

"Cultural Hybridity and the Role of Mimicry in *The Arrangers of Marriage* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie"

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Abstract

In the course of analyzing Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *The Arrangers of Marriage*, this study provides a postcolonial reading of the short story with reference to Bhabha's hybridity and the short story is also evaluated using I.A. Richards close reading. reflection of a Nigerian immigrant's trauma through culture shock, the crises of identification of African women in a patriarchal immigration context and forced marriage of Chinaza in the USA. This paper pays more attention to how Adichie as a writer presents the central character's struggle to maintain her Nigerian heritage and culture in the era of Americanization culture and other forms of domination. In the narrative of the novel, the author shows the material and emotional cost of migration to save culture and to obliterate it. Also, it portrays actions of patriarchal autocracy that stifles Chinaza freedom under the regimen of gasol and vectors of gender and culture oppression. As such, this paper aims to discuss how Adichie challenges these dynamics through the use of language, plot development and characters. In reference to the conceptual system developed by Bhabha it assesses the process leading to the earthly construction of the 'third space in which the notion of the single subject is contended as well as

recontended. The research establishes how the author develops portrayal of hybridity and resistance in detail negating binary oppositions of cultural and gendered power relation within diaspora. Thus, this research expands the current discourses on postcolonial literature and with it consequences for the concept of immigrant status as well as cultural and gender shifts. By using said aspects of analysing a narrative strategy the study demonstrates that even now, it is important to discuss Adichie's works with thematic focuses on topics and issues such as migration, identity, and structural injustice.

Keywords: *Hybridity, Mimicry, Third Space, Post Colonial.*

Introduction

This paper seeks to analyse Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *The Arrangers of Marriage* as a short story that has got numerous themes as pertains to the African summarised in identity, cultural elements, gender, and immigration. It centres around the life of Chinaza living in Nigeria married to a man in the United States in America via an arranged marriage. It becomes a lectern for Adichie ushers to elaborate on the assimilation and multicultural wars and sexism and systematic phobia linked to the immigrant's voyage. For these reasons, in addition to the ways it writes diaspora and engages questions of postcolonial suffering, *The Arrangers of Marriage* is a text that demands critique.

This postcolonial analysis focuses on colonization to identity and the following aspects elaborated by Homi K. Bhabha: the third space and hybridity. It shows how the conflict introduced by the Nigerian culture in Chinaza and the American culture in which she is introduced develops in this framework. On the other hand, however, new life remains an attempt to obliterate any form of Chinaza's identity which creates moments of agency, accommodation, and othering. By means of these dynamics the author also namelessly speaks of the absence of the cultural identity and indicates the socially and psychologically painful impact of migrations as processes that take place in the oppressive patriarchal context.

Problem Statement

On social aspects the above experiences are linked to a struggle between traditional culture and assimilation to the societally dominant culture especially among female immigrants. Although these contentious issues are encapsulated by *The Arrangers of Marriage* through the Chinaza's storyline,

some of the deeper panoplies of defiance of Chinaza, as well as some of the broad themes and matrices that undergird the novel are not sufficiently elucidated in the existing literature. We must, therefore, undertake a critical analysis of how Adichie uses language, plot, and character in her novel as modes of subversion of colonialism and or imperialism, gender relations, and the psychological trauma of displacement.

Research Objectives

1. In this paper, I shall therefore, examine how the Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie enshrines the cultural hybridity in *The Arrangers of Marriage* by referring to Homi K. Bhabha's third space.
2. In order to analyze the protagonist's coping strategy of mimicry, and its consequences for personal identity and cultural membership in a newly adopted culture.

Research Questions

1. In which ways does the author, Adichie employ the aspect of cultural hybridity in *The Arrangers of Marriage* by painting the portrait of the heroine?
2. In what ways does mimicry function as both a tool for survival and a site of tension in the protagonist's journey?

