

# Identity Crises: Post-colonial Reading to Private School Admission Advertisement Posters (2023–2024) in Raparin District

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**Abstract**—This research paper aims to investigate the identity crisis in some private school admission advertisement posters in Raparin district/Sulaymaniyah in the northern part of Iraq for academic years 2023–2024 from the post-colonial worldview. A preamble study of post-colonial theory is bound up with the traces of colonization and its effects on the psychology of the colonized. The colonizer has proven itself in many ways and endeavors to prolong its hegemony by any means. One of the colonial policies that the colonizer has employed is creating the false consciousness of the colonizer as superior in the mind of the colonized. This article endeavors to show how private school admission advertisement posters in the Raparin district were created under the impact of the colonial false consciousness. The study articulates the reason behind using European figures in their posters instead of non-European individuals and shows that colonization and its legacy still exist. This contraction shows that the advertisers are influenced by European cultures, shapes, and values. Unconsciously, they are portraying themselves as the West's other by giving superiority to Europeans over non-Europeans.

**Keywords**—Identity crisis, Post-colonialism, Private school admission advertisement posters, Raparin district.

## I. INTRODUCTION TO POST-COLONIALISM AND IDENTITY CRISIS

It seems to be impossible to offer a unique definition to post-colonial theory as colonization dates back to many centuries, especially from the late 15<sup>th</sup> century until now. A possible working definition for post-colonialism is that “it involves a studied engagement with the experience of colonialism and its past and present effects, both at the local level of ex-colonial societies, as well as at the level of more general global developments thought to be the after-effects of empire” (Quayson, 2000, p. 92). For that reason, the post-colonial critics are diverse in their approach to reacting against the ways that the West has been undertaking throughout history in colonized territories. Therefore, they use different tools to dismantle the West's misrepresentation of non-Europeans. From its appearance, especially in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, post-colonial critics acknowledged using critical frameworks in decolonization according to their own experience. Cultural critics such as Robert Young use an alternative term for post-colonialism and label it as tricontinentalism. This word refers to the three colonized territories, Asia, Africa, and South

America, and articulates that post-colonialism has “developed a body of writing that attempts to shift the dominant ways in which the relations between Western and non-western people and their worlds are viewed” (Young, 2003, p. 2). At the same time, Ato Quayson links post-colonialism to various types of experiences comparatively such as “slavery, migration, suppression, and resistance, difference, race, gender, place, and the responses to the discourses of imperial Europe such as history, philosophy, anthropology, and linguistics” (Quayson, 2000, p. 92). That is, post-colonial theorists believe that colonization is not only the physical domination of a people but rather is the physical and the psychological domination of a people and colonization is multidimensional in its implementation and its impact on the colonized.

There are some post-colonial theorists and each is concerned with his or her own experiences and territory. The most well-known ones are Edward Said (1935–2003), Spivak Gayatri Chakravorty (born 1942), and Homi J. Bhabha (born 1949). Robert Young considers them the founders of post-colonial theory and calls them the “Holy Trinity” of colonial

discourse analysis (Young, 2003, p. 475). Edward Said's view on post-colonialism is bound up with his book *Orientalism*. He invented the concept of orientalism which stands for the Europeans' perspective of Asians, especially modern Middle Easterners, politically, culturally, and religiously, through their writing, media, and philosophy. Orientalism, Edward Said asserts, "is a style of thought which the West uses for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient" (Said, 1978, p. 2). Edward believes that the West employed various strategies to control the orient such as physical attacks, colonial education, and writings to impose their identity on the orient.

Along with Said, there are Spivak Gayatri Chakravorty (born 1942) and Homi J. Bhabha (born 1949). Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak articulates that all literary works of the 19<sup>th</sup> century are interwoven with colonial discourses and "it should not be possible to read 19<sup>th</sup> century British literature without remembering that imperialism, understood as Britain's social mission, was a crucial part of the cultural representation of England to the English. The role of literature in the production of cultural representation should not be ignored" (Spivak, 1999, p. 243). This is what Spivak thought about the literary works of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in which colonization reached its peak. She states that literary works were biased during that period and misrepresented the non-European world to encourage their people to support colonization.

