

The Postcolonial Matrix of Border Enunciation: Spatial Traumas and Discursive Fractures in *How to Commit a Postcolonial Murder*

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Abstract

This study offers a critical postcolonial analysis of Nina McConigley's *How to Commit a Postcolonial Murder* (2026), purposefully moving beyond the familiar Bhabhaian triad of mimicry, hybridity, and ambivalence to engage with Homi K. Bhabha's more advanced concepts. By synthesizing cultural difference, the pedagogical versus performative split, the unhomely, and stereotypic fixity, this paper develops a nonlinear theoretical framework designed to decode the crises of displacement, systemic violence, and strategic narrative resistance in modern diasporic fiction. Epistemologically, the study charts how cross-cultural dialogue breaks down when the subaltern refuses to perform the role of the "Other" for the Western gaze. Discursively, it examines how the lived, performative reality of the oppressed disrupts the linear progress myths of settler colonial nationalism. Geographically, it traces the architectural uncanniness of "unhomely" spaces, where geopolitical trauma openly intrudes upon the domestic sphere. Finally, on a psychological level, it reveals how characters actively weaponize stereotypic fixity to rewrite their forced passivity into the position of agency.

Keywords: interactional injustice, knowledge hiding, lack of trust, higher education, mediation, Pakistan

Introduction

How to Commit a Postcolonial Murder (2026) by Nina McConigley is a book that talks about the lives of sisters of Indian diaspora struggling with life within the mythicized white settler space in America's West. Specifically, the novel depicts the struggles of sisters in Wyoming suburbia, where they have to strictly adhere to cultural practices due to the homogenizing tendencies of American multiculturalism. This external pressure directly collides with the internal erosion of their domestic sanctuary, the family home of "Cottonwood Cross," where the lingering transgenerational trauma of the 1947 Partition of India and immediate, intimate predatory violations by an extended family member shatter the illusion of home as a safe haven. Caught up at the point where systemic exclusion from public life meets domestic violence, the protagonists refuse the restrictive, static, and stereotypical roles dictated to them by the hegemonic white institutions. Instead, they transform themselves into agents of their own structural confinement by moving from passive scavengers to active hunters and using their marginalization to perform an act of resistance. By hiding in full view on the fringes of suburbia, they use their actions to

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turn the fears of the dominant power against itself, making the novel a perfect terrain for the study of the reconfiguration of identity on the fringes of the modern nation state.

In order to provide an adequate analytical basis on which to assess the contemporary diasporic story, literary theory needs to move beyond the classic conceptual triptych offered by Homi K. Bhabha consisting of mimicry, hybridity, and ambivalence. Although the three aforementioned aspects provide for accurate assessment of the fluctuating dynamics of colonial encounters, they often become inadequate in terms of analyzing purposeful and strategic ruptures in the structural, spatial, and narrative arrangements of contemporary geopolitical landscapes. In his seminal work, "The Location of Culture" (1994), Homi Bhabha offers an elaborate cartography of structural and discursive ruptures arising from the encounters between marginalised subjects and institutional structures of domination. Instead of providing a superficial analysis through the application of postcolonial clichés, the current work incorporates into a coherent framework four complex framework variables outlined by Bhabha, namely Cultural Difference, The Pedagogical versus Performative National Split, The Unhomely, and Stereotypic Fixity. Unlike the glossary of the above-mentioned terms, the present work offers an integration of the concepts into a coherent and nonlinear theoretical architecture linking psychological trauma and structural discourse.

In this regard the significance of the proposed matrix arises in its ability to decipher the workings of structural forces operating concurrently in the epistemic and discursive spheres in McConigley's novel. The cornerstone of this endeavor would be none other than the incisive critique of liberal multiculturalism offered by Bhabha. Where diversity treats culture as a static, pre-given, and safely compartmentalized object of empirical knowledge to be consumed by the dominant state framework, cultural difference operates as a volatile, uncontained site of active enunciation where identity is continuously produced, contested, and re negotiated. This epistemic tension directly intersects with the discursive narration of the modern nation state, which Bhabha uncovers as a fundamental conceptual split driven by the tension between the pedagogical and the performative. The pedagogical represents the state's official, institutional history, which relies on a fixed, linear timeline to construct a homogenous national identity from above. Conversely, the performative represents the immediate, living realities of the nation's minoritized subjects whose daily actions continuously disrupt that official history from below. By applying these dual vectors, this study traces how marginalized characters actively resist becoming empirical objects of knowledge and fracture the state's monolithic historicist framework.

