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Diasporic Echoes of Hybridity and Identity in Zadie Smith's *The Fraud*

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Abstract:

*This article aims to analyze how cultural hybridity is enunciated in the novel *The Fraud*. It delineates the stories of Eliza Touchet and Andrew Bogle, who grapple with cross-cultural identity. Through their stories, the novel, sheds light on the complexities of cultural hybridity and the ongoing negotiation of identity and belonging. The researcher has made an inquest of hybridity through the perspectives of the protagonists who navigate the shifting terrain of identity and belonging in a rapidly changing world. Hybridity, as enacted in the novel is a cause for internal and external strife. Hence, the novel stands as at estament to the complexities of multicultural Britain. Thus, Smith sheds light on the ways on how cultural hybridity has always been a part of the human experience and how it continues to shape our understanding of ourselves and our place in the world.*

Keywords: cultural hybridity, Post Colonial theory, identity, belonging and Mmulticultural Britain.

Introduction:

The Fraud depicts the stories of two central characters, Eliza Touchet and Mr. Andrew Bogle, two individuals from vastly different backgrounds. Eliza Touchet, a privileged white woman, a well-off feminist and abolitionist with feminist leanings and Mr. Andrew Bogle, a formerly enslaved Jamaican. Through the perspectives of these characters, Smith grapples with questions of representation and cross-cultural understanding. Eliza, with her progressive ideals and desire to champion the downtrodden, struggles to truly comprehend Bogle's experience and the nuances of his identity. Bogle in turn, navigates the Victorian society, constantly negotiating his sense of self in the face of the expectations and prejudices of the white elite. Similar to *White Teeth* where the paradoxes of being an immigrant torn between two countries and here it represents a continued engagement

with the complexities of multicultural Britain using the historical setting of Victorian London to shed light on contemporary debates around race, class, and cultural exchange.

Objectives:

- ◆ To examine how Zadie Smith's *The Fraud* engages with themes of diaspora, hybridity, and identity in the context of British colonial history.
- ◆ To analyze the representation of diasporic consciousness and its impact on character formation and narrative structure in the novel.
- ◆ To explore how notions of cultural hybridity challenge or reinforce established perceptions of national and racial identity within *The Fraud*.

Methodology:

A methodological approach involves a combination of textual analysis, contextual investigation, and engagement with relevant theoretical frameworks. The first key component is a close reading of the novel, paying close attention to the perspectives and narratives of the two central characters, Eliza Touchett and Andrew Bogle. By analyzing their interactions and experiences in depth, the researcher can elucidate how the novel grapples with questions of representation and cross-cultural understanding. This close textual analysis will lay the groundwork for a study that will provide a nuanced understanding of the novel's exploration of cultural hybridity. In addition, it would be productive to compare and contrast the representation of cultural hybridity in *The Fraud* with Zadie Smith's earlier works, such as *White Teeth*.

Dicussion:

Postcolonial writers have often explored themes of cultural hybridity in their works. The concept of cultural hybridity has been a significant focus in post colonial literary studies which refers to the blending and mixing of cultural elements, traditions and identities that occurs through processes like migration, colonization and globalization. Homi K. Bhabha is closely associated with cultural hybridity and sees it as emerging in the "in-between" spaces where different cultures meet and interact and he also contends that a new hybrid identity or subject-position can emerge from the interweaving of elements of the colonizer and colonized, challenging the notion of pure, essential cultural identities. The "third space" conceptualized by Bhabha is a productive, liminal space where these cultural hybridization and transformations can occur. Thus the exploration of cultural hybridity remains a vibrant area in literary and cultural studies, shedding light on the complex realities of identity, belonging and cultural exchange in the contemporary world.(Mambrol, 2016).

