



Between Two Worlds: Exploring Identity in Last, First, Middle by Joseph Azam: A Cultural Hybridity Theory

Iezaz Ul Hassan¹ & Zareena Qasim²

¹MPhil Scholar, English Department, University of Sargodha, Email: [aizaz3310@gmail.com](mailto: aizaz3310@gmail.com)

²Associate Professor, English Department, University of Sargodha, Email: [zareena.qasim@uos.edu.pk](mailto: zareena.qasim@uos.edu.pk)

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Corresponding Author:

Zareena Qasim

Email:

[zareena.qasim@uos.edu.pk](mailto: zareena.qasim@uos.edu.pk)

ABSTRACT

The research aims to investigate the theme of Identity in essay 'Last, First, Middle' by Joseph Azam from a postcolonial perspective, employing the theoretical framework of Homi K. Bhabha. By critically examining the experiences of a refugee grappling with notions of selfhood and belonging amidst the enduring colonial legacy, this study endeavors to shed light on the intricate process of identity negotiation. The overarching objective is to investigate the ways in which individuals in liminal spaces navigate the complex terrains of multiple cultural identities, while simultaneously interrogating the concepts of the Ambivalence, Third space, Hybridity, and Mimicry as articulated by Bhabha. Through an incisive analysis of the nuanced dynamics of identity formation, this research contributes to the broader understanding of postcolonial perspectives within the realm of literary analysis, thus enriching the discourse on cultural negotiation, diasporic experiences, and the intricacies of subjective constructions in postcolonial contexts.



Introduction

The objective of this paper is to examine the dynamics of identity crises by the perspective of Homi k Bhabha's theory of cultural Hybridity, exploring how essay of Joseph Azam; "Last, First, Middle" explain the difficulties of Post-colonial identity, ambivalence, mimicry and the third space.

In postcolonial discourse, identity is a dynamic and hybrid concept shaped by colonial histories, cultural displacement, and resistance to dominant power. It embodies the conflict between indigenous traditions and colonial ideologies, resulting in fragmentation, mimicry, and ambivalence, as Homi Bhabha suggests. Postcolonial identity is not static; it evolves as formerly colonized people and societies address their past oppression, reclaim their stories, and redefine their roles in the world.

Joseph Azam is also one of the refugees and a victim of post-colonial identity who seeks out a place to live in an alien country. Refugees are considered as individuals who have been compelled to leave their homes and have crossed into another country in search of safety.

Background

Joseph Azam, an Afghan-American Muslim refugee, was profoundly affected by the Soviet Union's war in Afghanistan in 1979, which resulted in his forced displacement from his homeland in 1980, as the country became a frontline in the Cold War. Seeking sanctuary, he along with his family embarked on a journey to the United States, propelled by a resolute pursuit of a more promising future. In his essay, *Last, First, Middle*, Azam eloquently chronicles his quest for a promised land, driven by the desire to evade the horrors of war in his native country. This arduous journey, marked by a nostalgic trauma for him and his family, encapsulated a process fraught with struggle and perils, the plan was to make their way back to America but, ... the path there was neither direct nor without peril. The essay *Last, First, Middle* is part of the anthology *The Displaced: Refugee Writers on Refugee Lives* (2018), which features narratives by refugee writers from around the world.

During the late 20th and early 21st centuries, the global refugee crisis grown, with millions of people displaced due to wars, oppression and conflict. The conflict of Afghan, in particular, resulted in a massive emigration of refugees, with many relocating in the United States. Authors like Joseph Azam, who experienced resettlement and displacement firsthand, began to write about the complexities of belonging, identity, and cultural hybridity. Azam's essay examines his personal journey as an Afghan-American refugee, explaining the problems of cultural adaptation, identity formation and the importance of names in shaping one's sense of self. Azam's writing explores the experiences of many immigrants and refugees who have encountered similar problems in their recipient countries. His essay illuminates the tensions of post-war between protecting cultural heritage and adjusting to a unfamiliar surroundings, along with the difficulties of identity formation in the context of resettlement and displacement.