Concurrently, this framework bridges these discursive splits with the material realities of geography and psychology by deploying Bhabha's concepts of spatial dislocation and psycho social regulation to ground the novel's thematic developments. By reframing Sigmund Freud's concept of the uncanny into the postcolonial variable of "unhomeliness," the framework maps the unsettling psychological condition wherein the protective boundaries between the public sphere of geopolitical trauma and the private sphere of domestic life completely collapse. The domestic architecture ceases to be a neutral sanctuary and is revealed as a compromised ideological site where imperial histories and localized violations collide. This spatial vulnerability is enforced from without by colonial mechanisms of stereotypic fixity—the ideological demand to freeze the marginalized subject into a stagnant, unchangeable type to justify domination. However, because this definition requires constant, anxious repetition by the

dominant power, it exposes an underlying vulnerability that the marginalized subject can projectively subvert.

By establishing this multidimensional matrix, this study provides the exact analytical tools required to unpack McConigley's narrative landscape. In application to the novel, these interrelated vectors describe the refusal on the part of the characters to participate in an idealized performance of their culture designed for their own structural survival. Instead, they harness the techniques of storytelling against the expectations of the reader. In examining the mythologies of Wyoming's frontier landscape, the domestic invasions inside the household in "Cottonwood Cross," and the inversion of racial stereotype from collection of food to the hunt, it becomes clear that the characters in the novel have become an unstoppable rhetorical device. In conclusion, this paper shows how McConigley uses the same techniques of structural containment to conduct an act of resistance, and how postcolonial identity is constantly negotiated at the margins of power.

Literature Review

Reviews of *How to Commit a Postcolonial Murder* by Nina McConigley (2026) have highlighted the novel as a critical moment in modern diasporic literature due to its subversive nature where the novel is analyzed through a specifically postcolonial and metafictional perspective in terms of the novel's formal disruption of Western regional stories. In the reviews published in the *Alta Journal* and the *Chicago Review of Books*, critics point out that McConigley moves away from the conventional immigrant narrative into a reflection of the lingering impacts of colonial violence and trans-generational trauma. According to reviewer Ilana Masad (2026), the novel is particularly critical of the "trauma plot" myth by making the young protagonist, Georgie, face the Western reader and mock the usual exotifying stereotypes of saris, mangoes, and spices. In their reviews, critics highlight how by asserting that "being of color is uncanny," the narrative creates the image of the diasporic body as being divided or split within the racially white landscape of rural Wyoming (Masad, 2026).

For an adequate theorization of such intentional cracks in the system, recent critical academic writing has turned increasingly to Bhabha's sophisticated postcolonial variables in *The Location of Culture* (1994), transcending beyond his initial trio of mimicry, hybridity, and ambivalence. Whereas the former is extensively used for theorizing flexible mental adjustments, the latter sophisticated postcolonial variables of Cultural Difference, The Pedagogical/Performative National Split, The Unhomely, and Stereotypic Fixity are employed by current postcolonial critics for theorizing aggressive confrontations between the subjugated individuals and the state structures dominating them. In literary criticism, Bhabha's advanced concepts are written not as independent definitions, but rather form an interrelated and non linear infrastructure of explanation of how state violence as a system imposes a strategic narrative performance against it (Bhabha, 1994). Criticism of Bhabha suggests that the focus on the concept of the "split" signifier and the uncontainable process of cultural enunciation allows the scholar to provide a proper language for decoding of characters resistant to being controlled as empirical beings of the state imposed multicultural project.

