SCRIPTA: JURNAL ILMIAH MAHASISWA
Vol.7. No. 4 Oktober – Desember, 2025
Hal. 01 - 13
https://doi.org/10.33019/s15xgk29
ISSN: 2656-9809 (Online)
https://scripta.ubb.ac.id/index.php/scripta/en

POSTCOLONIAL IDENTITY IN *YELLOW ROSE* FILM (2019) THROUGH HOMI K. BHABHA'S PERSPECTIVE

Tiara Lestari
Universitas Bangka Belitung
Email: lestaritiara2806@gmail.com
Tri Arie Bowo, M.Hum.
Universitas Bangka Belitung
Email: arie622@gmail.com
Dian Fitri K, M.A.
Universitas Bangka Belitung
Email: dian.fitri.k13@gmail.com

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mempresentasikan mekanisme identitas budaya imigran dalam film *Yellow Rose* (2019) dengan pendekatan pascakolonial Homi K. Bhabha. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana konsep mimikri, hibriditas, ambivalensi, ruang ketiga, dan efek diskriminasi direpresentasikan. Metode yang digunakan adalah kualitatif deskriptif dengan data berupa percakapan dan adegan dalam film. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa proses adaptasi budaya yang dilakukan oleh karakter menunjukkan adanya peniruan, identitas hibrida, pergulatan internal, dan penciptaan ruang ketiga. Karakter imigran masih mengalami diskriminasi meskipun telah menyesuaikan diri. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan kompleksitas imigran yang harus dipahami dalam konteks diaspora. Terdapat 16 data dari kutipan dialog dan adegan dalam film yang menggambarkan konsep dinamika identitas budaya. Dapat ditemukan 3 data mimikri, 2 data hibriditas, 5 data ambivalensi, dan 3 data ruang ketiga, serta 4 data diskriminasi dari 1 data didalamnya menggunakan data dari konsep mimikri.

Kata Kunci: Identitas Budaya, Teori Pascakolonial, Yellow Rose

Abstract

The presented research explains the mechanisms of cultural identity of immigrants in the film Yellow Rose (2019) by the Homi K. Bhabha postcolonial approach. The purpose of this research to explore the way the concepts of mimicry, hybridity, ambivalence, third space and the effects of discrimination are represented. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method and the data are in the form of dialogues and scenes in the film. The results of the research indicate that the cultural adaptation process undertaken by the characters demonstrates imitation, hybrid identity, internal struggle, and the creation of a third space. The characters are still discriminated despite adjusting. Findings of the research show the complexity of immigrant that is to be understood within the context of diaspora. There are 16 data from dialogs and scenes in the film that illustrate the concept of cultural identity dynamics. It can be found 3 data of mimicry, 2 data of hybridity, 5 data of ambivalence, and 3 data of third space, as well as 4 data of discrimination from 1 of them using data from the concept of mimicry.

Keywords: Cultural Identity, Postcolonial theory, Yellow Rose.

INTRODUCTION

The high rate of globalization has led to diverse cultural exchanges, which have direct effects on the process of the formation of personal and collective identity. In that regard, colonialism is still present in societies in the postcolonial world due to practices of discrimination, stereotyping, and marginalization of vulnerable groups of people such as women, indigenous people, and immigrants (Raja, 2019: 2). The effects of colonialism do not only end with the actual colonialism as such rather, there are still aspects of colonialism playing out today gaily, in the domain of culture and identity crisis among diaspora peoples. As a reaction to this fact, postcolonialism not only clears out the legacy of colonialism but also considers how postcolonial societies in the process of reorganizing their identities and belief systems challenge the global cultural flow (Anggraeni, 2022: 24). Colonialism is a form of a systematic destruction or pillage, according to Raina (2017: 511) that by means of epistemic, economic, and military conquest has long-term consequences on the construction, and negotiation of the identities, by instructing the individuals in their formations.

