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Chimamanda Adichie's: Imitation and Iqbal Al-Qazwini's Zubaida's Window - Study of Hybrid Analogy

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Abstract: Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonial concept of hybridity supports the hybrid individual with power and agency, it is an optimistic experience the individual has in the postcolonial literature. However, Bhabha's theory seems to ignore the anxieties, pressure and the traumatic daily obstacles that come along with it, and the postcolonial authors may neglect the complications for the advantages of hybridity. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Iqbal Al_Qazwini, investigate the failure of hybridity as a theory that cannot apply on all the hybrid individuals in the diasporic exile. The two writers explore the effects of hybridity on the hybrid females. They tackle the missing matter of the hybridity upon the women whose suffering does not stop through identity crises, clash cultures and anxieties of the falsehood. Those women live difficult practical obstacles and existential struggle against the foreign culture. Both of them provide different view of the nation opposing Bhabha's view. They do not celebrate a view of harmonious life outside their homeland; they show us how women have imprisoned by their home memories. Adichie and Qazwini argue for re-examining hybridity theory because the female characters in their texts live different experience of hybridity from those empowered hybrids.

This paper discusses the questions of, will the hybrid females comfort and benefit Bhabha's hybrid identity? Will the privileges of migration derive them to accept the new culture? How do the past and memory influence the present? And what is the solution those hybrid women will adopt to cure their anxious situations.

الخلاصة: ان مفهوم نظرية التكيف لهومي بابا في أدب ما بعد الاستعمار, يدعم الفرد المهاجر المتكيف بالنفوذ والقوة, يعيش الفرد المتكيف من خلالها تجربة متفائلة. يبدو ان نظرية بابا قد تجاهلت القلق, الضغط, والصعوبات

اليومية الصادمة التي ترافق التكيف, وأهمل مؤلفين ما بعد الاستعمار التعقيدات للحصول على ميزات التكيف. شيماماندا نجوزي اديك وإقبال القزويني, تناقشان فشل التكيف كنظرية لا يمكن تطبيقها على الأفراد المتكيفين في مهجر الشتات. تعالج كلا الكاتبتان تأثير التكيف على النساء المهاجرات, و التركيز على المسألة المفقودة من نظرية التكيف على النساء اللاتي لا تتوقف معاناتهن مع أزمة الهوية, تصادم الحضارات, وقلق الزيف. تعيش تلك النساء صعوبات عملية معقدة وصراع وجودي مستمر ضد الحضارة الأجنبية. تقدم الروائيتان وجهة نظر مختلفة للوطن معارضة لرأي بابا. و هكذا لا تشجع الروائيتان نظرية الحياة المتجانسة بعيدا عن الوطن, لأنهن قدمن لنا نساء سجينات بذكريات الوطن. اديك وقزويني تناقشان إعادة النظر في نظرية التكيف, حيث ان الشخصيات النسوية في رواياتهن يعشن تجارب يومية صعبة ومعقدة مختلفة عن أولئك المتكيفين ذو النفوذ والقوة.

يناقش البحث الأسئلة التالية, هل ان النساء المتكيفات يستقن من هوية التكيف حسب نظرية بابا؟ هل ان امتيازات الهجرة تمكنهن من قبول الحضارة الجديدة؟ كيف يمكن للماضي والذاكرة التأثير على الحاضر؟ وما هو الحل الذي تتبناه النساء المتكيفات لشفاء أوضاعهن القلقة. سوف تلخص الخاتمة في نهاية هذا البحث النتائج التي توصل إليها البحث.

Postcolonial theory broadly tackles the influences of colonialism on the societies and cultures. It shows the effects of the colonizer on the “ Third World” and the respond and resistance of this world. These effects on the colonized states are verify to be psychological, cultural, and social.(Ashcroft and Helen: 21). They also tend to make a struggle for cultural, ethnic and political autonomy. Moreover, it explores the diasporic, ambivalent, mimic and hybrid identity the colonized individuals face.

