novel third space is productive just for a single character named Mr. Viney, who appears to be almost English. But in the case of Marina and her Hungarian aunts, third space is never productive; they do mingle with the English society and strive hard to find common grounds but fail. Even for the Laura the English mother, third space is never encouraging, all the time while living and mimicking Hungarian cultural values she feels disgruntled and weak. Both Laura (colonizer) and Marina (colonized) try to escape the present circumstances, they try to escape into a world of imagination where everything will be normal, no complexes and no responsibilities, so escapism of such characters again

suggests non-productiveness of third space. The end of the novel unquestionably justifies this respective point that third space is not productive for them as Marina, her mom and aunts reject English school and decide that Marina would study in pervious school (Hungarian school), that means no doubt these people can grow, develop, and flourish but within their own traditional and cultural roots. It is proved through this research that the generation of degenerate types retain within them inferiority complexes i.e., they are inferior, and they can never come up to the level of their masters. In short, they have internalized that they are lower in rank, and it may require centuries or more to free their mind from such type of internalization.

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