The collision of McConigley's novel and Bhabha's theory receive particular emphasis from both literary reviews and theorists discussing the collapse of institutional history. Essays on literary criticism published by sources such as the Chicago Review of Books reveal how the novel brings into action Bhabha's dilemma of the pedagogical versus the performative nation (MacAllen, 2026). Criticism reveals how the state pedagogical narrative, represented by Wyoming's mythological frontier history and schools, requires the homogeneity of patriotism that cannot help but see brown children as alien "ink spots in class photos" (MacAllen, 2026; Masad, 2026). The performative presence of characters challenges this national pedagogy in terms of Bhabha's (1994) claim that the subordinated become an unruly rhetoric tearing through the smooth fabric of national history. In addition to that, literary criticism largely reflects Bhabha's concept of "the unhomely," which refers to the uncanny transformation of the geopolitics of public world into the private shelter of home. Criticism demonstrates how the family home, called "Cottonwood Cross," suffers from structural damage from the intrusion of the extended family members, revealing how the domestic sphere becomes a profoundly ideological border zone where imperial history, the trauma of post Partition, and immediate violence intersect (Kirkus Reviews, 2026).

Finally, the critical scholarship on the novel's climactic scene explicitly takes up Bhabha's Stereotypic Fixity model and its accompanying ambivalence of the stereotype. In theorizing colonial discourse, postcolonial critics show that stereotypes are not only incorrect images but defense mechanisms arising out of structural anxiety, necessitating the frantic repetition of the dominant power in order to feel safe (Bhabha, 1994). In reviewing *How to Commit a Postcolonial Murder*, the reviewers emphasize the stereotypic fixity projected by the protagonists, by transforming themselves from passive "gatherers" into active "hunters" who poison their cruel uncle with antifreeze (Kirkus Reviews, 2026). The sisters take advantage of their isolation that is forced on them by suburban white culture to remain hidden in plain sight and resist. This literature review shows that in combining the early reviews of the novel with Bhabha's sophisticated model, an understanding of the text demands a complex matrix to analyze simultaneously the forces of epistemology, discourse, space, and psychology.

Theoretical Framework

In order to lay down the groundwork of analysis for Nina McConigley's *How to Commit a Postcolonial Murder* (2026), this research transcends the classic triadic structure provided by Homi K. Bhabha's theories of mimicry, hybridity, and ambivalence. Although these basic principles succeed in highlighting the fluid dynamics of the colonial relationship, they often lack in examining the carefully constructed fractures in today's diasporic landscape. As such, this research applies an advanced theoretical approach based on Bhabha's ideas presented in *The Location of Culture* (1994) and his influential essay "Dissemination". Through the isolation and implementation of four advanced structural components—Cultural Difference, The Pedagogical/Performative National Split, The Unhomely, and Stereotypic Fixity—the construction of a nonlinear theoretical apparatus is achieved, enabling the analysis of systemic violence through the marginalized narrative rather than the psychological trauma of its subjects.

Epistemic Enunciation: The Bifurcation of Diversity and Difference

One of the key foundations of this theory is the philosophical criticism of liberal multiculturalism by Bhabha who performs it through the separation of ideas of cultural diversity and cultural

difference. In this context, cultural diversity is perceived as an epistemological object – a set of ethnic traditions that are pre-given and can be easily controlled by the dominant state power. Such a containment creates an image of equality but does not challenge any existing colonial hierarchy. Conversely, cultural difference operates as a volatile, nonlinear site of enunciation. It is an uncontained space where signs of identity are actively produced, misread, contested, or weaponized along shifting historical and geographic borders. As Bhabha (1994) conceptualizes: *"The revision of the history of critical theory rests on the notion of cultural difference, not cultural diversity. Cultural diversity is an epistemological object—culture as an object of empirical knowledge whereas cultural difference is the process of the enunciation of culture as 'knowledgeable'"* (p. 34). When applied as an analytical tool, this variable demands that the investigator look past the surface level appearance of ethnic motifs or multicultural set pieces within a text. Instead, it provides the exact mechanism needed to trace how cross-cultural communication fractures, breaks down, and forces a radical re negotiation of meaning at the margins of identity. It shifts the interpretive focus away from a text's compliance with exoticized consumption, focusing instead on how characters actively disrupt the reader's gaze and weaponize the act of storytelling against structural containment.

