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GENDERLASHGAN GIBRIDLIK: ZADIE SMITHNING MULTIKULTURAL NARRATIVLARIDA AYOL IDENTIFIKATSIYASI

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O'zbekiston davlat jahon tillari universiteti, mustaqil tadqiqotchi

Annotatsiya

Mazkur tadqiqotda genderlashgan gibridlik tushunchasi va uning Zadie Smithning multikultural narrativlarida ayol identifikatsiyasini shakllantirishdagi o'rni tahlil qilinadi. Postkolonial va feminist nazariy yondashuvlarga tayangan holda, maqolada yozuvchining ayol qahramonlari irq, gender, sinf va madaniy mansublikning murakkab kesishmalarini qanday boshdan kechirishi o'rganiladi. White Teeth, NW va On Beauty romanlari asosida olib borilgan tahlil ayol identifikatsiyasi gibrid madaniy makonlarda doimiy ravishda qayta shakllanuvchi, parchalangan va o'zgaruvchan hodisa sifatida tasvirlanishini ko'rsatadi. Tadqiqot natijalari gibridlik bir vaqtning o'zida ziddiyat manbai hamda imkoniyat maydoni bo'lib xizmat qilishini, ayollarga hukmron me'yorlarga qarshi chiqish imkonini berishi bilan birga ichki va tashqi nizolarni ham yuzaga keltirishini ko'rsatadi. Umuman olganda, Smith ijodi zamonaviy multikultural jamiyatlarda identifikatsiyaning dinamik va o'zgaruvchan tabiatini yoritib beradi.

Kalit so'zlar: genderlashgan gibridlik, ayol identifikatsiyasi, multikulturalizm, postkolonial adabiyot, interseksionallik, diaspora, Zadie Smith, uchinchi makon.

ГЕНДЕРНАЯ ГИБРИДНОСТЬ: ЖЕНСКАЯ ИДЕНТИЧНОСТЬ В МУЛЬТИКУЛЬТУРНЫХ НАРРАТИВАХ ЗЭДИ СМИТ

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Аннотация

В данном исследовании рассматривается концепция гендерной гибридности и её роль в формировании женской идентичности в мультикультурных нарративах Зэди Смит. Опираясь на постколониальные и феминистские теоретические подходы, статья анализирует, как женские персонажи писательницы преодолевают сложные пересечения расы, гендера, класса и культурной принадлежности. На основе анализа романов White Teeth, NW и On Beauty доказывается, что женская идентичность представлена как подвижная, фрагментированная и постоянно реконструируемая в гибридных культурных пространствах. Результаты исследования показывают, что гибридность одновременно выступает источником напряжения и пространством расширения возможностей, позволяя женщинам бросать вызов доминирующим нормам и одновременно сталкиваться с внутренними и внешними конфликтами. В конечном итоге творчество Смит раскрывает динамичный и изменчивый характер идентичности в современных мультикультурных обществах.

Ключевые слова: гендерная гибридность, женская идентичность, мультикультурализм, постколониальная литература, интерсекциональность, diaspora, Зэди Смит, третье пространство.

GENDERED HYBRIDITY:FEMALE IDENTITY IN ZADIE SMITH'S MULTICULTURAL NARRATIVES

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Abstract

This study explores the concept of gendered hybridity and its role in shaping female identity in the multicultural narratives of Zadie Smith. Drawing on postcolonial and feminist theoretical frameworks, the article examines how Smith's female characters negotiate complex intersections of race, gender, class, and cultural belonging. Through close analysis of novels such as White Teeth, NW, and On Beauty, the paper argues that female identity is represented as fluid, fragmented, and continually reconstructed within hybrid cultural spaces. The findings suggest that hybridity functions simultaneously as a source of tension and a site of empowerment, enabling women to challenge dominant norms while also confronting internal and external conflicts. Ultimately, Smith's work highlights the dynamic and evolving nature of identity in contemporary multicultural societies.

Keywords: gendered hybridity, female identity, multiculturalism, postcolonial literature, intersectionality, diaspora, Zadie Smith, third space.

In contemporary English literature, few writers have captured the complexity of multicultural life as vividly as Zadie Smith. Her works are deeply rooted in the social and cultural fabric of modern Britain, particularly in urban spaces where diverse ethnicities, histories, and identities intersect. Within these dynamic environments, questions of identity become especially significant, not as fixed or stable categories, but as fluid constructs shaped by historical, cultural, and personal forces. Among the most compelling aspects of Smith's fiction is her nuanced portrayal of female characters whose identities are formed through the interaction of gender, race, class, and migration.

