

A Postcolonial Reading of Cultural Identity in Gerald Vizenor's *Almost Browne*

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المخلص

قراءة في الهوية الثقافية لقصة "تقريباً بني" للكاتب جيرالد فيزنور من خلال نظرية ما بعد الاستعمار
يقدم هذا البحث قراءة في الهوية الثقافية لقصة "Almost Browne" أي "تقريباً بني اللون"
للكتّاب الأمريكي جيرالد فيزنور (Gerald Vizenor) من خلال نظرية ما بعد الاستعمار. وينقسم
البحث إلى جزأين: نظري وتطبيقي. أما الجزء النظري، فيحتوي النظريات ذات الصلة أساساً في مرحلة
ما بعد الاستعمار، ويحتوي جزئياً التحليل النفسي. وعليه فإن البحث ينظر في ثلاثة من مفاهيم نظرية ما
بعد الاستعمار والتي وضعها "هومي بابا"، ألا وهي: "التهجين"، "الاختلاف الثقافي" و"حالة الـ (ما بين)
جنباً إلى جنب مع إتباع نهج كارل يونغ للتحليل النفسي للشخصيات. ويكشف البحث كيفية تطبيق هذه
الجوانب النظرية على شخصية Almost Browne وهو بطل القصة. ويوضح البحث أن الهوية
الثقافية لشخصية "تقريباً براون" في القصة غير مؤكدة وتعتبر هي في حالة تقريبه كهوية ثقافية، لأن
الهيمنة الغربية البيضاء تسود على أي ثقافة في مرحلة ما بعد الاستعمار وتعتبر هي "الأخرى".
وبالرغم من أن السلطة الإمبريالية الغربية "كالذات" على الهنود الأصليين المرؤوسين تبدو أكيدة وحتمية،
فإن القصة تكشف عن إمكانية التقدم الاقتصادي في الثقافة الأصلية التي قد ترفع من مكانتها باعتبارها
"الأخر".

الكلمات المفتاحية: جيرالد فيزنور، "تقريباً براون"، مرحلة ما بعد الاستعمار، الهوية، التهجين،
الاختلاف الثقافي.

Abstract

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This paper is a postcolonial reading of cultural identity in Gerald Vizenor's *Almost Browne*. It is divided into two parts, theoretical and practical. The theoretical part contains mainly relevant theories of post-colonialism and partially psychoanalysis. Hence, it introduces three of Homi Bhabha's concepts of postcolonialism: "hybridity", "cultural difference" and the "in-between" along with Jung's psychoanalytic approach to personality. The paper applies such post-colonial aspects to Almost Browne, who is the

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protagonist of Vizenor's story. The cultural identity of Almost Browne in the story proves uncertain because the Western hegemony predominates over any other post-colonial culture. Although the western imperial authority upon the subordinate native Indians seems definite and inevitable, the story reveals a possibility of economic advancement in a native culture that might upgrade its subaltern status.

Keywords: Vizenor, "Almost Browne", Post-colonialism, Identity, Hybridity, Cultural Difference.

I. Introduction to Almost Browne.

Gerald Vizenor's "Almost Browne" depicts the conditions of the Indian American tribes in America, who live in reservations—an allocated area for tribes who share common language/dialect, culture and ethnic background. Vizenor's story is divided into two parts. The first part is told by an omniscient narrator while the second part is told in the first person singular pronoun. The story begins with describing the origin of its protagonist, Almost Browne, whose father is "tribal" (2334) and whose mother is "blonde" (2332). Almost "was born on the road" (2332), which points to the major issue of the story, precluding the search for cultural identity within the Western culture. The father of Almost seems uncertain of his identity; this mode of uncertainty is revealed by the father when he is with Wolfie Wight, who is the reservation's medical doctor. Subsequently, the name of Almost is given by White Jaws, not by his parents due to the father's inability to identify himself as belonging to the Indian or the white culture.