Both of Chimamanda Adichie’s **Imitation** (2009) and Iqbal Al_Qazwini’s **Zubaida’s Window** (2008) are postcolonial works. **Imitation** highlights various problems that the Nigerians suffer from, especially in the aftermath of the postcolonial independence situation. Such problems are concerning with race, class and ethnicity. The Nigerian people, as everyone knows, lived different process of immigration, displacement, dislocation and distortion, because of the colonial powers and military operations that forces its people separate themselves from their colonies to the exile. There, those people especially the women face the hybridity, multicultural environments, and diasporic identity. Those people were unlucky to live in the post independent Nigeria and its transitional phase. For this reason, Adichie insists that the Africans should write their personal experiences and stories to the world, and not to let the western writers labeling instead of them.(Kalra and Kaur: 104-106)

As a postcolonial work Al_Qazwini’s **Zubaida’s Window** carries the postcolonial definition of Biscaia, which states that “[the] postcolonial writing distinguishes itself by its corrective motivations either of denouncing

violence, giving voice to the silenced, valuing the local or attempting to reconcile the individual with her/his various fragmentary selves”(20). Zubaida the protagonist of the novel, is able to reflect some of the postcolonial struggles that the Iraqi woman faced for many years through revolutions, sanctions, and wars. Because of the wars, occupation, and neo-imperialism, the colonialism of the contemporary century is changed due to the military and political procedures and activities led by the United States of America and Britain on Iraq. Though the American occupation to Iraq is ended and the Iraqi people are not really decolonize, yet the foreign influence on the country is clear.(Gupta: 157-159).

Throughout history, war and exile have inspired the insight and work of many authors. Nigeria and Iraq witnessed different pressures of occupation, wars, internal civil conflict, displacement, and immigration. Nigeria was under the British administration that led to a sense of homogeneity. Though Nigeria is full of different ethnic groups, but the federal division did not take in consideration the ethnic and religious conflict which led to internal war. Hausa_Fulani, Yorubaand Igbo are the main three places in Nigeria which contain the majority population.

While the major religions are Christianity and Islam. Nigeria is, just like Iraq, witnessed internal civil war , it is called Nigerian_Biafran war(1967-70).(Mashberg: 6). As a result, many Nigerian people left their country to the exile, where as they think will get hope, new, happy and safe life far from the wars and occupation.

Iraqis are known to the world by their traumatic experiences with wars. Iraq or Mesopotamia, as it was named by the Greeks ,is the land of civilization and culture having deep roots. The land of two great rivers, the site of prophets, literature, law, and education. Iraq has geographical position that made it to be the center of trade routes between the Mediterranean and Asia. Simon, Reeva Spector and Eleanor H. Tejirian were gaper and exited with the great Iraq, as they most likely to call it:

Iraq has always been a frontier, across which the boundaries of empires have continually shifted. For much of its history, when it was not the center of empire attracting cultural, social, and political interchange as the Achaemenids or the Abbasid caliphs, the region has been a buffer zone, a swath of territory of indeterminate width that contracted and expanded, separating empires, peoples and families. (Simon &Tejirian:3)

Because of the wealth of Iraq, beside political reasons, Iraq witnessed series of wars, revolutions, and sanctions, the Iraqi_ Iran War (1980_1988), the Gulf War I (1991), and Gulf War II (2003). Moreover, ISIS War (2014) that destroyed all the religious and humanistic values. Through these wars, the Iraqis have faced, till now, various types of torture, sanctions, killing, rape, displacement, immigration, dislocation, poverty, psychological decline, violence, and the loss of freedom for women. Women were the most affected by the wars, they did not affect physically only, the cultural and academic aspects hit them also. The Iraqi British writer Haifa Zangana states in **The Right to Rule Ourselves** (2006), that “ many journalists, newspaper editors, and academics(many of them women) have been killed since 2003”(Grace:183).

The traumatic lived experiences of Iraqis obliged them to leave Iraq to exile, to any safe place. The unstopped wave of immigration (legal or illegal), displacement, dislocation, instability and insecurity is known to all the world. Their first and last aim is to live in safe and to leave their homeland, instead of facing death every day.