Wars have consistently been major causes of displacement, leading to the forced removal of people from their homes and inflicting significant damage on the identity and cultural heritage of native populations, as well as affecting their lives and economies. In 2022, there were 35.3 million individuals registered as refugees. These conflicts have resulted in vast movements of people who have become IDPs or forced to seek refuge as refugees. A significant example is the one where since 2001, the US has been involved in eight major conflicts, resulting in at least 37 million people being displaced from their homes in countries including Afghanistan, Iraq etc. The effects of war on displacement can be seen in Afghanistan, where a report from Brown University indicates that more than 2.1 million Afghans have left the country since the start of the US-led war. Additionally, from 1979 to 1992, over six million Afghans, which represents about 20% of the population, were compelled to leave their homeland to avoid conflict.

Research Questions

- How does *Last, First, Middle* negotiate postcolonial identities using Homi Bhabha's concepts of the third space and hybridity?
- How does mimicry in *Last, First, Middle* reflect the characters' negotiation of cultural backgrounds and dominant culture?
- What are the implications of ambivalence and tensions in *Last, First, Middle* for postcolonial identity formation, informed by Homi Bhabha's theoretical framework?

Research Objectives

- To analyze the representation of identity in *Last, First, Middle* by Joseph Azam within a postcolonial framework.
- To explore the ways in which the characters in the essay navigate between their cultural backgrounds and the dominant culture, highlighting instances of hybridity and mimicry.
- To examine the implications of the third space concept in understanding the negotiation of identities in the essay.
- To investigate the experiences of ambivalence and the tensions faced by the characters in their pursuit of a coherent sense of self.

Literature Review

A research paper about the theme of Identity Crisis in the poems *Pakistani Story* and *Stone Chat*, focusing on identity formation in post-partition Pakistan was published. It applies Homi K. Bhabha's concepts of hybridity and third space, alongside Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's ideas of subaltern and otherness, to examine the effects of post-colonialism on Pakistani society. The study highlights the tension between self and other, cultural clashes, and complex love-hate dynamics. Through close readings of the poems, it investigates the psychological and sociocultural challenges of identity, reflecting the struggle to integrate into the colonizers' culture while facing marginalization. This research enhances the understanding of identity fragmentation in the postcolonial context of Pakistani literature, emphasizing hybridity, third space, subaltern, and otherness. (Lodhi, Shoaib, Mustafa, 2025)

Exploration of the role of popular culture in the identity crises experienced in puberty by Hayriyem Zeynep Altan is studied there. This study explores the connection between popular culture and youth identity crisis. Youth aged 14-20 face identity struggles during childhood-to-adulthood transition. Market economy and commodity culture influence identity formation. It also explains how popular culture shapes youth identity. (Altan, 2008)

This article sheds light on the concept of Absalom and Achitophel through the lens of Homi K. Bhabha's hybridity theory by Ismeal. Homi K. Bhabha, a literary theorist, coined the term hybridity in postcolonial theory. He attempts to analyze the concept of hybridity as theorized by Homi K. Bhabha and its relevance to John Dryden's poem *Absalom and Achitophel*. (Mohammad, 2024)

An article about Toni Morrison's *Beloved* through the lens of Homi K. Bhabha's concepts of ambivalence, the uncanny, and stereotypes to investigate colonial relationships and identity was published. However, this research emphasizes cultural hybridity in Pakistani literature using Bhabha's ideas of mimicry and the third space, showcasing a different facet of his theory (Joodaki, 2014).

Additionally, the article provides a Critical Review of Postcolonial Theory of Homi K. Bhabha, analyzing Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* and focusing on his essays regarding the formation of anticolonial subjectivity. Umar cites four authors who critique Bhabha's work, but this study concentrates specifically on two essays: *Hybridity and Third Space* (Umar, 2024). The poem *The Earth Presses against us* delves into the connection between land and identity, illustrating how colonialism affects the relationship between people and their homeland (Mahmoud Darwish, 1970).

