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Postcolonial Echoes: Hybridity and Cultural Conflict in Adichie's Fiction

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Abstract

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's fiction offers a richly textured engagement with postcolonial identity, characterized by cultural hybridity, historical recall and socio-political tension. This paper considers how Adichie figures hybridity and cultural struggle through the following works chosen Half of a Yellow Sun, Americanah and The Thing Around Your Neck to unmask the psychological and social dissonance faced by characters divided between traditional Nigerian values and Western modernity. Drawing on postcolonial theory, particularly the theories of Homi Bhabha and Edward Said, this work identifies how Adichie interrogates the complexity of national and individual identity in the aftermath of colonialism. While previous scholarship has predominantly criticized Adichie's feminist subjectivities and historical changes, a perceived lacuna relates to focused comparative analyses of cultural hybridity becoming compounded by internalized conflict as well as diasporic consciousness across her novelistic corpus. This paper accomplishes this lack by analyzing how Adichie's protagonists come to internalize empowering yet distressing hybrid subjectivities. The study concludes that Adichie's novels document not only cultural dislocation but also gesture toward the possibility of a reconciled identity outside binaristic cultural paradigms. Future studies could investigate further how these ideas unfold in newer African literature or how Adichie's later works engage with digital culture and trans-nationalism as emergent layers of postcolonial experience.

Keywords: Postcolonial, Cultural, Hybridity, Adichie, Conflict.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Brief introduction to Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie as a literary figure:

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a celebrated Nigerian author whose works have made a deep impact on contemporary literature. She was born on September 15, 1977, in Enugu, Nigeria. She has become an internationally recognized novelist, short story writer and essayist who wrote about identity, feminism and post-colonialism. Some of her contributions include *Purple Hibiscus* in 2003 (Adichie, 2017), *Half of a Yellow Sun* in 2006 (Saiel, Mohd Farhan. 2023), and *Americanah* in 2013 (Mahmoud, Yasmine Nabil. 2023). Adichie's work is famous for its depth and realism, offering thoughtful perspectives into Nigerian culture and the complexities of the human condition. Her influence extends beyond literature; her TED Talk, *The Danger of a Single Story*, was watched around the world and discusses the importance of multiple narratives in understanding cultures (Luebering, J.E. 2025).

1.2. Context: postcolonial Nigeria, civil war, diaspora:

When it gained independence from British rule in 1960, Nigeria experienced enormous challenges in nation-building leading to the eruption of the Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970). The war, also referred to as the Biafran War, was a result of chronic ethnic disputes and political instability that escalated into an attempt at independence by the nation's southeast as the Republic of Biafra. The war had devastating consequences, with an estimated one million civilian dead, mostly due to starvation and illness (Orukpe, Williams. 2020). In the aftermath of conflict, Nigeria embarked on a multi-pronged process of reconstruction and reconciliation, battling the lingering effects of colonialism and domestic conflict. This was also characterized by massive migration patterns, both domestically and internationally, as people and communities sought stability and opportunity in the face of post-war hardship (Tarantola, Daniel. 2018).

1.3. Definitions of key terms (e.g., hybridity, cultural conflict):

In postcolonial studies, understanding of key concepts like hybridity and cultural conflict is crucial so that one has an in-depth understanding of identity complexities and interactions in cultures.

Hybridity:

Homi K. Bhabha, one of the first and most prominent proponents of postcolonial theory, theorizes about hybridity as creating new cultures as a result of the meeting of colonizer and colonized cultures (Homi K. Bhabha. 2025). This practice denies the existence of pure or essential cultures by attesting that cultural identity is dynamic and changeable (Raine, Sophie. 2024). Bhabha's theory enunciates the concept of the "Third Space," a space-between where hybrid identities are created and allow negotiation and remapping of cultural meanings (Mohammed, Ismael Mousa. 2022).

Cultural Conflict:

Cultural conflict occurs when a person or group of people from various cultures come into contact with non-compatible values, practices, or beliefs that result in misunderstanding or tension. They are prevalent in multicultural societies whose various cultural norms meet and bear a possibility of social friction or discord.