It is significant to shed light on the African literature, Africa is known for the west as a savage place whose people suffer from hunger; the western writers see them as barbarian, brawly and uncivilized. The African writers pencil seems contested on these themes. But through the last three decades, the recent-third generation literature argues about the Nigerian identity in the time of the contemporary and current political and socio-economic situations that from a new hybrid state. The first generation argues that the individual should negotiate and struggle for agency and identity, and to benefit ownership from the past culture and new one. Achille Mbembes, the postcolonial theorist, supports this viewpoint claiming that the Africans should define their own identity, but with different way, unconventional mean. He finds the thoughts of the first generation who uses the dominant power is alienate the individual from his own self. The third generation is far from victimization and alienation, it calls for self writing. Susan Z. Andrade admired the writings of Adichie for being direct and courageous in their perspectives. She encourages the African women writers, saying “the best female novelists no longer hesitate to represent the nation in explicitly political terms, nor does doing so require abandoning a full sense of commitment to female characterization”(93). The African writers should write their lived experiences by themselves. They have to convey their real life to the world and this what Adichie insists to view in her writing. She assumes that modern female African writers should present their nation

directly without apology, and they should stop using allegories to write their political viewpoints.

The modern Iraqi novel from 1966, is characterized as a novel of war and exile. It explores the themes of martyrdom, escape, heroism, alienation and exile. From 1980, it tends to tackle the Iraqi diaspora, ambivalence, and hybridity. As it is well known, the Iraqi writers in exile, unlike those in their homeland, were free in their perspectives, free from the oppressive obstacles of the regime on their literary

expressions. The writers in exile convey their themes and messages directly, while those who stay in Iraq, obliged to use allegories to express their viewpoints, if they could. The regime “not only prohibited criticism of the state and its symbols, but ruthlessly punished those who fell short of compliance”.(Mustafa:xvi). Some Iraqi novels welcomed and encouraged the exile and exilic theme include: Zaineb Salbi’s **Between Two Worlds: Escape From Tyranny** (2005), Dunya Mikhail’s **A Diary of Twist** (2007) and Leilah Nadir’s **Orange Trees of Baghdad** (2007). In these works, the authors find exile as empowerment to the Iraqi hybrids. Iqbal Qazwini and some other writers like, Al-Mana’s novel **Shufuni, Shufuni**(2001)and Samuel Shimon’s **An Iraqi in Paris** (2003) demonstrate this trend; that forget the personal lived traumatic experiences in diaspora. Not all the hybrids are empowered, most of them live painful life, prohibits them from being individuals of a hybrid identity (Ibid:xviii).

Like many African and Iraqi writers, Adichie and Qazwini, have been wrote and published their literary works outside their homeland. In their novels and stories, they tend to focus on the identity of their people. As an African writer Adichie (1977-) focuses in all her literary works on Africa in general and on the African identity in particular. She was born in Nsukka, in south-eastern Nigeria, and she travelled to United States to study. The place she grew up is reveal in her writing, that place inspired her to make it the setting for a number of her stories especially in **The Thing Around Your Neck**. She does not use the setting as symbol to reflect her themes, she reflects her ideas and messages directly to the readers, since she deals with the lived experiences of the African in general and the Nigerian woman in particular. Adichie is an award winner writer, she won Commonwealth writers’ prize in 2005 for her first novel **Purple Hibiscus**, and she won also the Orange Broadband Prize in 2007 for her second novel **Half of a Yellow sun**. Her first work deals with the military coup in Nigeria, while the second tackles the Biafran war for Independence. Actually, Adiche was affected by this war because her grandfather who was one of the victims of this war. Thosetwo novels turned into films. Her **Americanah** (2013) explores

themes of the hybrid and diasporic Nigerians in America. **The Thing Around Your Neck** is a collection of twelve short stories concerned with the life of Nigeria immigration to America. It was the best African book in 2010, Adichie won Commonwealth writers' prize for it. (Kalra and Kaur: 101-104). In her novels and stories, Adichie presents common places, people, names and events she knows well.