Significance of the Study

The research matters as it fleshes out the canon of postcolonial literature and reveals the story of immigrant women and other minorities who struggle with racism and other kinds of prejudice while adapting to life in a new country. Finally, by adopting and applying the discourse of cultural hybridity and gender studies, the paper offers a detailed examination of Adichie's cultural/gendered imperialism critique. Also, this paper explores how literary narratives help to improve a reader's understanding of the struggling minorities and contribute to the development of empathy in a globalized society. It aims to contribute to the ongoing debate of migration, identity, and resistances and be useful to scholars, students, and consumers of post-colonial and black diaspora studies.

Literature Review:

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *The Arrangers of Marriage* explores cultural agency, isolation and gendered domination when immigrant grants metropolitan tenancy. In the light of the protagonist the narrative involves the erasure and adaptive culture of postcolonial subjectivities under the influence of the Western norms The novel under discussion explores the two pivotal motifs of

culture and identity erasure or adaptation in both systematic and interpersonal levels. Chimamanda Adichie’s work falls squarely into postcolonial discourse through the construction of the theme of colonization and its impacts on individual and group identification.

Postcolonial Identity and Cultural Hybridity

Some of the issues that postcolonial criticism addresses are ways in which formerly colonized people/cultures come to terms with the colonizing or hegemonic or generally European. A major feature of this negotiation as further illustrated by Adichie, is Chinaza’s change of her name to Agatha Bell by her husband. In the literature published after 2020 (for example, Eze, 2021; Kamara, 2022) the functions of names as the signs of the subject and colonial overthrown are outlined. While Chinaza personally abhorred her new name thus the toxic cultural imposition worsened whenever she was in private, as a symbol of the immigration challenge of keeping up with culture amidst acculturation.

This is even much more true in the effort to rename Chinaza as the attempt demonstrates other deeper efforts at cultural reformation. In postcolonial literature – in line with such cases – renaming reflects that the dominated groups relinquish power to the colonizers who, in turn, rechristen the defeated in their own likeness, Okonkwo (2021). Back in Flatbush a stereotypically carceral, racially diverse but impoverished Brooklyn neighborhood, the American Indian detection of cultural creolization emerges again as a site of both agency and ERAMP.

Alienation and Displacement in Diasporic Contexts

And such despair points to immigrant experience as far as characters like Chinaza depicted by Adichie’s narratives are concerned. This alienation is further compounded by her husband’s obliteration of the Nigerian culture and the rest of the worldly advise by having him change to dump all Nigerian practices as ‘un-American’. Literature has shown (see Onyekachi, 2020; Desai & Nair, 2023) such as narratives given by women describe how such cultural expectations make qualitative immigrants pay for migration.

Another of the ways in which Adichie rises Nigerian culture against that of America is with a blink of an eye to subvert the latent European/American dogma within the midst of the continent. For instance, when Chinaza miss Nigerian foods and is not willing to cook ‘American’ foods, shows manifest signs of cultural imperialism. Mbembe (2022) also gathered such portrayals underscore colonial histories when mapping an immigrant’s modernity; Anglo

American culture as the only platform of merit, the only form of acknowledgement.

The works of Adichie have been dissected by academics working according to the postcolonial, feminism, and migration theories. For example, the problem of linguistic imperialism as a question analyzed by Okafor recently in *The Arrangers of Marriage* refers to how Chinaza, the main protagonist of the described work, felt the English expected her to embrace a certain set of attitudes as the long-term consequences of colonialism that haunt diasporic subjects. Similarly, Johnson and Cole (2022) discussed on how race, class and gender function in Adichie's narratives indicating that characters look for one kind of acceptance in other.

Immigrants also bring in this facet has also been linked to component of cultural resistance by Adichie too. As Nnaji (2023) opined, while Chinaza uses Igbo when she is out of reach of the whites, she is not fully colonized. This resistance is like the Bhabha's (1994) hybridity that implies that to colonial subjects it is possible to take new that is a mixture of their origin and host society cultural models.

Concerning the topic of *The Arrangers of Marriage*, it does not take a lot of effort to draw links between today's discussions of immigration and individuality. In addition, this paper argues for the analysis of the dynamics of culture in relation to current debates on migration in the global society, as well as the dialogue on migration from the standpoint of the immigrants' experience and gravity of the issues they may face as illustrated by Adichie. For instance, Osei-Kufuor (2023) has endeavored to argue that Chinaza has been located in a universal setting, which is characteristic of most diasporic characters.