This phenomenon is further promoted by the fact that the world has now become even more modern and migration processes have placed too many people, especially immigrants, in a controversial position to maintain their own culture and shift towards an adapted one (Dizayi, 2015: 1). Even in the United States, the examples of social and cultural inequality relate to the experience of Asian immigrants like the Filipino community. In that regard, the postcolonial theory developed by Homi K. Bhabha is significant to the extent that it provides the concept relying on mimicry, hybridity, ambivalence, and third space as a construction of identity in a cultural place of intersection. According to Bhabha (1994: 86) mimicry describes how colonized cultures imitate dominant cultures, which are never exactly the same, thus creating ambiguity. Bhabha (in Waworuntu and Arianto, 2019: 2) hybridity represents a state of encounter of two cultures which leads to a new identity. Meanwhile, ambivalence is a phrase used to describe characters in colonized societies as a result of colonial power dynamics between the colonizer and the colonized (Petrina, 2019: 8). The third space then takes the value of symbolic space where culturally located meanings negotiated dynamically (Batchelor, 2014: 55).

In view of this, the film Yellow rose (2019) by Diane Paragas reflects this relationship through the story of Rose Garcia, an undocumented Filipino teenager immigrant to Texas who was not able to fulfill her dream of becoming a country singer due to social judgment and the ambiguity of identity. This film explores what it is like to be in a dominant

social environment, where immigrants and indigenous cultures interact, and where discrimination occurs not only openly but more often subtly through microaggressions (Sue, 2010: 7).

The culture product of film, which is an important reflective and representative media of such dynamics, is important when it comes to expressing the conflict between maintaining an original identity and not fitting in assimilation. This sresearch is applicable in the context of some of the ideas to be explored being part of the postcolonial approach theory propounded by Homi K. Bhabha relating mimicry, hybridity, ambivalence, and third space in the description of how immigrant identities are constructed and negotiated in a hegemonic social set up. The importance and urgency of this research is the goal of further comprehension of the process of construction of cultural identity under discriminatory circumstances, at the same time, the possibilities of how film representations can critically comment on social processes.

Within this context, the research question of the present research is as follows: what kinds of mimicry, hybridity, ambivalence, and third space are reflected in the cultural identity of the characters in *Yellow Rose* film and how do mimicry, hybridity, ambivalence, and third space affect the discrimination experienced by the characters in *Yellow Rose* film. In one sense the research offers a more broadened scope on postcolonial studies with the use of popular media and on the other hand it is also a study on the cultural identity dilemma of the Southeast Asian immigrants in the United States.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Type of the Research

This research uses a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach, This approach can lead to the social and the cultural patterns gone through by the characters in the film *Yellow Rose* (2019) through dialogue and scene. According to Creswell (2009:124), the qualitative research will focuses on measuring the meaning of social problems as understood by individuals and groups of citizens, whereas Taylor et al. (2024: 4) define it as research that uses data in written, spoken words and behavior formats. This has been followed to discuss the effect of mimicry, hybridity, ambivalence, and third space in the formation of the characters identity and how discrimination invents there. It gives a more explicit picture of the identity negotiation in a postcolonial media space.

Object of the Research

The object of the study is the musical drama movie called *Yellow Rose* directed by Diane Paragas. The film had its first screening at the Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival on May 2, 2019, and had a wider release on October 9, 2020, in the United States through Stage 6 Films/Sony Pictures. The film is one hour thirty-four minutes long. The body of data used in this study is the discussion and scenes of the protagonists which were examined to determine factors of mimesis, hybridity, ambivalence, third space and discrimination. The object of study was selected as the movie because it reflects on the plight of a group of Filipino characters as immigrants in Texas regarding the cultural adaptation issues and the problem with social exclusion. The characters which are to be examined according to the research are Rose Garcia, Priscilla Garcia, Gail, Dale Watson and Elliot.

Data Collection

The purpose of data collection is to identify research findings that will lead to fulfillment of the research objectives (Salmia et al., 2023:1). In this research, the data and technique were borrowed on a musical drama made by the collaboration of the United States and Philippines titled *Yellow Rose*, and its total running time is 1 hour and 34 minutes and can be purchased on Amazon Prime. The data that comprises this study is the dialogue and scenes that project ideas of mimicry, hybridity, ambivalence, third space, and discrimination of the characters of the *Yellow Rose*. In order to achieve valid results, various steps were taken, such as downloading the movie *Yellow Rose* (2019) on Amazon Prime, watching the movie, multiple times and finally noting the dialogues on the characters, Rose Garcia, Priscilla Garcia, Gail, Dale Watson, and Elliot. The choice of these dialogues was informed by the fact that they were relevant to the five postcolonial notions that have been identified previously. The analysed dialogues can pertain to the same scene or to the different ones in order to create a deeper insight. All the data identified were subsequently gathered to facilitate the research purposes.