Iqbal Al_Qazwini (1958 -) is an Iraqi feminist journalist and novelist, born and lived in Iraq for twenty years, then she was exiled to Germany because of the complicated situations in Iraq. From that time Qazwini is in Berlin. She, as millions of Iraqis abroad, knows the news of their homeland through television of course. She joined a delegation of the Women's International Democratic Federation in East Berlin. She wrote her first novel **Mamarrat as-Sukun** (2006) Her **Zubaida's Window**(2008) is the first English novel written in Iraqi. As a journalist, she wrote her articles in Asharq Al-Awsat and Al Riyadh newspapers.(Iqbal Qazwini, 2010).

Homi K. Bhabha, the main theorist of hybridity, states in **The Location of Culture** (1994), that hybridity is a "force ...that disturbs the visibility of the colonial presence and makes the recognition of its authority problematic" (159). Bhabha supposed that living a hybrid individual is to be empowered and fighter against the opposed and colonial power. Hybrid individual lives in-between two identities of the pre-colonial and colonial concepts, refusing the feeling of one identity, but why? Of course to live under the most dominated force through disavowal(ibid:159). That is to say, that the hybrid benefits from the controlled and dominated force or may take both of them to form his new own identity, to get more power and agency. Bhabha calls this empowered hybrid the third space, since the latter lives in-between two spaces. His new identity is the third space he gets concerning the historical and cultural aspects.

Theoretically, Bhabha is right to see the hybrid a happy and empowered individual with a margin of liberation, original viewpoint and a great chance for celebration; yet this theory neglects the daily difficult circumstances the hybrid lives and the complicated opposing obstacles impose on him/her. There are postcolonial theorists who welcomed the optimistic states of hybridity. Though Adichie and Qazwini are from different environments, histories, circumstances , cultures, languages, religions and societies; yet they share the same perspectives that hybridity neglects the anxieties that their characters feel. Both of them show us unhappy hybrids, anxious, and sad females who try to touch the new culture, indulge with the strange people, to be like them or at least to be close to them. Those females dual with their own identity and the new one.

Adichie and Qazwini agree with some critics who argue against the empowered hybrid, and present deep and closed realistic experiences to the suffering of the hybrids in diaspora.

Imitation, is one of a collection of twelve short stories **The Thing Around Your Neck**, investigates a Nigerian married hybrid woman living in the diaspora of the United States. In **Zubaida's Window**, Qazwini presents an Iraqi woman lives in Germany, far from her homeland Iraq. The setting of the novel is in exile. Adichie and Qazwini deal with the events, names, people and places familiar to them.

The protagonist Nkem lives in Philadelphia with her two children. Her husband, Obiora works in Nigeria, he comes only two months in the year visiting her. He brings an African mask with each visit, actually these masks have a great symbolic significance to them, since it related to their history and culture; they are good imitation. These masks define Africa itself. Obiora is obsessed with them in academic way, while Nkem is connected with them in different way. She touches and fascinated to them, because they are the lonely robes that connect her with her homeland: "she imagines _and this she imagines herself because Obiora did not suggest it happened that way _the proud young men wishing they did not have to behead strangers to bury their king, wishing they could use the masks to protect themselves, too, wishing they had a say"(Imitation: 23)

Nkem was very anxious, she is afraid if the mask will not bring happiness to her like in the past "could'nt have happy" Obiora stares at her saying : "Well, maybe nine hundred years ago they didn't define happy like you now" (Ibid:23). She goes on talking about the happiness; she was aware that her husband doesn't pay attention to her sadness away from Nigeria, he cannot consider or even imagine the needs of his wife to be happy.

Nkem related to the past, she put her anxieties on the African masks, this moment reveals a painful hybridization and the unease life she lives in. The mask should be original for original face, the face of human being, but the mask is imitation to the imitation. Nkem feels that this mask is "cold, heavy, lifeless", it

stands for "cold, heavy, lifeless" life she faces in the diaspora. Concerning the double imitation of the mask, it represents the double personalities and the double identities she carries. Thus, Nkem is imitating a Nigerian who is imitating an American.