Discursive Narration: The Temporal Split of the Nation State

To deconstruct the ideological and temporal contradictions inherent to national discourses, this framework incorporates Bhabha's theory of the fundamental conceptual split that tears through the narration of the national sign. This internal fracture is driven by the permanent, anxious tension between two distinct temporal dimensions: the pedagogical and the performative. The Pedagogical is the officially sanctioned and institutionalized history of the state which uses a linear and teleological narrative of time to make "the People" into an undifferentiated historical mass, grounded in a timeless, authentic past, educating a homogeneous national identity from the position of sovereign power. The Performative is the lived reality of the nation's subjects – in particular, its minorities, migrants, and dispossessed groups – whose practices of action, survival, and mere presence relentlessly repeat, reenact, and rupture this official history from the bottom up. This inherent duality guarantees that national identity will never be completely secure since the lived, performative presence of the marginalized people's functions as an unstoppable rhetorical strategy that ruptures the attempts of the state to produce a seamless history: "The people are not only historical events or the parts of a patriotic whole; they are also a complex rhetorical strategy... The people are the historical objects of a nationalist pedagogy, but they are also the subjects of a living performance that constantly disrupts that pedagogy" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 145). For literature, this is the variable through which we can understand structural alienation of diasporic characters in mythologized landscapes of white settler nations. The way the presence of minoritized people becomes literalized against the civic geography named after colonial agents helps to demonstrate the disruption of the linearity of time of the modern nation and the inability to fit into the historicist paradigm.

Spatial Dislocation: The Collapse of the Unhomely Sanctuary

To understand the spatial and psychological trauma of displacement, this framework turns Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytical idea of the uncanny into the postcolonial construct of "unhomeliness." According to Bhabha, unhomeliness is distinct from homelessness since it is a psychological and spatial condition in which all the usual divisions between public and private

spheres, i.e., geopolitical events, imperial history, and policy, on one hand, and domesticity, personal relations, and the home on the other hand, are totally merged. Under the unhomely condition, traumatic global history becomes intruding into the private domain of domestic sanctuary so that one has to acknowledge the truth about one's private space being irrevocably invaded by the outside world: "the unhomely moment creeps up on you stealthily...the recesses of the domestic space become the sites for history's most public invasions" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 9). This concept helps formulate a solid theoretical basis for the analysis of literary spaces that reveal domestic trauma, family dysfunctions, or domestic transgressions as an extension of larger imperial conflicts, such as British imperialism and ancestral partitioning. Domestic architecture is no longer an unproblematic haven; it is rather a tainted ideological zone wherein public vulnerability and personal trauma intersect. Through a consideration of how characters cope with the unhomely zones—wherein characters are compelled to find other havens beyond conventional architectural spaces—the theoretical model reveals how geopolitically induced trauma transforms the domestic domain into a site of displacement.

Psycho Social Regulation: Fixity and the Reversal of the Stereotype

Finally, this theoretical framework makes use of Bhabha's critique of colonial discourse in order to examine how the structures of dominance make use of the racial trope in the process of regulating psycho social dynamics. Instead of simply viewing the stereotype as a symbol of pure evil or even as a straightforward lie that can be easily discarded, this model takes the approach that views it as an intricate point of ideological anxiety and ambivalence. The power structures take advantage of the notion of fixity – the demand for creating the image of the marginalized group as a degenerate, stagnant, and unchanging type. This, however, is done out of the necessity of the structures of dominance to convince themselves of their own dominance by constantly repeating the notion in question in an effort to mask their fear that the marginalized subject is not fixed at all. *"The stereotype is not a simplification because it is a false representation of a given reality. It is a simplification because it is an arrested, fetishistic mode of representation within which lines of race, color, and culture are frozen to defend against the threat of difference"* (Bhabha, 1994, p. 75). By integrating this variable into the analytical matrix, the researcher moves past basic critiques of offensive imagery to focus entirely on how characters recognize, manipulate, and subvert these frozen categories. It tracks how marginalized subjects actively perform the rigid, exoticized scripts demanded of them by dominant white authorities, only to weaponize that perceived passivity. By using the isolation enforced upon them by fixity to hide in plain sight, characters turn the dominant authority's psychological vulnerabilities against itself, permanently fracturing the expectations of the dominant discourse.