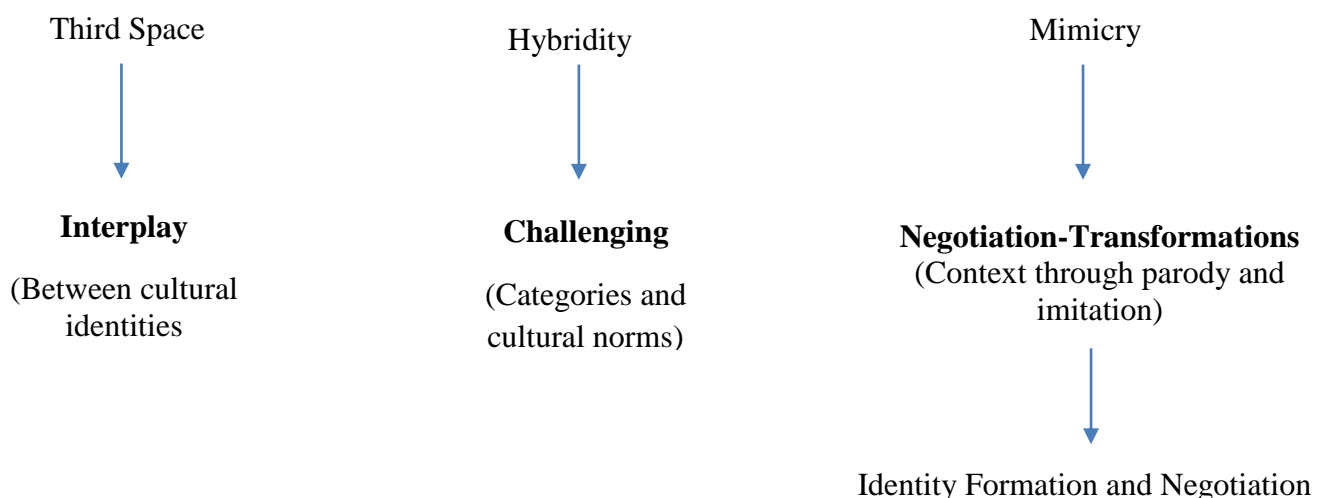
The work *In the Presence of Absence* deals with themes of absence, memory, and identity, exploring how colonialism has shaped the Palestinian experience and the quest for self-definition. (Mahmoud Darwish, 2006).

Theoretical Framework

The research framework for examining identity in Joseph Azam's *Last, First, Middle* utilizes Homi Bhabha's concepts of the ambivalence, third space, hybridity, and mimicry to analyze the complex interplay of cultural identities within postcolonial contexts, focusing on the relationship between Azam's experiences as a refugee and the hegemonic forces that influence them, ultimately portraying the intricacies of refugee identity construction.

The Third space occupies a central position, representing a discursive condition that challenges fixed cultural meanings and norms. It allows for the articulation of alternative subjectivities, providing opportunities for individuals to navigate and negotiate their identities beyond binary oppositions and fixed categories. From the Third space, the concept of hybridity emerges, denoting the intermingling and blending of diverse cultural influences. It disrupts essentialist categories and challenges rigid notions of identity. Hybridity highlights the complexity and fluidity of cultural production, where diverse cultural elements and practices converge, interact, and mutually influence each other. It enables the formation of hybrid identities that transcend singular, fixed cultural identities. Building upon hybridity, the concept of mimicry comes into play. Mimicry involves the ambivalent imitation and performance of the dominant culture by the colonized or marginalized individuals. Through mimicry, individuals strategically imitate and parody the dominant norms, highlighting the inherent gaps, instabilities, and contradictions within the exercise of colonial power. Homi Bhabha's concept of Ambivalence refers to the contradictory relationship between colonizers and the colonized. It highlights how colonial discourse is unstable, as the colonizer both desires and fears the colonized, while the colonized both resists and internalizes colonial influences. This duality creates spaces for resistance and disrupts colonial authority.