Almost Browne was born to be a trickster, a person who possesses great intellect or knowledge with which he uses to pass trials, and is said to know how to seize opportunities. Through his interaction with the blonde anthropologist, he unveils his daily practices and tricks. For instance, he tells the anthropologist about the names of the "Indian constellations" and their meanings. Almost has one close friend, Drain. The tribal people think

that they are brothers because of their similarities albeit Almost is tribal and Drain is white. Progressively, Almost describes to Drain how he has got the natural deals and tricks from his grandmother as the world is meant to be between memories and tribal stories. The most important deal is that the Native Indians themselves are at the center of the deal in their stories. Consequently, Almost began a business of selling blank books at the reservation.

The second part of the story is told by the protagonist himself. Almost recollects his birth conditions and his origins conflicts. Clearly, he expresses indignation of the public schools as they might be said to represent the dominant Western culture. As the story progresses, Almost juxtaposes his attitude towards words and books with Drain's as the latter can not imagine the missing words in burnt books like Almost. The closing incident of the story describes how Almost and Drain have been caught for selling blank books. Ultimately, they are set free, expanding their business as blank books publishers.

II. Theoretical Framework for Cultural Identity Conflict.

Postcolonial theory has been considered one of the most influential critical approaches to reading literature where the analysis of the literary work has to be studied within its context. Many concepts of postcolonial theory were crystallized in Edward Said's *Orientalism* as he unveils the deeply rooted opposition between the Occident and the Orient. The consequences of colonization in where the Western power is in conflict with those non-European countries mark the discourse of Said's book in which the "Orient is an integral part of European *material* civilization and culture" (Said 2). Edward Said was followed by many influential figures in

postcolonialism, such as Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha. Each postcolonial theorist has coined distinctive philosophical standpoint terminologies in order to elaborate on the theory. Hence, the diversity of postcolonial doctrines and jargons suggests a widespread applicability to a large mass of postcolonial literature.

Homi Bhabha is one of the prominent leaders in postcolonial criticism whose contribution to postcolonialism requires an understanding of the relationship between the superior and the inferior within the Western culture. For one thing, the Self-Other dialectic is the major issue of postcolonial theory that highlights the systematic discourse of hegemony and domination over the Other. The ideology of Homi Bhabha lies on that the supremacy of the Western dogma is built in the post-colonized personality. Accordingly, in *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon asserts that "[t]he Negro enslaved by his inferiority, the white man enslaved by his superiority alike behave in accordance with a neurotic orientation" (43). Thus, the White and the Black (the Native-American, in this paper) reveal their preconscious perception of the ideological concept of binary oppositions, which "are structurally related to one another" (Ashcroft et al. 24) in postcolonial epochs. This kind of dialectical interrelations provides a different understanding of the colonizer and the colonized who help identify each other.

In addition, the realization of the postcolonial people of their cultural inferiority due to the colonizer's doctrines results in contending ideologies between the supremacy of the colonizer and the cultural disposition of the colonized. Hence, the urgency of resistance arises on the side of the colonized in order to differentiate between various cultural markers. In *Orientalism*, Edward Said asserts that "certain cultural forms predominate

over others; just as certain ideas are more influential than others" (7) which dramatizes the conditions of diffusion within the interrelationships between the Self and the Other. Also, he insists that "the Westerner [is put] in a series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing ... the relative upper hand" (7). Thereupon, the Self's discourse of authority with the Other seems doubly beneficial; basically, the West's superiority is identified when the Other's subordination is manifested.

Homi Bhabha has coined many significant terms which will be used throughout the analysis in this paper. First, the concept of "hybridity" is as significant as the latent discourse of hegemony and will be explored in the discussion. In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha defines hybridity as "a problematic of colonial representation and individuation that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other 'denied' knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority - its rules of recognition" (114). The original markers of a postcolonial culture are evidently erased by miscegenation, for race-mixing suggests an ambivalent identification formula of a postcolonial cultural personality. The significance of "hybridity" lies in the very idea of "doubleness that both brings together, fuses, but also, maintains separation" (Young 22). This kind of dormant differentiation between homogeneous and heterogeneous cultures provokes a rethinking of hegemonic polarities in postcolonial discourses.

