

Postcolonial Epistemology and the Role of Silence in Formulating Postcolonial Aesthetics in Hanif Kureshi's Short Stories "Touched" and "Hullabaloo in the Tree"

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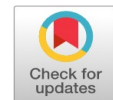
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Abstract: This literary study aims to analyze two short stories, "Touched" and "Hullabaloo in the Tree," by British-Pakistani writer Hanif Kureshi. The stories were published in his collection of short fiction, *The Body* (2002). The study evaluates the stories to explore the postcolonial aesthetic elements in the narratives. Postcolonial aesthetics is comparatively a less explored area in literary research. Out of a few postcolonial theorists, Bill Ashcroft is the one who drew the attention of scholars to evaluate postcolonial literature on aesthetic grounds. In this pursuit, he works on the epistemology of postcolonial conditions and contends that postcolonial knowledge lies beyond the boundaries of written language. His claim rests on the assumption that written language is restricted due to its reliance on inscribed words. Therefore, the power of unsaid "mystifies the aesthetic object" (text). In this theoretical backdrop, the analysis of the two selected short stories focuses on those 'silent moments' in the stories that can generate meaning beyond the boundaries of language and thus help to figure out the postcolonial aesthetics of the short fiction. Here, the phrase 'silent moments' refers to the instances in the narratives where the author does not convey the message explicitly. The research contends that the 'unsaid' can be interpreted through the power of literary language and the imaginative power of the writer and the reader. This qualitative research employs an interpretive method to anchor the analysis.

Keywords: Imagination, Aesthetics, Postcolonial, knowing, meaning, Epistemology

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INTRODUCTION

In contemporary postcolonial theory, Bill Ashcroft is one of those critics who draw the attention of scholars to an academic research gap that is the lack of research on postcolonial aesthetics, "Aesthetic theory has often been regarded with suspicion by postcolonial theorists who see aesthetics as implicated in the canonical marginalization of postcolonial literature (Ashcroft, 2015, p. 410). He contends that the said aesthetics can be explored in the 'contact zone' of a 'transcultural text' that brings a potentially transformative exchange between the writer and the reader. This article addresses the mentioned research gap by analyzing Hanif Kureshi's two short stories written in a postcolonial context. The rationale for selecting Kureshi's stories is that his short fiction has not been analyzed from the point of view of postcolonial literary aesthetics. The research thus intends to fill the research gap in the said genre.

Deepika Bahri (1995), a contemporary postcolonial critic, believes that defining the boundaries and measurements of postcolonial territory is complex, and establishing a clear and effective critical framework for the theory is challenging. She argues that much of what is labeled as "postcolonial" is categorized based on the broad limits and possibilities of the phenomenon. It makes postcolonial theory multi-dimensional in its approach. Postcolonial theory is inherently interdisciplinary due to its integration of various academic disciplines that explore the effects of colonialism on cultures, societies, and individuals. This interdisciplinarity is evident in how postcolonial theory interacts with and incorporates insights from fields such as feminism, Marxism, and studies of race, gender, and culture.

The discipline of Aesthetics, which deals with the nature of beauty, art, and taste, still needs to be explored within postcolonial theory (Scruton and Munro, 2024)). While postcolonial studies have made significant additions

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in analyzing colonialism's impacts on culture, identity, and power structures, philosophical inquiry into aesthetics has received different attention.

Critics observe that exploring the aesthetics of postcolonial text needs to be addressed. This oversight is notable because aesthetics is crucial in understanding how colonial powers imposed their cultural standards and artistic values on colonized societies. Colonialism disrupted local cultures and traditions and imposed Western aesthetic norms, often marginalizing or devaluing indigenous art forms (Thomas, 2022). The lack of interest in postcolonial aesthetics overlooks how colonial legacies continue to shape perceptions of beauty, art, and cultural production in formerly colonized societies. Besides appreciating beauty in art and culture, another aspect of postcolonial aesthetics concerns the literary aesthetics of postcolonial fiction. This research article is concerned with the literary aesthetic concerns of postcolonial fiction.