Methodological Synthesis and Integration

Ultimately, when these four advanced theoretical vectors are synthesized, they form an interconnected, nonlinear analytical matrix that functions seamlessly as a methodological integration model. Instead of examining plot or thematic elements in isolation, this integrated approach allows the critic to track how structural forces manifest simultaneously across epistemic, discursive, spatial, and psychological dimensions. On an epistemic level, the framework maps cultural diversity versus cultural difference to track the breakdown of cross cultural communication and the refusal to perform sanitized, prepackaged versions of culture for the Western gaze. Discursively, it juxtaposes official, institutional settler history against the

immediate, living realities of marginalized subjects who fracture the national timeline through the pedagogical versus performative split. On a spatial level, it brings out the collapse of the architecture of “unhomeliness” through the destruction of the dichotomy between the private and the public spheres to reflect how the geopolitical trauma of the world and local violence penetrate into the private sphere. Finally, from a psychosocial perspective, it questions the process through which the characters utilize their frozen race-based identities through stereotyped fixity to make the enforced passivity an instrument of resistance and subversion. This comprehensive matrix thus indicates that the identity of postcolonial and diasporic literature is constantly negotiated and rewritten.

Analysis and Discussion

In order to develop an overarching postcolonial critique, this study goes beyond Bhabha’s essential triad of mimicry, hybridity, and ambivalence to make use of his complex conceptual variables. In his book *The Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha describes a complex configuration of fractures in structure, space, and narrative that arise from the interactions of marginal subjects with the institutional architecture of dominance. Through an analysis of the variables of Cultural Difference, The Pedagogical versus Performative Split, The Unhomely, and Stereotypic Fixity, this chapter constructs a multidimensional theoretical framework for analyzing the more complex crises of displacement and resistance in postcolonial and diasporic literature. Rather than providing a disconnected list of these terms, this framework will contextualize and organize them into a nonlinear theoretical apparatus.

Epistemic Enunciation: Cultural Diversity vs. Cultural Difference

The key intervention into Bhabha's political theory is his strong criticism of liberal multiculturalism, which comes about in terms of his distinction between cultural diversity and cultural difference. This variable in the framework changes the emphasis from culture being consumed to culture being contested. Cultural diversity is treated as an epistemological object; it categorizes cultures as pre given, static, and separate entities safely compartmentalized within a dominant state framework, promoting an anodyne liberal notion of multiculturalism that masks ongoing colonial hierarchies. Conversely, cultural differences are defined as a dynamic process of enunciation. It is the volatile, uncontained site where cultural signs are actively produced, contested, misread, or misappropriated along shifting historical borders. As Bhabha (1994) posits: "The revision of the history of critical theory rests on the notion of cultural difference, not cultural diversity. Cultural diversity is an epistemological object culture as an object of empirical knowledge—whereas cultural difference is the process of the enunciation of culture as 'knowledgeable'" (p. 34).

In research design, this paradigm allows the investigator to look past the surface level inclusion of ethnic motifs in a text. Instead, it provides the analytical tools to track how cross cultural communication actively breaks down, destabilizes, and forces a radical re negotiation of meaning at the margins of identity. In Nina McConigley’s *How to Commit a Postcolonial Murder* (2026), this epistemic tension is manifested through the characters' refusal to remain passive objects of empirical knowledge. The text explicitly critiques the anodyne consumption of diversity through the narrator’s wry breakdown of ethnic expectations: "Does it bother me that you want to hear the story this way? Yes. Do'es it make me angry that you need all of these specific details to feel like you're reading a proper brown person story? Yes" (McConigley, 2026, p. 21).