The interconnectedness of these concepts demonstrates how the third space, ambivalence, hybridity, and mimicry influence and shape the process of identity formation and negotiation. These concepts elucidated by Bhabha in 'The Location of Culture', (1994) are pivotal to understanding the dynamic and contested nature of postcolonial societies in Joseph Azam's *Last, First, Middle* can be achieved, shedding light on the nuanced struggles and experiences of the characters as they navigate between cultural influences, challenge fixed meanings, and negotiate their identities within the context of the third space, hybridity, and mimicry.



Research Methodology

This research will employ a qualitative approach, conducting a close reading and textual analysis of Joseph Azam's *Last, First, Middle*. Primary data will be collected through a comprehensive examination of the essay, focusing on key phrases and words that highlight the characters' struggles with identity. The analysis will be guided by the theoretical framework of Homi Bhabha, particularly the concepts of the third space, ambivalence, hybridity, and mimicry. Secondary sources, including scholarly articles and critical essays on postcolonial theory and Bhabha's work, will be consulted to provide a theoretical foundation for the analysis. Homi K. Bhabha's work 'The Location of Culture' explores key concepts in postcolonial contexts. The third space challenges fixed cultural meanings, enabling cultural negotiation and the emergence of hybrid identities. Bhabha's exploration of mimicry reveals the ambivalent imitation of the dominant culture by the colonized, serving as a form of resistance and subversion. Homi Bhabha's ambivalence highlights the conflicting relationship between colonizers and the colonized, showing how colonial discourse is unstable. Colonizers desire and fear the colonized, who both resist and internalize colonial influences, creating opportunities for resistance and challenging colonial authority. Mimicry highlights the instability and gaps in colonial power, allowing the colonized to negotiate their agency within the colonial context. The theoretical insight of Homi Bhabha invites to critically engage with the complexities of postcolonial subjectivities and the ongoing processes of identity formation in a world shaped by colonial histories.

Discussion and Analysis

As Bhabha asserts, cultural symbols can be appropriated, translated, historicized, and interpreted anew, highlighting the dynamic and transformative nature of cultural representation (*Bhabha, 1994, p. 37*).

Joseph Azam's essay, *Last, First, Middle*, presents a compelling narrative that intersects with Homi Bhabha's postcolonial theory, shedding light on the intricate dynamics of his journey and struggles in an unfamiliar cultural milieu. Azam's experiences as an Afghan-American Muslim refugee exemplify cultural assimilation in the concept of third space, hybridity, and mimicry as he negotiates the blending of his Afghan cultural heritage with the cultural norms of the United States, leading to the emergence of a nuanced and multifaceted identity. His exploration of the third space reflects his navigation of the liminal realm between his homeland and the host country, where he grapples with the complexities of cultural adaptation, negotiation, and transformation. The act of mimicry in Azam's narrative highlights his strategic adoption and subversion of the dominant culture, signifying his agency in shaping his own cultural identity while simultaneously challenging established power structures.

Azam's narrative also sheds light on the complexities and challenges faced by individuals with immigrant backgrounds. The protagonist's feelings of dissonance and unrest reveal the constant struggle between being identified as foreign and the fear of being perceived as false or inauthentic. Moreover, Azam's portrayal of the immigrant experience underscores the role of memory and family history in shaping one's identity. His memories of his parents' struggles and the places they lived become central to his understanding of self. The significance of names and places becomes intertwined with the larger narrative of cultural negotiation and transformation.

Four main key concepts; Hybridity, Ambivalence, Third Space and Mimicry are discussed in this section:

Third Space

Homi K. Bhabha's idea of **Third Space** describes a cultural realm where individuals can forge new identities by combining different cultures. It is a postcolonial theory that investigates how people push back against dominant ideologies.