Consequently, the critique that Adichie opens to the Western culture imperialism means not only the indication of the problem with the leading stories but also the problem with the leading paradigms. Like this, reading about the oppression economical and social divide as the context of Chinaza's migration, the story narrates the views of imperialism as the defining aspect of relationship between nations. These points of reflection have been noted with more recent studies (Smith & Abebe, 2023) to enhance for a better and broader understanding as a way of explaining postcolonial selves in the 'post-colony' world.

Methodology

The research approach used in this study is meant to analyze different strata of postcolonial subjectivity and cultural creolization in Chimamanda Ngozi

Adichie's *The Arrangers of Marriage*. The primary method of this analysis is based on pair of phenomena and is also qualitative and outlined by theoretical and analytical apparatuses, making the analysis as comprehensive and profound as possible.

Research Design

Text analysis as the main method of inquiry forms the center of the study, which employs a qualitative research method. This approach is suitable to analyze multimodal texts with themes that are characterised by cultural conflict, displacement and other processes of migration. In this case, this study aims at looking at some of the heretofore concealed layer-structures of the novel and the study will focus on such a task by undergoing a closer examination of the postcolonial themes embedded in the discursive framework of the story from the pen of Adichie.

Theoretical Framework:

The theoretical framework of this research is indebted to Homi K. Bhabha's cultural hybridity theory. The cultural enactment of identity can be explained through postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha's ideas; especially those from his work *The Location of Culture*. As for Bhabha the production of cultures is a hybrid process and involves a colonial as well as native culture to produce new forms of culture and cultural identities. It is not a simple assimilation of two or more cultures but creation of a third culture, which is the culture of the in-between.

Applying Bhabha's theory to the novel *The Arrangers of Marriage*, one can understand how Chinaza, the protagonist, lives in America having to struggle to negotiate the imposed Nigerian and American culture she meets. The hybrid space enables the construction of a new Nation – an in-between space, not fully Nigerian and not fully American but a blend of the two that leads to an encounter, rivalry and tension which Bhabha recognizes as part of the experience of the postcolonial.

Analytical Framework

Concerning the method of the textual analysis, the theory of close reading by I.A. Richards is being applied. It entails the reading of the text through well stated receptors or hermeneutics with the intent of ascertaining their significance and possibly the significance of the significances. That is why Richards' approach is useful for this study as it opens up the chance of analysing how in *The Arrangers of Marriage* language conceals multi-layered cultural and postcolonial identities.

The Richards' model encompasses such Rational Appeals as use of metaphor, imagery, tone and diction among others. For instance, the analysis will look at, how Adichie, articulates, cultural otherness, of the protagonist Chinaza as well as her subject making in the text. Subsequently, this method of close reading allows offering a detailed elaboration of how the Nigerian text under discussion fits into the criterion of hybridity proposed by Bhabha and how the process of creation of new cultural signification and subjectivity in postcolonial context takes place.

Data analysis

Reading *The Arrangers of Marriage* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie explicates the life of a Nigerian immigrant, Chinaza as she struggles with living in America. The themes of cultural contact, assimilation, and othering, and gender roles are also underscored as well as other facets such can be seen from the detailed analysis of the text. To explain the analyzed data, this paper will use Homi K. Bhabha's theory of cultural Hybridity and I.A. Richards' methods of close reading.

Third space

In *The Arrangers of Marriage*, cultural migration and subject construction for Chinaza is from her arrival in the United States of America. Regarding the extent to which Adichie realized the first days that Chinaza spends in *США*, the confusion that enters him. Most coloured women who come to America have such ideas as are portrayed in the media and stories, therefore when she got to America she has to live in a small apartment which does not in any way resemble a house. This is encapsulated in her husband's declaration upon their arrival:

“We're here,” he said. He used the word house when telling me of our house. But in my mind was a drive between two beautifully mown cucumber green lawns, a door with an inviting wide hall way, beautiful paintings on the wall. Now they wanted houses like the ones the white newlyweds had in the American films that NTA broadcasted on Saturday.

