PSYCHOLOGICAL HYBRIDITY AND RESISTANCE: REINTERPRETING BHABHA'S THIRD SPACE IN ARUNDHATI ROY'S THE MINISTRY OF UTMOST HAPPINESS AND ARAVIND ADIGA'S THE WHITE TIGER

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Abstract:

Homi K. Bhabha's 'Third Space' is characterised as an 'interstitial realm' where cultural meanings are negotiated, allowing for the emergence of hybrid identities. It challenges the binary oppositions of coloniser and colonised, facilitating a space where new cultural expressions arise. 'Third Space' provides a compelling framework for analysing the complexities of identity and resistance in postcolonial literature. This concept is vividly illustrated through the characters of Anjum in Arundhati Roy's The Ministry of Utmost Happiness and Balram Halwai in Aravind Adiga's The White Tiger. As both characters navigate their identities through a cultural landscape characterised by hybridity and ambiguity, Bhabha's notion of a place where new meanings and identities emerge is embodied in both characters. The study also intends to explore the psychological dimensions of hybridity and argues that the various characters inhabit emotionally fraught Third Spaces where identity fragmentation, trauma, and cognitive dissonance influence their inner worlds. The paper highlights how resistance operates not only culturally and politically but also within the intimate, affective landscapes of the self by foregrounding the psychological negotiations embedded in hybrid identities. Roy's narrative intertwines various cultural threads such as Islamic, Hindu, and Western influences and creates a tapestry that embodies hybridity. Aravind Adiga, in his text, explores themes of class struggle and corruption within Indian society, using Balram's voice to critique the systemic inequalities perpetuated by both colonial legacies and contemporary capitalism. It allows individuals to articulate their identities outside fixed categories, thus fostering resistance against hegemonic structures, rather than simply reflecting. "Third space" as a concept is used by Bhabha and plays a pivotal role in understanding hybrid identities and cultural ambiguity in postcolonial literature. This aligns with Bhabha's assertion that such identities emerge from cultural negotiations within the Third Space, where past and present collide to create new forms of belonging. Adiga critiques the socio-political realities that shape individual destinies, revealing how characters like Balram inhabit a Third Space where they must negotiate their identities against systemic injustices. This paper aims to explore hybrid identity and cultural ambiguity as reflected in the select texts to Bhabha's concept of 'hybrid space'. It offers a lens through which contemporary Indian authors such as Arundhati Roy and Aravind Adiga, foreground how identity is formed and resistance to colonial narratives is manifested.

Keywords: Third Space, Hybridity, Resistance, Contemporary Indian English Fiction

INTRODUCTION:

Homi K. Bhabha's concept of 'Third Space' represents a transformative framework that redefines cultural interactions in postcolonial contexts. It is characterised by its fluidity, reflecting the changing identities and cultural dynamics that emerge in a postmodern world. 'Third Space' facilitates the emergence of hybridity, where various cultural influences intermingle, leading to new forms of cultural production and understanding. This hybrid space allows for the coexistence and negotiation of diverse cultural elements, providing a platform for the rearticulation of meaning and identity in the wake of colonial histories. This hybrid space allows for the

coexistence and negotiation of diverse cultural elements, providing a platform for the rearticulation of meaning and identity in the wake of colonial histories. Bhabha's analytical tools enable a critical examination of these interactions, allowing scholars to construct and deconstruct established notions of cultural identity and representation. However, this space is not without its complexities; it highlights the power dynamics that favour highly industrialised nations in negotiations, typically complicating the ability of non-Western countries to assert their identities independently.

Bhabha emphasises that Third Space is not a static location but an ongoing process where identity is continuously negotiated and redefined, challenging the notion of cultural fixity. This conceptualisation underscores the importance of recognising cultural differences while also acknowledging the hybrid nature of identity, thereby enriching the discourse around postcolonialism and cultural representation. 'Third Space' serves as a critical site for understanding the interplay of power, culture, and identity in a globalised world, reflecting both the opportunities and constraints faced by diverse communities in the context of historical and contemporary influences. As Bhabha writes in The Location of Culture (1994):

It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew. (55)

The concept of the 'Third Space' plays a pivotal role in challenging the traditional binary notions of identity and culture by providing a platform for fluid and dynamic interactions among diverse cultural groups. Bhabha emphasises that the 'Third Space' is not merely a passive area of cultural exchange but an active site where new meanings and identities emerged, thus questioning the rigid frameworks that prevailingly dominate discussions of identity. This space allows for the integration of self and other, resulting in a holistic understanding of identity that transcends simplistic categorisations. Moreover, the 'Third Space' fosters an environment where cultural diversity is not only accepted but celebrated, leading to unique and transformational cultural expressions that defy established norms. It disrupts the stereotype of "fixity," encouraging a focus on cultural differences and the processes of identification, which further illustrates the fluidity of identity. By prioritising human dignity and promoting collaborative meaning-making, the 'Third Space' creates opportunities for individuals to redefine their identities beyond traditional dichotomies of race, class, and gender. Through this lens, the 'Third Space' facilitates a critical examination of cultural identities, urging us to acknowledge the complexities and nuances that resist binary classifications and recognise the ever-evolving nature of cultural significance. As he writes:

In the oscillation between apocalypse and chaos, we see the emergence of an anxiety associated with the narcissistic vision and its two-dimensional space. It is an anxiety which will not abate because the empty third space, the other space of symbolic representation, at once bar and bearer of difference, is closed to the paranoid position of power (143).