The novel is a rich exploration of cultural hybridity set against the backdrop of 19th century Victorian London. The novel depicts the stories of two central characters Eliza Touchet, a well-off feminist-abolitionist and Mr. Andrew Bogle, a formerly enslaved Jamaican man who grapple with questions of representation and the limits of cross-cultural understanding. Through the perspectives

of Eliza and Bogle, the novel delves into the ways in which individuals navigate the shifting terrain of identity and belonging in a rapidly changing world. Eliza, a privileged white woman with strong abolitionist and feminist leanings becomes involved in the Tichborne case through her connections to the Tichborne family. Her interactions with Bogle, a former slave highlights the challenges and possibilities of cross-cultural understanding. Eliza with her progressive ideals and desire to champion the downtrodden, struggles to truly comprehend Bogle's lived experience and the nuances of his identity. Bogle, in turn must constantly negotiate his sense of self in the face of the expectations and prejudices of the white elite.

The character of Andrew Bogle is particularly compelling in his depiction of cultural hybridity. His life story, which spans Jamaica, England and Australia, highlights the interconnection of the British Empire and the ways in which colonial subjects navigated the complexities of identity and belonging. Through Bogle's experiences, Smith sheds light on slavery and the legacies of colonialism, while also emphasizing the resilience of those who survived. (Renaud, 2023).

The novel mirrors its thematic concerns around hybridity and representation. By situating her exploration of cultural hybridity within the rich cultural landscape of London, Smith invites readers to consider the ways in which the past continues to shape and inform the present. By using the historical setting of Victorian London as a lens, the novel offers a nuanced and thought provoking exploration of the challenges and possibilities of cross-cultural understanding and the ongoing negotiation of identity and belonging. Through the stories of Eliza and Bogle, Smith sheds light on the ways in which cultural hybridity has always been a part of the human experience and how it continues to shape our understanding of ourselves and our place in the world.

Zadie Smith's novel "The Fraud" explores the impact of cultural hybridity on its central characters, particularly Eliza Touchet and Andrew Bogle. Eliza's interactions with Bogle, reinvented himself as a gentleman's valet, highlight the challenges of cross-cultural understanding. As the novel states, "Until this moment she had not guessed that her cousin hoped for a knighthood, and she could not, from this distance, discern how likely it was... What really interested her was the presumption. Of recognition, of respect - of attention itself. Why did he assume such things as his due? Was this what men assumed?" Eliza struggles to comprehend Bogle's lived experience and the nuances of his identity (Cbsnews, 2023).

Bogle's character is central to the novel's exploration of cultural hybridity. His life story, which spans Jamaica, England, and Australia, "highlights the interconnections of the British Empire and the ways in which colonial subjects navigated the complexities of identity and belonging." Through Bogle's experiences, the novel sheds light on the horrors of plantation slavery and the legacies of colonialism, while also emphasizing the resilience and resourcefulness of those who survived. As one character notes, "Now, William, my love, now the thing is, you've lived a very soft

life, my dear, so you can't imagine what it is for an honest working man to come up against the gentry, and the Lord Chief Justice himself, and all the bigwigs, with their secret societies – caring not a jot for the little people!"(Harris, 2023).

Conclusion:

Thus, the novel sheds light on the complexities of cross-cultural understanding and the ongoing negotiation of identity and belonging and grapples with the challenges and possibilities of cross-cultural understanding, representation, and the fluidity of identity through the intertwining narratives of Eliza Touchet and Andrew Bogle; the Tichborne case, which serves as the historical backdrop, provides a compelling lens through which to examine the tensions and contradictions of class, race, and identity that were roiling beneath the surface of the British Empire, inviting readers to consider the ways in which the past continues to shape and inform the present, while the novel's formal structure, blending a variety of narrative forms and inter textual references, mirrors its thematic concerns around identity and representation, reflecting the complexities of truth and the multiplicity of truths that emerge from the Tichborne case; at the heart of "The Fraud" are the characters of Eliza and Bogle, whose interactions and experiences illuminate the impact of cultural hybridity on individual identity and belonging, offering a nuanced and thought-provoking exploration of the challenges and possibilities of cultural exchange and the ongoing negotiation of identity and belonging in the contemporary world, ultimately standing as a testament to the enduring power of literature to grapple with the most pressing issues of our time by delving into the past to illuminate the present.

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