

Interculturalism And Integration In Jhumpa Lahiri's The Lowland And Ahmed Saadawi's Frankenstein In Baghdad

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ABSTRACT:

This research paper shows how the theme of cultural merging is represented in the two selected novels: Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland* and Ahmed Saadawi's *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, as formed at the crossroad of various cultures and the stories of their characters. The study, through a postcolonial theoretical framework, analyzes how hybridity, diaspora, and cultural identity come together to create a complex cultural interface between the individuals in the works under investigation. In *The Lowland*, Lahiri unfolds the immigrant experience in the lives of Subhash and Gauri, punctuating the narrative with tensions and reconciliations that their Indian and American cultural influences beget. It shows how cultural hybridity forms their identities and relationships, leading to answers in the quest for belonging, not without challenges of displacement. In *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, Saadawi paints a grim post-invasion Baghdad, wherein traditional and modern elements compose a discordant symphony amidst the chaotic operations of war. Making the Whatsitsname, composed of body parts from victims of bombings and killings, is a literal manifestation of the fragmented and hybrid identity that emerges in this volatile context. The novel's thematic expression of fragmentation, survival, and cultural clash is a befitting comment on the social and political landscape of contemporary Iraq. Further, the paper reflects on what effect these narratives might have on the reader's perception of cultural hybridity and the protagonist's identity, leading to the development of empathy and a more profound understanding of the challenges of living in a multicultural world. Moreover, this study identifies how much significant are these novels for postcolonial and contemporary literature, they do not only contribute but also propel discourse on cultural interactions and identity formation.

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Introduce the Topic

The interplay between Interculturalism and integration forms a critical axis for examining contemporary literature, notably in the works of Jhumpa Lahiri and Ahmed Saadawi. This paper looks at the representation of cultural hybridity in Lahiri's *The Lowland* and Saadawi's *Frankenstein in Baghdad*. A postcolonial investigation of these novels reveals profound perceptions about identity formation, the diasporic experience, and the effects of cultural convergence. Understanding cultural hybridity can only be achieved by unpacking the challenges and opportunities that arise at the juncture of two different cultural spheres. The value of this study lies in its contribution to illuminating the complications of integration and

identity within globalization and postcolonial discourse—topics of deep resonance in today's multicultural world.

Background Information

In existing literature, Lahiri is often celebrated for her nuanced portrayal of immigrant experiences marked by tension between tradition and modernity, while Saadawi is acclaimed for darkly satirical depictions of post-invasion Baghdad, weaving realism with surrealism to critique social and political upheavals. Though both authors create their fictional universes in different settings and with various styles, the themes of belonging, displacement, and cultural hybridity are common to both. Whereas most scholarship has engaged with these texts individually, comparative works that locate thematic commonalities remain scarce.

State the Research Problem

This paper, in this respect, tries to fill the existing void by investigating how the trope of cultural intersections informs narratives and character construction in these novels. More precisely, it seeks to explore how hybridity and integration influence the process of identity building and contribute to the broader discussion on cultural resilience and adaptability.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study is to discuss how cultural hybridity and integration are represented in *The Lowland* and *Frankenstein in Baghdad*. This paper compares both works in an attempt to shed light on how different contexts and narrative strategies emphasize the transformative power of cultural fusion.

Scope of the Study

The scope of this paper is confined to the comparative analysis of the main characters of the two novels and their most relevant themes. Such an approach juxtaposes the immigration struggle in *The Lowland* with postwar Baghdad's fragmented realities in *Frankenstein in Baghdad*. This paper, therefore, explores the dynamic interaction between cultural influences in shaping individual and collective identities.

Research Questions

The following are the major research questions to be answered in this work:

1. How do Lahiri and Saadawi present cultural hybridity and integration in their works?
2. What implication does this have for the explanation of identity in a postcolonial context?
3. How do the portrayals of the struggles faced by the characters reflect broader societal challenges?

Thesis Statement

This paper argues that both *The Lowland* and *Frankenstein in Baghdad* reflect the transformative power of cultural hybridity in negotiating identity crises, albeit from different narrative and contextual perspectives.

Preview of Structure

The paper will first provide a theoretical overview of postcolonialism and the concept of cultural hybridity; it will then proceed to a detailed analysis of the two novels. The discussion section synthesizes the findings to draw parallels and contrasts, leading to the broader implications of such works in contemporary literature and cultural studies.

