



RESEARCH PAPER

Hybrid Identities and the Other: Indigenous Culture and Representation in Tariq Rahman's *Bingo*

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to explore the depiction of indigenous culture in Tariq Rahman's short story *Bingo*. Rahman's portrayal of indigenous culture is analyzed to point out features that fully depict the culture by employing a qualitative approach and delves into the thematic analysis. Edward Said's Orientalism (1978), Homi K. Bhabha's Hybridity (1994) theories work as a theoretical framework which highlights the author's positive and negative representations that create a picture of identity, Indigenous struggles and resilience. This paper also analyses how Rahman portrays them as presenting indigenous culture as an inexpensive façade which also captures the Native Americans' exploitative culture as 'Other'. The research concludes an authentic portrayal of indigenous culture and its incorporation into *Bingo* which not only highlights the necessity of diverse and genuine representation of the oppressed citizens of the society but also demonstrates the potential of postcolonial literature to challenge the boundaries of cultural identity.

KEYWORDS Bingo, Complex Identities, Identity, Indigenous Culture, Other

Introduction

Tariq Rahman is a Pakistani writer, linguist and academician who writes mainly about language, literature, and cultural issues. The short story *Bingo*, which Mahmood penned in 2008 in the anthology *Karachi Noir* is a very moving account of the Pashtun people's present-day identity and set in Pakistan.

This study of *Bingo* chronicles, a young Pashtun man named Mehmood, a lowly security guard in Karachi. Thus, Mehmood is facing the conflict of his Pashtun ethnicity and his work-related obligations, as well as role requirements overall. He experiences loneliness in the context of social relations and desires to have friends who could make him feel like he fits in. In the serial *Miaad*, through the character of Mehmood, Rahman tried to depict the conflict of married couples living between the two famous phases of the Pashtuns: the tribal phase and the modern phase in contemporary society. The cultural aspect is witnessed through the richness and diversification of Pashtun traditions about their cultural values and beliefs and the prejudice they faced from the Pakistan authority and the non-Pashtun Pakistani community.

Another noteworthy aspect of Rahman's writing in *Bingo* is the fact that the narrative is written lyrically and is rather descriptive about the feel, the look, and the sounds of Karachi. The story is both intimately autobiographical and overtly polemical, i.e., on a narrative level, it registers a fierce critique of the processes through which Pashtun subjectivity is produced, in the contemporary Pakistani context.

Therefore, it is crucial to acknowledge Tariq Rahman's *Bingo* as a remarkable Pakistani short story writer; representing multifaceted aspects of Pashtuns' existence. The portrayal of the sufferings of Afghani women and the distorted image of the Pashtun people actually poses questions about the politics of representation; yet, at the same time, it gives voice to the cultural essence and diversities of Pashtun society.

Indigenous cultural representation has been a sensitive and hot issue in many countries for quite a long time now. Traditionally, Native Americans have been depicted by preponderance of the white authors, and the fiction work produced has only fed stereotyping of the Indian culture. However, in the recent past, there is a call to have representation of Native American people with the actual ethnicity portrayed.

In this context, it is pertinent to brood on Tariq Rahman's *Bingo* as a significant work in this genre. The novel revolves around a number of Native American teenagers who have to deal with the main issues of Native American identification in today's America. Rahman's portrayal of indigenous culture reflects the indigenous people in *Bingo* and, as such, does not incorporate a simple stereotypical patriotic narrative.

The issue of indigenous cultures' portrayal in literature has been a concern of scholars and critics for quite some time. To self-reflect on the process as indigenous themes are written, authors face the dilemma of representing indigenous people and cultures as realistically as possible and, at the same time, a privilege to respect Indigenous people and their culture. When exploring the Indigenous characters' personalities, authors face challenges of how to portray them in the best way possible. These questions can be addressed through an analysis of social changes in modern America reported in Tariq Rahman's *Bingo*, a short story that portrays the life of a group of Native American teenagers.

