

The Construction of Identity in "the Third Space" Taking Mozasu and Noa in the Novel *Pachinko* as an Example

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Abstract: The identity of the diaspora is a topic that is often discussed in diaspora literature, but not enough attention has been paid to the Zainichi, a diaspora in East Asia. Based on Homi K. Bhabha's theory of hybridity and the third space, this research takes Mozasu and Noa in the novel *Pachinko* as an example to discuss how diaspora individuals build new identities under bicultural identities. Based on the text analysis method, it is concluded that the identity of the diaspora inevitably forms a hybrid, and it becomes inevitable to form a hybrid identity in the middle zone.

Keywords: Homi K. Bhabha, The third space, Diaspora, Identity, Zainich.

1. Introduction

Postcolonial theory, as a method of literary and cultural criticism, is a multicultural theory that studies the power relations of cultural discourse between the former sovereign state and the former colony after the immediate period of colonial rule ended, as well as the relationship between racism, cultural imperialism, national culture, cultural power identity and other new issues. [1]

Homi K. Bhabha is the main representative of postcolonial critical theory, whose theory has strong characteristics of "third world" cultural criticism and "minority" studies, [2] and is closely related to issues such as cultural identity and diaspora writing. One of Homi K. Bhabha's main theories about postcolonialism is "hybridity"[3], a concept that is divorced from biological meaning and is a cultural hybridity. The third space is created with "mixing". While studying the binary opposition and contradiction between the two sides of the colonization, there is a mixed space, namely "the third space", which is a negotiable space outside the "self" and "other". This space enables many new cultural identity meanings to emerge.

Diaspora is one of the manifestations of postcolonialism in literature. It refers to exile in the geographical sense as well as exile in the psychological and cultural sense. As the main elements of diaspora stories, diaspora people become immigrants due to war, apartheid and other reasons, leaving their native land and moving to a foreign land. In addition to the spatial changes, they are in a psychological and cultural state of one or the other: a dual identity makes them neither accepted nor belonging to their homeland. They are overwhelmed by the question "Who am I?" At the same time, it is this "in-between" state [3] that forms a third space that can be shaped for the construction of the new cultural identity of the diaspora.

Homi K. Bhabha's theory of the third space has been the basis for numerous studies analyzing classic diaspora literature, but there hasn't been enough attention paid to the identity construction of the minority Korean diaspora's stories. This paper focuses on the marginalized minority group

Zainichi and offers an East Asian viewpoint for the study of diaspora works in a global setting, based on Homi K. Bhabha's hybridity and the third space theory. By using brothers Mozasu and Noa from the book *Pachinko* as an example, this article compares the two characters' distinctive identities through text analysis and discusses on how diaspora people create new identities under their dual cultural identities.

The author of *Pachinko*, Min Jin Lee, was born in Seoul, South Korea. She immigrated to the United States with her family when she was 7 years old. She lived and grew up in the United States, and studied history at Yale as an undergraduate. Min Jin Lee noticed the Zainichi group during an unexpected lecture during her junior year of college. Zainichi is used to refer to the Koreans in Japan who were either colonial immigrants or descendants of these immigrants. For ethnic Koreans in Japan, the word Zainichi is undoubtedly a form of discrimination. Min Jin Lee was moved by a story mentioned in that lecture about a Korean middle school boy in Japan who chose to commit suicide after being bullied by his Japanese classmates. Because of her history major and her immigration experience, Min Jin Lee came up with the idea of writing a story about the Koreans in Japan, and the boy's story was later written into *Pachinko* as a plot. [4]

Pachinko chronicles the story of four generations of Sunja's family in exile in Japan, spanning nearly eighty years from 1910 to 1989, from the Japanese colonization of Korea, to World War II, to Japan's bubble economy. Set against the backdrop of the grand era, the story focuses on the encounters of four generations of one family in different times. "Although the history of kings and rulers is unequivocally fascinating, I think we are also hungry for the narrative of ordinary people, who lack connections and material resources." [4] Min Jin Lee believes that history is made up of both big and small people, and that the stories of ordinary people are also worthy of our attention. By writing in such a small way, readers can experience this story of love, suffering, and resilience from many different perspectives.

2. Mozasu's Cultural Identity Building Process

2.1. Mozasu's Identity Dilemma

For the first group of immigrants to leave North Korea, represented by Sunja, their perception of their Korean identity was not only not destroyed, but strengthened to some extent. The main problem they faced in Japan was how to survive the war. In Japan, the first generation of Korean immigrants are at the bottom of Japanese society. It is difficult for them to live a decent life through their own efforts. Even skilled workers like Yoseb can only work day and night in Japanese factories to make ends meet.

Although they survive in the cracks, for Sunja, the first-generation immigrants, their hometown is clearly accessible, and it is their spiritual sustenance in their difficult lives. The vast majority of them firmly identified themselves as Koreans and hoped to return to Korea after the war. But for Mozasu, who was born and raised in Japan, his hometown only exists in the stories told by the previous generation, and Mozasu's Korean cultural identity is imagined. In Japan, Mozasu needed to establish a new cultural identity. [5]

The first generation of immigrants, represented by Sunja, solved the problem of survival, and the second generation of immigrants, represented by Mozasu, faced the question of "Who am I?" Mozasu is Sunja's son, and the second-generation immigrants represented by Mozasu are undoubtedly "Japanese" because they speak Japanese, attend Japanese schools, work and live in Japan, but they have never been recognized by Japanese society.