1.4. Purpose of the Paper:

The objective of the paper is to critically examine constructions of hybridity and cultural tension in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's major texts *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *Americanah* and *The Thing Around Your Neck*. Employing a postcolonial framework, the paper examines how Adichie frames the lived experience of multi-cultural subjects in local contexts as well as in diasporic contexts. This criticism aims to ascertain how such characters reflect the tensions and

possibilities of hybrid identity within the broader framework of postcolonial Nigerian society and transnational migration.

1.5. Research Gap and Rationale:

While there has been existing scholarship on themes of identity and migration in Adichie's writings, there is still a necessity for close readings that particularly focus on the subtle expressions of cultural hybridity and the ensuing identity crises of her characters. Current research has started examining these dimensions; for example, studies have shown that migrants tend to face abusive treatment because of cultural hybridity and thus more research is needed to investigate how these experiences contribute to the formation of individual identity (Alam and Halim, 2022). This essay aims to bridge this gap by offering a critical analysis of how Adichie's fictions contain the tensions and shifts inherent in cultural hybridity, thus shedding light on the wider postcolonial discourse of identity and belonging (Shamshad, Sarah, and Asad Ali Hashmi. 2022).

1.6. Thesis Statement:

This essay argues, drawing on Homi K. Bhabha's hybridity theory (1994), that Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* is a metaphor for Ifemelu's transcultural identity crisis as an epitome of the more universal problems of those with double cultural lives. Adichie's novel shows that cultural hybridity, while it promises enlarged vision, also results in complex identity negotiations and conflicts, reflecting the complicated nature of postcolonial identity construction.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Explanation of key postcolonial concepts:

In the study of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novels, specifically *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *Americanah*, and *The Thing Around Your Neck*, a number of central postcolonial ideas offer a critical lens. These are Homi K. Bhabha's hybridity theory, Edward Said's othering and Orientalism, and diaspora and identity politics dynamics.

Hybridity (Homi K. Bhabha):

Homi K. Bhabha advances the concept of hybridity as the way that new cultural forms are created as a result of the encounter of colonizer and colonized. It is an operation that overturns ideas of pure or essential cultures because it demonstrates mobility and flow within cultural identity. Bhabha's "Third Space" hypothesis is a point of transition between identities in which hybrid identities are formed so that meanings can be negotiated and reproduced at a cultural level. This is a site of resistance and transformation where marginalized voices can resist dominant narratives.

Othering and Orientalism (Edward Said):

Edward Said's theory of Orientalism challenges the Western representation of Eastern cultures as exotic, primitive and uncivilized. Othering is a process used to legitimize colonial rule by creating a hierarchical opposition between the civilized West and the backward East. According to Said, representations such as these are not only cultural but political as well, sustaining power relations that marginalize the non-Western world (Said, Edward. 2003).

Diaspora and Identity Politics:

Experiences of diaspora entail management of multiple cultures of identity and more often result in intricate bargaining around selfness. Diaspora citizens can have issues with identifying how their cultural identities fit the expected cultural habits in their places of residence and ending up as strangers or as mixtures of these two cultural identity worlds. Identity politics under this scenario, then, relates to how persons or groups manage asserting their culture due to the reasons of being alienated or merged. This tension is at the heart of the lived experiences of characters in Adichie's fiction, who frequently struggle with issues of belonging and cultural authenticity (Dhar, Anushka, and Nagalaxmi M. Raman. 2024).

3. TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

3.1 Half of a Yellow Sun:

War as Cultural Fracture:

In *Americanah*, the heroine Ifemelu's travel from Nigeria to America and return exemplifies the complexity of hybrid identity and cultural negotiation. Her experiences embody Bhabha's theory of the Third Space, as she moves between Nigerian and American cultures. Likewise, *Half of a Yellow Sun* (Adichie, 2006) depicts the effects of the Biafran War on individual and national identities, emphasizing the process of othering and the struggle for self-definition. The short stories in *The Thing Around Your Neck* also continue to explore diaspora and identity politics themes, presenting characters who struggle with cultural dislocation and the difficulties of preserving their heritage in alien environments.