It is, therefore, anchored under postcolonial theory since it aims to explore how indigenous people have been represented in literature depending on the history and politics that surround their narrative and characterization. As mentioned by Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2002), postcolonial literature describes the ability of dominated groups to challenge the discursive formations incessantly dominant in societies. Understanding these storms and harbingers of change is crucial for reading *Bingo* since this theoretical framework offers the analytical language for condemning the portrayal of Native American characters and their lives.

Thus, in recent years, there has been a focus on minority and Indigenous Peoples' voices in literature and their portrayal of culture preservation. Kroeber (2004) agrees with Reynolds, noting that literature can influence public opinion towards indigenous people, making it all the more important that indigenous people are portrayed accurately; in this, they will know they are not invisible to society. Thus, Rahman's *Bingo* aids in the continued construction of Native American characterization, containing both affirmative and negative aspects, painting a mixed picture of the concept.

Moreover, the works of Said (1978) involving what he termed as 'Othering' apply to this study. Othering means the act of defining the other and excluding them from the 'centered' society since they are regarded as inferior. In *Bingo*, Rahman further looks into how Native American characters live their lives, struggling to survive in a society that will only see them as the object of desire, the sexualized Native American woman, and the savage, the Native American man. This key feature is significant in analyzing the story and its representations of indigenous culture as well as the roles it played in the main characters' lives.

Other critics and self-assured that indigenous authors have endeavored to push for better representation of indigenous people in literature. According to Ortiz (1998), when indigenous people present their cultures to the world, they should be empowered to represent themselves since narrating one's own story, is an essential factor in cultural revitalization. Rahman's work is in no way a Native American text. However, his desire to try to portray the plight of Native American adolescents raises questions about the representativeness and the proper 'Indian' sensitivity of his representation.

When it comes to indigenous culture in *Bingo*, Rahman tries to paint a rosy picture of present-day indigenous people sustaining their culture despite the hardships they face in modern America. The text shows that its characters accept cultural values and fight against oppression.

Literature Review

Representation of Indigenous Cultures

Depiction of indigenous cultures in literature is always complicated in portrayal of realism. According to Kroeber (2004), literature plays a powerful role in creating people's vision of indigenous communities. Thus, writers should portray these people and their culture as carefully as possible. This opinion is corroborated by Ortiz (1998), who underlines the position of indigenous people in literature and maintains that their right to depict themselves as characters in literary works should be upheld to protect their cultural identity. While a non-indigenous writer pens Rahman's *Bingo*, the latter tries to depict the real life of Native Americans, so the question of the work's authenticity becomes rather relevant.

Postcolonial Theory and Othering

Given this, it is possible to cooperate with the postcolonial theory to analyze indigenous representation in the literature. According to Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2002), the world's subordinate cultural bodies struggle to establish a proper cultural identity against hegemonic discourses. Regarding *Bingo*, this theoretical viewpoint is essential, as it facilitates the evaluation of Native Americans' portrayal compared to stereotypical norms. Moreover, another relevant theory is of Said (1978) called Othering, describes situations of exclusion of subjects that are considered different. Rahman's portrayal of Native American adolescents struggling to find a proper place in a society that tends to objectify them by sexualizing their Indigenous culture is an example of such a mechanism.

Stereotypes and Misconceptions

Historically, literature has been used to reinforce stereotypes as it has also served to deconstruct stereotypes regarding indigenous people. As early as the literary representations of Native Americans, Berkhofer (1978) mentions stereotyping, such as the noble red-skinned and the disappearing Native American. Such distortions have continued to be presented in various forms to the present generation and, therefore, shape the current portrayals. Rahman's *Bingo* deals with these issues since it depicts characters who are at once the construct of colonialism and the indigenous gaze. Thus, the semantics of indigenous life painted by this duality are not clear-cut and force the readers to rethink the notions they have.