Furthermore, Homi Bhabha constructs the basic notions of "cultural difference" which can be conceived as an oppositional party of "cultural diversity" (207). Cultural "diversity" denotes good correspondence between cultures while cultural "difference" suggests an encounter with the predominant Western culture, where every cultural construct indicates its

significance. For instance, the linguistic ambivalence along with the behavioral attitudes in a postcolonial community entails the intrusion of the Western manners as prerequisite cultural constructs of the given culture. In an interview with Jonathan Rutherford, Bhabha asserts that cultural difference stems from the recognition of "the notion of the West itself, or Western culture, its liberalism and relativism – [where] these very potent mythologies of 'progress' – also contain a cutting edge, a limit" (Bhabha 207). Thus, the difference, which Bhabha emphasizes, demonstrates the 'in-between' space within the conflict discourse between the Self and the Other. Also, he suggests an identification of this place in which there is "a temporality of the 'in-between' through the 'gap' or 'emptiness' of the signifier that punctuates linguistic difference" (Bhabha 299). Therefore, this 'in-between' space postulates endorsement for the position of contending cultures where:

The barred Nation *It/Self*, alienated from its eternal self-generation, becomes a liminal form of social representation, a space that is *internally* marked by cultural difference and the heterogeneous histories of contending peoples, antagonistic authorities, and tense cultural locations. (Bhabha, *Nation*, 299)

This transitional mode of cultural antagonisms is seemingly significant because it highlights the clash between people, "authorities" and polarity division in order to maintain a cultural token. Therefore, the very idea of the Self/Other in this mode of transition suggests, as Homi Bhabha assumes, a new configuration of the Self and the Other which exists in a "Third Place" (36) of representation. In this "Third Space", there arises ambivalence in the act of interpretation (Bhabha 36). The mobilization of cultural powers within the context of postcolonialism heralds a perceptible

response to the Self-Other relationship. Consequently, the coexistent relationships between those polarities lead to a psychoanalytic approach that will entail the intrapersonal and the interpersonal relations within a colonized or post-colonized culture. Hence, personality will be analyzed in terms of the postcolonial emblem.

Personality, for Jung, is the psyche which "embraces all thought, feeling, and behavior, both conscious and unconscious" (Hall and Nordby 32). The psychoanalytic evaluation of the recently independent cultures campaigns in the depiction of postcolonial individuation progression. In *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, Jung defines individuation as "a process or course of development arising out of the conflict between the two fundamental psychic facts:" the conscious and the unconscious (288). Jung's process of individuation directs the psychological realization toward a mode of inner and outer discourses though they are contradictory. The first discourse is "initiation into outward reality" and the second is "initiation into the inner reality, a deeper self-knowledge and knowledge of humanity" (Jacobi 108).

III. Discusson of *Almost Browne* and Cultural Identity Conflict.

In spite of its short length, Gerald Vizenor's *Almost Browne* dramatizes a considerable spectrum of postcolonial cultural issues that would help in interpreting the covert and overt literary ideologies. Vizenor provides a worldview of a native Indian culture in which the Western culture proves predominant. This native Indian overview of the world stems from the very need for cultural literary development, drawing bridges between the literature of the disposed, Indian culture and supremacy of the Western literature. Seemingly, Gerald Vizenor

investigates the inter-relational discourse between the West and Indian culture in a mode of imperial and hegemonic considerations.

The implementation of postcolonial studies in *Almost Browne* will be manifested by the analysis of the character of Almost Browne through which it crystallizes the conflict dichotomy between the Western ideology and the Indian cultural identity. This kind of discourse will be decoded by applying "hybridity" to the story in which the protagonist, Almost Browne, is said to be hybrid; "cultural difference" as a mode of differentiation between two coexistent cultures, the Western cultural dominance and the post-colonized Indian culture; the notion of the "in-between" will be manifested throughout the story as Almost interacts with other characters. The psychoanalytical interpretation will be integrated with the body of the paper as it incorporates the postcolonial analytic reading. The "individuation process" will relate Browne's conditions within this culture to his psychological dimension that governs his interaction with the surrounding environment.