The narrative functions not as an exoticized commodity for the Western gaze, but as a site of active structural contestation where the mechanics of storytelling itself are weaponized against the reader's expectations. This is further illustrated by the internal dynamics of the immigrant community at localized Indian parties (McConigley, 2026). Rather than presenting a monolithic, cohesive ethnic identity, McConigley (2026) highlights the untranslatable fractures within this displaced collective: "The other Indians we know? A strange menagerie... everyone speaks a different language, and so we all end up speaking English" (McConigley, 2026, p. 66).

By mapping these cross cultural communication breakdowns, the novel moves beyond a surface level inclusion of ethnic motifs. Instead, it exposes how the process of enunciation forces a radical renegotiation of identity in the American West, where being of color is uncanny and characters must actively resist performing a sanitized, prepackaged version of their culture for structural survival". (McConigley, 2026, p. 45).

Discursive Narration: The Pedagogical vs. The Performative Nation

In his essay "Dissemination: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation," Bhabha (1994) deconstructs the temporal and ideological contradictions inherent to national discourses. He uncovers a fundamental conceptual split in the narration of the national sign, driven by the tension between the pedagogical and the performative. The pedagogical represents the state's official, institutional history, relying on a fixed, linear timeline to construct the people as a unified historical weight with a pure, archaic past, teaching a homogenous national identity from above. The performative, on the other hand, is an embodiment of the real, living experiences of the nation's people, especially its minorities, immigrants, and the disenfranchised, whose everyday activities keep reshaping the official narrative from below. The internal split guarantees that national identity will always be insecure, as the reality of the marginalized continually undermines the state's attempts to construct an unbroken historical narrative: "The people are not simply historical events or parts of a patriotic body; they are also a complex rhetorical strategy... the people are the historical 'objects' of a nationalist pedagogy, but they are also the 'subjects' of a living performance that continuously disrupts that pedagogy" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 145).

The concept for literary criticism would provide an explanation of structural alienation within the context of diasporic/minority subjects who through their experiences reveal the exclusive, singular nature of patriotic duties of the state. In this case, McConigley (2026) externalizes structural alienation by contrasting the mythical past of Wyoming with its brown subjects' performed experience. This pedagogical state story is reinforced by naming the local civic geography after these explorers: "Kit Carson was a frontiersman. A trapper. He killed Indians...We don't have to name streets after houses in Wyoming, but we can name streets after people. People who looked at the Arapaho, Shoshone, Cheyenne and Sioux in this region and realized that they had to expand further into the West. (McConigley, 2026, p. 61). The institutional past is one which defines the white settler as the only historical actor, calling for homogeneous patriotism from its citizens. But there are always the performative disruptions of the narrators herself and her sister to these nationalist pedagogies. In a performance of frontier history at a school play, they are literally made into blots of ink on photographs of the class; they cannot merge into the patriotic body politic. (McConigley, 2026, p. 78) "Half our class would go dressed as Indians, the other half as cowboys... We were always Indians... We'd sit on wagon wheels while our classmates pretended to kill one another" (McConigley, 2026, p. 22). The life of these characters shows how demanding the demands of patriotism are for the state. By being half and half creatures in a world that wants them to be assimilated, these characters become what Bhabha (1994) refers to as a rhetoric that

defies containment because it ruptures the timeline of the modern nation, thereby showing that their life is not contained by the historicist project (McConigley, 2026).

Spatial Dislocation: The Uncanny Architecture of "Unhomeliness"