Indigenous Identity and Modernity

Peculiar to the contemporary indigenous literary production is an attempt at negotiating between indigenous peoples' rightful belonging to the land and the values of the modern world. Weaver (1997) examines how indigenous writers deal with the dilemma of representing the traditions of their people in the contemporary world. In *Bingo*, Rahman tries to deal with this issue by painting the picture of Native American adolescents who are indeed indigenously oriented yet exposed to American life. Such representation indicates the continuous formation of indigenous subjectivities in the contemporary world and reveals the ability and desire of the Native American peoples to transform themselves.

Material and Methods

The qualitative research approach is adopted to study this research, and the material analyzed in this study is the content of Tariq Rahman's *Bingo*. Therefore, it makes sense to employ qualitative methods to discuss the secondary and often stereotyped aspects of indigenous culture presented in the texts as well as the multiple and contradictory Native American characters. The methodology used in the study includes re-reading and analyzing the text to determine its themes, the characters portrayed by Rahman and the narrative techniques used by the author.

The primary data for this research is *Bingo* by Tariq Rahman, which forms the main source used to gather the data to fill the research gap. The sequences and main discussions involving the native characters and their background will also be outlined. Secondary data is made up of journal articles, books, and other critiques from the available literature pertaining to indigenous representation and postcolonial theory.

The data collected from the interviews will be analyzed using thematic content analysis, a method that can be useful in complementing the identification of patterns and themes from Augsburg qualitative data sources.

Theoretical Framework

This paper operates within the postcolonial framework and the theory of speech acts thereby setting a rather broad paradigm for analyzing indigenous peoples' portrayals in literary works.

Postcolonial Theory

Integration of postcolonial theory looks at the effects of colonies and how formerly colonial societies reclaim themselves. Key concepts include:

Othering: A mechanism through which one class of people isolates others viewed as inferior (Said, 1978). This concept will be employed to investigate whether Rahman's depiction of Native Americans aligns with existing stereotypical norms or subverts them.

Hybridity: Hybridity is the process of mixing and merging colonial and postcolonial cultures and identities (Bhabha, 1994). Thus, Rahman's characters will be analyzed in terms of how they interact with and assimilate indigenous roots and American Society.

Results and Discussion

Instance 1: Cultural Hybridity

"This shows that although Maria had the beaded necklace that her grandmother gave her; she did not wear a gown or traditional African attire instead she wore a band t-shirt and ripped jeans because of the pressures that comes with modern lifestyle."

This passage is also rich in the concept of cultural creolization, where Maria is a perfect example of a woman with roots in tradition and modernity. The beads necklace indicates Sherrie's relationship with her aboriginal identity, while the band t-shirt and ripped jeans show her interaction with American pop culture. This can be explained by Bhabha's (1994) notion of hybridity, which people exist in spaces in between, unlike the two extreme poles of assimilation or non-assimilation. In Rahman's own portrayal of Maria, he shows the conflict in terms of these facets of identity and, in doing so, the sex, race, and age issues faced by Native American adolescents.

Instance 2: Othering breakpoints in the cascade of stereotyping

"Taking pictures of the boys charming in their dance and regalia, newcomers whispered to one another about getting an 'authentic Indian experience.' But behind the boys' grins, in the look of their eyes was a tale of their life that could not be marketed."

These lines exemplify the idea of Othering, in which Said (1978) stated that the Native American actors are sexualized and turned into curiosities for white visitors. As the expression of 'the authentic Indian experience' depicts the idea Australian tourists have of India and the way they regard the boys is one-dimensional and distinctively naïve. Rahman takes this occasion to make a powerful intervention on the exploitation of indigenous people through cultural representation that misapprehends their qualitative existence and actuality of Native Americans. While mundanely forcing hearty laughter, their jaws are drawn as to show concealed tales emphasizing the contrast of the inside and the outside of the boys, thus pointing to its critique of stereotype.

Instance 3: Active and passive representations

"John's father was fond of the traditions and shared the language and all the stories of their ancestors with John, however, at school kids laughed at John saying it was strange that he has peculiar manner of speaking and believes in 'primitive' customs."