Bill Ashcroft and Elleke Boehmer emphasize the importance of evaluating postcolonial texts on aesthetic grounds. They argue that the theory's predominant focus on political dimensions has led to the neglect of postcolonial aesthetics (Tan, 2021). They contend that while postcolonial theory has been instrumental in highlighting power, identity, and resistance issues, this focus on the political has often overshadowed the aesthetic aspects of postcolonial literature and art. They point out that postcolonial texts are not merely vehicles for political or social critique but are also rich in aesthetic value, offering unique artistic expressions that reflect the complexities of postcolonial experiences. By concentrating primarily on the political implications of these texts, scholars risk reducing them to mere instruments of ideology, thereby overlooking their artistic qualities, narrative techniques, and stylistic innovations.

The aesthetic dimension of postcolonial texts is crucial because it reflects the creativity and resilience of postcolonial cultures in the face of colonial domination. Through their aesthetic choices, postcolonial writers and artists engage in acts of cultural recovery, reimagining and redefining their identities and histories. These aesthetic practices are not just secondary to the political message but are integral to how that message is conveyed and received.

This research paper utilizes Ashcroft's essay "Material Resonance: Knowing before Meaning" (2014) to locate postcolonial aesthetics in indigenous writing. He explores the concept of "material resonance" in art and design, where materials and their inherent qualities evoke knowledge and understanding before the observer imposes any explicit meaning or interpretation. The author delves into this idea's philosophical and practical implications, suggesting that materials have a kind of agency or vitality that can communicate and influence human perception on a pre-cognitive level. "knowing before meaning" refers to the idea that our engagement with materials often begins with a non-verbal, pre-cognitive response. This response is shaped by the physical properties of the material, which resonate with the observer in a way that precedes intellectual analysis or interpretation.

The discussion is framed within a broader philosophical context, drawing on theories of materialism, phenomenology, and aesthetics. The author references philosophers like Baruch Spinoza, Henri Bergson, and Gilles Deleuze to support the argument that matter is not inert but active, capable of affecting and being affected in complex ways. Ashcroft's inquiry about the act of 'knowing initiates' the epistemological discussion later connected with Indigenous writing. In this way, Ashcroft paves the way for exploring postcolonial aesthetics in the philosophical understanding of a form of 'knowing.'

LITERATURE REVIEW

R'boul (2022) in his article "Postcolonial Interventions in Intercultural Communication Knowledge: Meta-intercultural Ontologies, Decolonial Knowledges and Epistemological Polylogue", criticizes the overwhelming influence of Western viewpoints in intercultural communication and how these viewpoints have become the dominant "truth." This dominance stems from the historical preference of modern science for knowledge systems from the Global North, often disregarding other ways of knowing, especially those from non-Western or indigenous cultures. It argues for the necessity to go beyond this Western-centric framework by introducing "meta-intercultural ontologies." This term describes a more inclusive and diverse approach to intercultural communication, influenced by post-colonial theory and intercultural philosophy. Post-colonial theory highlights the lasting effects of colonialism on knowledge production, emphasizing the importance of acknowledging and valuing the perspectives and experiences of formerly colonized peoples. Intercultural philosophy aims to understand the complex interactions between different cultural worldviews, promoting a more dialogic and less hierarchical approach to knowledge

exchange. The text outlines two main aspects of this new approach. Firstly, it calls for a reevaluation of intercultural communication knowledge at the epistemological level, questioning the foundational assumptions and methodologies that have traditionally guided this field. The goal is to broaden the scope of knowledge production to include a wider range of perspectives and experiences. Secondly, the text criticizes the historical Western dominance over knowledge production and distribution. It argues that power hierarchies and sociopolitical circumstances have significantly influenced academic practices, often at the expense of marginalized voices. By challenging these hierarchies, the article advocates for a more fair and inclusive approach to intercultural communication that recognizes the value of diverse epistemologies. This emphasis on diverse epistemologies can enlighten and open the minds of scholars and students in the field of intercultural communication.

In her master's thesis, "Portrayals of Identity in the Works of Hanif Kureishi", Hohnjec (2024) delves into the exploration of identity within the works of British author Hanif Kureishi, particularly focusing on his writings from the 1990s. The thesis is divided into multiple sections, each addressing different aspects of identity, including ethnic, religious, sexual, gender, and class identities, as portrayed in Kureishi's fiction.