Literary Context and Theoretical Framework of Postcolonial Theory

Colonialism is the establishment of a colony through the capture of new territory and the moving into it of a significant part of the population whose home base country. Colonies, from ancient times, have been created on the land and the high seas, usually around powerful centers. The earliest examples of strong colonial states comprise the Assyrians, Greeks, and Phoenicians. The scope and nature of the colonies have evolved. In the fifteenth century they brought geographic discoveries that added to a new dimension of colonial expansion. In particular, the Portuguese and Spanish explorers invented new routes to the spice and precious metal mines in Asia, which led to the discovery of new continents, oceans, and locations. The era underwent an enriched continent with European culture, creating new ideas such as mercantilism and colonialism, which later led to the formation of politics. The maritime states started to invade the underdeveloped state, which later would lead to the political lifestyle by sailing across the oceans and carrying back the wealth back home, and this was called colonialism. Colonialism can be defined as the domination and control over another country's assets or lands. It aims to establish political sovereignty and exploit the resources of the colonized territory (Loomba, 2015).

Colonialism reached its apogee in the context of the Industrial Revolution, a driver for new capitals in search of raw materials and the other way around refined colonial policies (C. Nwankwo, 2012). This was also an era of capitalism, which intended to make maximum profits by investing a limited amount of capital. Capitalism had been extended globally. This came into the picture of colonialism by exploiting the natural resources. As a result, colonialism readapted into a new form of colonialism, which brought imperialism. Imperialism is the last stage of capitalism. "Capitalism is the stage that shows how the developed nations exploit the less developed countries" (Brewer, 2001, p. 88). According to İpkilçi (2017), "imperialism takes away from colonialism's fullness and clarity regarding colonial dominance, for it is defined as the apex of colonialism, fulfilling and maintaining the industrial and capital-based expansion" (p. 1531).

Colonialism came about when geographical discoveries were being made and later morphed into imperialism. However, towards the end of World War II, the superpowers were obligated to let go of their colonies. With the dying of this, a new world order emerged, commonly referred to as the postcolonial era. This era was characterized by continued practices of colonialism that had been done in public by the superpowers, but this time in a covert manner. Even the condition reaping in the post-colonial has been framed by cultural theorist Stuart Hall:

Postcolonial is not the end of colonization. It is after a certain kind of colonialism, after a certain moment of high imperialism and colonial occupation in the wake of it, in the shadow of it, inflected by it. It is what it is because something else has happened before, but it is also something new (Hodge, 2005, p. 377)

In brief, colonialism has always been based upon the plunder of the resources of weaker regions. This study deconstructs critical building blocks that define postcolonialism today. The introduction will have the research objectives and postcolonialism developmental pathways, whereas the second section will contain the overall analysis of vital postcolonial concepts.

“The concept of 'post' colonialism dated from the late 1970s and later emerged within a realm so that it became one of the political ideologies instead of a mere temporality term, most of all in relation to British imperialism” (Overbey 2012, p. 145). Therefore, while postcolonialism includes philosophical, sociological, psychological, and literary theories in a manner that is a 'critique' of the legacy of colonialism, the phenomenon has not vanished but transformed itself. The end of the imperial empires post-World War I led to a wave of decolonization, but still, colonialism has continued to exist through neocolonialism. The control of society has been exerted less through the political structure or military power and more through globalization, technology, and capitalism.

Currently, postcolonialism is characterized and focused on intellectual resistance to colonialism, neocolonialism, and imperialism and focused mainly on the literature emanating from the former colonial powers like England, France, and Spain. This theory takes the view that the colonized peoples have anxieties concerning what lies ahead for them and for their colonizers, which are experiences of social malaises, one being language and ethnic differences (personhighered, 2022). It argues for universal happiness for all the members of society, thus erasing the distinction between the West and the rest (Young, 2003, p. 17). The postcolonialism theory covers all the philosophies that take on board Marxism and Feminism.

The two main dimensions of postcolonialism in promoting global equality are first discursive, stemming from the works of Frantz Fanon, Michel Foucault, and Edward Said. “The East-West divide finds its best representation in Edward Said's *Orientalism*, (Turanlı, 2017, p. 101). Frantz Fanon made immense contributions to the binding of colonialism with the production of knowledge, where he more or less frames the issue to revolve around the colony in this context (Loomba, 2015). Another important figure in the philosophical development of theory is Michel Foucault. The other dimension is articulated in the work of Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, which focuses on postcolonial works and their cultural context” (Ashcroft, 2002, p. 3).

In sum, postcolonialism stands absolutely in line with the history of colonialism, analyzing its impact on both the colonized and the colonizer. It looks into the interaction of power, economy, politics, religion, and culture within the framework of colonial hegemony. Recognition and understanding of colonial history are essential for research and application in postcolonial theory.