Hybridity in Olanna and Richard:

Olanna, though formally educated in London, is firmly connected to her Igbo identity and she is thus a cultural hybrid. Her existence is a negotiation between Western and native values, placing her in Bhabha's Third Space. Richard, the British author sympathetic to Biafra, is a reverse hybridism a foreigner who identifies with a colonized people. But his position is full of contradictions because he is still a product of colonial privilege even when he denounces it.

Nationhood and Identity:

The novel subverts the idea of Nigerian nationhood as a fragile, colonial inheritance. Adichie interrogates whether it is possible to have a genuine national identity in a state fragmented by ethnicity and war. With shifting allegiances of characters, she illustrates how nationalism is fabricated and its typically violent aftermath.

3.2 *Americanah*:

Ifemelu's Migration and Blog:

Americanah (Adichie, 2013) is focused on Ifemelu's immigration to America and her return to Nigeria. Her blog, *The Non-American Black*, is a platform for articulating her changing race and identity thinking in America. The blog entries enable her to be in a hybrid space, both witnessing and being part of American culture. Writing is a form of taking back narrative power during cultural displacement.

Blackness as a Western Construct:

Adichie reverses racial identity by showing that it is only when Ifemelu reaches the U.S. that she becomes Black as Nigeria does not know this identity and its ethnic identity is even more foregrounded. This verifies Said's theory of othering through which identities are conferred from the outside and forced on individuals. Ifemelu's case show that race, especially Blackness, is not a fixed identity but a socio-political one and that it is constructed by Western narratives of oppression.

Return and Estrangement:

Ifemelu's return to Nigeria is characterized by cultural dislocation. She is home, yet she is in a liminal space: not quite American, but no longer quite Nigerian. Her alienation is symptomatic of the diasporic condition and reinforces Bhabha's concept of hybridity as both productive and disorienting.

3.3 *The Thing Around Your Neck*:

Short Stories on Displacement and Cultural Conflict:

The stories in *The Thing Around Your Neck* (Adichie, 2009) contain Nigerians in the diaspora grappling with displacement. In *Imitation*, a U.S. left wife grieving for her abandoned spouse decries the emptiness of assimilation. In *The Arrangers of Marriage*, cultural misunderstanding and language hegemony outline postcolonial power dynamics.

Gendered Experiences of Hybridity:

Adichie highlights that women's hybridity is different, frequently achieved through social expectation and emotional labor. Women characters have to endure patriarchy in addition to cultural conflict, thus their hybridity is doubly burdensome. The gendered perspective provides richness to postcolonial identity discourse.

Liminal Identities:

Characters throughout the collection inhabit liminal spaces between past and present, homeland and host nation. Their identities are not fixed or binary but transitional and contingent. This is to reinforce the postcolonial rejection of essentialism and to rejoice in fluidity of cultural belonging.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1. Cross-Textual Connections:

The writing of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie exhibits a relentless and committed effort to upset rigid dualities, explore the psychological and emotional life of hybridity and write about identity as process rather than product. In setting her most important work *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *Americanah* and *The Thing Around Your Neck* alongside each other, we can perceive a deeply nuanced preoccupation with postcolonial issues that overflow each contained narrative.

4.2. Adichie's Complication of Binaries: Home/Abroad, Tradition/Modernity:

In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *Americanah* and *The Thing Around Your Neck*, Adichie positively deconstructs such oppositions as home/abroad and tradition/modernity. Instead of viewing them as unproblematic dichotomies, her characters inhabit spaces-in-between where borders are porous and frequently mythical. In *Americanah*, Ifemelu's life as a Nigerian in the United States disrupts the idea of abroad as a place of individual freedom or superiority. Her ultimate disillusionment and return home undercut the mythic story of the diaspora as escape or salvation. But home itself is now no longer a site of unproblematic belonging, as with her cultural dislocation. In the same way, in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Olanna and Odenigbo, being intellectually superior and Western-educated, are nonetheless deeply involved in local customs. However, the war unsettles both tradition and modern ideals, dissolving the binary. The Biafran national project fails not because tradition fails or modernity does not work but because of the unresolved tension between them. Adichie similarly employs short fiction like *Cell One* or *The Arrangers of Marriage* to demonstrate how Western modernity might be alienating, especially if it requires erasing one's cultural heritage. These stories demonstrate that neither modernity nor tradition provides a solid sense of self; rather, characters are subject to a fluid negotiation between them.