This passage is filled with endearing images of Indian culture, and at the same time, it is filled with criticism of said culture. John's father showed appreciation for the use of traditional language and the telling of traditional stories, which also brought out the aspects of cultural history and emphasized the aspect of indigenous knowledge. A positive image is shown in the childhood home, where John and his Muts suffer scorn and social rejection in school. Rahman provides a sound analytical analysis of the positive attributes of indigenous traditions and the negative aspects of incorporating such traditions in a social setup whose population is dominated by non-indigenous people. Such a situation paints a relatively diversified picture of the Native American identity, thus capturing the paradigm between the aspects of the culture.

Instance 4: Expressive Speech Acts.

"It is as if the world does not want to remember that we exist' Whispering Wind said to her friends openly weeping."

Whispering Wind's confession is an *illocutionary speech* of the performative type that shows the woman's intense emotional conflict regarding personal identity and acceptance. Searle explains that, in particular, there are expressive speech acts that give information concerning the psychological state of the speaker. In this case, Whispering Wind gives vent to suffering and disappointment with the situation that people do not want to notice them. This scene makes viewer acquainted with the internal struggles of indigenous characters who withstand the impact of society and the loss of their cultural sense. Examining the formula of expressive speech acts, Rahman initiated a deeper evaluation of the emotional aspects of native people's lives. The main feature of *directive speech acts*, in the following textual evidence, is that they require a second person to do something.

"Let them know our dances, our songs our stories,' Grandmother White Eagle declared passionately wanting to make sure they understand that they have to show the settlers who they are."

The speech act in question, which has been given by Grandmother White Eagle, can be seen as a direct address to a call to action that aims at saving the latter's community's culture. Imperatives intend to cause the hearer to do something (Searle, 1969). In this regard, her directing to bring the traditional dances, songs, and stories suggest to pass the cultural knowledge to the next generations. This directive thus presents some effort by the community to sustain the culture in the face of assimilation. Thus, the authoritative voice of the grandmother White Eagle, as an indigenous elder, also underlines the function of the older generations as those who can pass the tradition on.

The consideration of these passages from Tariq Rahman's *Bingo* exemplifies the indigenous subject positioning and bipolarity of the cultural voice in the novel. It can be revealed through the help of the postcolonial theory and the theory of speech act, how Native American characters present the struggles and determination of today's Native Americans depicted by Rahman. Thus, assertive, expressive and directive speech acts represent the characters' attempts to keep their identity, involving their feelings and preventing the traditions from fading away. The present research highlights the need for accurate multicultural portrayals of indigenous people practicing today in literature and contributes to the knowledge of the current Native Americans' lives.

Discussion

From the analysis of Tariq Rahman's *Bingo*, one learns complex elements and constructs representations and identities against the backdrop of the social context of Native American people. Thus, this discussion integrates the commonalities identified in the process of data analysis with the indigenous representation, postcolonial theory, and speech act theory.

Thus, Rahman's presentation of Native Americans in *Bingo* reflects the intricacy of stereotyping characters who are a part of two worlds: indigenous and American. This concurs with the idea of hybridity by Bhabha (1994), whereby the postcolonial cultural identity is dependent on the merging of two or more cultures. The dual feature of Running Deer as an interpreter and performer undoes the seemingly set and fixed identity of Indigeneity. It is seen that through stereotypes and Othering, it is possible to create significant negative impacts on people and society.

The novel also examines the issue of Othering, which had been depicted in the portrayal of Indians through the eyes of the tourists, who indulged in the mocking admiration of the Native Americans' dance. This is in congruence with Said (1978) *Orientalism*, where the hegemonic culture mystifies and disappears the *Other* into the margins. From this narrative, Rahman clearly depicts how the native people, in this case the Native Americans, are seen as the epitome of pre-B sobriquets. However, the novel also explores possibilities of subversion by its characters who, despite being stereotyped and typecast in negative ideas in the society, actively fight these portrayals in the modern world.