2.2. Identity Exploration in A Mixed State

Unlike most kids who live in slums, Mozasu has never shied away from being Korean since he was a child. During the US bombing of Osaka, the Sunja family took refuge on a farm with the help of Hansu. Perhaps this experience made little Mozasu realize that having money and power can protect his family. Rather than gaining recognition from the Japanese, the young Mozasu said he wanted to make money to help his family live a better life. "I want to make a lot of money, then umma and Aunt Kyunghee wouldn't have to work anymore." [4]

Although he was often insulted by Japanese classmates at school, Mozasu didn't care when he faced discrimination in middle school, and he even looked down on the Korean classmates around him who concealed their identity. He told Haruki, a transfer student who was trying to integrate into the school environment: "Get a life of your own." "If people don't like you, it's not always your fault." [4] As can be seen, Mozasu began to try to explore his new identity in a third space that was neither Korean nor Japanese.

After dropping out of school, Mozasu ran Pachinko parlors with Mr. Goro. Mozasu took the job seriously as his career, working hard while subsidizing his salary for the family. Twenty-year-old Mozasu became a store manager because of his excellent work ability, and later opened his own Pachinko parlor in Yokohama. Through his own efforts, Mozasu has a successful career and a better life for his family. To a certain extent, this sense of accomplishment has strengthened Mozasu's attempt to take root in a new cultural identity in Japan.

2.3. Hybrid Identities Established Under Self-reconciliation

Mozasu understands: He wants to be respected by becoming rich, but no matter how hard he tries as a Korean, it will be difficult for him to be recognized by the Japanese in Japan in the end. Mozasu's son Solomon chose to take over the family's Pachinko business after experiencing workplace discrimination, allowing Mozasu to finally let go of his obsession with pursuing recognition and reach a reconciliation with himself.

Japanese is Solomon's native language, and he lives in Japan's fast-growing economy. Since childhood, Mozasu has attached great importance to cultivating Solomon, hoping that Solomon will stand out and not be looked down upon. Even if Solomon has a Columbia University educational background and excellent work ability, he will not be able to get the position he deserves in the investment bank, and he still cannot be trusted by the Japanese. After Solomon was fired, Hana had the last conversation with him in the hospital. Hana suggested Solomon to take over the Pachinko parlors at home, saying "It's a filthy world, Solomon. No one is clean." [4] Solomon finally accepted: someone else's opinion doesn't matter. Solomon also persuaded his father.

Both Mozasu and Solomon finally reached a reconciliation with themselves: since they are already in a state of hybrid identity of Korean and Japanese identity, instead of seeking affirmation from either side, it is better to seek affirmation inward, giving themselves a sense of belonging and forming a new hybrid identity. So far, the efforts of three generations of diaspora have brought Zainichi a relatively stable life, and the identity issues faced by future generations have also changed, from seeking recognition to establishing a new identity of their own.

3. Mozasu and Noa: Negotiation and Separation

Noa's death in the novel represents a failed identity construction under binary opposition. Noa is Mozasu's half-brother. Unlike Mozasu, who never shies away from his Korean identity, Noa has a secret since he was a child: that he wants to be Japanese. Noa wanted to try to gain acceptance in Japanese society by discarding his Korean cultural identity. Lee writes in the novel: "Above all the other secrets that Noa could not speak of, the boy wanted to be Japanese; it was his dream to leave Ikaino and never to return." [4]

Since childhood, Noa has been a good boy praised by people around him. He hopes to win the recognition of the Japanese through his excellent character and achievements. Noa wanted to protect himself in this way from being discriminated against by the Japanese. Although he was admitted to Waseda University through his own efforts, he still felt inferior because he was a Korean. He was a loner at the university, and the state of inferiority and disguise made Noa's cultural identity torn apart. The Japanese cultural identity he had laboriously established crumbled after discovering that his biological father was not just a Korean but also a yakuza boss. He considers himself "impure". "I will never be able to wash this dirt from my name." [4] He became more disguised about his Korean identity, changed his name to the Japanese name Nobuo Ban, falsely claimed to be Japanese, and married a Japanese wife.

Noa only wants to be recognized by the Japanese society, deliberately hides the fact that he is Korean, actively

integrates into Japanese culture, and longs for recognition. However, Noa lost himself in the extreme of binary opposition and truly became an outsider between Koreans and Japanese. Up until his suicide, Noa thought it was scary to be Korean. In the end, Noa expressed his disappointment by ending his life. Noa's suicide occurred abruptly and it is reflected in the novel through Hansu's narration to Sunja. This may also mean that insisting on binary opposition in a state of confusion is doomed to be fragile, with the possibility of destruction at any time.

4. Conclusion

Min Jin Lee, also a Korean immigrant, studied history, worked as a lawyer, and taught writing in college. These experiences allow her to tell Zainichi's story in a richer light, providing readers with a larger perspective. The popularity of *Pachinko* and the TV adaptation of the same name have brought Zainichi's stories to a wider English-language audience, which has brought East Asian minorities to wider attention. Zainichi lives in the cracks, with a bicultural identity of Korean and Japanese. This hybridity puts them on the edge of both Korea and Japan. Korean Japanese, like other bicultural or even multicultural diasporas, are seen in mainstream culture as "outsiders", with an identity anxiety of "who am I?" that plagues them.

The process of establishing Mozasu's new identity reflects that the identity construction of the diaspora is not static or completed in a single space, which also reflects the negotiation strategy of Homi K. Bhabha [3]. By comparing

the identity constructions of Mozasu and Noa, it can be seen that the pursuit of a single identity is not a good solution to the identity dilemma. Since the hybrid identity of the diaspora is inevitable, it is inevitable to form a hybrid identity in the middle zone. Therefore, the belonging of diaspora individuals under dual cultural identities is the construction of mixed cultural identities. This also makes us think that in the context of globalization with multicultural integration, groups who study and work in different places also experience a sense of diaspora. Under dual or even multicultural identities, consciously establishing mixed identities is also a solution to identity confusion.

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