As he theorizes the trauma caused by displacement in terms of space and psyche, Bhabha reconfigures Freud's idea of the uncanny into the condition of unhomeliness in the postcolonial era. Bhabha makes it clear how the state of unhomeliness is different from that of homelessness, and he says that unhomeliness is a peculiar psychic state where the usual demarcation between the two spheres—that of public events such as geopolitical affairs, imperial battles, government policies, and that of the private sphere, including domestic matters and family relations—gets blurred. The result is that the subject experiences the trauma of the unhomely world as "The unhomely moment creeps up on you stealthily... the recesses of domestic space become the sites for history's most public invasions" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 9). This concept offers a powerful framework for evaluating narratives where domestic trauma, family dysfunction, or localized violence mirror broader imperial conflicts or post-independence crises. It demonstrates that the domestic space is never neutral; it is an ideological site where geopolitical trauma is intimately lived and reproduced. The physical layout of the family home "Cottonwood Cross" in McConigley's (2026) novel is methodically violated through the colonial and psychological traumas that have occurred in the past. The narrator explicitly links the rigidity of her mother's housekeeping to the larger traumas left by British imperialism and the Partition of India in 1947 (McConigley, 2026): "It was the British who shaped Amma's world... The British are to blame, the British are to blame, the British are to blame, and Vinny Uncle will pay" (McConigley, 2026, p. 15). Spatial dislocation is brought to its peak by way of the invasion that is inflicted upon the narrator's psyche by Vinny Uncle. "You're out of your body, looking down. You're split in two. There's a you and a me. The you lies there, frozen, as horrible things happen to her. The me is up above, watching" (McConigley, 2026, p. 56).

Psycho Social Regulation: Fixity and the Ambivalence of the Stereotype

Within Bhabha's seminal piece "The Other Question," he examines the use of stereotyping in dominant colonial discourses to maintain systematic control. Unlike other theorists who denounce the stereotype as simply an expression of evil intent, Bhabha claims that the stereotype contains significant elements of ideology and ambivalence. The dominant power places a heavy emphasis on the notion of fixity—an ideological need to represent the subjugated community as a kind that is forever stagnant, degenerate, and immutably fixed in order to sustain its dominance. But since such representation can only be maintained through constant repetition, it reveals the underlying fears of the colonizer of the fact that the subjugated subject is not really fixed, passive, and controllable after all. The stereotype is essentially a defense mechanism that arises from anxiety as much as it does from mastery: "The stereotype is not a simplification because it is a false representation of a given reality. It is a simplification because it is an arrested, fetishistic mode of representation within which lines of race, color, and culture are frozen to defend against the threat of difference" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 75). In including this variable, the researcher can go beyond superficial criticism of offensive images. Rather, the examination would revolve around how the characters use, reflect, and break these stereotypes in order to exploit their psychological weaknesses. In the text, this ideological fixation is projectively subverted by the characters, who recognize that they are constantly forced to perform a rigid, exoticized script for the dominant white authority (McConigley, 2026). The narrator explicitly calls out this systemic trap: "I have been performing forever. My own little dance. But I'm going to stop now... It's having to perform. It's what happens when people are split" (McConigley, 2026, p. 21). Instead of merely consuming the fixed

racialized concepts, the sisters subvert the stereotype by exploiting the weaknesses of the dominant authority's psyche. It is through the narrator's transition from a passive state to that of an active hunter that this manipulation becomes clear (McConigley, 2026): Through the weaponization of the passive and the use of the isolation created through fixity against them, the sisters bring about the greatest disruption to the postcolonial structure. Using the mechanisms of confinement against themselves, they create a moment of resistance which will serve to shatter the oppressive expectations of the dominant discourse (McConigley, 2026). "We had always been gatherers... Simply to stop gathering wasn't enough. We had tried months of nonviolence. We were done gathering. I was ready to hunt" (McConigley, 2026, p. 39).

Conclusion

Used in analyzing a postcolonial work in today's society, the four vectors create a coherent matrix of analysis that does not view plot related factors as independent but rather as part of a web of forces operating in epistemic, discursive, spatial, and psychological levels. In light of the above theory, *How to Commit a Postcolonial Murder* demonstrates that postcolonial identity is inherently fractured, flexible, and dynamic because of the constant influence of colonial past and cultural exchange.

In particular, this study reveals that ambivalence produces a psychological dilemma of conflicting emotions of attraction and resistance towards dominant culture values. While hybridity serves as an ongoing struggle between one's native identity and dominant one, mimicry sheds light on the institutional dilemmas that arise from the performance of the required behavioral values. Taken together, these theoretical notions shed light on the ways in which the ongoing impacts of structural trauma reveal themselves within the realm of society, culture, and individuality in contemporary reality. In this way, the novel itself becomes an example of the ongoing struggle for identity that is not determined once and for all, but rather is constantly rewritten.

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