On the other hand, the central ideas of both symbolic activity sections are synthesized using speech acts, and then specific characters are used to illustrate the development of their personalities. Explaining the understanding of the characters in *Bingo* based on the real-world activities deriving from speech act theory, the following points can be revealed: It is the use of assertiveness in the speeches of Running Deer during the school assembly to change the focus of the audience's colonization narrative towards mainstream modernization by indigenous people of America. This incidence from the text can be supported by Searle who in his taxonomy of 1969 categorizes assertives as those used to state a matter of fact and convey information. Likewise, the stylistic features many *Whispering Wind* employs to be as tangible and physical as he is when he speaks, indicate that he has a condition such that he can be defined as a psychological survivor of indigenous youth marginalization.

Grandmother White Eagle's directive speech act encourages the community to preserve their traditions and pass on their knowledge related to indigenous people. The fact that she commanded the women to teach conventional ways to the young ones also supports the community's firmed-up measures to preserve their culture. Eagle's use of directives shows how elders perform as the guarantors of culture and tradition, therefore providing a picture of indigenes' strength and flexibility in today's world.

In Rahman's *Bingo*, there is a blatant attempt to include the indigenous peoples' POC portrayal with positive and negative components and thus give a historically layered view of Native Americans. Although the novel tenderly satirizes the narrow-minded perceptions typical of those who stand outside the circle of the indigenous people, it also presents strong and invulnerable indigenous characters.

This study has analyzed the multiple and often conflicted assertions of indigenous culture and self in Tariq Rahman's novel *Bingo* through the application of postcolonial critique and speech-act theory. This textual analysis has helped to expose how Rahman's characters experience and interact with the mixing of traditional indigenous culture with modern American reality, providing for the complexity of cultural hybridity and identity.

Conclusion

Through the different characters depicted by Rahman, the aspect of postcolonialism, particularly the hybridity of cultural characteristics such as Running Deer, is illustrated by the blending of both indigenous and present-day aspects of life to form new models of personality. Such hybridity plays with the conventional settler fixtures of what constitutes native authenticity, thus undermining homogeneously fixed indigenous identity, which aligns with Bhaba's (1994) perspective of hybridity. The novel extrapolates the theme of Othering and continues to consider the problem of stereotypes. Characters are shown with exotic and somewhat despicable demeanor by outsiders,

which brings about external Orientalism, as explained by Said (1978). As for the issue of Rahman's narrative as a metaliterary critique, the displacement of such reductive views shows an awareness and defiance by the characters.

Based on speech act theory, the present research has demonstrated how assertive, expressive, and directive speech acts enhance characterization and identity performance. The assertive declarations of *Running Deer*, the expressive confessions of *Whispering Wind*, and the directive instructions of *Grandmother White Eagle* all of which help to state and maintain their cultural and community orientations. Rahman adopts a middle ground in approaching the representation of Native Americans, and positive and negative characteristics of their characters are incorporated in this novel. Thus, this approach dismisses the popular stereotypical and often narrow-minded notions, thus enabling readers to familiarize themselves with the 'real' Native American lives.

Implications

The implications of this research are significant within the sphere of literary studies, particularly in how indigenous cultures are represented. This study underscores the necessity for a conscientious and nuanced portrayal of Native American identities, emphasizing the pivotal role that literature plays in shaping societal perceptions and fostering empathy. By challenging reductive stereotypes and engaging with complex characterizations, the narrative in Tariq Rahman's "Bingo" not only enriches literary discourse but also influences readers' understanding of cultural diversity and identity complexities. It advocates for a representation that respects the authenticity and varied experiences of indigenous peoples, thus contributing to a broader recognition of their cultural and historical significance. Moreover, this work serves as a critical reminder of the power of literature as a tool for cultural preservation and social change, encouraging authors and readers alike to consider the deeper implications of cultural narratives in fostering a more inclusive and informed society

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