The very concept holds significant implications for postcolonial studies and cultural resistance, as it serves as a transformative framework that allows for the articulation of hybrid identities and the negotiation of power dynamics. At its core, the 'Third Space' raises critical questions about cultural narratives and identities that have been historically marginalised, emphasising the importance of amplifying these voices. This space invites individuals and communities to resist dominant narratives by redefining their identities in ways that challenge traditional binaries. Moreover, this concept acts as a site for cultural negotiation, where the complexities of identity are acknowledged and explored, highlighting the fluidity of cultural meanings and symbols. It not only facilitates cultural resistance by empowering marginalised groups to articulate their experiences but also encourages a re-examination of historical and contemporary power relations.

He states that the productive potential of the Third Space is rooted in its colonial or postcolonial origins. Engaging with this complex space reveals how recognising the divided nature of enunciation lead to the concept of an international culture. This culture is not based on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the mere diversity of cultures but on the hybridity of culture, which is both inscribed and articulated within this space. In this context, he writes:

It is significant that the productive capacities of this Third Space have a colonial or postcolonial provenance. For a willingness to descend into that alien territory – where I have led you – may reveal that the theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualising an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity (56).

Jean-Paul Sartre in his book, Colonialism and Neocolonialism, wrote, in the late 1950s, as France's colonies gained independence, Jean-Paul Sartre observed that colonial powers were adapting their methods rather than relinquishing control. While formal colonial rule ended, he saw how these nations became economically dependent, with former colonisers influencing them through debt, trade imbalances, and covert political pressure. Sartre highlighted how these "invisible chains" of neocolonialism – through economic and cultural dominance – kept former colonies from achieving true freedom. Sartre noted that, though some leaders sought to resist by nationalising resources and forming new alliances, these moves were met with resistance, including sanctions and isolation. He viewed this system as a hidden prison that upheld human subjugation while proclaiming independence. Sartre advocated for true liberation, which he believed required economic autonomy, cultural renewal, and mental emancipation from colonial legacies. His perspective still resonates, shedding light on why

formal independence did not guarantee true freedom and why the struggle for genuine self-determination continues in many parts of the world (Sartre, 1964/2001). In this context, Bhabha writes:

Each time the encounter with identity occurs at the point at which something exceeds the frame of the image, it eludes the eye, evacuates the self as site of identity and autonomy and – most important – leaves a resistant trace, a stain of the subject, a sign of resistance (71).

'Third Space' is a powerful theoretical framework for understanding how resistance, hybridity, and new forms of identity emerged from the interstices of cultural encounters. It refers to a liminal, in-between space that challenges binary oppositions and allows for the negotiation and creation of new meanings, identities, and forms of resistance. It functions as a space for resistance. In the Third Space, hybrid identities emerge, challenging essentialist notions of self and other. These hybrid identities resist fixed categorisations and disrupt dominant narratives that seek to define and control individuals based on singular aspects of their identity, such as race, gender, or nationality. This space is marked by ambivalence and ambiguity, which is a source of resistance. By inhabiting and embracing these uncertainties, individuals subvert and challenge systems that rely on clear-cut definitions and hierarchies. This ambiguity unsettles dominant power structures and creates openings for alternative narratives and ways of being. The very concept is a powerful theoretical framework for understanding how resistance, hybridity, and new forms of identity emerged from the interstices of cultural encounters. It points to a liminal, in-between space that challenges binary oppositions and allows for the negotiation and creation of new meanings, identities, and forms of resistance.

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The enunciative process introduces a split in the performative present of cultural identification; a split between the traditional culturalist demand for a model, a tradition, a community, a stable system of reference, and the necessary negation of the certitude in the articulation of new cultural demands, meanings, strategies in the political present, as a practice of domination, or resistance (51).

In Arundhati Roy's The Ministry of Utmost Happiness, the character Anjum embodies hybridity. As a trans woman, Anjum defies traditional gender binaries and challenges societal norms. Her identity is a blend of her biological sex, chosen gender, and religious influences, making her a symbol of resistance against rigid gender and cultural norms. In Aravind Adiga's The White Tiger, the protagonist Balram Halwai inhabits a space of ambivalence and ambiguity. He straddles the worlds of rural poverty and urban wealth, and his identity is a hybrid of these two worlds. Balram's ambivalent position allows him to critique and resist the corrupt systems that perpetuate inequality in India.

Third Space is to be sited of historical resistance, where marginalised communities reclaim and reinterpret their histories. This reclamation challenges dominant historical narratives that often erase or distort the experiences of marginalised groups. In The Ministry of Utmost Happiness, Roy explores the historical and political contexts of Kashmir and the struggles of its people. The novel reclaims and retells the history of Kashmir from the perspective of those who have been silenced, offering a counter-narrative to official histories that often justify state violence and oppression. She writes:

They were making a documentary film about Protest and Resistance, they explained, and one of the recurring themes of the film was to have protesters say, 'Another World Is Possible' in whatever language they spoke. For example, if their mother tongue was Hindi or Urdu, they could say, 'Doosri duniya mumkin hai …' They set up their camera while they were talking and asked Anjum to look straight into the lens when she spoke… (Roy 110).