The initial lines of the poem: *While I grew up not necessarily knowing what a refugee was or that I was one, I don't recall ever not knowing the feeling of being an outsider.* Shows the feeling of being an *outsider* illustrates the tension present in the Third Space. The narrator is caught between being fully integrated into American society and maintaining a connection to their Afghan roots. The reference to their green card, which labels them as a *Resident Alien*, emphasizes the legal and social ambiguity of their situation—stuck between two worlds, never fully accepted, and always in a process of defining themselves. The Text: *Most days I hide in plain sight. I am a Muslim refugee from a war-torn country — the sum of many fears—camouflaged by the trappings of Anglo-Americanisms: fair skin, a mastery of the American vernacular, a picture of my blue-eyed wife and daughter on my desk at work, and called by a name that my late grandfather would not recognize*, the narrator reflects on the hybridity of their identity. The term *camouflaged by the trappings of Anglo-Americanisms* speaks to how they have adapted to the American culture, adopting its language, appearance, and social customs. However, the phrase *called by a name that my late grandfather would not recognize* indicates the persistence of their

Afghan roots. This hybridity shows how the narrator is negotiating their Afghan identity within an American context, a quintessential example of the Third Space where these identities meet and redefine each other. In the following text, *Living in New York brought with it two things families like mine were eager to have: opportunity and anonymity.* New York becomes a space where the narrator's family can exist in a state of cultural in-betweenness. The *opportunity* and *anonymity* signify a freedom from traditional identity markers, allowing them to exist without the expectations of either Afghan or American societies fully defining them. This is the Third Space, a fluid space of cultural exchange where they are neither fully accepted nor fully alienated. *grew up in, was full of families like mine who had recently come from some distant place in search of a better life. We were the ones who dressed a little differently and carried our lunches in repurposed plastic shopping bags that could never be tied tightly enough to contain the unfamiliar aromas from our home kitchens.* These passages illustrate the hybrid experience in the Third Space. The children from immigrant families, including the narrator, stand out because of their *dressed a little differently* appearance and the *unfamiliar aromas* from their lunches. Their cultural practices—such as the way they dress and the food they eat—serve as visible signs of their hybrid identity, **a blend of the old (Afghan) and the new (American)**, where they are both insiders and outsiders. The lines , *The revolving cast of characters my parents hired to work there—almost exclusively African and Caribbean immigrants—became family*, shows the diversity of immigrant experiences at the family business creates a Third Space where different cultural identities coexist and intermingle. The connection between Afghan-American and African/Caribbean immigrants signifies cultural negotiation and fluidity, where boundaries between distinct ethnic or national groups blur to create new forms of belonging.

The notion of the “**third space**” emerges as a crucial aspect of Azam's narrative, reflecting the discursive condition where dominant and subordinate cultures interact. The protagonist's experiences as an immigrant in America exemplify this liminal space where cultural meanings are contested and alternative subjectivities are produced. Azam's journey embodies the struggle and agency of individuals as they navigate through this in-between space, challenging fixed cultural

meanings and norms. The “**third space**” becomes a transformative site where marginalized voices assert their presence, seeking to transcend predefined cultural categories.

Hybridity

Hybridity by Homi K. Bhabha describes the cultural fusion that takes place when people or groups engage with various cultural identities, leading to the creation of a third space that challenges traditional ideas of national or cultural purity. **Hybridity** goes beyond simply mixing two cultures; it involves a dynamic negotiation of identity within a space that exists between cultures.