Bhabha's thoughts on post-colonialism are worth mentioning when the theory is discussed. His contribution to post-colonial studies is bound up with his theory of "Third Space." The third space notion articulates that identities continuously change and are not static but fluid which cannot be conscious (Bhabha, 1994). According to Bhabha, identities will be constructed and reconstructed when two cultures exist within a space. In doing so, the existing cultures face, harmonize, and negotiate with each other until a new culture is born. When two cultures clash, the powerful culture imposes itself on the less powerful culture and thus the bearers of the weak culture are forced to adopt the borrowed culture and detest their native culture. According to Homi Bhabha, the fundamental essence of colonialism is built on division, "us" versus "them," "powerful" versus "powerless," "west" versus "east," "civilized" versus "savage," "master" versus "slave" (1994, P.107-108). The self/orient should depict themselves from their own point of view, which is the polar opposite of the misrepresentations of the colonial discourse, but they cannot because they lost trust in their identity and representation and believe in the European representation. The Orient is forced to accept the misrepresentation of the Europeans and see it as their true description and hold it respected as will be demonstrated through the case study of this research.

The crisis of non-Europeans identity is quite obvious in many non-European countries and the various aspects of peoples' lives whether because of their direct contact with them through domination and colonization or through the impact of the European hegemony which is being imposed on the non-Europeans through indirect colonization (soft

colonization) such as exploiting media and social media. Non-European individuals want to imitate Europeans in their attitudes to life. Homi Bhabha states that the notion of imitation or mimicry is seen among non-Europeans that they desire to be different from the Europeans but they are not as he says "the ambivalence of colonial authority repeatedly turns from mimicry – a difference that is almost nothing but not quite – to menace – a difference that is almost total but not quite" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 90). That is, the colonized is in a state of in-betweenness;" she/he cannot be like the colonizer and he lost her/his native identity. Hybrid identity is the term Bhabha uses for this state of colonized confusion. The colonized are lost in a way that they are physiologically homeless.

Likewise, Frantz Fanon, another pillar of post-colonialism, concentrates solely on the psychological effects of colonizer over colonized. He thinks that racial discrimination maintains itself not only by European institutional academics but also by their culture and patterns of thought. They even manipulated religion for their colonial benefits. Fanon quotes from the Old Testament that blacks are inherently inferior to whites: "We are the chosen people to look at the color of our skins. The others are black or yellow: That is because of their sins" (Ibid, p. 30). That is, Fanon writes that the superiority of Europeans over non-Europeans is made unavoidable as it is deeply rooted in the minds of Europeans, and the thought of inferiority is embedded in the minds of non-Europeans: "the Negro enslaved by his inferiority and the white man enslaved by his superiority alike behave in accordance with a neurotic orientation" (Fanon, 1986, p. 60). That is, Fanon confirms that the Europeans systematically worked on imposing their hegemony on the non-Europeans and this colonial goal negatively impacted the minds of the subjects who suffer from it to this day.

Fanon maintains that the dehumanization of Europeans by non-Europeans through their power as they want the non-Europeans "turn white or disappear (Ibid, p. 100). Due to these colonial endeavors, the crisis of identity for the colonized was generated and they have been trying to "turn their race white" (Ibid, p. 11) and at the same time the colonized is "overwhelmed to such a degree by the wish to be white" (Ibid, p. 100). Then, Fanon continues his focus on the cultural division that the black people have lost their identities: "the Negro is not any more than the white man" (Fanon, p. ix). He continues the notion of losing their identity by neither living in the past nor hoping to live in the future, i.e., the Negro is lost. The Negro is frustrated and sees himself in the eyes of his master as Fanon writes "as a man of color does not have the right to seek ways of stamping down the pride of my former master. I have neither the right nor the duty to claim reparation for the domestication of my ancestor I have one right alone: That of demanding human behavior from the other. One duty along that of not renouncing my freedom through my choices" (Fanon, 1986, p. 228-229). Finally, Fanon is preoccupied with the decoloniality of black minds and thinks that they can do something different; the colonized people are not necessary to replicate the Europeans and encourages them to