Zubaida's situation is not different from Nkem, since she is also living in exile, in Berlin. She knows the news of Iraq through television, she watches the events of the Anglo-American occupation to Iraq that happened in 2003, and the violent processes the Iraqis witnessed till now. There is no other

means for Zubaida to keep in touch with her homeland except the television screen. The title of the novel is a symbolic one; it connects Zubaida to Iraq and provides her memories and thoughts. When she saw the Iraqi suffering the escalating violence, she recalls the beautiful memories of her childhood and adolescence. Iraq is the place she grows in, Zubaida has deep roots in Iraq, but what obliged her to leave her country is out of control. As she is watching the television, Zubaida remembers the reasons that derive her to exile, the deceased pilot lover, the scattered family members, the entanglement of her brother, and the death of her grandmother. She recalls the traumatic history of Iraq of war, invasions displacement and sanctions. Her memory touches the beautiful and the horrific past. Zubaida waves in the struggle of her life in exile and her guilt at leaving her sole homeland because of her inability to adopt Germany as a home.

Both of the female characters, Nkem and Zubaida, attempt to live the happiness of other hybrids. They try to live the empowerment the other hybrids talk about. Nkem “goes to a Pilates class twice a week in Philadelphia with her neighbor, she bakes cookies for her children’s classes and hers are always the favorites; she expected banks to have drive-ins. America has grown on her, snaked its roots under her skin.” But she remains “miss home ... her friends, the cadence of Igbo and Yoruba and Pidgin English spoken under her. And when the snow covers the yellow fire hydrant on the streets, she misses the Logos sun that glares down even when it rains”(Ibid:37).

Nkem’s attempt to be American is failed, as she imitates the Americans by their shape, language and life style. But Africa lives in her spirituality, she misses her homeland, the conventions, traditions, her lovely people, friends and the place she grows up in. she is shattered between the two places. Nigeria lives in her memories, thus she is imprisoned in her memory.

Zubaida , on the other hand, attempts to convince the new life Germany offers her by leaving her cold apartment. She leaves the “dreary, alien, lifeless” wall of her apartment. She goes to the coffee shop pretending to wait someone to arrive. When Zubaida enters the coffee shop, she remains looking on the ‘familiar’, then she chooses to sit in the “empty and secluded place”.(Zubaida’s Window:89). She also tries to make conversations with her neighbor, but that German woman always comments on the Iraqi-Iran war, that affects Zubaida’s sensitivity.

Zubaida fails to find the home she dreams in Germany. Germany for her is a cold and lifeless place; she cannot find herself with a place without memories and history. Thus, she finds herself “in one half of a cold city,

whose other half was encircled by electrified wire and iron helmets, planted by an iron regime in the middle of the dynamic West”(Ibid:10). Though Zubaida dwelt there for three decades, she is still living alienation and isolation from the new culture, though Germany is a safe place, representing the dream of most Iraqis, yet Zubaida stays passive to indulge the life she chooses to live voluntary.

After Nkem’s and Zubaida’s failure to cope with the new home , they decide to travel to their homeland (imaginary). Nkem confirms her situation in the diaspora by imitating a Nigerian woman having an affair with her husband in Nigeria, the woman who takes her place in bed. Nkem cuts her hair to be just like her. She moves to Lagos, her homeland by cutting her hair, but this imaginary journey is failed , she is still in America physically. She attempts to be like her husband’s girlfriend, just to put herself back next to him in their bed.

_ “ why did you cut your hair?” Obiora asks.

_ “ Don’t you like it?”

_ “ I loved your long hair.”

_ “ you don’t like short hair?”

_ “ Why did you cut it ?... I like your long hair better. You should grow it back”.(Imitation: 40).

Here, Nkem tries to put herself physically in both Philadelphia and Lagos. She wants to be in both of the places, in the same beds. She wants to occupy both places through her imitating her husband’s girlfriend. Therefore, Nkem does not feel comfort as a hybrid, she suffers the dual place and identity. Her attempt to be Nigerian is failed, she is a Nigerian in America imitates another Nigerian.