The Khwabgah or the "House of Dreams" emerges as a literal manifestation of Bhabha's Third Space which acts as a liminal realm where conventional binaries dissolve and new identities emerge. This space houses individuals who exist beyond normative categories and thereby creating what Bhabha terms "a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation." Anjum, born Aftab, embodies this psychological hybridity. In the novel he declares: "I'm not Anjum, I'm Anjuman. I'm a mehfil, I'm a gathering. Of everybody and nobody, of everything and nothing. Is there anyone else you would like to invite? Everyone's invited." (4)

This declaration illustrates the Third Space as a psychological reality where identity becomes fluid and inclusive rather than fixed and exclusive. Anjum's rejection of a singular identity in favour of "Anjuman" represents a radical reconfiguration of self that aligns with Bhabha's theory of hybridity as "the third space which enables other positions to emerge."

Language is a powerful tool of resistance in the Third Space. By using hybrid languages, code-switching, and linguistic innovation, individuals challenge dominant linguistic norms and create new forms of expression that reflect their hybrid identities. In The White Tiger, Balram's use of language is a form of linguistic resistance. He code-switches between English and Hindi, using language to navigate different social contexts and subvert the expectations of those around him. His linguistic dexterity is a tool of resistance, allowing him to challenge and manipulate the systems that seek to control him. His anger and resentment towards the systemic injustices he faces are a form of affective resistance. His emotional responses drive him to challenge the status quo and seek a better life for himself, even if it means breaking the rules.

In The Ministry of Utmost Happiness, the novel challenges dominant epistemologies by presenting alternative ways of knowing and understanding the world. The characters' experiences and perspectives offer a critique of mainstream knowledge systems, which often exclude or marginalise their voices. In her work, she writes,

Normality in our part of the world is a bit like a boiled egg: its humdrum surface conceals at its heart a yolk of egregious violence. It is our constant anxiety about that violence, our memory of its past labours and our dread of its future manifestations, that lays down the rules for how a people as complex and as diverse as we are continue to coexist – continue to live together, tolerate each other and, from time to time, murder one another. As long as the centre holds, as long as the yolk doesn't run, we'll be fine. In moments of crisis it helps to take the long view (Roy 150-151).

The novel also explores how language itself becomes a site of hybridity and resistance. When Jahanara Begum discovers her child's intersex condition, she confronts the limitations of language: "In Urdu, the only language she knew, all things, not just living things but all things – carpets, clothes, books, pens, musical instruments - had a gender. Everything was either masculine or feminine, man or woman. Everything except her baby." (Roy 9) The child's existence outside the gender binary exposes the constructed nature of language itself and creates space for resistance through the articulation of new meanings.

Nagendra Bahadur Bhandari in his research, titled Homi K. Bhabha's Third Space Theory and Cultural Identity Today: A Critical Review, examines Bhabha's concept of the "third space" and its limitations in resisting colonial and neocolonial domination. Bhabha's third space proposes an in-between, liminal space where cultural differences are negotiated, producing hybridity and undermining essentialist cultural identities. The article argues that while Bhabha's theory subverts colonial discourse and binary oppositions, it ignores the material conditions of inequality, exploitation, and unequal access to resources. The third space fails to adequately address the heterogeneities and power differentials among marginalised groups within the space. It assumes a privileged, homogeneous experience of cultural negotiation. The article examines how the third space created by neocolonial institutions like the WTO and social media networks tends to benefit the interests of the powerful First World countries, rather than resisting their exploitation of the Third World. The article concludes that resistance should address both the discursive and material aspects of colonial and neocolonial domination, transforming unequal social, cultural and economic relationships. Comprehensively, the article offers a critical assessment of the limitations of Bhabha's third space concept in effectively challenging colonial and neocolonial power structures and inequalities (Bhandari 2022).

To the similar extent, Naglaa Abou-Agag researched and argued that Homi Bhabha's concept of the "Third Space" contributes to modern neocolonialism by promoting a fluid, continuously evolving cultural identity that prevents former colonies from establishing a solid, independent identity. The paper posits that the Third Space concept, as seen in postcolonial literature, the World Trade Organisation (WTO), and social media, reinforces Western dominance by fostering dependence on continuous negotiation and self-definition. These platforms, it argues, act as tools of neocolonialism, imposing Western ideologies and hindering independent cultural development in formerly colonised nations. The text examines postcolonial literary works, the structure of the WTO, and the impact of social media, showing that these realms often trap non-Western identities in an "us vs. them" framework. In postcolonial literature, characters struggle with identity and belonging, illustrating how Third Space dynamics enforce the need to constantly reconcile with Western norms. The WTO and social media serve as global spaces where economic and cultural exchanges occur, occasionally to the disadvantage of less powerful nations, which are pressured to conform to Western standards. After all, the paper suggests that Bhabha's Third Space, while seemingly progressive, is a tool that reinforces Western hegemony, limiting the agency of former colonies and integrating them into a global system that prioritises Western interests and identity (Abou-Agag).