One of the major constituent of postcolonial theory is "hybridity" which requires a close look at the construction of the cultural structure within society. For one thing, Gerald Vizenor starts *Almost Browne* by accounting for the racial origin of the character of Almost Browne, "who was born on the White Earth Indian Reservation in Minnesota" (Vizenor 2332). The significance of the given place of birth foregrounds the inferiority of this character, where he was born to a low rank place which is the "Reservation" which is an area designated to Indian American tribes as independent sovereigns. The account of this character, as the opening lines unfold, shows that " Almost ... is a crossblood and was born on the road; his father is tribal and his mother is blonde" (Vizenor 2332). This

description of the original status of Almost seems suggestive for it settles the question of identification of his character. Being a "crossblood" (2332) is remarkable because the identity markers are infected by this status of hybridization. Although this condition can be manifested by racial roots, the analysis of it in accordance with postcolonialism might be more appropriate. Consequently, the cultural side-effect of being physically hybrid results in a situation of psychological and cultural uncertainty because Almost "was born on the road" (Vizenor 2332). Hence, he is neither Indian nor Western. As Homi Bhabha suggests, this act of hybridization "is an instance of iteration, in the minority discourse, of the time of the arbitrary sign — 'the minus in the origin' — through which all forms of cultural meaning are open to translation" (Bhabha 314). Accordingly, Almost, as the analysis will reveal, is said to translate his original status in favor of negotiation and variety.

The description of the conditions of Marthie, Brown's mother, highlights the very idea of engendering Almost with uncertain identification markers because "[s]he was on the road in labor with no checkboard, no money, no proof of identity" (Vizenor 2332). Therefore, as the subaltern people "refer to those groups in society who are subject to the hegemony of the ruling classes" (Ashcroft et al. 215), Almost and his parents are said to demonstrate the subordinate situation in their culture; they are economically inferior and racially insignificant. The construction of Almost's "in-betweenness" (Bhabha 4), being born on the road, alongside being born on "the White Earth Reservation" shows the indebtedness to the Western culture, where it dominates the markers of the inferior native Indian culture. Also, Vizenor's depiction of Almost's birth discloses a poor standard place for living:

The hatchback thundered over the unpaved government road; a wild bloom of brown dust covered the birch on the shoulders. The dust shrouded the red arrow to the resort at Sugar Bush Lake. The hospital was located at the end of the road near the federal water tower. (Vizenor 2333).

Needless to say, the economically exposed situation discloses that the Indians' "[l]ife has been reduced to its lowest terms" (Chapnick 30). This naturalistic way of living in the Indian culture is seemingly related to post-colonization period where the remnant of American colonialism left the native people to poverty and hopelessness. Also, the symbolic meaning of the "hatchback" demonstrates the backwardness of Almost who suffers in the upcoming consequences. He was found "covered with dust, darker at birth than he has ever been since then" (Vizenor 2333). Apparently, the discourse of Wolfie Wight, who is a Western doctor at the reservation, mocks the place of Almost's birth and underscores the inadequacy of his father who seems "uncertain of his rights" (Vizenor 2333). This mode of uncertainty:

reveals the deep psychic uncertainty of the colonial relation itself: its split representations stage the division of body and soul that enacts the artifice of identity, a division that cuts across the fragile skin - black and white - of individual and social authority (Bhabha 44).

In addition, the colonial interrelations, as Bhabha states, show the clear dissection of the superior and the infected inferior. Thus, identity becomes an uncertain area within the culture of *Almost Browne* because the hybrid race is fragile and inadequate. Also, the conflict between social and individual powers emphasizes the hegemony of the West in a mode of imperialism. This "psychic uncertainty" (44) is manifested by the repetition of speech acts of Almost's father, such as his repetition of "White Earth"

(2333-4). Besides, being "born so close to the border" (Vizenor 2333) reinforces the idea of the 'in-between'; he is neither Western nor pure Indian. Wolfie Wight represents the Western culture which implements its supremacy to grant the inferior their name; sometimes they impose what cultural practices the Indians should do. This kind of superimposition entails "the colonial policy of 'modernization' which resulted in the supplanting of local cultural practices by imported European ones" (Ashcroft et al. 45). Therefore, identity is constructed by the colonial attitude towards the Other:

The great differences between the colonizing and colonized societies mean that some forms of cultural activity crucial to the cultural identity of the colonized, and so highly valued by them, may simply be unrecognizable or, if recognized at all, grossly undervalued by the dominant colonial system. (Ashcroft et. al. 44)

It is crucial to recognize that this act of misidentification stems from the belief of prior dominance of other cultures. As the narrator of "Almost Browne" investigates the case of the protagonist, the characteristics of his personality are said to convey a concept of identity. His imaginary perception uncovers his intelligence when he "read the centers of the pages and imagined the stories from the words that were burned" (Vizenor 2334). This sort of imaginary faculty shows Almost's capability to overcome the Western impingement on individual conditions. In addition, the obscurity and the incompleteness of the books imply the determinant personality Almost has, which draws attention to the process of individual transformation.

From the very beginning of the story, the question of physiological identity might be considered that informs the inferiority of blackness in

Almost's character. Hence, Ryan Trimm argues that color is so significant in maintaining identity where "[w]hiteness is the quality that allows continuity of identity despite apparent changes of material circumstance or, alternatively, a subtle transformation of that identity" (Trimm 246). Thus, the relationship between Almost Browne and any other character in the story seems glossed by this act of inferiority that suggests differentiation between members within the same culture. For example, Drain is seemingly given a priority over Almost because of his skin, albeit they seem brothers, and because he is said to be more 'American'. Drain "became what he heard" (Vizenor 2334), he must become, unlike Almost who has evidently created himself as what he has come to be.

Moreover, the relationship between Almost and his close friend, Drain, shows the complexity of being in a postcolonial country. Drain was not physically hybrid like Almost, but he is "the fifth son of white immigrants" (Vizenor 2334). Also, their cultural personalities are somehow similar on the surface level; yet, they prove different from within. For one thing, "Almost never attended school" because he is an "in-between" character as "[h]e lived on the border between two school districts, one white and the other tribal" (Vizenor 2334). This hyphenating technique dramatizes the inadequacy of the Almost's existence as an indication of the Western infection in the psychological domain. This gap between the white and the tribal people indicates that there "is a turning of boundaries and limits into the *in-between* spaces through which the meanings of cultural and political authority are negotiated" (Bhabha 4). Thence, the meaning of Almost's cultural identity is put into negotiation where he hangs in the domains of 'in-betweenness' and uncertainty.

Therefore, the analysis redirects the consideration of Almost's psychomotor drive.

For Almost was born as a mixed-race character, "no one cared that much where he lived or what he learned" (Vizenor 2334). So, this kind of apathy sustains the feeling of inferiority within Almost would result in a state of alienation. This poses the question of the fundamental need of Almost where "the man of color there is a constant effort to run away from his own individuality, to annihilate his own presence" (Fanon *Skin* 43). In this regard, Frantz Fanon emphasizes, "every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality" (Fanon *Skin* 9). Nevertheless, Almost has inherited from his grandmother "four natural deals" that are thought to preserve some markers of the Native culture. Most importantly, he tells his friend Drain about their stories through which they might reflect their own cultural significance or difference. Clearly, he insists that they are "the deal of [their] stories" (Vizenor 2334) that might distinguish between the White and the Indians.

The psychological dimension of Almost Browne heralds in accounting for his individuation process toward identity. Inasmuch as this process implies inner and outer conflicts, the development of Almost's personality is recognized by two main factors; the interpersonal relationships and his correspondence with the milieu. Consequently, Almost "achieves an inward and outward bond with the world and cosmic order" (Jacobi 109). This kind of inter-relational involvement reveals the latent significance of Almost as a subordinate entity along with the hegemonic regimes that are built in the societal, cultural, and postcolonial systems. Almost's feeling of inferiority is defined by stereotyping Indians

as subjacent, backward, empty and meaningless. Wolfie reinforces the very idea of tributary when she shouted "[b]lack books? [indicating that] people don't read here, even black [books]" (Vizenor 2335). Needless to say, the illiteracy the Indian people are characterized by shows the imperial infection of the colonizers culture where the Indians "live under the constant threat of imperialist aggression" (Fanon 39). In addition, Wolfie's reception of Almost's actions depicts different attitudes that gloss their interactions. Vizenor reveals this tension by granting Wolfie the priority over Almost for his inadequate business manners due to, one might argue, a "crossblood" (2332).