In Joseph Adam’s “Last First Middle,” the narrator embodies this hybridity as he balances his Afghan background with his American identity. The subsequent textual evidence reinforces this interpretation:

In the first sentence of short story; *Most days I hide in plain sight. I am a Muslim refugee from a war-torn country*; the concept of hybridity is very evident and gives the overall picture of whole story. The narrator is an Afghan refugee who portrays himself as an assimilated American, intentionally embracing **Anglo-Americanisms** to fit in. In the next lines; *The sum of many fears — camouflaged by the trappings of Anglo-Americanisms: fair skin, a mastery of the American vernacular, a picture of my blue-eyed wife and daughter on my desk at work, and called by a name that my late grandfather would not recognize.* His light skin, proficient English, and Anglocentric family are cultural indicators that enable him to *pass* in mainstream American culture. However, this concealment highlights the major theme **Identity Crisis**; one that exists between two cultural extremes, never fully belonging to either. In the very next lines, *Living in New York brought with it two things families like mine were eager to have: opportunity and anonymity*, The narrator’s parents pursue anonymity while also aiming for economic success. This conflict between being visible and invisible illustrates the dual challenges of assimilating into a new culture while preserving their own. Bhabha’s concept of hybridity suggests that immigrant identities are not fully integrated into the dominant culture nor completely disconnected from their origins; instead, they occupy a transitional state. Both the narrator’s parents and the narrator himself exemplify this hybridity by engaging with American society while still holding on to aspects of their Afghan heritage. In the passage; *My father, who had studied economics and was fluent in German and French, started off selling newspapers at a corner kiosk in midtown Manhattan, not far from Rockefeller Center ... my parents saved money to start a business selling imported Middle Eastern rugs and tapestries*, the family’s business represents hybridity by combining Eastern and Western economic systems. Selling Middle Eastern rugs in an American city illustrates a cultural intersection that preserves Afghan heritage within an American commercial context. This hybrid space allows for economic survival while maintaining ties to the family’s roots. The text, *amazed at how boundless America seemed*, the imagery of the road signifies fluidity and transition, essential elements of hybridity. The narrator’s travels across America reflect his struggle with identity—torn between longing for his heritage and the appeal of American opportunities. The *dusty rugs* symbolize Afghan tradition, while the *unbroken darkness* signifies the limitless, unfamiliar possibilities of assimilation and reinvention in America. The passage *New York in the 1980s, at least the part that I grew up in, was full of families like mine who had recently come from some distant place in search of a better life* shows that the narrator is among immigrant families who, like him, navigate two cultural realities—one rooted in their heritage and another shaped by American assimilation pressures. This ongoing negotiation defines hybridity. These immigrant children, marked by their differences (like clothing, lunches, and roles as translators), reflect the in-between identity that Bhabha describes as neither fully belonging to

their parents' culture nor completely integrated into American society. In the last lines, *Being known as Joseph or Joe outside*.

The concept of **Hybridity** is evident throughout the narrative, symbolized by the protagonist's composite name, Joseph Mohammad Yousuf Azam. This amalgamation of names represents the intermingling and blending of diverse cultural influences within the protagonist's identity. By embracing all his names, Azam exemplifies the fluidity of cultural affiliations and the refusal to be confined by singular, fixed identities. His name becomes a powerful symbol of cultural exchange and transformation, reflecting the complexities of postcolonial subjectivities and the hybrid cultural landscapes that emerge from migration and encounters with new cultures.

Mimicry

Mimicry refers to the process of adopting, modifying, or even imitating various elements. It often involves an exaggerated replication of language, culture, behaviors, and ideas.