The very concept of 'Third Space' is a foundational idea in postcolonial theory that describes a space where cultural identity negotiated, hybridised, and redefined. It emerges as a site of resistance against fixed, essentialist, and binary identities typically imposed by colonial or dominant cultural structures. According to Bhabha, the Third Space offers a productive arena for resistance because it allows for the coexistence of conflicting identities, creating new forms of identity that disrupt established power dynamics and cultural hierarchies. This theoretical space emerges from the interactions between the coloniser and the colonised, allowing for the negotiation of identities that challenge binary oppositions and essentialist notions of culture. It also manifests as a space for resistance. It disrupts fixed identities and allows for fluidity in cultural expressions, enabling individuals to navigate multiple cultural influences without being confined to one singular identity. The blending of different cultural elements creates new identities that subvert colonial narratives. This hybridity is not merely a mix but a transformative process that redefines cultural meanings. 'Third Space' is characterised by its 'hybridity', which arises from the interactions between different cultures. In this space, the identities of both the coloniser and the colonised are not fixed but are instead fluid and dynamic. This fluidity enables individuals to resist dominant narratives by creating new identities that draw from multiple cultural influences. The Third Space is where cultural differences intersect and interact, resulting in hybrid identities that combine elements from both colonised and colonising cultures. This blending creates new, unique cultural expressions that go beyond simple assimilation or mimicry, challenging binary oppositions. By resisting fixed identities and allowing for ambiguity, the Third Space creates a form of resistance against rigid, authoritarian definitions of cultural identity. It acknowledges that identity is not a singular, unified construct but is instead fluid, shifting according to context. This fluidity makes it difficult for dominant power structures to classify, control, or oppress identities, as they are no longer fixed within familiar

colonial binaries. Again, Bhabha argues that the Third Space enables subaltern voices to challenge colonial narratives and articulate their identities on their own terms. By creating hybrid expressions that include elements of both the coloniser's and the colonised's cultures, the Third Space questions the legitimacy of the dominant culture's claim to superiority, thus destabilising its authority. As Bhabha underscores the same thought:

"…with the repertoire of positions of power and resistance, domination and dependence that constructs colonial identification subject (both coloniser and colonised) … In order to understand the productivity of colonial power it is crucial to construct its regime of truth, not to subject its representations to a normalising judgement. Only then does it become possible to understand the productive ambivalence of the object of colonial discourse – that 'otherness' which is at once an object of desire and derision, an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity" (Bhabha 95-96).

Within the Third Space, individuals and communities gain the agency to redefine their own identities outside of the constraints imposed by colonial discourse. This empowerment leads to the assertion of a unique, multifaceted cultural self, allowing for self-representation and self-determination. In Bhabha's view, resistance in the Third Space occurs through the "in-betweenness" of cultural identities, where the interaction between cultures creates a space that is neither fully one nor the other. This in-betweenness allows for a re-imagining of identity that is subversive and creative, producing new meanings that cannot be easily categorised. These hybrid identities resist colonial frameworks and empower marginalised voices, providing a powerful means of defying established cultural and political boundaries. Throughout the reading, it helps us understand identity as a dynamic process rather than a static label.

It emphasises that resistance is not only about direct opposition to power but also about the creation of new identities and spaces where marginalised voices can be heard. In this way, it extends a powerful framework for understanding how cultural interactions lead to innovation, resilience, and resistance in the face of oppression. Third Space is born out of the "in-betweenness" of cultures. It represents an alternative to binaries like coloniser/colonised, self/other, East/West, or tradition/modernity. When individuals occupy this in-between space, they develop "hybrid identities", which blend elements from different cultural backgrounds. In the same line, Krishna Sen discussed this in At the Rendezvous of Conquest: Post-colonial Possibilities and the Anxiety of Inference, "The third major extrapolation of postcolonialism in recent times, deriving from the global/glocal dialectic of the spread and movement of populations following nineteenth century imperialism and its aftermath are Diaspora Studies, and the attendant issue of hybridity and multiculturalism" (Bakshi et al. 27). This hybridity disrupts the purity often associated with "authentic" identity, showcasing that identity itself is fluid and adaptable, not bound to a single origin or essence. The hybrid identity resists the colonial binary that seeks to categorise and thereby control individuals based on these simplistic dualisms.

Characters in Cultural Conflict and Hybrid Identity: The Third Space in literature appears through characters who exist between two or more cultures. These characters are immigrants, exiles, or members of marginalised groups who navigate contrasting cultural expectations. In these novels, they find themselves in an "in-between" state where they can neither fully belong to their culture of origin nor to the dominant culture around them. In this way, the Third Space becomes a site where these characters negotiate hybrid identities, blending different cultural elements into new, personal identities. Adiga in his novel explores the life of Balram Halwai, a character who navigates the complexities of class, caste, and identity in contemporary India. He states,

The dreams of the rich, and the dreams of the poor - they never overlap, do they?

See, the poor dream all their lives of getting enough to eat and looking like the rich. And what do the rich dream of?

Losing weight and looking like the poor (Adiga 225).

Balram embodies the essence of Bhabha's Third Space through his hybrid identity, which reflects the tensions between his origins and aspirations. Born into a lower-caste family in Laxmangarh, he represents the marginalised "small bellies" who are trapped in a system of servitude and exploitation. As Balram opines,

These are the three main diseases of this country, sir: typhoid, cholera, and election fever. This last one is the worst; it makes people talk and talk about things that they have no say in ... Would they do it this time? Would they beat the Great Socialist and win the elections? Had they raised enough money of their own, and bribed enough policemen, and bought enough fingerprints of their own, to win? Like eunuchs discussing the Kama Sutra, the voters discuss the elections in Laxmangarh (Adiga 98).

