





*Unveiling Social Struggles: A Marxist Analysis of 'My Son the Fanatic'
by Hanif Kureishi*

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كشف الصراعات الاجتماعية: تحليل ماركسي لرواية "ابني المتعصب" لحنيف
قريشي

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Abstract

This research will be a literary analysis of the short story "My Son the Fanatic" with the purpose of providing a Marxist reading. This analysis will reveal the actuality of life, which denies the possibility of understanding it only through Marxist principles, showing the transformation of historical materialism. The use of the materialism historically sediments therefore, reveals a multi-layered meaning that is embedded in this narrative. Thanks to this approach, we can extend the discussion in economics and politics. As a result, this approach reveals the causes of social problems appearing in relation to the conflict between classes, demonstrating how Marxist ideas are Negatively ingrained and the poor are continually exploited by the rich family member cause for power and Benefit but also highlights the pivotal role of ideology in perpetuating this social hierarchy and influencing individual behavior based on class distinctions.

Keywords: My son the fanatic, Marxism, class struggle, Parvez, Ideology

المستخلص

تتناول هذه الدراسة تحليلاً أدبياً لقصة "ابني المتعصب" للكاتب حنيف قريشي، بهدف تقديم تفسير ماركسي لها. من خلال تحليل النص عن كثب، تكشف الدراسة صورة واقعية للحياة تستدعي الفهم من خلال مبادئ ماركسية، مكشوفة التطور المعقد للمادية التاريخية. من خلال هذا العدسة، تسعى الدراسة إلى كشف طبقات متعددة من المعاني المدفونة داخل السرد، مما يوسع نطاق الحوار الاقتصادي والسياسي. تسلط النتائج الضوء على ظهور قضايا اجتماعية مع تصاعد صراع الطبقات، مبينة كيفية أن تصبح الأيديولوجيا الماركسية متجذرة ومتأصلة، مما يؤدي إلى استبعاد الطبقات الأدنى من قبل الطبقات العليا في المجتمع. من خلال الشخصيات، وخاصة بارفيز، لا تصور السرد فقط استغلال وتلاعب الطبقة الاجتماعية الأدنى ولكنها تبرز أيضاً الدور المحوري للأيديولوجيا في الحفاظ على هذه التسلسل الاجتماعي وتأثيرها على سلوك الفرد استناداً إلى التمييز الطبقي.

كلمات مفتاحية: ابني المتعصب، ماركسية، صراع الطبقات، بارفيز، أيديولوجيا

Introduction

Economic theories have benefited literary criticism over the last few decades, as they have seen society and literature as fundamentally intertwined and inseparable. Many critics and writers have utilized Marxist ideas throughout the twentieth century by focusing on the relationship between the text and the society that generated it. The Marxist position might be echoed domestically, asserting that economics drives the capitalist system's historical and political life. For that reason, Marxist literary criticism and theory are based on the worst sociology of texts; they expose the forces in society that literature reflects and acts as proponent. (Tyson, 2016).

Literature has always been the platform for promoting or questioning economic principles, depicting ignorance or incognizance in the social comprehension of economic ideas. Thus, the current study focuses on a Marxist reading of the short story "My Son the Fanatic" by Hanif Kureishi . By means of interpretation, this study seeks to discover examples of class awareness, multiple ways how ideology perpetuates natural ideas, as well as fundamental differences between class-affiliated characters.

Hanif Kureishi, born on December 5, 1954, in the UK to an English mother and Pakistani father, was deeply influenced by the racial and cultural tensions he experienced growing up. As a result, much of his work reflects these themes. Kureishi's decision to pursue writing was solidified early on, as he began crafting books for publication at a young age.

This research is relevant because it allows to combine the theory of Marxism and its impact on the lives of real people and their relationships with one another when exploring the characters of the narrative. First and foremost, this can serve as an indicator as to the impact of Marxism on society, as well as the influence of their class position and the subsequent struggle between them and society. The fact that the research can become a landmark can be confirmed, among other things, by the following . Kureishi's short story was first published in *The New Yorker* in 1994. The narrative delves into the transformation of Ali, the son, into a religious fanatic, and the ensuing complexities in their familial dynamic. Set against the backdrop of a Pakistani immigrant community in England, the story grapples with themes of Islamic fundamentalism, class disparities, and the alienation experienced by second-generation immigrants (MacCabe, 1999).

Indeed, in the film, the father Parvez personifies such a cultural contradiction: on the one hand, he already lives the Anglicized life of a taxi; drinks beer with company, and eats bacon for breakfast, but on the other hand, he grew up an Islamic man. All this time in the picture, one can feel the alienation of Parvez from his spiritual foundation ((Kureishi & Nahem, 2009).