The concept of hybridity, central to postcolonial theory, provides an important lens through which to understand these characters. Associated with theorists such as Homi K. Bhabha, hybridity refers to the emergence of new cultural forms resulting from the blending and negotiation of different traditions and identities. Rather than suggesting harmony, hybridity often involves tension, ambiguity, and transformation. Bhabha's notion of the "third space" is particularly relevant here, as it describes a site where conventional binaries, such as colonizer/colonized or self/other, are destabilized, allowing new forms of identity to emerge. In Smith's narratives, this third space becomes a lived reality, especially for women navigating multicultural societies.

At the same time, feminist theory highlights how identity is profoundly shaped by gendered expectations and power structures. Thinkers such as Judith Butler have argued that gender is not an inherent essence but a performative construct, continuously produced through social practices and norms. When combined with postcolonial perspectives, this insight reveals how women in multicultural contexts experience identity as a layered and often contradictory process. They must negotiate not only cultural hybridity but also the constraints imposed by patriarchal systems and racial hierarchies.

In this regard, the notion of gendered hybridity emerges as a crucial analytical framework. It emphasizes that hybridity is not experienced uniformly; rather, it is mediated by gender, leading to distinct challenges and possibilities for women. Female characters in Smith's fiction frequently confront conflicting expectations between tradition and modernity, assimilation and cultural preservation, autonomy and social conformity. These tensions are particularly visible in novels such as *White Teeth*, *NW*, and *On Beauty*, where women navigate complex social landscapes shaped by migration, globalization, and historical legacies.

Furthermore, Smith's portrayal of female identity challenges essentialist notions that reduce identity to a single category. Instead, her characters embody what is now commonly understood as intersectionality, a concept that recognizes how different axes of identity, such as race, gender, and class, intersect to produce unique experiences of privilege and marginalization. In multicultural settings, these intersections become even more pronounced, as individuals must constantly negotiate their place within overlapping cultural frameworks.

This article aims to examine how gendered hybridity operates in Smith's multicultural narratives and how it shapes the construction of female identity. By analyzing key texts and characters, the study seeks to demonstrate that hybridity in Smith's work is not merely a condition of cultural mixing, but a dynamic process of identity formation marked by conflict, negotiation, and transformation. Ultimately, the introduction of gender into discussions of hybridity allows for a deeper understanding of the complexities of identity in postcolonial literature and highlights the unique experiences of women within these contexts.

Main part

In contemporary English literature, the works of Zadie Smith stand out for their rich and nuanced exploration of multiculturalism and identity, particularly within the context of modern urban Britain. Her fiction reflects a world shaped by migration, colonial histories, and cultural intersections, where identity is no longer fixed or singular but fluid, dynamic, and often contested. Within this framework, the construction of female identity occupies a central place, as Smith's female characters navigate complex intersections of race, gender, class, and cultural belonging. The concept of gendered hybridity becomes especially useful in analyzing these representations, as it highlights how hybridity is not experienced uniformly but is deeply influenced by gendered expectations and social constraints.

The theoretical foundation of hybridity, most prominently associated with Homi K. Bhabha, emphasizes the emergence of identity within a "third space" where cultures interact, overlap, and transform one another. In this space, traditional binaries such as self and other, or colonizer and colonized, are

destabilized, giving rise to new, hybrid forms of identity. However, when viewed through a feminist lens, particularly through the ideas of Judith Butler, identity is also understood as performative and constructed through social norms and repeated practices. Combining these perspectives reveals that women in multicultural contexts must negotiate not only cultural hybridity but also the expectations imposed by patriarchal systems and racial hierarchies. As a result, gendered hybridity emerges as a condition marked by both constraint and possibility, where identity is continuously formed and reformed.

This complexity is vividly illustrated in *White Teeth*, where the character of Irie Jones embodies the tensions of hybrid identity. As a young woman of mixed Jamaican and British heritage, Irie struggles with internalized Eurocentric beauty standards, attempting to reshape her appearance in order to fit dominant ideals of femininity. Her experiences reveal how the female body becomes a site where cultural and racial expectations intersect, producing a fragmented sense of self. Yet her journey also points toward the possibility of self-acceptance, suggesting that hybridity, while often conflictual, can lead to personal growth and transformation.

A different dimension of gendered hybridity is explored in *NW* through the character of Natalie Blake, whose upward social mobility reflects the complexities of identity formation in a contemporary urban setting. Natalie's transition from a working-class background to a successful professional life involves a process of self-fashioning that distances her from her origins while simultaneously failing to provide a stable sense of belonging. Her identity becomes performative, shaped by external expectations and internal conflicts, illustrating the tension between authenticity and adaptation. This portrayal underscores the idea that hybridity is not a harmonious blending of cultures but an ongoing negotiation marked by uncertainty and contradiction.