The protagonist explicitly acknowledges this duality in his letter to the Chinese Premier when he writes:

See, I am in the Light now, but I was born and raised in Darkness. But this is not a time of day I talk about, Mr Premier! I am talking of a place in India, at least a third of the country, a fertile place, full of rice fields and wheat fields and ponds in the middle of those fields choked with lotuses and water lilies... Those who live in this place call it the Darkness." (Adiga 14))

This spatial metaphor extends beyond geography to represent Balram's psychological hybridity that is his existence between the traditional rural values and modern urban ambitions. As Bhabha suggests, the Third Space "is the precondition for the articulation of cultural difference (Bhabha 38)," which Balram achieves through his entrepreneurial transformation.

In Roy's work, the struggle for identity is poignantly delineated through the concept of the 'Third Space'; this space represents a liminal area where cultural identities are negotiated, hybridised, and redefined, allowing characters to navigate their complex realities. She writes,

Addiction has its own mnemonics- skin, smell, the length of the loved one's fingers. In Tilo's case it was the slant of her eyes, the shape of her mouth, the almost invisible scar that slightly altered the symmetry of her lips and made her look defiant even when she did not mean to, the way her nostrils flared, announcing the displeasure even before hr eyes did (Roy 217).

The Third Space in literature is not just a geographical place but also a psychological and emotional space. Characters feel fragmented or ambivalent, caught between contrasting cultural expectations and the desire to create an identity that doesn't fit into prescribed cultural norms. This ambiguity disrupts rigid binaries, emphasising that identity is fluid and often shaped by conflicting influences. In this context, Roy emphasises the 'identity' as she narrates,

…She remembered reading somewhere that even after people died, their hair and nails kept growing. Like starlight, traveling through the universe long after the stars themselves had died. Like cities. Fizzy, effervescent, simulating the illusion of life while the planet they had plundered died around them.

She thought of the city at night, of cities at night. Discarded constellations of old stars, fallen from the sky, rearranged on earth in patterns and pathways and towers. Invaded by weevils that have learned to walk upright (Roy 214).

Meanwhile, Adiga effectively portrays a fragmented identity, as he writes,

Now, there are some, and I don't just mean Communists like you, but thinking men of all political parties, who think that not many of these gods actually exist. Some believe that none of them exist. There's just us and an ocean of darkness around us. I'm no philosopher or poet, how would I know the truth? It's true that all these gods seem to do awfully little work – much like our politicians – and yet keep winning re-election to their golden thrones in heaven, year after year. That's not to say that I don't respect them, Mr Premier! Don't you ever let that blasphemous idea into your yellow skull. My country is the kind where it pays to play it both ways: the Indian entrepreneur has to be straight and crooked, mocking and believing, sly and sincere, at the same time (Adiga 8).

In 'Third Space', characters mostly resist the rigid identities imposed upon them by colonial, patriarchal, or traditional forces. Literature set in this space reflects a redefinition of identity, as characters reject stereotypical, "essentialist" views of their identities and redefine themselves. This resistance is a form of empowerment, allowing characters to subvert colonial narratives and assert their own, complex identities. Roy's The Ministry of Utmost Happiness explores this through characters like Anjum, who lives on the margins of society, both literally and metaphorically. Anjum's experience as a hijra (transgender woman) and her journey across different religious and social boundaries allows her to construct an identity within the Third Space. Her story resists the rigid categories of gender, religion, and caste, redefining herself beyond these categories through an identity that draws from multiple sources and experiences. She wrote, "Who was he mourning? She didn't know. A whole generation maybe" Roy (2017, p. 267). On the same wavelength, she did express, "All they have to do is to turn around and shoot. All the people have to do is to lie down and die." Roy (282).

In The Ministry of Utmost Happiness and The White Tiger, the themes of hybrid identity and cultural ambiguity are central to understanding the struggles, aspirations, and resistance of the characters. Both novels manifest the complexity of identity in contemporary India – a nation shaped by the legacies of colonialism, the complexities of caste, class, religion, and the pressures of globalisation. These works highlight how hybrid identities, created in culturally ambiguous spaces, become both sources of struggle and means of empowerment for individuals caught between worlds. If we take hybrid identity into account, we observe in The Ministry of Utmost Happiness, Roy explores hybrid identity through characters who defy traditional boundaries of gender, religion, and nationality. The novel centers on Anjum, a hijra (a genderqueer identity recognised in South Asia), who occupies a space that defies the binary structures of male/female and, more broadly, accepted norms of society. Anjum's identity is shaped not just by her gender, but also by her Muslim heritage, her complex experiences in Delhi, and her engagement with diverse communities, including other marginalised groups. On the other hand, in The White Tiger, Aravind Adiga explores hybrid identity through the character of Balram Halwai, a young man from a lower caste who transforms himself into a successful entrepreneur in modern-day India. The novel is a dark critique of India's class divisions and the "two Indias" that exist within the same nation—the wealthy, urban elite and the impoverished rural masses. Balram's journey from village boy to businessman represents a form of hybrid identity that straddles these two worlds, embodying both ambition and moral ambiguity.

Roy's The Ministry of Utmost Happiness demonstrates how the embodied hybridity becomes a form of resistance against oppressive structures. Anjum's physical transformation from Aftab to Anjum represents a reclaiming of agency through the embrace of liminality: "She had a strong, chiselled face and an impressive, hooked nose like her father's. She wasn't beautiful in the way Bombay Silk was, but she was sexier, more intriguing, handsome in the way some women can be." (Roy 26) This description highlights how Anjum's hybrid appearance defies conventional gender categories, creating a "productive capacity of Third Space" that challenges the normative structures. Her identity exists in the "interstitial passage between fixed identifications" (Bhabha 4) that he identifies as crucial for cultural resistance.

