

Mapping The Colonial Conquer Of Native Minds: A Socio-Historic Critique Of Turquoise By Amir Husain

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Abstract

A range of postcolonial literature has exhaustively discussed the negative traits of colonization, but many of the studies also fail to provide the socio-historic critique of the institutional practices of the postcolonial legacies. Amir Hussain, a contemporary Pakistani English writer, with his highly aesthetic expression of radiant imagery and metaphors has tried to trace the colonial history and the inability of the colonized to rise above the colonial archetypes. The present study is an attempt to provide a socio-literary analysis of one of his short stories, "Turquoise" in a short story collection entitled "Cactus Town". The postcolonial context of the main characters of the story, their psychological transformations, and the cultural unconsciousness exhibited by their thoughts and actions, the text establishes a difference between the cultural cognition and the utopian dreams of post-colonial orients of South Asia. Keeping this as a point of departure, the study intends to analyze the stylistic and postcolonial analysis based on Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphor theory and Gramsci theory of progressive hegemony to highlight the psychological complexities of the third world people and their internal conflicts to engage themselves in the first world. Husain does this, by making use of metaphors throughout the story by engaging metaphors as target and concrete concepts to construe his socio-historic critique. Therefore, the source-target pairing is analyzed to infer the semantics of the discourse.

Keywords: Postcolonial, Colonization, Cultural Cognition, Semantics, Cultural Unconsciousness. Conceptual theory of metaphor.

Introduction

Among the benefits of the British connection with the subcontinent during the times of their colonization were the acquisition of the large-scale knowledge systems of the rich heritage land, looting its physical wealth, human resource, and the psychological indoctrination of the Western values and traditions within the minds of

indigenous people. Thomas Macaulay, disregarding the ancient history and civilization of the subcontinent wrote "never found one among them (speaking of Orientalists, an opposing political faction) who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia" (Macaulay et al., 2008). He further explicated his racist thought saying, "It is, no exaggeration to

say, that all the historical information which has been collected from all the books written in the Sanskrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the paltriest abridgments used at preparatory schools in England". On the contrary, William Macintosh, a European has confessed, "All history points to India as the mother of science and art," and Pierre Sonnerat, endorsing his point wrote, "This country was anciently so renowned for knowledge and wisdom that the philosophers of Greece did not disdain to travel thither for their improvement". But colonialists like Macaulay through their efforts to educate the natives had successfully created a class "Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions." After a few years of Macaulay's education plans, J.N Farquhar, one of his contemporaries wrote, "The new educational policy of the Government created during these years the modern educated class of India. These are men who think and speak in English habitually, who are proud of their citizenship in the British Empire" (Dilip, 2000). Not only this, but in fear of the natives' realization of their heritage, the colonizers translated Persian and Sanskrit texts attuned with the colonial aims and ideologies. With all these tactics, the benign process of rape and conquer of native minds through school instructions and social discourses, the cultural repertoire of the indigenous people was strategically transformed and they started looking at themselves as conservative, orthodox, genetically less creative, not intelligent, and dependent upon West for their enlightenment and moderation.

In Charles Trevelyan's words on 23rd June 1853, "...the effect of training in European learning is to give an entirely new turn to the native mind. The young men educated in this way cease to strive after independence according to the original Native model, and aim at, improving the institutions of the country according to the English model..." His words proved that the

training was effective enough to achieve the objective. Colonialism imbued much of native thought, educated natives believed that enlightenment and modernization are subject to association with the West, which Thiong'o (1996) has summarized as "It makes them see their past as one wasteland of non-achievement and it makes them want to distance themselves from that wasteland. It makes them want to identify with that which is furthest removed from themselves".

The Present Study

A range of postcolonial literature has exhaustively discussed the negative traits of colonization, but many of the studies also fail to provide the socio-historic critique of the institutional practices of the postcolonial legacies. Amir Hussain, a contemporary Pakistani English writer, with his highly aesthetic expression of radiant imagery has tried to trace the colonial history and the inability of the colonized to rise above the colonial archetypes. The present study is an attempt to provide a socio-literary analysis of one of his short stories, "Turquoise" in a short story collection entitled "Cactus Town". A preliminary analysis of the selected text shows that Hussain has utilized different types of metaphors to critique the British history of colonization and the imprints drawn on the minds of the colonizers. Due to the postcolonial context of the main characters of the story, post-colonialism, and psychological transformations of the colonized added with their cultural unconsciousness exhibited by their thoughts and actions, the text will be viewed as establishing a difference between the cultural cognition and the cosmopolitan utopian dreams of post-colonial orients of South Asia. Keeping this as a point of departure, the study intends to analyze the linguistic and stylistic strategies used to highlight the psychological complexities of the third world

people and their internal conflicts to engage themselves in the first world.