In the very first passage of the poem, *Most days I hide in plain sight. I am a Muslim refugee from a war-torn country—the sum of many fears—camouflaged by the trappings of Anglo-Americanisms: fair skin, a mastery of the American vernacular, a picture of my blueeyed wife and daughter on my desk at work, and called by a name that my late grandfather would not recognize. The narrator mentions being *camouflaged by trappings of AngloAmericanisms*, which highlights how he adopts certain cultural traits to fit into American society. His *fair skin* and *mastery of the American vernacular* are ways he tries to blend in, reflecting the mimicry process where he assumes aspects of the colonizer's identity. However, the phrase "*the sum of many fears*" reveals the internal struggle he faces as a refugee, indicating that despite his outward appearance, his true identity remains hidden. This emphasizes the dual nature of mimicry—he is *almost the same, but not quite*, as his refugee background and cultural identity continue to influence his experiences. The next passage; *While I grew up not necessarily knowing what a refugee was or that I was one, I don't recall ever not knowing the feeling of being an outsider. It didn't help that for years the only identification I had was a green card with the words Resident Alien across the top.* depicts that even though the narrator tries to imitate American identity, he is constantly reminded of his outsider status through legal and social labels like *Resident Alien*. This illustrates Bhabha's idea that mimicry is always associated with a sense of difference—full assimilation is unattainable without aspects of one's original identity becoming apparent.*

The lines; *We were the ones who dressed a little differently and carried our lunches in repurposed plastic shopping bags that could never be tied tightly enough to contain the unfamiliar aromas from our home kitchens.* Emphasizes the children of immigrants make an effort to blend in, but subtle cultural signs, like their distinct clothing and food, set them apart. This reflects Bhabha's idea that mimicry is always partial—despite their attempts to integrate, remnants of their cultural backgrounds make them noticeably different.

Azam's choice to go by Yusuf instead of Mohammad is a clear example of mimicry in action. He alters his name to sound more **American** (like Joseph) while still keeping a link to his cultural heritage. This reflects Bhabha's idea that mimicry isn't an exact duplication; it's a modified version that both fits into and challenges the dominant culture.

The modest bargain I made with myself was that I would live with Yousuf, which sounded enough like Joseph to get me by, but I would rid myself of the name Mohammad, which I could not fashion into anything that could pass. Here, in this instant Azam deliberately changes his identity to blend into American society, but the struggle to completely abandon his origins leads to

a feeling of cultural duality, which is a key aspect of mimicry. *My father's decision liberated me from the immigrant self-gaze that had consumed me for so long, but it also felt like a death.* This text supports Bhabha's claim that mimicry is always *almost the same, but not quite*—showing the tension between adapting and remaining authentic that many immigrants navigate. Azam's internal conflict about being **identifiably foreign** or **secretly false** reflects the challenge of mimicry—whether to blend in or maintain one's cultural identity.

The following lines: *What It did do was leave me with an entirely new dilemma over what was worse: being identifiably foreign or secretly false,* directly connects to Bhabha's concept of mimicry as an incomplete and unsettling action, where individuals find themselves caught between two cultures rather than picking one.

The act of **Mimicry** also plays a significant role in Azam's narrative. Mimicry, as conceptualized by Bhabha, involves the ambivalent imitation of the dominant culture by the colonized subject. In this case, Azam's decision to adopt an American-style composite name can be seen as a strategic act of **Mimicry** to navigate the American society more smoothly. By mimicking the dominant cultural practices and expectations, Azam seeks to negotiate his own agency within the constraints of the new cultural context. Mimicry becomes a form of resistance and adaptation, exposing the inherent gaps and instabilities in the exercise of colonial power and asserting his own cultural reclamation.

Ambivalence

Ambivalence refers to the contradictory feelings and experiences arising from cultural hybridity, mimicry, and colonial influence in postcolonial or diasporic contexts. It describes the complex navigation between acceptance/rejection, belonging/alienation, and empowerment/marginalization, highlighting the instability and multiplicity of identities, cultures, and experiences.