Data Analysis

To produce information that is in keeping with the research topic, the data that has been collected must be analyzed. The data in this research were analyzed using qualitative descriptive techniques. The steps used to analyze the data include: categorizing data collection based on Homi K. Bhabha's theory of mimicry, hybridity,

ambivalence, third space, and discrimination, describing the types of mimicry, hybridity, ambivalence, and third space that emerge from the characters dialog in *Yellow Rose* based on Homi Bhabha's theory, explaining the impact of discrimination on the characters in *Yellow Rose* based on Homi Bhabha's theory and finally, drawing conclusions based on the data that has been analyzed.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

1. Representation of Cultural Identity in Yellow Rose

a. Mimicry



Picture 1. Mimicry

Rose: I fell in love with country music as a kid. ***I once played a song for a talent show, so much so that I was nicknamed "yellow rose".***
Dale: It's not funny. It's just that you're great, really great.

Mimicry in this scene is indicated by the cultural appearance of rose as a country singer in music and this music style is equated to America. Her attempts to progress into the mainstream culture can be deemed as successful as people begin to acknowledge her and even refer to her as the *yellow rose*. This nickname demonstrates some kind of recognitions, though this is also connected with limitations. The term *rose* depicts the existence of stereotype of graceful southern woman whereas the term *yellow* describes the race of rose as filipino woman.

This scene the fact that despite the fact that Rose seems to be a culturally integrated individual, there exists a gap between her and the dominant group. This, Bhabha said, is the ambivalence of the mimicry of imitation that is almost the same, but not quite. Rose has a liminal status, she is allowed to be seen in the American cultural space, but she is not integrated within it. Her dual identity renders her as part of the hybrid character belonging to both cultures without belonging to one of them.

b. Hybridity



Picture 2. Hybridity

Rose: ***I never fit in, I never could win***
Though I tried and tried, this feeling don't end
Feel out of place*, song out of tune*
Like a velvet chair in a dusty saloon
Square peg, Round Hole
Rose: ***Thank you, Austin. I'll be here all week***

During this scene, Rose sings her own song in her own room, but adds a line at the end in the form of singing on stage, in this case, saying thank you Austin, *I would be here all week.* This conveys the emotional and imaginative state of Roses as an illegal immigrant who wanted to be identified to the American common scene. The lines of her song reveal that there are elements of alienation, and incompatibility, like the use of the phrase, *square peg, round hole*, which means that she is someone who does not fit in both cultures, neither in the American nor in the Filipino one. Despite the fact that she cannot occupy spaces with her physical movement according to the legal frameworks of the society, she uses her mind and creativity to move symbolically in spaces where she can be accepted as a member of society.

This state of affairs represents hybridity in the meaning that Homi K. Bhabha ascribes to this term, a form of identity that comes about when two cultures come into contact with one another, but remain unmerged. The music of Rose is not a pure country music by white people of America, neither is it Filipino folk music but a combination of both which shows her cultural integration. It is an in-between space through which she lives, this results in her being a negotiable space in identity. This scene reveals that hybridity is not just a cultural thing but also a form of survival mechanism both emotionally and psychologically with the cultural and societal pressure, discrimination and confusion in identifying who one is.

c. Ambivalence



Picture 3. Ambivalene

Elliot: ***Did you see this? Dale is playing in Austin next week.***
Rose: cool.
Elliot: ***I'll go if you... If you want to come.***
Rose: My mom won't let me go

This scene illustrates the ambivalence that Rose, being a Filipino teenage immigrant, went through between two competing systems of values. When Elliot takes Rose to watch a music show with most of the American teenagers, she says in a polite manner that her mother would not allow it. This denial is not all within herself but through conservative Filipino morals that she inherited about her mother. Such values place an emphasis on family honor and limit the freedom of the young women particularly regarding the social life that is not inside a house.

This scene in fact part of the process of ambivalence, which was presented by Homi K. Bhabha through his theory containing the description of the tension between the desire to make oneself like what the dominant culture is like and the desire to embrace the own cultural values. Rose never clearly declines the desire of Elliot, but she cannot stop being under the cultural influence of her mother. This clash of values helps to evidence a failure to come to grips with identity and demonstrate the fact that the idea that postcolonial individuals live under the conditions of emotional and cultural tension is true to the point. This ambivalence denotes the fact that the immigrant identity is shaped in the ambiguous fringe between acculturation and adherence to culture.