The thesis begins by discussing the post-World War II cultural exchange in the United Kingdom, highlighting how the influx of immigrants from former British colonies led to the diversification of British society and its literature. The theoretical framework draws heavily on postcolonial theory, particularly the works of Edward Said and Homi Bhabha, as well as sociological concepts of identity. The thesis also references Zygmunt Bauman's "liquid modernity" theory to describe the fluid and ever-changing nature of identity in contemporary society. The thesis first addresses ethnic and religious identity, particularly in Kureishi's early works such as *The Buddha of Suburbia* and *The Black Album*. These novels focus on second-generation immigrants in Britain, exploring their hybrid identities as they navigate between the cultural expectations of their parents and the society they live in (Volkman, 2020). The thesis discusses the concept of "Britishness" and how Kureishi's characters, through their unique experiences and perspectives, challenge and redefine traditional notions of what it means to be British, often finding themselves in a liminal space between cultures. The struggle with religious identity is also a key theme, particularly in the face of rising religious fundamentalism, as depicted in *The Black Album*.

Kureishi's exploration of sexual and gender identity is also a central theme in his works. The thesis discusses how characters in Kureishi's novels and short stories challenge traditional gender roles and sexual norms, often exploring fluid and hybrid identities. For instance, characters like Karim from *The Buddha of Suburbia* and Jamila explore their sexual identities in ways that defy societal expectations, reflecting Kureishi's broader critique of rigid gender norms (Upadhyay, 2021). She also examines how class identity is portrayed in Kureishi's work, mainly through his depiction of the middle class. Kureishi's characters often belong to the lower middle class, and their social status is reflected in their occupations, consumer habits, and cultural tastes. The suburban setting of many of his works is also analyzed as a representation of middle-class life, with its associated frustrations and aspirations.

The thesis concludes by summarizing how Kureishi's works from the 1990s reflect the complexities of identity formation in a multicultural, postcolonial Britain. Kureishi's characters often struggle with their identities, caught between different cultural, social, and personal expectations. The thesis argues that Kureishi's exploration of identity is deeply influenced by the broader societal changes occurring in Britain at the time, including the decline of traditional class structures, the rise of multiculturalism, and the challenges to conventional gender roles.

The article "Meaning-Making Process and Aesthetic Response in Sylvia Plath's Selected Poems" by Ahmad and Khalid (2022) explores the emotional and intellectual connection between Sylvia Plath's poetry and her readers, particularly female readers. The research employs Wolfgang Iser's theory of Aesthetic Reader Response, which posits that the meaning of a literary work is not confined to the text itself but emerges through the interaction between the text and the reader. The study focuses on how Plath's profoundly personal and emotional poetry resonates with female readers, enabling them to engage in a unique meaning-making process. The authors argue that Plath's poetry is characterized by its confessional style, in which she expresses her personal experiences, fears, and traumas, often related to themes such as patriarchy, victimization, death, motherhood, and identity. These themes reflect Plath's own struggles and resonate with the shared experiences of many women, making her work particularly powerful for female readers.

The research highlights the role of Plath's linguistic and stylistic choices in evoking a strong aesthetic response from her readers. Her use of metaphors, personification, and enjambment creates a rich, immersive experience and draws readers into her emotional world, fostering a deep connection with her female audience. Moreover, the

article discusses how Plath's poetry enables readers to explore and process their own emotions and experiences. By engaging with her work, readers can achieve a form of catharsis, as the poems offer them a space to confront and understand their feelings. Central to Iser's theory, this interactive process emphasizes the reader's active role in creating meaning, making them feel intellectually engaged and active. In conclusion, the article asserts that through its emotional intensity and thematic relevance, Sylvia Plath's poetry provides female readers with a profound aesthetic experience that allows them to engage in a meaningful dialogue with the text, leading to a deeper understanding of themselves and their world.

In his unique perspective on Hanif Kureishi's novel *The Black Album*, Elyasi (2022) explores the themes of assimilation, resistance, and identity. His study, which is framed by Homi Bhabha's postcolonial theories, delves into the lives of Pakistani immigrants in 1980s London. The focus is on the protagonist, Shahid Hasan, a young Pakistani student who grapples with his identity amidst cultural and religious tensions. The article contextualizes *The Black Album* within Kureishi's body of work, and highlights exploration of immigrant experiences in a postcolonial context. Shahid's character, a representation of the hybrid identity that emerges from assimilation, is contrasted with Riaz, another Pakistani immigrant. Riaz leads a group of Muslim students committed to resisting Western influence and maintaining their religious identity through extreme actions, such as book-burning in protest of Salman Rushdie's 'The Satanic Verses'.