Diaspora means scattering or displacement of people who were forced to let go of their native lands and traditions. The 1970s and 1980s gave the term a different meaning: hybrid and multi-identity for the Africans dragged by force to the land of America. Much struggle and frustration among the people was conveyed during this period. Over time, the term came to cover a broader, more affirmative description of varying migrant movements. Thus, as a means of spread and deconcentration, diasporic people epitomize a dual contradiction of being pluralistic and being spread out. In the words of Robert Fossaert, diaspora may be thought of as a constellation of transnational regions of stateless groups (lehigh, 2022).

Gabriel Sheffer says that diaspora is more than consolidation and represents a bond to the motherland; it involves an ethnic identity, origin, and trans-national solid relations. According to the political scientist William Safran, there are five essential constituents for the trait of diaspora, and these are: a geographic disconnection from the motherland, collective memory of the native land, interest in the place of origin, a dream to return, and discontent with the place of the moment's residence (Helly, 2006, pp. 1-32).

The study of Diaspora is multidisciplinary, shaped by the history of slavery, colonization, and indentured labor and the economic conditions and livelihoods of the displaced people. The experiences of their displacements, their ideologies of home and nation, and their cultural and multicultural expressions are also included in it. (Bhat, 2015, p. 7). The doctrine of Hybridity is one of the most essential concepts employed in the postcolonial discourse regarding cross-cultural transit. Originally a rich term from the domain of biological science, it made its way into linguistics and race theory in the nineteenth century. In postcolonial theory, hybridity was first introduced by critical theorist Homi Bhabha to discuss intercultural forms that originate from linguistic, political, or ethnic mixings—fusions—challenging previous orders (Mambrol, 2017).

Diaspora refers to the dispersion of people from their original homeland to multiple destinations, often accompanied by a longing for return and a sense of displacement (Bressler, 2003). This idea points out the experiences of the migrant communities as they hold on to their cultural roots while simultaneously adapting to their new environment. Avtar Brah refers to the diaspora as a “multi-locality institution through webs of relations instead of a single place” (Brah, 1996, p. 125).

Explanation of *Frankenstein in Baghdad* as an Issue of Diaspora is through the fragmented lives of the characters living in a town ravaged by a war. The ever-present violence and consequent dislocation produce a diasporic condition inside Baghdad as well. All the characters in Saadawi display the desire for rootedness and attachment to a unified cultural identity. This parallels the general experience of diaspora for Iraqi people displaced by conflict.

According to postcolonial theorists, hybridity results from the give-and-take of cultures between the colonizer and the colonized. There are seven forms of hybridity. Racial hybridity is a concept of a blending of different races. It was a concept that was shaped by the interactions of colonial and colonized. At the same time, literary hybridity is a body of work referred to as post-colonial literature. Linguistic hybridity is the integration of the components of various languages into a single language (lehigh, 2022).

Hybridity involves the interaction process of colonial and indigenous cultures to create new mixed cultural forms (AlAsad, 2021). Therefore, hybridity is a challenge against pure and homogeneous cultures, emphasizing the fluid and dynamic nature characterizing cultural identities. Similarly, Homi K. Bhabha, another leading postcolonial critic, states that “it is the hypothesis of hybridity that troubles the narratives of domination and cultural hegemony, creating a “third space” within which new forms and meanings may be articulated” (Bhabha 1994, p. 147).

In *The Lowland*, “Lahiri investigates hybridity through recognizing two lives among the characters in Indian and American cultures” (Ramya, 2018, p. 716). Subhash himself is typical of hybridity, being an immigrant to the US and going through the struggle of his Indian legacy while assimilating himself to American life. The novel shows how hybridity influences identity and forms his relationship with his family and community.

An “In-Between” status of a diasporic or migrant individual is articulated about belonging to two worlds, one's place of origin and the other the host country. Two types of attachments can be formed. The first involves the significant ambiguity of both locations,

hence the confusion about how to identify with each (Alwan, 2022). This confusion can lead to either assimilation into the host country with a feeling of inferiority towards the origin or to a segregationist lifestyle, where the person rejects the host culture, follows his religion and culture, and develops a sense of superiority over the contemporary culture of the host country. The second type of attachment is hybrid. In this scenario, the diasporic person would be seen to maintain proper relations with his homeland and be actively involved with the host community in the search to fulfill obligations. The people feel they belong to the two cultures, which solves the hyphenated case of their existence. Homi K. Bhabha calls this the third space, that which promotes creativity and public conversation. The Third Space is an imaginative construct, an effortful creation bridging identity gaps: a new home in the mind.

An art form, Orientalism was not just a doorway for the Europeans to enter the otherwise nonexistent worlds and cultures, but, more importantly, it defined the way the Orient was imagined by the Westerners of the period (Donzé Magnier, 2017). These artistic and historical backgrounds provided the springboard for Edward Said's Orientalism theory, which placed such a story into an intense narrative of post colonial subjugation. The discussion of Orientalism returns to the surface the old idea of domination and the perpetual presence of power inequality between the West and the East.