Picture 4. Ambivalence

Priscilla: ***If you can't go back to Tita Gail's house, I insist that you to comeback to Manila with me.***
Rose: what? no mam, I don't want to.
Priscilla: I can't leave you in danger like this.
Rose: ***You said all my opportunities are in here!***

In the scene, Rose is made by her mother, Priscilla, to take a decision between either going back to the house of Gail or back to Manila to seek safety. Rose says no, and she retorts, "You said all my opportunities are in here!", and she feels aggravated and betrayed. Her reaction shows that there is an emotional argument to go back to her Filipino roots or remain in America in a future that is uncertain.

This is a demonstration of the idea of ambivalence pronounced by Homi K. Bhabha wherein one is confused between two cultural selves by Rose. She is not angry about being Filipino but neither can she leave behind the life which she had at the beginning to build in America. She is broken down into parts by the systematic pressure, which continues to make her walk between survival and belongingness. In the scene, postcolonial subjects are described as the ones who are generally between two worlds with neither of them accepting them fully.

d. Third Space



Picture 5. Third Space

Rose: ***We need a clear mind, because*** *we're going to write a song. I have something to say****, take your guitar.***
Dale: ***That's right, let's go.***

In this scene, Rose asks Dale to help her write a song as she believes that she has something to say. This is the point where a crucial shift is indicated in the formation of the

individuality of Rose as a Filipino immigrant in America. Music is her form of sharing her personal stories and her struggles and conflicts. In terms of the postcolonial theory of Homi K. Bhabha, this act would mean construction of the Third Space, a symbolic space in which identity is brought in a crisis of the negotiation process, based on experience and in creative power.

Rose gradually comes to terms with the two cultural extremes in her self, as a result of the song writing experience. Songs turn into a channel of expression of the feeling of alienation, loss, and resistance that she is going through. The Third Space is therefore not only a concept but also very real when it comes to individual and art performances. Music also functions as a mode of resistance and recovery of identity, which reveals how immigrants can establish new space where they can remain.

2. The Effects of Cultural Identity on Discrimination



Picture 6. Discrimination

Mark (Gail's husband): Why is she here?
Gail: I told you Mark
Mark: No, you said it was temporary and I told you ***I didn't want it. It makes me nervous.*** *He's going to get us arrested.*
Gail: No way Mark.
Mark: We have enough problems already. We have a daughter, ***we don't need another one.***

In this scene, Rose asks Dale to create a song with her since she thinks that she has something to tell the world. This scene is significant as it is the turning point in the evolution of Rose as a Filipino immigrant in America. Music also presents a method of expressing herself and sharing her personal experiences and confusions. According to the school of thought of Homi K. Bhabha, the postcolonialist thinker, the move demonstrates the construction of the Third Space, a symbolic space that multiple identities are actively negotiated through experience and creativity.

As a result of writing songs, Rose starts to accept the two ends of her culture. Songs become a mode of expression that echoes the alienation, loss and resistance that she goes

through. Therefore, the Third Space is not only a theoretical approach but also a real practice expressed in both a personal and artistic activity. Music turns out to be a method of resistance and identity reconstitution and is a way to show how immigrants may make up new grounds in an environment filled with pressure of leading culture.



Picture 7. Discrimination

Rose: I fell in love with country music as a kid. I once played a song for a talent show, so much so that I was nicknamed "yellow rose".
Dale: It's not funny. It's just that you're great, really great.

In this scene, when Rose tells her story, she remembers that she was called *Yellow Rose*, after one such performance. Though it may sound a friendly name, it makes her be racialized in the subtle sense of this word by emphasising on her Asianness rather than her talent. This is a part of the subtle discrimination called microinsult (Sue, 2010) that indirectly shows that a person does not fit into the situation.