Using Bhabha's concepts of ambivalence, mimicry, and hybridity, Elyasi argues that Shahid's hybrid identity—formed by his intimate relationship with his professor Deedee, who symbolizes Western philosophy and modernity—effectively challenges colonial power more than Riaz's overt resistance. The article suggests that while Riaz's group clings to traditional values and resists assimilation, Shahid's journey reflects the complexities of identity formation in a multicultural society, where assimilation and hybridization can subvert the authority of the colonizer more subtly and effectively. Elyasi also discusses the broader implications of Kureishi's work, noting how it reflects the struggles of immigrants caught between the expectations of their homeland and the pressures of adapting to a new culture. The article emphasizes the importance of understanding the dynamics of assimilation and resistance in postcolonial studies, as illustrated through Shahid's character, which ultimately embodies the potential for creating a new, hybrid identity that transcends traditional cultural boundaries.

METHODOLOGY/ THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research article uses the interpretive method to analyze the text. The method is helpful to get a nuanced understanding of the text. Contextual analysis and hermeneutics of a text are the critical aspects of the interpretive method (Nigar, 2020). The former concerns the text's cultural, historical, and social understanding, and the latter regards interpretation within words, symbols, and metaphors to reveal the hidden meanings. Readers' interpretation and reflexivity are integral parts of the interpretive method, as the diversity of their experiences adds to the interpretation of meaning. The theoretical stance of Ashcroft emphasizes a form of 'knowing' that lies beyond words; therefore, the interpretive method is the suitable choice to explore the aesthetics of postcolonial texts.

Bill Ashcroft's article "Material Resonance Knowing before Meaning" (2014) begins with the question, "What is it to know what we know" (Ashcroft, 2014, p.107)? By raising such questions, the author delves into the epistemological debate, specifically the knowledge in intercultural space, where different cultures meet. He is interested in going beyond traditional interpretation and meaning that might not fit within conventional ways of knowing. His specified focus is on Indigenous experience. In this regard, he proposes a form of communication that lies beyond the boundaries of written words. Instead, the interpretation depends on engaging directly with the material aspects of the text or experience. In this way, he shows his concern for postcolonial epistemology, as the postcolonial phenomenon is inherently characterized by the indulgence of two or more cultures simultaneously. Ashcroft accentuates a form of 'knowing' that cannot be put into words.

Ashcroft delves into complex questions about the nature of knowledge, representation, and understanding, especially in the context of different cultural relationships to place. It suggests that there exists a form of knowledge that transcends language, particularly written language, which is often limited by its representational power. This knowledge is more about a deep, almost instinctual connection to place—something that may be felt or intuited rather than fully articulated. Ashcroft references a profound claim by Aileen Moreton Robinson (2020) that the Aboriginals experience an ontological relationship with the land that is impossible for white people to share. This claim underscores the unique depth of the Aboriginal relationship to the land, a distinct perspective from that of

white settlers' experience of the same land.

Ashcroft challenges the traditional ideas of epistemology by asking whether it is possible to know something before fully understanding it. It suggests that creative acts, such as the creation of art or poetry, communicate this kind of pre-cognitive knowledge, affecting the body and emotions before being intellectually understood. He ponders how communication occurs between cultural divides. Ashcroft suggests that communication might begin in the body through affective and emotional responses before it is processed intellectually or cognitively.

As a postcolonial theorist, Ashcroft is keen on exploring the transcultural space between languages—inhabited by Indigenous writers who choose to write in the language of their colonizers. This space is well-known to many writers from colonized backgrounds. By adopting the colonizer's language, these writers access a global audience and gain the power of self-representation. Postcolonial literature thus becomes a narrative of resistance through transformation, as English is adapted to the demands of vernacular languages. Ashcroft is particularly interested in examining how this transcultural space is transformative in hermeneutic and epistemological terms. The presence of 'transcultural space' is significant in the postcolonial context because it offers a contestatory space that gives birth to "a process of intersubjective contact and mutual change. One contact zone clearly open to analysis is the transcultural text" (Ashcroft, 2014, p.111). Ashcroft borrows the idea of Bakhtin, who contends that all novels involve a 'cross-cultural' interaction between the producer (writer) and consumer (reader). According to Bakhtin, a novel provides a suitable space for polyphonic voices in different languages. Bakhtin's idea best suits Ashcroft because a postcolonial text can interpret Bakhtin's dialogism that "true dialogue can only occur when the difference of the other is recognized" (Ashcroft, 2014, p.112).