That said, the success of Orientalism lies in an adaptable positional dominance, which offers Westerners the capability of manipulation and involvement in different relationships with the Orient while holding the position of dominance. What is essential in Orientalism is that it always represents the final "other" that an individual must project their sense of self onto to understand and ultimately exercise power over other cultures. This idea of the Orient is formed by centuries of intellectuals, artists, writers, and politicians; therefore, many Orientalist stereotypes and ideas have been easily naturalized. The relationship between the Occident and the Orient is one of power and domination, with complex layers of hegemony (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2000).

Cultural identity is considered a much-debated and highly complex concept in post-colonial theory, with the basic idea as the ways an individual or group would position themselves in relation to culture, ethnicity, and nationality. Stuart Hall argues that "cultural identity is not a fixed essence but a continuous becoming, formed and shaped under historical, social, and political contexts" (Hall, 1990, p. 225).

Both Lahiri and Saadawi recognize the fluidity of cultural identity within their novels. *The Lowland*: Gauri fights her cultural identity as she reconciles her past in India with her life in America. Her academic endeavors and personal relationships show her identity as a site of ongoing negotiation. Similarly, Hadi in *Frankenstein in Baghdad* represents the fragmented cultural identity of post-invasion Iraq. His creation, "Whatsitsname," is an allegory for the shared country's trauma and for its hybrid identity as it incorporates itself after a time of chaos.

The following study analyzes how the themes of hybridity, diaspora, and cultural identity manifest using both Lahiri's and Saadawi's narratives. In the borqnds of this framework, post-colonial theory gives a vantage point for recognizing the problematics of cultural interactions and how they affect people's individual and collective identities. In the ways of *The Lowland* and *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, this theoretical framewok speaks in post colonial theory.

Displacement, Belonging, and Identity in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*: A Cultural and Emotional Odyssey

Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland* takes place against the most essential background of events that concern history and culture _ both in India and the United States of America. The novel unfolds

over several decades, from the 1960s in Tollygunge, a neighborhood in Calcutta (now Kolkata), India, to current times in America. One needs to be aware of the historical context to understand the characters and what drives them, more so with the Naxalite movement in West Bengal.

The Naxalite movement started in 1967 in the rural hamlet of Naxalbari in West Bengal. "It was a radical communist insurrection with the goal of seizing state power and then redistributing land to people with low incomes" (Buell, 2005, p. 95). This movement, epitomized by violence and militant ideology, is a profound determinant that shapes the early life of the novel's protagonists: Subhash and Udayan Mitra. While Udayan becomes deeply involved in it, Subhash decides to pursue higher studies in the United States. "The novel sets up the cultural context about traditional life in India against the backdrop of the modern, more liberal American lifestyle" (Kumar, 2022, p. 145). Lahiri digs deep into the contrasting cultures that will drive the characters' identities or their lives. For instance, Subhash's migration to the United States is a shift from India with a collectivist cultural background to the individualistic society in the U.S. That, in itself, mirrors an assimilation battle of fitting in or holding one's culture while in a foreign land.

In *The Lowland*, the theme of displacement is immensely magnified: whether in the physical or emotional course of action taken by the characters. Two brothers in Calcutta, Subhash and Udayan, faced significant displacement. Subhash moved to Rhode Island to study, which left him lonely and detached from his family. Udayan remained in India, deeply involved in the Naxalite movement until his tragic death. The physical displacement of Subhash to the United States worsens his sense of isolation. It is reflected in the subsequent line when he feels the absence of his family and the usual surroundings ". For a year and a half, he had not seen his family. Not sat down with them, at the end of the day, to share a meal" (Lahiri, 2013, p. 50).

"In *The Lowland*, Jhumpa Lahiri neatly tags in the themes of hybridity and diaspora in that displacement, belonging, and identity are seen through the character experiences and his portrayal of the same" (Istari, 2018, p. 175). The novel beautifully illustrates the emotions and psychological struggle behind these themes, primarily through the characters of Subhash, Gauri, and Bela. Character displacement runs throughout the novel as the characters find their way across the continents and cultures. By physically displacing Subhash from India to the United States, more than a geographical shift has been cataloged; a cultural and social change is also evident.

The battle of fitting into American society and not losing his Indian identity shows how complicated the process is as he pushes through. Gauri's displacement, on the other hand, is both physical and emotional. After Udayan's death, she moves to America with Subhash, leaving behind not only her homeland but also a sense of self. Her academic pursuits in philosophy became only a coping mechanism for loss and dislocation. Another central theme the novel addresses is the theme of belonging. Belonging becomes problematic with Subhash, with his urge to belong both in America and with his heritage in India. "Subhash's struggle to make a home, to belong anywhere in a foreign land or another, underlined the hidden fact that every human being deep inside is hungry to belong somewhere and be accepted by others" (Challa, 2018, p. 225).