Literature Review

Various linguists have defined stylistics as being the branch of applied linguistics “to study a literary discourse from a linguistic orientation” and establishes a link between disciplines (Widdowson, 1975, Leech and Short, 2007, Crystal, 1980). The stylistic analysis explores the particular choices construed by the author to present a particular emotion and meaning. Stylistics has various approaches and orientations which the researcher may adopt. This work is based on systematic metaphor analysis based on Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) conceptual metaphor theory and post-colonial analysis to explain the internal turmoil of the main character of the story while living in the first world.

There are different qualitative research works on metaphor like Aubusson (2002) tried to reflect the “massive, untidy mess of information” through metaphors. Schmitt (1997) work attempted to show that one specific phenomenon sometimes can be represented in many contradictory metaphors. Nerlich et al. (2002) demonstrate a striking analysis of metaphor employed by media and politics in handling the Foot and Mouth Disease in Great Britain. All these works represent qualitative research based on metaphor but this work analyzed metaphor to explore the deep meanings of the literary work to reflect the socio-historic effect of post-colonization.

Metaphor got its currency from great Greek philosopher Aristotle in the fourth century in his work “Poetics”. He defined metaphor as “a kind of comparison, a condensed simile” (Martin and Harre 1982). Metaphors, based on similarity and a powerful tool of persuasion, is an effective rhetorical figure for eloquent political discourse (Semino 2008, Cacciari 1993). This perspective ignores the important function of metaphor that is

categorization besides comparison (Cacciari 1993). Then the substitution theory of metaphor defines it as “saying that could be said literally” (Martin and Harre 1982). It means metaphor is a synonymous literal expression. Both comparison theory and substitution theory mutually describe metaphor as a matter of deviant language. Its literal meanings can be perceived naturally and conventionally. The third is the interaction theory of metaphor proposed by I.A Richards and Max Black. This theory says that metaphor does not describe something figuratively that might have been said literally (Semino 2008). It is used to construct a new meaning not only in poetic discourse but also it is a feature of a common language. Then there came a significant change in the perception of metaphor study in 1980 with the publication of Lakoff and Johnson's work “Metaphor We Live By”. This work proposed a cognitive theory of metaphor which says “our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature” (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, Lakoff and Johnson 1999, Kovecses 2010). Metaphors are a matter of language and a matter of thought. Presently, the focus of the investigation regarding metaphor is shifted to explore the ideological effect of metaphor. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) have divided metaphor into three types: structural metaphor, orientational metaphor, and ontological metaphor. Structure metaphors are frequently used in everyday communication to talk about life. It is defined as “understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of other”. Such as “Time is money”. In this metaphor, “Time” is considered as important as “money” for a successful life. Orientational metaphor provides a spatial orientation to a concept as (up-down, in, out) i.e. “Happy is up versus sad is down”. This metaphor has a physical basis to describe different states of mind. It means a happy mind thinks rightly. Lastly ontological metaphor expresses the view about any

experience in terms of entities and substances. Personification is a typical example to present ontological metaphors. It allows us to comprehend human characteristics and actions in physical objects i.e. hold on your dreams.

Against the backdrop of cognitive theorists and researchers of the ideological perspective of metaphor, this work aims to reveal the multi-functionality of metaphor in shaping the way we perceive reality is bound to a socio-historical context and being partly a cultural product. The metaphors employed in the text ‘turquoise’ suggest post-colonialism in the actions and thoughts of the main characters. Post-colonialism theory analyzes main character issues present in text related to culture, economics, religion, and power and their bearing regarding hegemony. Marx defined hegemony through an economic structure of society. According to Marx, the economic structure of society is divided into two sectors base and superstructure. The base is described as forces and relations of production. They produce things needed by society. The forces of production subtly bring changes in the society and political and ideological struggle is seen as indifferent to this change. Thus these forces (base) becomes the source of wars, revolutions, philosophical argument. On the other hand, Superstructure stems out of the base, comprised of ethics and morality, culture, ideology, identity, political structure, and apparatus reflects dominant or ruling class ideology that controls the base. Gramsci (2001) furthered Marx's concept of hegemony. He opined that the world view, reality, and beliefs of the dominant classes are accepted by the subordinate classes as the only suitable way of living in the world. In the post-colonial era, consent is achieved through the force of education and media propaganda because the ruling class owned the means of production. Thus hegemony of the ruling class is achieved through

a combination of consent and force with reciprocity as endorsed by Weber (1956).