In the article, Ashcroft suggests a model of reading he calls 'constitutive reading' to demonstrate the transculturality in the text. To achieve this objective, he proposes that the dialogic quality of a text forms it as a social situation. He maintains that it is crucial to recognize the text as a material object, as its physical form influences communication. However, it is equally important to remember that writing is a deeply involved and socially mediated act. By acknowledging writing as a practice, we can view the text as a social situation where the 'objective' meanings of the writing emerge through a process of social interaction between the writer and the reader. Meaning and understanding arise because language encodes the reciprocal experiences of those engaged in the conversation. It is this situation, the 'event' of reciprocal interaction, that 'tells,' 'refers,' and 'informs.'

The term 'beyond' holds special significance in Ashcroft's theoretical stance in achieving transcultural meaning as it refers to a 'non-semantic,' 'pre-linguistic' phenomenon. He suggests that the interpretation of the text must first begin by focusing on its materiality (visual) and then later on be involved in interpreting it. In his diagram of The Hermeneutic spiral, Ashcroft demonstrates the idea that the presence of the text (transcultural text) may become the basis of interpretation "rather than the excess or the additional engagement with the text's 'meaning'" (Ashcroft, 2014, P.117).

The two selected short stories are analyzed against a given theoretical understanding of interpretation to locate those 'silent moments' in the text that may refer to pre-linguistic and non-semantic demonstrations of the interpretation.

DISCUSSION

Kureshi, in the short story "Touched," introduces the themes of familial relationships, youth, and the complexities of growing up in a transcultural contact zone (Idrus et.al, 2020). Ali, a young boy of mixed heritage, experiences a bittersweet moment as he bids farewell to his relatives from India. The story captures the nuances of his emotions, from the warmth and excitement of having his relatives around to the sadness and confusion as they leave. Ali's interactions with his cousin Zahida are pleasing to him as she came from India, the place of his origin. Ali's excitement for India allows the readers to understand the nature of his attachment to his native land. This is how meaning is located beyond words.

Meanwhile, his encounter with Miss Blake, the blind neighbor, enriches his experience with adults. The story subtly portrays Ali's internal conflict between his dual identities – his British and Indian heritage – and his desire to connect with both. Ali's relationship with his father, who is struggling with his sense of inadequacy and pressure from his extended family, further emphasizes the theme of generational and cultural tensions. Ali's father seems to be struggling with many expectations, exacerbated by his brother's criticism of his life in England and his father's unrealized hopes. This situation also has an impact on Ali's life. The story reflects the challenges of growing up in

a multicultural environment and the impact of family and societal pressures on one's sense of self.

There are several moments in the story where 'knowing' occurs in the gaps of cultures, a contact zone that transforms subjects mutually. At the outset, Ali bids farewell to his Indian relatives with tearful eyes; he feels embarrassed by his tears. The act is a natural expression shown at the departure of loved ones. However, it contrasts with the behavior he feels is expected in front of Mike, a British boy. Ali's embarrassment suggests that he knows a cultural difference in how emotions are expressed and perceived in the cultural contact zone. Mike's statement—"What's goin' on? We could' ear you lot from down the road, makin' a noise all day" (Kureshi, 2010, p.511), reflects his curiosity and a sense of Otherness regarding Ali's family gathering. Mike's remarks create a distance from Ali's family, subtly marking them as different or Other. The remark about the noise implies that the lively, perhaps exuberant, atmosphere of Ali's family gathering is unusual or noteworthy in Mike's eyes, possibly contrasting with his cultural expectations of quieter or more reserved behavior. Mike's statement subtly underscores the cultural differences between him and Ali, reinforcing the idea of a cultural contact zone where differing practices and expectations intersect, sometimes leading to moments of misunderstanding or alienation. The readers can know Ali's situation in the cultural contact zone of British society.