Belonging is a significant theme, where the characters struggle to find a place in different cultures and living environments. Gauri, the widow of Udayan, is estranged from life in America while living with Subhash. Her past continues to haunt her while simultaneously making it difficult for her to integrate entirely and feel a sense of belonging: "She never proves to be a good wife and a good mother. As a matter of fact, Gauri has also been a sufferer in her ways". Likewise, Subhash's new beginning in America is equally difficult for him, as he

consistently could not distinguish between his new place and his native land, mainly, in great cultural significance, as India Independence Day. The following day was August 15, Indian Independence. A holiday in the country, lights on government buildings, flag hoisting, and parades. An ordinary day here" (Lahiri, 2013, p. 61).

Belonging, though, is a fleeting concept for Gauri. Her failure to adapt to the American way of life and emotional distance from Subhash and Bela reveal her inner struggle and lonely life. "The character's identity in *The Lowland* seems to be fluid and mutable" (Bhattacharya, 2022, p. 50). Lahiri explores the continued struggle of the characters with their identities, created by the experiences lined up from the past into the present. "He was divided, as the earth is divided, into hemispheres. He lived in the second hemisphere now ... as if he'd been sent to orbit the earth instead." (Lahiri, 2013, p. 88). Subhash maintains a hybrid identity, balancing his Indian roots with his American lifestyle. His daughter, Bela, is the next generation of the diaspora, forced to chart her course in the ocean with mixed cultural heritage.

Identity in *The Lowland* is tied to family, culture, and personal history. What the death of Udayan shows is that it drastically changes the identities of the characters who are left—especially Gauri and Subhash. Gauri's identity is always fluid; first, she is Udayan's wife, then Subhash's wife, and finally, she seeks to define herself on her own: "When Udayan dies, her individuality is confused, and the identity got by Udayan is vanished. When she remarries Udayan's brother, Subhash, her identity is negotiated in another form" (Lahiri, 2013, p. 55). This fluidity of identity is mirrored in the story of Subhash himself as he had to juggle his duties with his wants and always felt the memories of his brother overtaking him.

Gauri's personality is fragmented: her guilt, loss, and choices constantly trouble her. Lahiri uses the metaphor of the lowland—an area that is constantly experiencing floods and transformation to symbolize the characters' lives—full of uncertainty and alteration. The novel offers an identity that is not static but shifts and develops with experiences and choices, especially for those who live within this diaspora.

Fragmentation, Hybridity, and Survival in Ahmed Saadawi's *Frankenstein in Baghdad*: A Portrait of Postwar Identity and Chaos

Frankenstein in Baghdad focuses on the chaotic and violent backdrops of post-2003 Baghdad after the U.S. invasion of Iraq that saw high sectarian violence, political instability, and significant disintegration of social order. There was a power vacuum following the invasion and later occupation, which fostered a rise in insurgent activities, frequent bombings, and a general atmosphere of fear and uncertainty. Ahmed Saadawi, in his narrative, very much sums up all that was taking place during this period of turmoil and brought to the fore a resplendent picture of life among the debris of a city that was fit to burst with the activity until such time it lost its vibrancy and luster (Phillips, 2023).

The novel can be best understood concerning the setting it speaks of and brings alive on paper. Baghdad, which was once considered the epitome of cultural and intellectual supremacy, is projected as a fractured society dealing with war's aftershocks. The crumbling of the physical and social landscapes of the city is, in a way, treated identically to how the people in the town face their inner turmoil. The narrative of Saadawi supports the lived experiences of the Baghdadi people with reflections on the strength and adaptability of the human spirit in the face of relentless adversity.

The theme of fragmentation is central in *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, be it taken literally and metaphorically. The city of Baghdad represents a fragmented entity in its infrastructure and communities, which are being constantly torn asunder by violent forces. In this setting,

the physical disintegration is mirrored in the characters' lives, who are struggling to piece together their shattered realities. Hadi himself embodies this fragmentation when, in his quest for inspiration, he sculpts an abomination of body parts taken from the dead victims of the bombings, the "Whatsitsname". "In its being, the "Whatsitsname" becomes almost a grotesque totem of dismembered Baghdad and its previous integrated society" (Murphy, 2018, p. 274). The journey to exact revenge on all those who were part of its creation becomes an eternal lot for this pitiful creature—an apt metaphor for the vicious circle of war. Saadawi uses this allegory to emphasize the dissolution of an identity and the existential crisis an individual faces in war-torn environment.