This quotation is a symbol of the first phase of migration where ideal world, expected reality and the position in which one finds him or herself challenges the central formation of Chinaza's identity. Here specifically, I think about the third space that Bhab has introduced: for this, I recognized that Chinaza begins cultivating a hybrid identity in between Nigerian culture she was socialized into and the forced assimilation of an American self.

Cultural Hybridity

Further, the experience of Chinaza along with her husband demonstrates further continuation of the analysis of the phenomenon of cultural hybridity. Her husband's attempts to make her fit a 'fit' model of a typical 'American' wife are therefore representations of acculturation. This is depicted where he forces her to alter her name, and attempts to control other aspects of her life, something, which is exemplifies cultural eradication in its entirety. The renaming act is particularly poignant:

That is not Ofodile by the way. 'Yes,' that's right' he said, still looking at the pile of envelopes that Shirley had just handed him. "The last name one uses here itself is different." People could really never pronounce my name Udenwa, so I shortened it.

This change also proves that he has rejected his Nigerian ethnicity and he wants Chinaza to do the same thing as well. This imposition connects the colonial power of writing the Other that remains a primary focus in postcolonial theory and Bhabha's discussion of power and the subversive.

In this paper, I will attempt to demonstrate that in cultural hybridity and the narrated experience of immigrants in *The Arrangers of Marriage*, the process is multi-featured. From the time Chinaza reacts to her husband's greeting right up to passive defiance, everything is a continuous process of postcolonial subject formation. They may not explain why it is different but it does give a feel of how identity is lesser remade, if not constantly so in different environments. Such understanding is however arrived at via the use of Bhabha's theoretical model of cultural hybridity, as read through Richards' detailed contextual account of the text; thereby making it possible to see how Adichie raises and responds to issues of culture, gender and migration. Apart from contributing to the practice of enriching the debate in postcolonial literary production, this paper also offers useful practical tips to anyone interested in the mechanics of the cultural shift and various forms of subversion in immigrant populations.

Mimicry

In *The Arrangers of Marriage* Adichie is doing exactly the same and in an excellent manner imitating which according to the specifications of Bhabha on postcolonialism. Mimicry as [];

* — It is noted that the subject imitates the colonial culture and the process is depicted as both the necessity and the battle ground. Ofodile whose mimetism is complete submission to the American way of life expects Chinaza to do the

same. This is not the mimicry of embrace, it is mimicry, in which a group/ individuals strive to integrate themselves into the presently prevailing culture in order to better their lot in the society.

Such cultural Erasure, such as Ofodile's change of name from its Nigerian origin, Dave, or the renaming of Chinaza to 'Agatha Bell' is, therefore, a rejection of Nigerian origin for a western[ers'] culture. He states,

Patent litigation, you don't understand how it works in this country. In other words if he wanted to get anywhere he was confined to be as normal as can be.

It is a quote that captures the most main topic of the novel which is assimilation in the United States. As Ofodile rather pathetically attempts to choose her Western given name and become an American, this is an example of how this is quite literally impossible.

Mimicry is also compulsory to Chinaza; therefore, he or she develops an internal struggle. This is because she has challenges in accepting fully her Nigerian part, according to her husband, in embracing total America culture. Every time she has to say the things she used to say such as 'you're welcome' with 'hi' every time 'lift' is referred to as an 'elevator', then Chinaza knows that change is still non-existent. This discomfort is felt when she says:

"Americans say elevator... I then looked down the table mat made on the waterproof fabric which was alongside us. I wanted to tell them that was why I did not know the name because I did not know the fellow.

secondly based on this understanding of twofold, mimicry is an oppressive activity although by so doing it is also defiance. Last, while Ofodile dismissively glances over the mimicry strategy as something that could be used to deal with the issues of immigration, Chinaza's defiant actions such as, cooking Nigerian food and speaking Igbo when she is all alone, depicts a very NSA (Not Steele's) type way of assimilation. In Bhabha's text, mimicry is always in two ways in that, on the one hand the Native demonstrates that colonial power is substandard but on the other, embodies it most efficiently.