The space in which Ali is performing lies beyond interpretation, as Kureshi does not offer explicit clues to interpret the boy's state of mind. Ashcroft accentuates the power of unsaid. "It is the resonance of the unsaid and unsayable that both enriches and mystifies the aesthetic object" (Ashcroft, 2014, p.109). The practical implication of Ashcroft's contention is visible when Ali tries to hide his Indian origin from Miss Blake. There is no single clue in the narrative where she would have undermined people of non-white origin, but even then, Ali avoids telling him about his Indian background. Through the power of literary language, the readers interpret Ali's situation. He feels elated when Miss Blake calls him 'Alan' instead of Ali. "She thought his name was Alan. He enjoyed being Alan for a while; it was a relief. Sometimes he went all day being Alan" (Kureshi, 2010, p.515).

Ali belongs to a second-generation Indian family that has never been to India. However, he is emotionally attached to his native land as he expresses his emotions to his cousin Zahida, "Tell India I am coming" (Kureshi, 2010, p.513)! To know and interpret Ali's emotion about India is possible only through the power of literary language where knowing occurs before understanding. In this regard, Ashcroft reflects on the question, "Can we understand what we cannot share? In this regard, Ashcroft explains that in the case of postcolonial writing, 'knowing' or 'understanding' must not be confused with a shared experience. In his opinion, postcolonial literature is marked by resistance and transformation. The reader recognizes resistance and transformation in Ali's character through a nuanced understanding of complexes. Ali never experienced the real-time situation of partition, but Kureshi makes his readers able to interpret and 'know' Ali's inner conflicts through the power of art.

There are few occasions in the story when readers interpret Ali's white mother, Joan, as Other. The possible interpretation is the demonstration of 'knowing' beyond the limits of written words. The story has no verbal expressions where whites are labeled Others (Ahmed and Mahmood, 2024). However, as the readers know what it means to be 'Other' in a postcolonial context, they can interpret the status of Ali's mother as 'Other.' Ali's uncles scold his father for marrying a white lady. "There are so many opportunities here, yaar, and the only one you've taken is to marry Joan! Why are you letting down the whole family" (Kureshi, 2010, p.513)? Their wives ordered her to cook Indian dishes for them and wash their clothes.

In the second chosen short narrative, "Hullabaloo in the Tree", Kureshi focuses on the dual identity of the characters in the cultural contact zone. The Indian friend is not happy with the hybrid lifestyle that an Indian doctor and his kids adopted. Readers interpret the situation while understanding the element of transformation in cultural gaps. The Indian friend remarks, "I know we live here now, but you have let them become Western, in the worst way" (Kureshi, 2010, p.424)! What it is to be 'Western in the worst way'? It is in the power of literary language that suggests the meanings of the given expression. It shows the postcolonial bias of a postcolonial subject who, despite living in British society for so long, is not ready to appreciate the Western ways of life. This form of resistance occurs in the "interstices of cultures." In this space the elements of 'ambivalence' and 'resistance' are active implicitly. The very remark 'Western in the worst way', allows the reader to interpret it in the postcolonial context. This is how the readers 'know' before 'understanding'. To draw a difference between 'knowing' and 'understanding' can be performed in nuanced understanding of the postcolonial context. 'Understanding' takes place on a cognitive level, whereas 'knowing' can occur at visual level. When Indian doctor gets to know the young kids through their appearances and the way they interact with their father. The doctor draws a conclusion on this

base that they have become 'western in the worst way.' Ashcroft contends, "Postcolonial literature is a story of resistance through the transformation" (2014, p. 110). In his opinion, this space of writing is transcultural, and he is interested in knowing "the extent to which transcultural space is transformative in both a hermeneutic and epistemological sense" (ibid). According to Ashcroft, drawing the meaning in transcultural text provides a 'space of negotiation' where the writer and reader are involved in 'constitutive collusion' to negotiate the meaning. In this way, both are transformed to draw meaning (Ashcroft, 2023). In "Hullabaloo in the Tree", the Indian friend remembers his Papa as an immigrant. He mentions him as "the subject of curiosity"; this is how the white natives perceive non-whites. Creating a space for him in Western society took a long time.