The fragmentation of Baghdad is social and cultural beyond the physical aspect. The novel depicts the conflicts within society—something that the war caused to be only intensified and multiplied. These fractures are visible in the conflicts between various religious and ethnic communities and the seemingly eternal fight between different factions for acquiring power.

I'm living in an unfinished building close to the Assyrian quarter in Dora, south of Baghdad. It is an area that has turned into a battlefield for three forces: the Iraqi National Guard and the American Army on one side, and the Sunni militia and the Shiite militia on the second and third sides. I could describe the building I live in No Man's Land because it and the buildings around, in an area about a half-mile square, have never been under the complete control of any of the three forces and because it's a war zone without any inhabitants. So it's the right place for me (Saadawi, 2014, p. 138)

The novel reflects the cultural clashes and the sense of alienation felt by different communities within the city. The hybrid creature, Whatsitsname, becomes a metaphor for the city, a patchwork of disparate parts struggling to form a coherent whole.

Frankenstein in Baghdad works with the themes of hybridity and war to bring forth the intricate underpinnings supporting the themes of identity, survival, and a clash of cultures in such a city. The novel, through its dystopic lens, will make a poignant representation of the violence and fragmentation actually at the heart of the definition of Baghdad in modernity, really representing the resilience and adaptability of the people. A symbol of the city's fractured identity, Whatsitsname is a chimera of the eternal search for justice in a world of malaise.

Another theme expressed through the novel is that of survival. Among all the chaos and destruction that endure the characters display such a determination to survive. This theme gains sharp realization through everyday life among people living within the Bataween district with all its dangers of surviving in a lawless city. The novel leads to the arms of coping, making use of the cast, consisting of humor and satire up to endurance and unity. "The 'Whatsitsname', as an ugly monster, symbolizes human survival" (Metz, 2018, p. 15). The being of the 'Whatsitsname', gruesome as it is, is a reflection of the spirit of the people of Baghdad who still suffer and hold on in the middle of death. "Saadawi's survival goes beyond physical survival to psychological and emotional durability, and that is when we realize the complexity of human survival amidst adversity" (Campbell, 2020, p. 145).

Frankenstein in Baghdad is still intensely rooted in a cultural clash that happens apart from the war, much aggravated by it. That war has an intrusion, then an occupation delivers a confluence in calls, ideas, and personation. This is represented in the novel by the relations the local people had with the strangers in Baghdad and even among the different tribes and religious groupings. "The book portrays the cultural tensions at such intersections, creating, more often than not, conflict and misunderstanding" (Alhashmi, 2020, p. 105). Through

Saadawi, Baghdad is revealed as a microcosm of broader, complicated geopolitical struggles. The clash of cultures eventually turns into both breeding grounds of destruction and the formation of new hybrid identities. A conjoined body of the 'Whatsitsname' embodies such cultural hybridity, representing a coming-together in one entity of what was, in effect, disparate elements. This underscores the complexities in the making of identities in a postcolonial, post-conflict situation, where generally, the cultural borders are being renegotiated.

Hybridity is a dominant theme in the novel, embodied in Whatsitsname, a mishmash of body parts of different victims of violence. This grotesque assemblage stands for the shattered identity of Iraq, suffering from the war and sectarian conflict. Whatsitsname stands for the hybrid creation that mirrors the hybrid way in which the population of the city is made up—different ethnicities, religions, and social classes are often forced together and with violent results.

Because I'm made up of body parts of people from diverse backgrounds - ethnicities, tribes, races, and social classes - I represent the impossible mix that never was achieved in the past. I'm the first true Iraqi citizen, he thinks. The madman mused, 'The old madman thinks that, through me, the instrument of mass destruction prophesying the advent of the Savior mentioned by all religions of the world (Saadawi, 2014, p. 140)

The identity of Whatsitsname questions ideas of belonging and identity. A singular, homogenous identity, where he belongs; this hybrid being embodies collective trauma and unresolved grief of a society in turmoil, searching for justice and revenge for countless innocent lives lost.

The War is depicted as omnipresent and designs all components of life like in Baghdad. The novel shows the daily horrors people experience, from suicide bombings and sectarian violence to the fear that hangs over everything. In the minds of these people, survival had become a matter of chance.

The explosion went off two minutes after Elishva, the old woman sometimes referred to as Umm Daniel, which means 'mother of Daniel,' or as Daniel's mother, stepped onto the vehicle. All eyes on the bus turned to see what had occurred. As a big black ball of smoke rose from the car park in the middle of Baghdad, near Tayaran Square, they watched in shock, masses of people running away from it (Saadawi, 2014, p. 5)

Saadawi's pointed description of explosions and their aftermath, dismembered bodies, and pervading dread point to the brutal realities of war. The plot emphasizes that war humanizes nobody; people are disintegrated into mere body parts and statistics and robbed of their actuality and humanity.