Anjum's existence as a hijra (third gender) places her in a culturally ambiguous space, as hijras in India occupy both reverence and rejection. Roy uses Anjum's hybrid identity to challenge rigid gender norms, showing how she constructs her own space of belonging—an inclusive graveyard that becomes a sanctuary for other social outcasts, including orphans, political exiles, and abandoned animals. Anjum's world within the graveyard becomes a microcosm of India's hybrid cultural landscape, embodying the idea of a "Third Space" where new identities

are possible and where marginalised voices resist social exclusion. In Adiga, Balram's identity is shaped by the contradictions of caste and class. As he rises in social status, he must adopt the manners and values of the elite while never fully shedding his background. Balram's journey is marked by a sense of alienation as he struggles to fit into the world of wealth and power. He learns to manipulate and even betray those around him, suggesting that his hybrid identity is not simply a personal choice but a survival mechanism in a society divided by caste and class. Balram's transformation is marked by moral ambiguity as he navigates between loyalty and ambition. The novel's tone is satirical and darkly humorous, highlighting how Balram must adopt multiple identities – servant, driver, entrepreneur – to succeed. His identity as a "self-made" man comes at a high ethical cost, blurring the lines between victim and oppressor. In this way, Adiga presents hybrid identity as a double-edged sword, showing how the drive for economic mobility in India's modern economy lead to ethical compromises and cultural dislocation. Balram's self-identification as a "half-baked" Indian exemplifies Bhabha's concept of hybridity as "the third space which enables other positions to emerge." The protagonist describes himself as:

Half-baked, because we were never allowed to complete our schooling. Open our skulls, look in with a penlight, and you'll find an odd museum of ideas: sentences of history or mathematics remembered from school textbooks... all these ideas, half formed and half digested and half correct, mix up with other half-cooked ideas in your head, and I guess these half-formed ideas bugger one another, and make more half-formed ideas, and this is what you act on and live with (Adiga 10).

This "half-baked" condition represents a form of hybridity that becomes a site of resistance. Balram embraces his incomplete education as a strength rather than weakness, declaring: "Entrepreneurs are made from half-baked clay." (11) This statement aligns with Bhabha's assertion that hybridity "is not a third term that resolves the tension between two cultures... but rather the 'other' dimension that allows new meaning to arise." His entrepreneurial success emerges precisely from his ability to navigate between traditional and modern value systems.

Roy also explores hybridity through the theme of religious ambiguity. Anjum's identity as a Muslim in a Hindu-majority country forces her to navigate a polarised society, especially in the wake of events like the Gujarat riots. Her experiences reflect the hybrid nature of contemporary Indian identity, torn between secular ideals and rising religious nationalism. Anjum's journey symbolises how cultural identity in India is layered, multifaceted, and shaped by the histories of colonialism, partition, and communal tensions. Both novels illustrate the concept of a "Third Space" (as theorised by Homi Bhabha), where hybrid identities emerge and defy traditional definitions. For Anjum, this Third Space is her graveyard sanctuary, where she creates a community that embraces diversity and defies social norms. For Balram, the Third Space is the metaphorical space between his humble beginnings and his life as a business owner, where he becomes "the White Tiger" – a creature that stands out but is ultimately a product of its environment. Anjum's Third Space serves as a form of resistance, offering a sanctuary for those who defy social conventions. Her graveyard represents a place where the marginalised find dignity and belonging, challenging the dominant cultural and religious narratives of society. Similarly, in The White Tiger, Balram's hybrid identity allows him to subvert traditional roles, moving from servant to master. His transformation is a critique of the rigid class and caste structures that oppress people in India, though his rise involves questionable moral choices. Both Anjum and Balram experience profound loss as they enter the Third Space. Anjum loses her family's acceptance, her place in society, and, at times, her sense of self. Balram, on the other hand, sacrifices his moral compass and his ties to family. This loss, however, also becomes a source of transformation, enabling them to reconstruct their identities on their own terms. Their hybrid identities reflect not just a blending of cultures but a deliberate rejection of the social constraints that shaped their pasts.

Balram's transformation from servant to entrepreneur represents his navigation of the Third Space between traditional servitude and modern capitalism. He describes this journey: "The story of how I got to Bangalore and became one of its most successful (though probably least known) businessmen... will show you everything there is to know about how entrepreneurship is born, nurtured, and developed in this, the glorious twenty-first century of man." (Adiga 6) This entrepreneurial identity embodies what Bhabha describes as "the emergence of an 'interstitial' space between the fixed identifications of colonial discourse. (Bhabha 3)" The protagonist creates his own moral framework that operates outside traditional categories: "The entrepreneur's curse. He has to watch his business all the time." (7) His resistance to traditional moral codes becomes evident when he justifies his actions:

I was looking for the key for years, The British tried to make you their servants, but you never let them do it... For this land, India, has never been free. First the 21 Muslims, then the British bossed us around. In 1947 the British left, but only a moron would think that we became free then... thanks to all those politicians in Delhi, on the fifteenth of August, 1947 - the day the British left - the cages had been let open; and the animals had attacked and ripped each other apart and jungle law replaced zoo law. (Adiga 21-64).