In *On Beauty*, Smith further expands the exploration of female identity by situating it within academic and transnational contexts. Characters such as Kiki Belsey confront issues of race, body image, and cultural belonging within predominantly white intellectual environments. Her resistance to dominant beauty standards and her assertion of self-worth highlight how gendered hybridity can function as a form of empowerment. At the same time, her experiences demonstrate that identity is shaped not only by ethnicity and gender but also by class, education, and institutional structures, reinforcing the importance of an intersectional approach.

Across these narratives, Smith consistently presents female identity as a product of intersecting social forces rather than a stable or unified essence. Her characters embody the multiplicity of experience that defines multicultural societies, where identity is continuously negotiated in response to changing circumstances. Gendered hybridity, therefore, emerges as both a site of conflict and a space of creative possibility. It exposes the pressures faced by women who must reconcile competing cultural expectations, yet it also enables them to challenge rigid definitions of identity and construct new ways of being.

Ultimately, the representation of female identity in the works of Zadie Smith demonstrates that hybridity is not simply a condition of cultural mixing but a dynamic and ongoing process of becoming. Through her complex and multifaceted characters, Smith reveals that identity is shaped by negotiation, transformation, and resistance, reflecting the realities of life in a multicultural world.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis of gendered hybridity in the multicultural narratives of Zadie Smith demonstrates that female identity is neither stable nor singular, but rather a complex, evolving construct shaped by multiple and often conflicting forces. Smith's fiction provides a powerful representation of contemporary multicultural societies in which identities are continuously negotiated at the intersections of race, gender, class, and cultural history. Through her nuanced portrayal of women, she reveals that hybridity is not merely a blending of cultures but an ongoing process of tension, adaptation, and transformation.

The examination of key novels such as *White Teeth*, *NW*, and *On Beauty* highlights the diverse ways in which female characters experience and negotiate their hybrid identities. Characters such as Irie Jones, Natalie Blake, and Kiki Belsey illustrate that gendered hybridity operates across different social contexts, from questions of beauty and self-perception to issues of class mobility, professional identity, and intellectual belonging. Despite their differences, these characters share a common struggle: the need to reconcile competing cultural expectations while attempting to assert a coherent sense of self.

Importantly, this study underscores that hybridity is inherently ambivalent. On the one hand, it generates internal conflict, fragmentation, and a sense of displacement, as individuals are caught between cultures and social norms that may be incompatible or contradictory. On the other hand, hybridity also

creates a productive space for resistance and self-definition. By occupying what Homi K. Bhabha terms the “third space,” Smith’s female characters are able to challenge fixed categories of identity and reimagine themselves beyond traditional boundaries. In this sense, hybridity becomes a source of agency, enabling women to negotiate and reshape the terms of their existence.

Furthermore, when viewed through the lens of feminist theory, particularly the ideas of Judith Butler, Smith’s work reveals that gender itself is not an inherent or stable category but a performative and socially constructed dimension of identity. This insight deepens the understanding of gendered hybridity by showing how women must navigate not only cultural multiplicity but also the expectations and limitations imposed by patriarchal structures. As a result, female identity emerges as a layered and intersectional phenomenon, shaped by the interplay of multiple forms of power and resistance.

Another important conclusion is that Smith resists offering simplistic resolutions to the challenges of hybridity. Her narratives do not present identity as something that can be fully resolved or stabilized. Instead, they emphasize the ongoing and unfinished nature of identity formation. This open-endedness reflects the realities of contemporary multicultural life, where individuals must continuously adapt to shifting social, cultural, and personal circumstances. By doing so, Smith moves beyond essentialist and binary models of identity, offering a more realistic and inclusive representation of human experience.

In a broader literary and theoretical context, the study of gendered hybridity in Smith’s work contributes to postcolonial and feminist scholarship by highlighting the importance of intersectionality in understanding identity. It demonstrates that analyses of culture and identity must account for the ways in which different social categories interact and influence one another. Smith’s fiction serves as a compelling example of how literature can illuminate these complexities, providing insight into the lived experiences of women in multicultural societies.

Ultimately, the detailed examination of gendered hybridity in the works of Zadie Smith affirms that identity is not a fixed destination but a continuous process of becoming. Her female characters embody the challenges and possibilities of living between cultures, illustrating that hybridity, while often fraught with tension, also holds the potential for creativity, transformation, and empowerment. In this way, Smith’s narratives not only reflect the complexities of modern life but also offer a profound commentary on the evolving nature of identity in an increasingly interconnected world.

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