The story of *Frankenstein in Baghdad* is a testament to themes such as fragmentation, survival, and an intercultural clash that provides insight into the human condition in a postwar environment. Through his story, Saadawi indeed casts a powerful message about the unbowed human spirit and the unflinching impact of cultural traffic on the making of identities and stories.

Discussion

In both *The Lowland* by Jhumpa Lahiri and *Frankenstein in Baghdad* by Ahmed Saadawi, cultural fusion shapes stories and characters in deep and meaningful ways. Cultural fusions introduce a richness, a tapestry of experience, conflicts, and resolutions that drive the plot and whittle the development of the characters. In *The Lowland*, blending Indian and American cultures becomes the narrative's focus. The life of Subhash in America is always set in juxtaposition with his Indian roots, adding a duality that he reflects in his decisions and relationships.

Indeed, Gauri reveals that identity crisis is another face of cultural merging. Her transformation from the wife of an Indian revolutionary to a scholar in America tells much about reconciling different cultural expectations with personal wishes. In the hands of Lahiri, cultural crossings just talk about the themes of displacement, belonging, and the journey to finding an identity. Similarly, "*Frankenstein in Baghdad* illustrates the melting pot of cultures in the anarchy of traditional Iraqi life and the impact of foreign occupation" (Abdalkafor, 2018, p. 3). In this text, Hadi, being a scavenger who molds together the Whatsitsname from human remains, represents a hybrid piece-meal identity pieced together from the elements of a broken society. It lives as a symbol, bringing a fusion of cultural ingredients into it to represent the collective trauma and resilience of the people in Baghdad. His storytelling, therefore, became richer from this fusion of cultures, and Saadawi manages to describe complex survival and identity in a war-torn context with finesse.

The potential contribution of these narratives to readers in understanding cultural hybridity and identity is immense. The characters and stories that Lahiri and Saadawi present to negotiate the complexities of mixed cultures raise the issues and opportunities of living in a multicultural world. *The Lowland* makes the reader feel for the immigrant experience; it highlights internal and external struggles born from cultural displacement. The intimate portrayals of so many of the characters bring to the fore the challenges inherent in preserving heritage while it is in the process of change, and this can lead one to have an affection for the diverse lives of immigrants and the resilience required to fabricate new lifestyles in a new country (Batra, 2014). *Frankenstein in Baghdad* brings home what war does to cultural identity. Saadawi's view of the Whatsitsname as an icon of hybrid identity makes it necessary for readers to address the human loss conflict brings and how cultural identities are repackaged in its wake. This tale opens up the socio-political intricacies of an invaded Iraq to the reader and its ongoing impacts on cultural fragmentation and resilience.

Both *The Lowland* and *Frankenstein in Baghdad* contribute to broader discussions in postcolonial and contemporary literature through the uniqueness and compelling approaches taken by the writers in cultural hybridity, identity, and resilience. Her work contributes to postcolonial literature, affecting experience or thought in the South Asian diaspora. Her research regarding cultural inflations and identity construction makes the narrative of immigrants more comprehensive, as it centers on the challenges these people face to sustain cultural practices learned back at home. "Lahir's softness in the presentation of characters' inner worlds and their grappling with cultures adds to the discourse of post-colonialism, a sense of the day-to-day realities of immigrants" (Bhattacharya, 2022, p. 55).

Frankenstein in Baghdad by Ahmed Saadawi brings to the table a new strain of horror and satire in the general state of affairs in the contemporary novel, acting as an acute commentary on the effects of war. His use of the Frankenstein myth to symbolize the hybrid identities forged in the crucible of war is scathing in its critique of socio-political conditions in Iraq. Saadawi's narrative challenges readers to rethink the constructs of identity and human cost from cultural fragmentation, thus "adding impetus toward a better understanding of the postcolonial condition in the Middle East" (Abdalka, 2018, p. 15).

Taken all together, these novels contribute to the literary texture of perspective on cultural fusion and identity. They bring to light the intricate notions of postcolonial existence and provide valuable insights into how people and communities can negotiate the intersections sectioned off by multiple cultural influences, continually contributing to the fundamental importance of identity, belonging, and resilience in the modern, globalized world.

Conclusion

The crossing and clashing of the Indian and American cultures in *The Lowland* are intense, and the acute turns taken by the characters—Subhash and Gauri—are in the folds exposed in this very complex scenario of displacement and identity. By delving deep into hybridity and the immigrant experience, Lahiri painstakingly illustrates the tensions and reconciliations that shape characters' lives, providing insight into the immigrant psyche and the impact of cultural merging.