Homi K. Bhabha's concept of ambivalence is exemplified in the narrator's experiences as an Afghan-American, who embodies the complexities of cultural hybridity, mimicry, and colonial influence. The narrator's identity is marked by ambivalence, as he *hides in plain sight* with his fair skin, fluency in English, and Anglo-American family, yet remains aware of his Muslim refugee status, highlighting the tension between belonging and not belonging. His name change, which his *late grandfather would not recognize*, symbolizes a loss of cultural heritage, but also provides protection and assimilation in America. Additionally, the narrator's experiences in New York reflect the ambivalence of opportunity and anonymity, where his family benefits from economic opportunities, yet remains invisible and disconnected from the mainstream, exemplified by his father's reduction from an educated man to selling newspapers. The narrator's fleeting sense of belonging, feeling that *all of it was mine*, is juxtaposed with his acknowledgment of being an outsider, reinforced by his **Resident Alien** green card, highlighting the ambivalence of the **American Dream** and displacement. Furthermore, the narrator's cultural identity is marked by ambivalence, as he struggles with pride and shame in his cultural heritage, exemplified by the unfamiliar aromas of immigrant children's food, which represents both cultural pride and vulnerability to exclusion. Lastly, the narrator's experiences as a refugee are marked by ambivalence, as he feels like an outsider, yet his family's hard work and economic survival are signs of success. *My father's decision liberated me from the immigrant self-gaze that had consumed me for so long, but it also felt like a death.* In this instance, Azam experiences a mix of relief and discomfort—being referred to as Joseph allows him to escape the feeling of being an outsider, yet it also diminishes a part of his identity. This exemplifies classic ambivalence, where the joy of fitting in is intertwined with the loss of one's self. In the lines, *Being known as Joseph or Joe outside of my family brought with it the ordinariness and anonymity that I had so*

desperately wanted at age six, but at fifteen it brought me discomfort and waves of guilt at home, the narrator shows that; As a child, he wished to blend in, but as a teenager, he begins to question if conforming means betraying his roots. His name serves as both a protection and a burden, causing feelings of inclusion alongside alienation. *What it did do was leave me with an entirely new dilemma over what was worse: being identifiably foreign or secretly false*. This statement encapsulates Bhabha's notion that the colonized (or immigrant) individual is never entirely one identity or the other. If he retains his original name, he remains an outsider; if he adopts a new one, he risks feeling inauthentic.

In short, the analysis of excerpts from "Last, First, Middle" by Joseph Azam offers a scholarly discussion of Bhabha's concepts of the **Third space, hybridity, ambivalence** and **mimicry** in the context of immigration and postcolonial experiences. The narrative portrays the complexities of identity formation and cultural production within the liminal space of immigration. The protagonist's journey reflects the fluidity and dynamism of postcolonial subjectivities, where individuals assert their agency and navigate multiple identities while embracing their cultural heritage. Azam's narrative serves as a powerful reflection of the interplay between cultural influences and the construction of alternative subjectivities within a world shaped by colonial histories. Examining these concepts deepens our insight into the complexities of immigration, revealing how individuals navigate their identities and reclaim their cultural heritage within an increasingly interconnected and diverse world.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis of Joseph Azam's "Last, First, Middle" reveals the profound presence and significance of Bhabha's concepts of the Ambivalence, Third space, Mimicry and Hybridity in the context of immigration and postcolonial experiences. Azam's narrative exemplifies the complexities of identity formation and cultural negotiation within the liminal space of immigration, where individuals assert agency, challenge fixed cultural meanings, and navigate multiple identities while embracing their cultural heritage. The protagonist's journey reflects the fluidity and dynamism of postcolonial subjectivities, emphasizing the transformative potential of cultural exchange and the constant struggle to negotiate between two worlds. By embracing his composite name, Azam embodies the intermingling of diverse cultural influences and the refusal to be confined by singular, fixed identities, exemplifying the complexities of postcolonial identities and cultural landscapes. The act of mimicry, as portrayed in Azam's decision to adopt an American style name, becomes a strategic form of resistance and adaptation, challenging colonial power structures and asserting cultural reclamation. Through this analysis, we gain deeper insights into the immigrant experience and the ongoing processes of identity negotiation and cultural reclamation in a diverse and interconnected global context, ultimately enriching our understanding of postcolonial subjectivities and the complexities of cultural production in the modern world.

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