Co-constructing America and Pakistan: Hybridity and Transculturality in Pakistani English Fiction

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This paper explores some major issues with regard to Pakistani fiction in English published for the international market. The main theme in such postcolonial fiction is the quest(ions) of forging distinct cultural and national identity(ies) in the wake of independence from a colonial power. Sixties thinkers developed the concept of neo-imperialism to label relationships between the US and countries like Pakistan, which, while nominally independent, had economies dominated by American interests, often backed by American military forces. Hall (1993) illustrates this through referring to the postcolonial conditions in the Caribbean, where three presences African, European and American illustrate the idea of ‘traces’ in identity. Taking theoretical insights from the works of Stuart Hall (1993) Bhabha (1994) and Pennycook (2007), my paper problematizes the complex notion of identity(ies) with regard to the construction of identity(ies) in two postcolonial novels by Pakistani authors: Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and, Sidhwa’s *An American Brat*. A common thread running through these novels is the juxtapositioning and co-construction of America and Pakistan to capture the essence of transnational and transcultural struggles over issues of identity(ies) in terms of race, class, nationality, gender, sexuality. At issue is whether those identities which defined our distinct social and cultural worlds-- distinctive identities of gender, sexuality, race, class and nationality-- are in decline, giving rise to new forms of identification and fragmenting the postcolonial individual as a unified subject. The two novels capture the essence and complexity of identity as fluid, never complete, always in process owing to transnational and transcultural flows in today’s globalized world. The hero in both travels to America in quest of their American dream, but while pursuing that dream is caught unawares with the primeval question of their own cultural roots and identity.