This "new key" represents the hybrid identity forged in the Third Space - neither fully traditional nor entirely Western, but something new that enables resistance against both systems.

In both the novels, hybrid identity and cultural ambiguity serve as a lens through which Roy and Adiga consider the complexities of contemporary India. Anjum and Balram navigate culturally ambiguous spaces, creating hybrid identities that allow them to resist and redefine themselves in a society divided by religion, caste, class, and globalisation. Their stories illuminate the challenges and potentials of hybrid identity, ultimately depicting the Third Space as a realm of both conflict and creative possibility, where marginalised voices assert agency in the face of rigid social structures. Through these narratives, both authors present a nuanced portrait of India, capturing the cultural hybridity and the persistent struggles for belonging and empowerment within its rapidly changing

landscape. Roy's depiction of marginalised characters and unconventional spaces reflects Homi Bhabha's concept of the 'Third Space,' which is an "in-between" area where hybrid identities and new cultural meanings develop. This space allows individuals to resist binary distinctions and dominant narratives. In Roy's novel, the Third Space enables characters to subvert social, religious, and political norms, allowing them to exist beyond traditional cultural identities. Here are a few insights.

Anjum's hybrid identity and the hijra community as Third Space, where Anjum, a central character, exemplifies Bhabha's Third Space through her position within the hijra community. Anjum, born as Aftab and assigned male at birth, transitions to a female identity and joins the hijra community, which exists outside conventional categories of gender. This community inhabits a literal and symbolic Third Space, as hijras in India are neither fully accepted as male or female, and thus occupy a unique, liminal position in society. For Anjum and her hijra family, the Third Space represents a physical refuge and a space of resistance, allowing them to defy societal binaries and reclaim their identity. By resisting the traditional male-female gender binary, Anjum redefines herself and challenges societal norms, creating a new cultural identity that blends rejection and adaptation of mainstream gender norms. The graveyard as a physical and symbolic Third Space, over the trajectory of the novel, the graveyard Anjum transforms into the Jannat Guest House becomes a significant Third Space. It serves as a community for outcasts and marginalised individuals whose identities and experiences defy categorisation. The Jannat Guest House symbolises inclusivity, welcoming all regardless of their societal status, religion, or background. It is a refuge for those denied acceptance in mainstream society, allowing them to form bonds based on shared experiences of rejection and resilience. As a graveyard, it also symbolises a liminal space between life and death, a metaphorical boundary where societal hierarchies lose their meaning. By establishing the Jannat Guest House there, Anjum asserts the right to live freely and authentically, transforming a place associated with endings into a new beginning for herself and others. This act of resistance reshapes the graveyard from a site of exclusion to one of communal survival and belonging, creating a new world within the old.

Tilo is another character who occupies a Third Space, not only through her relationships but also in her sense of identity. Tilo is an outsider, a woman who does not conform to traditional roles expected of her in love, religion, or politics. Her relationships with Musa, a Kashmiri freedom fighter, and others involved in India's turbulent political landscape reveal her own internal struggle with belonging and identity. As she expresses,

Mar gayee bulbul qafas mein

Keh gayee sayyaad se

Apni sunehri gaand mein

Tu thoons le fasl-e-bahaar

… "When I die,' Tilo said, laughing, 'I want this to be my epitaph" (Roy 435). Tilo's resistance is subtle yet powerful, as she exists in a psychological Third Space, neither fully embracing nor rejecting the worlds around her. Her complex identity defies religious, social, and political labels, reflecting Bhabha's idea that the Third Space allows for a fluid, constantly renegotiated identity. This ambiguity provides her with the autonomy to define herself. By resisting these labels, Tilo embodies a quiet yet subversive form of resistance, refusing to be confined by societal binaries and expectations.

The Third Space as political resistance, across the novel, the characters are not just navigating personal identities but are actively resisting the political climate of modern India, which is marked by religious intolerance, nationalism, and marginalisation of minorities. The novel argues the Kashmiri conflict, caste discrimination, and communal violence, portraying characters who live on the margins of these struggles. The Third Space becomes a site of resistance against political oppression, where characters can articulate identities that reject the divisive narratives promoted by those in power. Countering this, Tilo asserts,

A weevil-philosopher with a grave manner and a sharp moustache was teaching a class, reading aloud from a book. Admiring young weevils strained to catch each word that spilled from his wise weevil lips. 'Nietzsche believed that if Pity were to become the core of ethics, misery would become contagious and happiness an object of suspicion.' The youngsters scratched away on their little notepads. 'Schopenhauer on the other hand believed that Pity is and ought to be the supreme weevil virtue. But long before them, Socrates asked the key question: Why should we be moral?' (Roy 214).

Roy uses characters like Musa, a Kashmiri activist, to highlight the complex, conflicting identities of those resisting political and cultural oppression. Musa's fight for Kashmir's independence represents both personal and collective resistance, and his ambiguous relationship with Tilo reflects the tension between personal connection and political ideology. This portrayal of multiple, layered identities shows how hybrid identities in the Third Space can challenge state power and give a voice to those silenced by dominant narratives.

In The White Tiger, Adiga presents Homi Bhabha's concept of the 'Third Space' as a space for resistance where characters navigate and resist the rigid social, economic, and moral boundaries imposed by India's class system. This Third Space allows Balram Halwai, the novel's protagonist, to transform himself from a powerless servant into a self-made entrepreneur. Through Balram's journey, Adiga uses the Third Space to highlight how individuals caught between traditional and modern worlds can subvert societal expectations and challenge oppressive structures.