4.3. Psychological and Emotional Layers of Hybridity:

Whereas hybridity has usually been theorized in sociopolitical or cultural terms, Adichie imbues it with a profoundly personal, affective quality. Her characters wrestle with guilt, disorientation and self-alienation. Ifemelu's identity crisis is brought inside her with depression, romantic disconnection and social isolation while in America, implying that hybridity comes with a psychological cost. Her challenges are symptomatic of what postcolonial theorists call the psychic costs of displacement. In *The Thing Around Your Neck*, such stories as *The Shivering* and *The Thing Around Your Neck* present characters psychically immobilized by estrangement. They lose their linguistic fluency, feel emotionally detached from their families and become lonely proving hybridity is not a position of privilege but a position of emotional dismemberment.

4.4. Identity as Negotiation, Not Destination:

The through line in Adichie's writing is that identity is not a destination but a fluid process shaped by movement, memory and context. Ifemelu's identity is in perpetual formation never really Nigerian, never really American. Her blog, which at first is a venue of openness and expression, later becomes too small to hold her multifaceted reality. Similarly, Richard in *Half*

of a Yellow Sun is perpetually an outsider despite being emotionally invested in the cause of Biafra. The Thing Around Your Neck characters too are suspended between cultural extremes and never quite a part of either. This accord with Bhabha's assertion that postcolonial identity is formed in the Third Space a negotiator and ambivalent space and not the essentialist closure. Adichie's characters eschew tidy narratives of belonging, themselves being temporal, contradictory and in process.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1. Recap of Findings:

This research has examined Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's fiction from the perspective of postcolonial theory, with an emphasis on the repeated themes of hybridity, cultural tension and identity negotiation. Throughout *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *Americanah* and *The Thing Around Your Neck*, Adichie deconstructs reductive binaries like home/abroad, tradition/modernity and self/other. Through characters like Ifemelu, Olanna and Richard, she evokes the psychological and social complexity of navigating converging cultural identifications. Her vivid account of diasporic dislocation, war trauma and racial identity gives readers a vibrant sense of what it is to live in the borders and crossroads of multiple worlds.

5.2. Restating the Importance of Hybridity in Adichie's Work:

Hybridity is a cornerstone in Adichie's literary vision. Drawing on Homi Bhabha's theory of the Third Space, her narratives position the in-between at the center as a site of both conflict and creativity. Characters rarely arrive at absolute conclusions about their identities; instead, they inhabit fluid and dynamic spaces shaped by personal history, migration, language and sociopolitical forces. Adichie maintains that hybridity is not merely a blend of cultural items, but an emotional, political and epistemological process that subverts essentialist conceptions of selfhood.

5.3. Implications for Postcolonial Literary Studies:

Adichie's work is central to postcolonial literary scholarship because it brings its concern into the 21st-century global sphere. Her work pushes against the limitations of inherited postcolonial paradigms by being attentive to new modes of displacement, such as digital migration, global Blackness and neoliberal nationalism. In addition, her interest in female subjectivity provides a feminist intervention within the debate on hybridity, expanding its concern for the affective and gendered aspects of cultural negotiation. Adichie also critically grapples with the afterlives of colonial violence symbolic and historical and refuses nostalgic or reductive visions of authentic culture. Her works are thoroughly grounded in Nigerian history but have global resonance, making them key texts for remapping post-coloniality in the era of globalization.