Saadawi describes how "'traditional' and 'modern' faces of a fragmented Baghdad collide" in *Frankenstein in Baghdad*. The Whatsitsname is a potent metaphor for hybrid identities; it's bred within this crucible of war. The themes of fragmentation, survival, and cultural clash inside the novel stand as a powerful commentary on the human condition within an Iraq just post-invasion that underlines resilience and adaptability.

The discussion thus also brought to light the prospect of these narratives about readers' comprehension of cultural hybridity and identity. Both novels can get, readers a realization of the complexity of cultural entanglements and, consequently more empathy and a higher sense of different people's experiences in a multicultural world. The merging of cultures between *The Lowland* and *Frankenstein in Baghdad* highlights how cultural identity is dynamic and fluid.

Lahiri and Saadawi do a masterful job of putting into vision both the challenge and the opportunity posed by cultural intersections, offering rich, deeply layered narratives that become both resonant and current with today's experiences. The works contribute further to the debate on post-colonial and contemporary literature, being valued sources for elaborating on the processes of identity formation and the resilience of the human spirit in the middle of cultural and social turmoil.

By their narratives, both authors challenge the reader's notion of cultural purity and homogeneity. They illustrate that cultural identity is not fixed in time but in a state of continuous remolding by historical, social, and political forces. In this way, they open up for us more profound perceptions of the complexities and nuances of cultural hybridity, which could encourage a more inclusive and empathetic worldview.

In research along these lines, the real-world implications of the motifs evoked by *The Lowland* and *Frankenstein in Baghdad* would be processed, therefore giving a broader perspective on the contribution of cultural hybridity to the configuration of individual and collective identities. In conclusion, works of fiction by both Jhumpa Lahiri and Ahmed Saadawi prominently delve deep into cultural blending and its effect on identity. Their works stand as invaluable in post-colonialism and contemporary literature, respectively, with narratives of complexity that challenge and deepen our understanding of cultural hybridity.

التعدد الثقافي والاندماج في رواية جومبا لاهيري الارض المنخفضة ورواية احمد سعداوي فرانكشتاين في بغداد

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الكلمات المفتاحية | التهجين الثقافي؛ نظرية ما بعد الاستعمار؛ الشتات؛ جومبا لاهيري؛ احمد سعداوي



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ملخص البحث:

ستعرض هذه الورقة البحثية كيفية تمثيل موضوع الاندماج الثقافي في الكتاين المختارين: "الارض المنخفضة" لجومبا لاهيري و"فرانكشتاين في بغداد" لأحمد سعداوي، كونهما يشكلان تقاطعا لعدة ثقافات وقصص شخصياتهما. من خلال إطار نظري ما بعد الاستعماري، تحلل الدراسة كيف تتكامل ظواهر التهجين، والشتات، والهوية الثقافية لتخلق واجها ثقافيا معقدا بين الأفراد في الأعمال قيد البحث. في "المنخفض"، تكشف لاهيري عن تجربة المهاجرين في حياة سوباش وغوري، معززة السرد بالتوترات والمصالحات التي تطرأ بسبب تأثيرات ثقافتهم الهندية والأمريكية. تظهر الرواية كيف يشكل التهجين الثقافي هوياتهما وعلاقاتهما، مما يؤدي إلى الإجابة على سؤال الانتماء، ولكن ليس دون تحديات التشتت. في "فرانكشتاين في بغداد"، يصور سعداوي بغداد ما بعد الغزو، حيث تتناغم العناصر التقليدية والحديثة في سيمفونية غير متناغمة وسط عمليات الحرب الفوضوية. إن صناعة "الوشيسنيم" الذي يتكون من أجزاء أجسام ضحايا التفجيرات والقتل، هو تجسيد حربي للهوية الجزأة والمهجنة التي تظهر في هذا السياق المتقلب. تعبير الرواية الموضوعي عن التمزق، والبقاء، والصدام الثقافي يعد تعليقاً مناسباً على المشهد الاجتماعي والسياسي للعراق المعاصر. علاوة على ذلك، تعكس الورقة تأثير هذه السرديات على تصور القارئ للتهجين الثقافي وهوية الشخصيات الرئيسية، مما يؤدي إلى تطوير التعاطف وفهم أعمق لتحديات العيش في عالم متعدد الثقافات. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تحدد هذه الدراسة مدى أهمية هاتين الروايتين في الأدب ما بعد الاستعماري والمعاصر، حيث لا تساهمان فحسب، بل تدفعان أيضاً النقاش حول التفاعلات الثقافية وتشكيل الهوية.