Balram's Identity as a Third Space of resistance, his identity embodies the Third Space. Born into rural poverty and later working as a servant in Delhi, he occupies a space between India's 'Darkness' (rural poverty) and 'Light' (urban wealth). This duality creates an in-between space where he is neither fully tied to his rural roots nor

accepted in urban elite society. His hybrid identity – part village servant, part aspiring businessman – allows him to resist the oppressive structures that keep the poor in servitude. His awareness of this liminal position enables him to craft a new identity that combines rural survival instincts with urban ambition, challenging the entrenched class hierarchy in Indian society. Adiga wrote,

Maybe it will be a disaster: slums, sewage, shopping malls, traffic jams, policemen. But you never know. It may turn out to be a decent city, where humans can live like humans and animals can live like animals… (Adiga 317). Delhi, where Balram moves to work as a driver, functions as a Third Space, blurring the boundaries between rural and urban, traditional and modern. In Delhi, he encounters luxury, corruption, and the moral ambiguities of the wealthy elite. This exposure leads him to question the moral values and loyalty expected of him as a servant, seeing them as tools that maintain power dynamics. The city becomes a place where he can reject traditional loyalties, adopting the ruthlessness of the wealthy to forge his own path. By shifting his identity within this urban Third Space, he resists the expectations of obedience and begins to see himself as deserving of power and wealth. Resistance through moral ambiguity and identity shifting, Bhabha's Third Space highlights the potential for individuals to create new, hybrid identities through cultural and moral negotiation, which Balram exemplifies through his shifting sense of right and wrong. His journey from loyal servant to murderer illustrates this ambiguous moral space, where survival and ambition drive him to transcend his assigned role. By breaking free from his village's moral codes and embracing an identity shaped by urban cynicism, Balram challenges the notion that lower-class individuals are bound to serve those above them. His moral ambiguity allows him to resist the cultural script that condemns the poor to lives of submission, showing the Third Space as a realm where traditional values are reinterpreted or abandoned.

… Kill enough people and they will put up bronse statues to you near Parliament House in Delhi – but that is glory, and not what I am after. All I wanted was the chance to be a man – and for that, one murder was enough (Adiga 318).

The novel's unique narrative style, structured as a letter to the Chinese Premier, acts as a Third Space where Balram critiques the system that oppressed him and offers a counter-narrative to India's image as a rising democracy. By addressing his story to an outsider, Balram distances himself from India's official narratives of progress and democracy, presenting an alternative perspective that challenges the polished image India presents to the world. This letter format allows him to occupy a space of critical reflection, providing insight into his resistance and the alternative identity he has forged. Through this narrative Third Space, Balram voices a critique of Indian society's injustices, exposing the corruption and inequality he navigates to survive. He addresses his grandson,

… The city has corrupted your soul and made you selfish, vainglorious, and evil. I knew from the start that this would happen, because you were a spiteful, insolent boy. Every chance you got you just stared at yourself in a mirror with open lips, and I had to wring your ears to make you do any work. You are just like your mother. It is her nature and not your father's sweet nature that you have. So far we have borne our sufferings patiently, but we will not do so. … Also, it is your duty to look after Dharam, and take care of him as if he were your own son. Now take care of your health, and remember that I am preparing lovely chicken dishes for you, … (Adiga 262).

The 'Rooster Coop' metaphor in the novel symbolises the systemic forces trapping individuals within their class and preventing upward mobility. By escaping the Rooster Coop, Balram actively resists these limitations and enters a Third Space of his own making. This metaphor highlights the struggle to break free from social constraints and create a new identity, challenging the idea that the poor must remain subservient. "Men huddle together and discuss and point fingers to the heavens. One night, will they all join together – will they destroy the Rooster Coop?" (Adiga 303). In breaking out of the Rooster Coop, Balram subverts class expectations, creating a hybrid identity that defies societal norms and critiques the oppressive class hierarchy.

Balram as a hybrid figure: The White Tiger, His self-styled identity as the 'White Tiger' symbolises his unique status and refusal to conform to societal expectations. The white tiger represents Balram's ability to navigate and resist the forces that oppress him. "I remember the title very well: Lessons for Young Boys from the Life of Mahatma Gandhi. So that's how I became the White Tiger" Adiga (35). This identity, formed in the Third Space, blends traditional values of resilience and loyalty with modern, individualistic ambitions he adopts in Delhi. "A White Tiger keeps no friends. It's too dangerous" Adiga (302). As the White Tiger, Balram embodies resistance, adapting to new cultural codes while rejecting those that confine him. He becomes a figure of hybrid identity, resisting the rigid class system through self-reinvention and redefining his own worth and potential.

To conclude, Bhabha's concept of the Third Space represents a transformative site for resistance against colonial and neocolonial domination. By facilitating cultural hybridity and ambiguity, it allows individuals to negotiate their identities in ways that subvert dominant narratives. As Bhabha aptly points out,

The production of meaning requires that these two places be mobilised in the passage through a Third Space, which represents both the general conditions of language and the specific implication of the utterance in a performative and institutional strategy of which it cannot 'in itself' be conscious (Bhabha 53).

Although there are critiques regarding its focus on cultural aspects at the expense of material conditions, the Third Space remains a powerful tool for understanding how resistance manifest through new forms of identity in postcolonial contexts.
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