Zubaida imagines her journey to Iraq, but as she imagines her return, she remembers the horror, violence and the tensioned political climate there. She turns her journey to Jordon, as it is so close to Iraq. She chooses to stay in the Middle East, in Egypt for example, but she will find the Masters graduate is the same person who sells tea in plastic cups, thus she worries about her education that will not find a light in the Middle East. If she returns to Iraq, she will face those weeping women who lost their husbands and lovers in the daily explosions. Moreover, the freedom that she will never find, the safety, security, equality, peace, wealth and honor of the human itself. Zubaida is worried about her return to live in the homeland she dreams and thinks about all the time, the homeland that possesses her memories in Germany, that stole her life in her new home Germany. Zubaisa assumes to live in Jordon or Lebanon at least to see “Arab moon” (Zubaida’s Window:91), but her suitcase remains empty, she is paralyzed to step to her

journey, because she is aware that she cannot live anywhere away from Iraq, but not this current Iraq, the safe and great Iraq, as most of us (Iraqis) like to call it. As her imaginary journey reached its end, Qazwini states that:

from the stories of other travelers, Zubaida knows the routes, the places for drinking tea with them in the squares and gardens, she has travelled from her balcony, and she has loved the journey. She weaves a lovely, golden shawl from these stories and wears it over her black coat. She wraps herself in the shawl, creating a refuge from cold, estranged, long nights (Ibid: 96-97).

The futility of Zubaida's return and "living in a present that offers her absolutely nothing" (Ibid : 7), derive her to confess that her sole cure is to live in memories.

The last scene of the two texts, **Imitation** and **Zubaida's Window**, reveals the futility of returning back to Nkem's and Zubaida's homeland. Obiora brings Nkem an original mask, Nkem feels excited, since this mask is the rope connected her to Nigeria, that means she will stop being an individual with two personalities, she chooses to return back to Nigeria. But can Nkem release herself from that imitation to go back originally? Some strange and difficult feeling obsess her mind. Therefore, she asked the wife of a "Big Man" :

But how can I live in Nigeria again? she said. When you've been here so long, you're not the same, you're not like the people there. How can my children blend in? And Nkem, although she disliked the woman's severely shaved eyebrows, had understood. (Imitation: 29)

One can notice that Nkem is, as the situation of Zubaida, a afraid of returning back again to the homeland she dreams in. She has double consciousness, she cannot live in exile with dual identities, at the same time she is afraid if her return which will be difficult to her and her children. They cannot indulge and mix with their past culture, because they are changed, they used to live different life of the previous one. She will be obliged to wear the mask again, the mask of imitation, to hide her past of hybridity to hid those anxieties come with their hybridity.

Though Zubaida chooses to leave Iraq voluntary, she does not enjoy the privileges her new location offers. Her heart cannot cope with the happiness; her lovely persons vanish in the grief. She finds futility in her return, she is used to live safe days in exile. When the novel reached its end, Zubaida “feels a new serenity” (Zubaida’s Window:121) in the approaching death.

Conclusion

It is risky to literary theories to be inapplicable to lived experiences, Bhabha’s theory of hybridity cannot be applied on all the hybrids. Bhabha seems to concentrate on the mode of hybridity that provide hybridity with agency and empowerment by mixing the past culture of colonized to the new one of the colonizer. His approach to generate his viewpoint and application to hybridity is

subject to sever criticism of the neo- Marxist critics. Through the texts of Adichie and Qazwini, hybridity provides its limitation to lived experiences and the neglecting of the political and economic aspects in their postcolonial reading of the postcolonial texts in postcolonial situations. In order to show the accuracy of hybridity theory, Adichie and Qazwini provide two females black and white, of different cultures, religions, languages, historical background, economy, and society. Their female characters are ungrounded, false, sad and anxious in their inability to be hybrids like others. Nkem failed to accept the cultural hegemony, she is still trapped between the two cultures. She proves her failure to be American or even to return to Nigeria by her imaginary journey, Nigeria will remain in her memories. Qazwini’s protagonist Zubaida exposed a sense of grief inherent in the departure of Iraq. She couldn’t benefit from the new culture, her memories and the national project prohibit her from achieving the reconciliation between the past memories and the hope to build her future in her new home Germany. Even her imaginary journey be impossible to her homeland Iraq. Iraq and Nigeria will stay in the memories and minds of those women as a cure to their new hybrid life.

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