“decide not to imitate Europe and let us tense our muscles and our brains in a new direction. Let us endeavor to invent a man in full, something which Europe has been incapable of achieving” (Fanon, 2004, p. 236). Meaning, it is necessary to decolonize the minds of the colonized and liberate them from all the stereotypes that the colonizer implanted in the minds of the colonized. This research aims to contribute to the process of helping the colonized to be free and find their true identity. The study empowers the colonized by raising awareness of their state.

## II. THE IDENTITY CRISIS IN PRIVATE SCHOOL ADMISSION ADVERTISEMENT POSTERS IN RAPARIN DISTRICT

Nowadays, the decorative colorful objects and pictures of private school admission advertisement posters are crucial for marketing which can motivate and inspire the minds of their viewers. They provide visual information by delivering important messages. When one walks or drives through Raparin district, which lies in Sulaymaniyah city in the northern part of Iraq, one comes across many school admission poster billboards for attendance year 2023–2024 on the roads and highroads. Raparin district consists of many residence places but the major ones are Chwarqurna, Hajiyawa, Ranya, Qaladiza, and Sangasar. There are not any private schools in Chwarqurna, Qaladiza, and Sangasar. However, there are many private schools in Ranya and one private school in Hajiyawa. These schools advertise posters each year to attract people’s attention to send their children to the schools. The following are some examples of non-governmental private schools advertising posters in the Raparin district for attendance from 2023 to 2024:

Although these pictures and photographs are used without the owner’s permission which creates ethical problems, at the same time, they are examples of the colonial impact and European hegemony on the non-Europeans, and Iraqi Kurds in this case (Figs. 1-6). These images seem to be optimistic and positive. When one closely observes these posters, one can detect Western characters and all of the images or pictures are of European ethnicity. They have a physical difference from non-Europeans as they have white skin and some of them with blond hair or different hair color. They wear Western clothes and mostly have blue eyes which represent Western ethnicity. Furthermore, the size of the pictures is wider and longer than the patterns or textures that are written and shown. As if these posters want to tell viewers “please pay close attention to the pictures.” The question that arises here is, why do these advertisement posters use visual representations of European characters instead of non-European figures in a place where most of the people are non-Europeans (Raparin District)? Are European figures more attractive and smarter than non-Europeans? What is the main purpose of using Western individuals in advertising these posters?

The crisis of identity through the post-colonial framework is evident because of the absence of visual value of non-European characters or figures in the above pictures while



Fig. 1: A poster of Andesha private school from Ranya in Raparin district, depicting White-skinned Individuals. (Cherograph, 2020).



Fig. 2: A poster of Ranya English basic school from Ranya in Raparin district, featuring white-skinned figures (Pressfoto).



Fig. 3: A poster of Bradost private school from Ranya in Raparin district, portraying white-skinned Characters (Andarcia).



Fig. 4: A poster of a famous private school from Ranya in Raparin district, showcasing white-skinned individuals (Relampagoe studio).



Fig. 5: A poster of Ranya's high school from Ranya in Raparin district, displaying white-skinned figures (Freepik).



Fig. 6: A poster of Zirak high school from Hajyawa in Raparin district, exhibiting white-skinned characters (Freepik).