5.4. Final Reflection on Cultural Identity in a Globalized World:

In a more migratory and interconnected world, Adichie's fiction challenges us to rethink cultural identity as an open-ended process formed by movement, memory and multiplicity rather than determined by geography or ethnicity. Her characters teach us that identity is less about reaching a single truth than about learning to inhabit complexity, contradiction and transformation. Through giving value and precision to emotional and psychological cartographies of hybridity, Adichie offers us an actual picture of cultural identity not one which needs to be thinned by plurality but enhanced. Her work coerces readers, scholars and societies to accept the pain of humans and the potency of difference.

6. FUTURE RESEARCH SCOPE

6.1. Exploration of Adichie's Newer Works and Public Writings:

In addition to her core fiction work, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's subsequent writing her public speeches, essays and the memoir *Notes on Grief* (2021) continues to complicate and enrich her exploration of identity, culture and belonging. In *Notes on Grief*, Adichie turns

inward, narrating a transnational grieving process that brings together Nigerian tradition and Western manifestations of loss. This shows how individual grief is a place where cultural expectations and global citizenship are negotiated. Her popular TED Talks *The Danger of a Single Story* (2009) and *We Should All Be Feminists* (2012) function as sites of discourse in which Adichie expands upon her fictional preoccupations with engaging, transnational appeal. Both widely quoted in academic and popular discourse, the talks prioritize the politics of narrative representation and gender in postcolonial contexts. As postcolonial studies expands to encompass global media and discourse studies, Adichie's both literary and public intellectual status represents fertile ground upon which to trace how postcolonial identity is performed, mediated and disputed outside of mainstream literary forms.

6.2. Comparison with Other Contemporary African Writers:

Adichie's theme of hybridity, migration and postcolonial identity overlap with the themes of other African writers such as Teju Cole and NoViolet Bulawayo. Teju Cole's *Open City* (2011) similarly explores urban alienation, transnational memory and diasporic identity dislocation. His introspective narrative voice and philosophical tone echo Adichie's exploration of psychological interiority, but his male voice and focus on cosmopolitan disaffection provide a useful counterpoint to Adichie's gendered portrayals. NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2013) takes a bleak child's-eye perspective of poverty and displacement, as Darling swings between Zimbabwe and America. At the same time, like Adichie, Bulawayo condemns the myth of the West as a theater of unlimited freedom while highlighting the disorientation and loss caused by migration. Both authors center women protagonists struggling with cultural disintegration and the yearning for embeddedness, albeit Bulawayo frequently taking on a satirical tone. These inter-textual contrasts serve to place Adichie in a larger movement of African writers of the transnational period, all of whom engage the new landscape of identity in postcolonial and post-national environments.

6.3. The Intersection of Digital Identity and Post-colonialism:

Adichie's *Americanah* is likely one of the first African novels to openly incorporate digital culture specifically, through Ifemelu's race blog in America. This online environment is used as a site for diasporic voice, performative identity and resistance. Through doing so, Adichie is already prefiguring increased scholarly interest in digital post-colonialism, a field that investigates how the internet reshapes cultural identities, particularly for diasporans. The blog's hybrid identity is both polished and fractured resembling the status of diaspora itself. Later research can study how Adichie's online presence imitates broader cultural phenomena in African digital literature such as Instagram verse, online diary keeping and poetry on YouTube.

6.4. Broader Studies on African Diaspora in Literature:

Adichie's work is part of a larger diasporic literary trajectory which replots the lives of the African diaspora, particularly its second generation grappling with the complexities of racialization, cultural memory and double belonging. Comparison with diasporic Caribbean, South Asian or Arab authors might provide fertile cross-regional insights.. Issues of code-switching, cultural liminality and double consciousness are common to these literatures, although articulated through distinct cultural and linguistic traditions. Additionally, as postcolonial analysis continues to cross-talk with research areas like the study of migrations, gender and critical race theory, Adichie's works offer a strong basis upon which intersectional analysis can engage placing her not only as a Nigerian or African author but as a global literary voice reframing the international understanding of identity.

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