The Impossible Love of Two “Aliens”

Alienation is a fundamental concept in Marxist criticism that originated around labor alienation in capitalist economies but was ultimately applied to larger societal contexts by various Marxist critics. In the short story, both primary characters, Parvez or his wife, become alienated. Parvez, even though he is arguably dissatisfied with his wife, can alienated because he relies on someone outside his family group emotionally, indicating that

Parvez has forsaken his cultural identity to be entirely integrated into English culture. The alienation of the society from Parvez, as seen by the society's rejection of Parvez's emotional interactions, depicts Marxist alienation, which divides people by economic inequality or production type (Alshammari, 2018).

Ali's racism triggers his transition into a preconceived person. Unlike trying to come to terms with the changes in his unfamiliar relations, Ali decides to openly ignore western values, leaving a sense of alienation. Parvez, estranged from faith by his son's conversion to Islam, for which he has emotionally alienated a faith he rejected, emotionally identifies with his son. It is from this identification that Ali withdrew rejection of the model of alienation from life and the western environment that had isolated him from his father. Palwasha is seen as one more means of merging into a mirror created between societal and intra-family cultural gaps. (MacCabe, 1999).

Ali's increasing zeal for religion exemplifies his detachment from his father and the society. Ali becomes obsessed with his religion and considers his father's life as a corruption by Western influences. Patello describes the alienation: "that's one of the reasons kids get a martyr complex. If I'm nothing over there, I can at least be something here" . Ali feels acutely alienated from his the society since his identity as a result of his race, religion, or cultural became so marginalized that he rejected his father's westernized morals and embraced his own heritage (King & Moore-Gilbert, 2002).

We can see that the analyzed abstract delves into a dynamic between the two main characters, the father and son. They are drawn into the same sphere but commit to opposing directions.

Parvez demonstrates typical materialism, attempting to make some space in the unfamiliar landscape, which leads him to the end of his journey. Although, his son goes against the widely accepted pattern of living once he understands it separates him from the religious root. The struggle in the narrative appears through the prism of class struggle along with the alienation of anthropological character (MacCabe, 2009). The abstract develops the distinction of the definitions mentioned above. For instance, alienation appears in the text when the characters face social biases.

All of these elements create a class struggle where the characters' way of life places them in opposition to the ruling class as they perceive injustices. Parvez, who was a symbol of being materialistic and attempting to coalesce with a society that is far from his cultural legacy. The standards of living a noble and decent life compel him to align with society's norms, which is only feasible by abandoning his religious convictions. When determining to integrate, he leaves behind his beliefs in practising his faith and simultaneously performs activities forbidden by his belief. His existence sticks in with the English standard of life following changes in various domains ranging from areas of living to activities undertaken to family relations. On the varying side, Ali's religiosity grows, as he strives to be more specific with his faith and persistently pray five times daily. Some Chapter Two: My son the fanatic Signals in the narrative cover his cultural roots (Alshammari, 2018).

Parvez and Ali: A Beneficiary and Victim of Classism

D. In economics, Marxism claims that differences in socioeconomic status, which is almost entirely dependent on economic power, form the primary division of people before differences in religion, race, nationality, or sex. People in a market system are naturally sorted into men and women, as well as creating stratification based on the processes of production, division and consumption of goods divide people into corresponding levels of socioeconomic role. Ultimately, it is more possible than many other differences to create multiple classes and the corresponding classism with it. (Bressler, 2011).

One event that seems to throw Ali overboard is Parvez's advice to his wife to cook pork sausages, which are prohibited by Muslim law. It is significant that Parvez considers this act of full assimilation into English society necessary for him. This reflects on how classism has forced him to forget the role of his roots, traditions, and customs and become fully English. Ali, on the other hand, wants to find his community, his identity. That is why he finds it in his religious community. Here he refers to other Muslims as "my people" and contrasts them with "Western materialists." Thus, his religious ardor is a reaction to his assimilation (Kureishi, 2009).

The intercultural conflict between Parvez and Ali becomes apparent during a restaurant encounter, highlighting their divergent worldviews and the generational gap between them. Ali disapproves of his father's attempts to assimilate into English culture, criticizing his deviation from Islamic teachings and their family's traditional class identity. Each time Parvez indulges in

alcohol, Ali's disdain is palpable, reflecting a deeper rift between them beyond just religious differences (Kureishi, 2009).

Their strained relationship underscores the broader theme of intergenerational and cultural conflict within immigrant families, where differing worldviews and values create barriers to understanding and connection. Ali's rejection of his father's lifestyle and values reflects not only religious differences but also the struggle to maintain cultural identity and resist assimilation into Western society (Alshammari, 2018).