Rose stands out in the white section of the country music industry as positioned in the label, which suggests her form of existence in the country is strange or special. This also works within the framework of postcolonial ambivalence, where she is both included and excluded recognized as having a talent, but defined only by her race. Such cases are an example of how discrimination can work both on a micro and macro level, labeling and enforcing marginalization even when they have reached a peak of success.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

This research discusses how mimicry, hybridity, ambivalence, and third space have been portrayed in the film *Yellow Rose* (2019), according to the postcolonial theory developed by Homi K. Bhabha, and how these issues have affected the formation of the cultural identity of a person discriminated on by the surrounding society. It has been found that there are 16 data: 3 mimicry, 2 hybridity, 5 ambivalence, 3 third space, and 4

discrimination from 1 of them using data from the concept of mimicry. This research is transferred to the negotiation between the roots of Rose in the Philippines and her American surroundings, which is demonstrated through her speech, music, the lives of a day and her emotional conflicts. Discrimination manifests not only on a structural level, but also in terms of subtle cultural rejection, internalized inferiority and symbolic exclusion. These results present that identity negotiation in diasporic context is problematic, picky, and intertwined with exclusionary norms.

Suggestions

Future scholars are invited to continue working on this subject by conducting a study of various works of literature or cinematography focusing on postcolonial and immigrant experiences. Comparative research between the different Southeast Asian or other diaspore can even raise the topics of mimicry, hybridity, ambivalence, third space, and cultural discrimination. Besides, it is possible to refer to varied media types such as novels, poetry, or drama in order to expand the use of the theory by Bhabha in the present cultural studies.

BIOGRAPHY

Tiara Lestari was born in Toboali, Bangka Selatan, June 28th, 2003. She is an undergraduate student in Department of English Literature, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Bangka Belitung University. For more information, go further to contact me on my email lestaritiara2806@gmail.com or on my Instagram account _tiaraalestari.

REFRENCES

Anggraeni, A. D. 2022. *Postcolonial views on the application of mimicry in My Name is Khan*. https://doi.org/10.26740/lk.v10i1.48294

Batchelor, K. 2014. *Third spaces, mimicry and attention to ambivalence: applying Bhabhian discourse to translation theory*. Translator, *14*(1), 51–70. https://doi.org/10.1080/13556509.2008.10799249

Bhaba, H. K. 1994. *The Location of Culture* (Routledge Classics). In *Routledge* (First). http://www.amazon.co.uk/The-Location-Culture-Routledge-Classics/dp/0415336392

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. 2009. *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mix methods approaches.* In writing center talk over time. Sage Publications, Inc. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429469237-3

Dizayi, H. A. S. 2015. *The crisis of identity in postcolonial novel. Proceedings of Iintcess15-2nd International Conference on Education and Social Sciences*, February, 999–1007.

Iftani, U. N. 2023. Hybridity and mimicry in three thousand years of Longing film. *Undergraduate Thesis*. English Literature Department Faculty of Adab and Humanities. Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif hidayatullah.

Petrina. (2019). The ambivalence of main character in Divakaruni's The Mistress of Spices. *Undergraduate thesis.* *11*(1), 1–14. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.regsciurbeco.2008.06.005%0

Putri, E. E. 2025. Mimicry, hybridity, and ambivalence of Huang Family in Fresh Off the Boat tv series season 1. *Undergraduate Thesis*. Universitas Bangka Belitung

Raina, J. A. 2017. *Colonialism vs postcolonialism: A review of basic preliminaries. International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts*, *5*(3), 2320–2882. www.ijcrt.org

Raja, M. 2019. *What is postcolonial studies? Postcolonial space.* https://postcolonial.net/2019/04/what-is-postcolonial-studies/

Salmia, Sukmawati, & Sudarmin. 2023. *Development of quality instruments and data collection techniques. Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pengajaran Guru Sekolah Dasar (JPPGuseda)*, *6*(1), 119–124. https://doi.org/10.55215/jppguseda.v6i1.7527

Sue, D. W., Alsaidi, S., Awad, M. N., Glaeser, E., Calle, C. Z., & Mendez, N. 2010. *Disarming racial microaggressions: Microintervention strategies for targets, white allies, and bystanders*. The American Psychologist, *74*(1), 128–142. https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000296

Taylor, S. J., Bogdan, R., & DeVaukt, M. L. 2024. *Introduction to qualitative research methods* (Vol. 11, Issue 1). http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.regsciurbeco.2008.06.005%0

Waworuntu, M. I. G. R., & Arianto, T. 2019. *Hibridity of the chacracters in My Son the fanatic story by Hanief Kureshi. Jurnal Basis*, *6*(2), 197. https://doi.org/10.33884/basisupb.v6i2.1432