advertised in Raparin territory in Sulaymaniyah city which is a part of the northern region of Iraq and none of the pictures mirror Eastern popular cultures and individuals. What appears in the reveal is naturally the result of the European hegemony and the subordination of the non-Europeans. During the process of colonization and after the process of colonization, the Europeans have been trying to represent themselves as civilized, educated, peaceful people and misrepresented the non-Europeans as barbarous, uncivilized, and uneducated. Post-colonial theorists claim that European scholars and writers give superiority to Europeans over non-Europeans and show a non-European world full of “treacherous stereotypes of primitivism” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 42). This stereotype and misrepresentations were implanted in the minds of the colonized. This is why they see their misrepresentation as a true image of themselves and respect European culture, values, and ethnicity more than their values, identities, and ethnicity. As it is evident in the above posters, the chosen figures are not from the Kurdish race, but from the European race. The idea behind creating these posters demonstrates that those who create and advertise these posters suffer from the lack of their true identity because they are not satisfied with using pictures from their own ethnicity. They do not feel confident in their own ethnicity and see themselves as less than Europeans because they suffer from having a true identity. That is to say, these posters reinforce Eurocentric perspectives because they marginalize non-European characters and give priority and superiority to the symbolic value of European figures.

This is why, it is safe to assume that the people behind these posters are enslaved by their inferiority. The poster owners and creators think that if they use European figures, it will help their schools and schooling to appear high in quality, while if they use Kurdish figures, it negatively impacts the quality and the image of the schools. They are internalized in their mind that using European figures in their posters would attract the attention of the parents to send their children to those specific schools. This concept reflects what Fanon (1986, p. 98) ironically mentions about himself and the African people that they suffer from not being a white man, “I will quite simply try to make myself white” as these posters want to adopt and imitate the European figures.

According to Leela Ghandi, one of the tools that post-colonial critics should concentrate on is the decolonization of the minds of the colonized. She insists that “colonialism does not end with the end of colonial occupation” (Gandhi, 1998, p. 17), but the colonial power has perpetuated itself through language, culture, and mentality. Hence, she calls for “a psychological resistance to colonialism’s civilizing mission” (Ibid, p. 7). Likewise, Frantz Fanon calls for the liberation of minds and argues, “In a war of liberation, the colonized people must win, but they must do so cleanly, without “barbarity” (Fanon, 1965, p. 24). The analysis of these posters from the post-colonial framework can help the colonized to liberate and decolonize their minds. The colonized can see that the content of these posters implies the low self-esteem and inferiority of the advertisers because what the owners of these private schools believe is the fact

the posters are created for the non-European audience by non-Europeans in a non-European context. These posters are

that if they use a European figure in their posters, it will give life to it and attract others to send their children to those specific schools as they have not positively valued their identity. The advertisers entirely want to adopt and construct the values and shape of the colonizer and deprive themselves of their true identity as the posters are solidified by visual differences of European figures. They see themselves in the eyes of Europeans and want to be like them and imitate them. They devalue themselves as if they are nothing and have no voice. They find themselves as “other” (Ibid, 2004, p. xix). It means that they avoid themselves from their true selves and find the West as their true identity. Otherness is a tool of division between West and non-West and “it can refer to the colonized others who are marginalized by imperial discourse, identified by their difference from the center and, perhaps crucially, become the focus of anticipated mastery by the imperial “ego” (Ashcroft et al. 1993, p. 170). The embodiment of the sensibility vision of the advertisers to see themselves as Europeans reinforces the idea of identity crises in their personhood as they are obsessed with Europeans. They potentially seek to strengthen their school by contributing and supporting the validity of European culture, values, and shapes and depriving their own cultures and values.

### III. CONCLUSION

Colonialism sustains itself in many ways throughout the world and post-colonialism as a theory in reaction to colonization came into being and one of its objectives is to liberate the colonized from the imposed European identity on the colonized. The identity crisis in private school admission advertisement posters in Raparin district has been discussed in this paper. The study has demonstrated that the colonized, suffering from low self-esteem and imposed borrowed identity, try to imitate the Europeans and see the borrowed identity as their true identity. The advertisers are using pictures and photographs of European figures in their posters instead of pictures and photographs of their own ethnic. They do not realize and give authenticity to their own culture and nation. This contraction shows that the advertisers are influenced by European cultures, shapes, and values. Unconsciously, they are portraying themselves as the West’s other by giving superiority to Europeans over

non-Europeans although they belong to the East, not the West.

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