When analyzing one of the short tales, such as "My Son the Fanatic" from the perspective of Marxist theory, it is possible to apply several suitable actions. For example, one could analyze the dynamics of interaction between characters. Marxism focuses on the relations based on the social aspect of communication, so all "social" interactions could be criticized. Additionally, it is important to consider the characters' occupational roles. The question focuses on the development of a "class structure," and the occupation is one of the most obvious factors. Secondly, individual characters' financial assets or labor requirements should be considered. Finally, it is important to pay attention to the characters' activity during free time, another issue stressed by Marxist criticism is that individuals can spend free time in actions. A significant part of the analysis is devoted to the voluntary choices, and it is interpreted from the perspective of the superstructure approach of Marxist theory. According to this postulate, the person's worldview, values, and judgments are formed by by economic class. Thus, the main plot concerns the impact of class segregation on the identify deployment and actions of persons, and it is consistent with the principles of Marxism (Marx, 1865).

Belonging and Shift of Ideology in My Son the Fanatic

Marxism posits that among the strategies employed by the ruling class to maintain control over the impoverished masses, ideology plays a significant role by perpetuating a belief system that masks itself as natural, thereby subjugating individuals to the ruling power structure (Marx, 1865). In this context, materialism takes precedence over spiritual values, with belongings serving as tangible symbols of one's place within society.

Ali's behavior that initially seems insane is the following: he suddenly renounces virtually everything in his life, discarding "plastic pouches of pornographic videocassettes," "stacks of textbooks and electronic discs," and his new fashionable attire, as well as his friends and girlfriend. Despite his modern dress, Ali feels "an alien" in the soulless new world of English consumer society and "prefers spiritual values to material comforts". He refuses to become an accountant although this is a highly-paid job in England. The reason he gives for it is that the British education "turns men into monkeys, totally anti-religious!". Instead of a high-paid job, he gets a job in a prison, his companions there being "poor Muslims," who are, however, "rich in faith" . (Scott, 1962). In Kureishi's "My Son the Fanatic," Parvez and Ali emerge as contrasting characters. Parvez, having embraced English culture upon immigrating from Lahore, seeks to integrate into the "English community," whereas Ali vehemently rejects Western materialism and its associated ideologies. This ideological divide creates tension between father and son, with Ali expressing disdain for Parvez's assimilation into English ways, viewing it as a betrayal of their cultural identity (Eagleton, 1967).

Ali's rejection of his father's efforts to provide him with opportunities for success and his embrace of religious piety symbolize his resistance to the materialistic values of Western

society. Parvez, in turn, feels perplexed and hurt by Ali's rejection of his efforts, questioning why his son is tormenting him despite his best intentions. This familial conflict reflects broader societal tensions between assimilation and cultural preservation, as well as the struggle between materialism and spiritual fulfillment (Marcuse, 1941).

Conclusion

The present study uses a qualitative method, specifically, textual analysis to analyze the short story "My son the fanatic" by Hanif Kureishi through the lens of Marxist theory. To the best of my knowledge, and based on the knowledge I have gained throughout my life, this research is the first of its kind, exploring the reflection of Marxism in literary work and specifically focusing on a non-extensively examined text. Thus, gathering information on societal environment of regular people and class injustice conducted by the ruling class, this research highlights the socioeconomic context depicted in the story. Based on the superstructure concept of Marxist theory, it stresses how social background impacts a conscious, value system, and behavior of humans.

The central theme of the story concerns the way classed-based distinctions affect lives and the way humans interact with each other. Kureishi criticizes the shallow attitudes of the upper class and deplorable mistreatment of the less fortunate, which serves as a reflection on class-related issues in a broader perspective. This study can be seen as broadening the horizon since the topic it researches involves economic theory, which is later applied to a story, and it draws attention to how this theory can be projected into real life.

This short story maintains the alleged complexity of the father-son relationship, aggravated by the described pressures, in which both identify themselves with a particular level of social class. The mentioned character, who in the period of the previous generation, changed class after leaving their country, brought up the existing values to adapt to the leading culture and become socially raised. His expressed anxiety and rage are based on the fear of his son's discrimination on the basis of religious belief and personal desire for the child to integrate into a more comfortable, higher new social class for the family, instead of returning to the old lower one as identified with the country of origin.

In contrast, Ali's rejection of bourgeois values and adherence to his religious convictions signify a rejection of his father's assimilationist aspirations, leading to tension and resentment between them. Parvez's concern for his son's future stems from a desire to protect him from societal discrimination and ensure his success within the dominant social order. The narrative skillfully navigates these themes, offering poignant insights into the complexities of class, identity, and familial relationships.

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