Cultural difference, that Almost Browne represents, is manifested by his correspondence with the outer world which significantly implies a twofold aspect of Almost's postcolonial condition. This aspect entails the psychological and sociological facets. Hence, cultural markers are dependent on the psychological aspect along with the sociological one. In *Black Skin White Masks*, Frantz Fanon crystallizes the Other's condition (Almost's condition) where:

The direct access from individual interests to social authority is objectified in the representative structure of a General Will—Law or Culture—where Psyche and Society mirror each other, transparently translating their difference, without loss, into a historical totality. (Bhabha & Sardar xxvi)

First, Almost's personal interests stem from his awareness and utter need to get rid of the remnants of the Western colonialism in his character. Yet, he is seemingly stamped by their acts of superimposition where "cultural diversity" (Bhabha 34) might be the righteous way for coexistence. Homi Bhabha asserts that "[c]ultural diversity ... gives rise to

liberal notions of multiculturalism, cultural exchange or the culture of humanity", which may "emerge as a system of the articulation and exchange of cultural signs" (Bhabha, *Culture* 34).

The significant turning point of the narrative of "Almost Browne" is, no doubt, when the discourse turns into the first personal pronoun, I. Vizenor gives Almost a priority to speak about his conditions and occasional subalternity. "Difference", "in-betweenness" and "hybridity" can be explained by the psychological process of development or individuation. For one thing, the very beginning of Almost's speech clarifies the inner consideration of himself. The burden he shoulders is quite plain in the bad economic conditions of his father who ran out of money and gas, so Almost, "was born in the backseat of a beatup reservation car, almost white, almost on the reservation, and almost a real person" (Vizenor 2335). Clearly, Almost is uncertain about his existence as an in-between postcolonial person, who proves to be "real". Also, the haunting images of the Western supremacy in Almost's mind in relation to his current reality reflect the impact of the colonial authority on his existence.

Moreover, Almost recounts getting his name "Almost Browne" which is given by the government doctor, White Jaws. The unauthentic state of being proves manifest when Almost regrets "if [they] had run out of gas ten miles earlier, near white hospital, [his] name might be Robert. ... Instead White Jaws made [him] Almost" (Vizenor 2335). Evidently, the role of the government doctor, White Jaws, is decisive, rather hegemonic. The strictness of her attitude toward a tribal newborn baby looks distorted by the colonial authority of predominance. The acceptance of the Western despotic systems helps to sustain the colonial discourse through which

"[t]he visibility of the racial / colonial Other is at once a *point* of identity" (Bhabha, *Culture*, 81). The Other is given the identity in a mode of subjection where the White Self has the upper hand of dominance albeit colonialism has relatively ceased. Thus, the colonial authoritative power has to remain as it is in order to preserve the Other's identity and identification.

Vizenor proclaims his major character, Almost Browne, a subjugated Indian who suffers from the alienation and detachment from his society. Public schools, as Almost indicates, are not an appropriate place for him to get education because of some systematic imperial disciplines. For example, maltreatment and racial discrimination obstruct his involvement in modern public schools. Thus, his "imagination stopped at the double doors; being inside school was like a drain on [his] brain" (Vizenor 2335) that shows the deep feeling of frustration. Consequently, Almost expresses his ambivalent attitude toward such schools in which he insists that "nature was [his] big book, imagination was [his] teacher" (Vizenor 2335). The refusal to coexist with such Western embedment within public schools points at the hybridity of Almost due to which he expresses his attitude towards nature and imagination. In addition to that, Almost justifies his attitude towards classrooms in which he finds "the end of the tribes" (Vizenor 2335). Hence, the natural way of living for the inferior tribal person has to be recognized from within that subjugated person because, as Almost claims, white schools are likely to be doubly injurious for tribal people. This entails, on the first hand, the psychological burden of being tribal and inferior, and on the second hand reinforcing the Western legitimacy to be superior. Evidently, the discourse of Vizenor through the character of Almost displays "how the representational power of whiteness

has historically operated in the service of colonial and neocolonial regimes, and has specifically served such regimes in the domination of their nonwhite others" (Lopez 4).