The trivial acts like opening the car's bonnet without any mechanical skills Papa's act of opening the bonnet of his car and staring into it, despite his lack of practical mechanical skills, shows his "immigrant helplessness." This act serves as a bridge, inviting the local men—civil servants, clerks, shop owners, and others—to engage with him. Papa, looking for help, gathers the attention of white natives and slowly creates a space for acceptance in the transcultural scenario. Ashcroft locates the aesthetics of postcolonial text in the act of 'knowing' in the creative space of negotiation. The Indian friend is unhappy with the Indian Doctor's remarks about the kid, who calls them disobedient and disrespectful. He wants to tell him that his children are very obedient, but he cannot do so as the doctor has left the park. The father looks around, anxious and hopeful that his Indian friend might be at the park today. Now, he has something on his mind to share. He realizes that, like desire, children have the power to disrupt what seems settled and that this disruption could be a virtue. Despite any wish to raise his kids with strict rules or a fixed system, he knows he can only do it by being true to himself—by living as an example and guide. This approach was more challenging than pretending to be an authority but also more authentic. In his nostalgia, he remembers his Papa's love for the children. "Papa had never thought of children as an obstacle or a nuisance. They were everywhere, part of life" (Kureshi, 2010, p.429).

Reading the texts in the light of the model of 'constitutive reading' offered by Ashcroft gives an insight into how transculturality operates in the text. In this regard Ashcroft uses Bakhtin's concept of 'dialogism'. According to this, "form and content in discourse are one, once we understand that verbal discourse is a social phenomenon social throughout its entire range and in each of its factors, from the sound image to the furthest ranges of abstract meaning" (Bakhtin, 2010, p.259). Bakhtin contends that what we communicate and how we communicate are shaped by social context. Since each response in a social context results from a previous response, it gives birth to social dialogue (Kent, 2020). To analyze transcultural elements in the text, Ashcroft follows Bakhtin and takes the text as a 'social situation.' Moreover, he treats text as a material object, for its materiality impacts communication. In the stories "Touched" and "Hullabaloo in the Tree," taking form and content as one helps to locate postcolonial aesthetic elements in the texts. Stylistic features (form) and the texts' themes (content) support readers' imaginative understanding and interpretation of meaning beyond the boundaries of written language. As Bakhtin's dialogism states, language cannot be studied as an abstract system of signs; instead, it is influenced by the social scenario. So, the aesthetics of postcolonial fiction also depends on the historical, cultural, and social context. The characters and situations in "Touched" and "Hullabaloo in the Tree" show dialogic elements that help readers draw meaning beyond the boundaries of the written words.

CONCLUSION

A comprehensive analysis of the two short stories by Kureshi shows how Ashcroft's philosophical inquiry into literary aesthetic concerns of the fiction locates it in the silent moments of the text. These moments refer to a form of 'knowing' in the postcolonial context. Ashcroft's stance that "it is the resonance of the unsaid and unsayable that both enriches and mystifies the aesthetic object" (Ashcroft, 2014, p.109), is traceable in the analysis of the short stories. The presence of the themes of cultural tension, hybrid lifestyles, resistance, and assimilation is traced in the 'unsaid' in the stories. In compliance with Bakhtin's concept of dialogism utilized by Ashcroft, the analysis shows how the content and form of the text work simultaneously to 'know' transcultural moments in the stories. These transcultural moments can be well recognized due to the dialogic quality of the text. Ashcroft calls the transcultural zone a 'heterotopic' place where meaning is 'negotiated.' The analysis contends that within the characters, situations and events the readers can find an internal and external dialogue that plays a significant role in mystifying the 'aesthetic object' (text).

LIMITATIONS AND STUDY FORWARD

This research is novel in its attempt to analyze Kureshi's two short stories to explore the aesthetic elements of the text. Unlike previous studies that have primarily focused on Kureshi's novels from a postcolonial lens, concentrating on issues of identity, diaspora, and marginalization, this article takes a new approach. It seeks to evaluate Kureshi's short fiction using Ashcroft's critical model of reading, known as 'constitutive reading.' This model suggests that the aesthetics of postcolonial literature lie in the expression beyond the reach of written words. The novelty of this research lies in its potential to open up new avenues for scholars to explore the aesthetics of literature in cross-cultural postcolonial geographies.

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