When it comes to mimic, Adichie doesn't hesitate to call out the system that makes different immigrants hate their own culture in order to adapt to a new society, world. Like Ofodile who considered mimicry as the route as the way to success, the novel presents the theme of assimilation with tensions because of Chinaza's opposite behaviour. Mimicry is making a copy of something or a representation and it is when it is manifested; if as in the film the Arrangers of Marriage, when it becomes illusion and reflection pushing the consideration of mimicry closer to the situated cultural subject's battle for existence and assimilation.

Conclusion

Therefore, being one of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's short stories presented in the book with the same title *The Arrangers of Marriage* is also conceptually layered and very much concerned with the otherness and acculturation, immigrant becoming, as well as the question of cultural doubling that can also be referred to as *mestizaje*. In previous theorization by Homi K. Bhabha, cultural hybridity is the theoretical lens through which this study explores how Adichie portrays multiculturalism as the centrality of its question – to preserve the culture or conform to a new culturally unfamiliar environment. Instead, it allows the author to discuss what it is like for a person of colour to be alienated culturally and provide a view into the migrant's state and emotions through Chinaza.

Using the concept of cultural mimicry by Bhabha the intra-psychic conflict of Chinaza can be best understood. In *Once in America* she jumps into a new culture with a vulgar reproduction of the Nigerian background. This makes me want to argue that, while working through the very concrete experience of Chinaza, Adichie also shows that the workings of culture changes, are not assimilation on the same level, they are in fact, full negotiations with contestation. What is very postcolonial is when the main character feels that she can disappear in an endeavour to find herself in a society, which though not of the colonized nation, is different from the colonizing nation in terms of a code. Focus is made on Chinaza and her husband's episodes and, with regard to the problem Chinaza has because of the cultural differences, the writer underscores the main idea of the work, which is that it is possible to foster the balance between the two cultures.

However, the sting underlines the 'third space' as defined by Bhabha and which results from cultures' interference. However, Chinaza misses all her attempts at looking for her new self at the center of being a Nigerian and now American where she cannot embezzle herself fully of either cross-cultural system. This so-called 'double exposure,' is thus not a fixed category but a reiterative one, a state of performativity that results from her doing and that which she is subjected to. In relation to this theme, Adichie does so through Chinaza and her ordeals: whether transitioning from Nigeria to America, Me, the girls portray immigrant narratives of contemporary culture in a center of culture war.

The author also brings to the reader's notice racist/stereotypical effect on culture eradications by halting Chinaza gradually, right from renaming her to introducing her to American like culture. Chinaza's transformation of her

name to ‘Agatha Bell’ is now can join other cultures of domination as are observed throughout the immigration processes. However, this simple act of renaming can be considered as a tangible manifestation of an endeavour that goes on to this very day: effacing, or at any rate toning down, this figure in favour of the dominant ethnic group and its way of life. Still, even if it is as small and calm as Chinaza’s fight against such transformation implies the problem of spiritual identity loss.

From this research the author has explained during reading the novel *The Arrangers of Marriage* how Adichie shows immigrants’ life and the challenge encountered when striving to live in multiple faciality in an adopted country. From postcolonial perspective , the aspects of washing out of the cultural selves and the integration nuisances are evident in this narrative which not only tells the much about the postcolonial subjects at a physiological level but also at emotional level. From further analysing the Chinaza’s story embedded in the work, it is evident that the creed of cross-cultural integration is the only functional approach of enhancing an expulsion of the immigration lifecycle and at the same time mirror culturally the new society while retaining a small quintessential of the rooted cultural identity.

Finally, in her *The Arrangers of Marriage*, Adichie provides evidence for immigrants who always line up in the chorus that proscribes the process of cultural imperialism; they are the identity subjects who wish to scream. The latter has to be deemed important for understanding Postcolonial literature because of the salient traits of the immigrant’s subject and relationship with culture/global power domain.

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