The encounter with a blonde anthropologist re-emphasizes Almost's inferiority to white race. For example, she teaches him "not to use his finger on the page" (Vizenor 2335) which reveals the tribal lack of a civilized western manner when dealing with books. Bearing what may be considered an inferiority complex, Almost points out that the mental status of people who come to learn reading bears a high sense of difference in mind and variance of attitude on the side of the learner. Almost's cultural hybridity is reflected as a depiction of "[w]estoxification of non-Western societies" (Huntington 101), dramatizing that "contradictions and conflicts, which often thwart political intentions and make the question of commitment complex and difficult, are rooted in the process of translation and displacement in which the object of politics is inscribed" (Bhabha, *Culture* 26). This kind of 'cultural translation' stems from the political innovation of Western thought that instills within the postcolonial people a sense of indebtedness to the West.

Vizenor juxtaposes two characters: Almost and Drain, in order to highlight the cultural difference between the two. Drain lives "on the white side of the road, outside the reservation, and Almost lives "on the road". Hence, Almost's personal development is rooted in events "which provoke[d] strong emotional reactions [that] are of great importance for [his] subsequent psychological development" (Jung 26); such an event is undoubtedly the colonial and postcolonial hegemonic injections. Therefore, Almost has chosen a considerable path toward individuation in which he taught himself how to read. Vizenor implicitly hints at:

The contribution of negotiation [which] is to display the 'in-between' of this crucial argument; it is not self-contradictory but significantly performs, in the process of its discussion, the problems of judgment and identification that inform the political space of its enunciation. (Bhabha, *Culture* 29)

Clearly, Almost settles himself between reality and imagination while he was trying to read the burned words. Metaphorically speaking, the missing words represent the translated cultural identity of postcolonial people, who, as Almost indicates, "are words" and those "[w]ords are crossbloods too" (Vizenor 2336). Most importantly, identity is lost by the burning of words that herald in a colossal destruction of the true tribal cultural authenticity.

The tense interpersonal relationship between Almost and Drain suggests a considerable look at the cultural dimension of both characters. First, Drain represents the super-ordinate in a mode of certainty and purity, while Almost is sided with the subordinate who represents the heterogeneous existence of the hybrid person. Hence, the white fellow, Drain, "never thought about real words because he found them in books" (Vizenor 2336). Yet, the individuation process of both characters, in the context of real words, unveils Almost's philosophical recognition that "[w]ords are never dead" (Vizenor 2336). The depravity of economical advancement resulted in arresting both Almost and Drain "for false advertising" which might be said to highlight the undemocratic governmental systems in postcolonial countries. In front of the judge, Drain "was bold and determined" (Vizenor 2336), indicating the certainty of his legitimate existence in such a country.

One of the most important indications of the urgent need for cultural authenticity comes from Professor Monte's comment on the shaman music which is, as Monte claims, "real music, ethnic authenticity at the very threshold of civilization" (Vizenor 2336).

III. Conclusion.

Vizenor instills within the ending course of the story a traumatic vision of the conditions of postcolonial cultures which have lost their true identification devices; metamorphosed into a distorted copy of neither Western civilization nor the Indian authentic cultural identity. Accordingly, music for Monte might preserve a slight sense of the Indian cultural heritage though postcolonial effects still haunt the Other. Subsequently, the story ends up with granting the inferior a place for expressing the 'self' in a mode of economical reproduction of blank books. Nevertheless, blank books might be said to come across the discursive gaps between the West and the Other in a mode of hegemony and postcolonial imperialism.

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