

CULTURAL SHAREDNESS IN THE LITERATURE OF IMMIGRATION

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ENGLISH

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Letter of Recommendation

We certify that this dissertation entitled “Cultural Sharedness in the Literature of Immigration” was presented by Shiva Raj Panta under our guidance. We hereby recommend this dissertation for the Final Viva Voce by the research committee of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English.

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Date: January 2024

APPROVAL LETTER

Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation entitled CULTURAL SHAREDNESS IN THE LITERATURE OF IMMIGRATION submitted to the Office of the Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, is an entirely original work of my own and I have made due acknowledgements to all ideas and information borrowed from different sources in the course of writing this dissertation. The findings presented in this dissertation have not been presented anywhere else for the award of any degree or for any other reasons. No part of the content of this dissertation has ever been published in any form before. I shall be solely responsible if any evidence is found against my declaration.

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Shiva Raj Panta

January 2024

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Abstract

This dissertation studies the emergent area of immigrant literature particularly focusing on *The Enigma of Arrival* by V. S. Naipaul, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* by Junot Diaz and *White Teeth* by Zadie Smith. By placing immigrant characters within the interstices of cross-cultural social milieu, these novels, among other issues, best demonstrate the issue of dual allegiance to the culture of their origin and that of the host society. Such cultural interstices have been examined from various angles including multicultural and intercultural perspectives; however, such approaches leave the attempt for the co-existence of the immigrants and hosts in a problematic state as they either elide differences into cultural homogeneity or maintain an essentialist position of inherent differences of each culture. In this context, this dissertation proposes a transcultural approach to interrogate the intercultural and multicultural viewpoints that permeate the study of immigrant literature.

The research agenda constitutes the inquiry in three texts about the way the immigrants and hosts share common cultural practices in relation to food and attires; the issues of homogeneity and uniqueness of cultures; and the status of the hitherto accepted theoretical paradigms such as multiculturalism and interculturality. The objective of the study is to examine the cross-cultural commonalities and internal cultural variation. In addition, the analysis of the multiplicity of the self and problems of delimitation of culture is subsequent objective.

The characters in the selected novels demonstrate that cultural differences, especially in terms of food and attire, not only mark the differences between the culture of origin and that of the host society but they also instigate similar differences within the culture of origin . Drawing upon theories of diaspora and postcolonial

literature and culture, especially Wolfgang Welsch's emphasis on the confluence of cultures and his questioning of the homogeneity of culture, this dissertation asserts that the cultural commonalities between the cultures of immigrants and that of the host society undermine both the essentialist and the assimilationist views; it shows that culture for immigrants is much more permeable and as such it cannot be allied to any monolithic absolute, be that the culture of origin or that of the host society. Thus, the researcher argues that cultures are not entirely different; they possess sharedness with each other and are not unmistakably homogeneous within.

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