In the short story, ‘‘Turquoise’’ Danny's acceptance of western life as a guarantee of better and more opportunities for growth continues his married life with Lisa and his joining another school for a job is an example of progressive hegemony. Danny's decision demonstrates that colonizers are still powerful on colonized but the dominance is exercised not through force but with consent. Colonizers are powerful not purely in an economic sense but also in ideas, theories, and values that are accepted by all as ‘‘normal’’.

In the framework of Lakoff and Johnson conceptual theory of metaphor and Gramsci theory of progressive hegemony, this work conducts stylistics and post-colonial analysis to answer the following question:

- How do metaphors configure a socio-historic critique of post-colonialism in the short story ‘‘Turquoise’’?

Methodology

This work is a combination of stylistic analysis and post-colonial analysis because the researchers agree upon the notion that ‘‘no text is value-free and neutral’’ (Simpson, 1993). It is an analysis of the short story ‘‘Turquoise’’ taken from the short story collection ‘‘Cactus Town’’ by Amir Hussein. This analysis is based on George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's conceptual metaphor theory published in their book ‘‘Metaphors we live by’’. The fictional text was selected purposefully because this genre shows how the author represents his/her characters to demonstrate socio-historic, cultural, and economic stereotypes of colonized people to reveal postcolonial issues such as Gramsci's concept of hegemony to live in the present time successfully as presented by Dahl and Adachi (2013) work and explored in book Joshi (2002).

This work is a systematic metaphor analysis of the short story “turquoise” to represent a socio-historic critique of post-colonialism by establishing a link between “thought, language, and action” (Blumenberg, 1988). The researcher conducted a close reading of the text and extracted the metaphor by following Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) guideline. According to them, a word or phrase is labeled as a metaphor if it can be understood beyond the literal meaning in the context, its literal meaning stems from an area of cultural experience (source area) and it can be transferred to a second usually abstract area (target area). Lakoff and Johnson proposed three types of metaphors: structural, orientational, and ontological. In the practical procedure, firstly the metaphors having target and source area in the immediate text context were picked up, then the remaining text was closely read to find other metaphoric words or phrases until only connecting words having no relevance to target and the abstract area remained in the text under consideration. It was done to avoid any subjective influence.

Summary of the Story

The story revolves around two main characters Nusra and Danny. Nusra, forty-two, one of the main characters of the story, married to a civil servant lives in Islamabad. Her children had grown and flown to colleges across the sea. She left for London to attend college. Danny, an Indonesian with a changed name, working in another department of the college. Nusra and Danny met each other in the college and came closer to each other, as both were unhappy with their spouses. Nusra was working on a paper she

was supposed to write for a seminar but instead, she started to write a story for Danny.

The story is of two children, Danny, a sick child, and the wild child with blue eyes who wore a string of turquoise. The wild child taught many things to Danny. One day he taught Danny swimming by holding his hand and took him in the deep waters of the lake and then let go of his hand in the middle. Danny drowned and was nearly dead when recovered out of the lake. Danny rose from his bed a few days later. His servant brought him a parcel saying “a beggar boy has dropped it for you insisting that there is something in it that belonged to you”. Danny opened the parcel. In it found the string of turquoise beads, the wild child had worn around his neck while swimming. He went back to the lake many times but never saw the wild child again. The story ends with Nusra’s leaving London for Pakistan and Danny’s going back to his wife and joining a new school.

Analysis and Discussion

The author of the text under study makes use of different types of metaphors throughout the story by engaging abstract concepts as targets and concrete concepts as a source to construe his socio-historic critique. Therefore, the source-target pairing will be analyzed along with the suggestive nature of postcolonial features especially Gramsci theory of progressive hegemony employed in the text to interpret the socio-historic aspect of the discourse. Table 1 presents different types of metaphors employed by author:

Table 1 Different Types of Metaphor Employed in Turquoise

Types of Metaphors	Frequency	Percentage
Structural Metaphor	3	5%

Oriental Metaphor	3	5%
Ontological Metaphor	59	90%
Total Number of Metaphors	65	

Hussain has used Turquoise, the title of story as a structural metaphor in almost all its traditional etymologies. “Turquoise”, is an opaque, blue-green stone that was known by different names in the history of different cultures but was given this name in the 17th century when the mineral was first brought from Turkey to Europe from the mines of Persia. The stone has been valued for centuries as a bringer of good fortune, supplier of material good, and was used as protection against unnatural death. In Western culture, turquoise is the birthstone for those who are born in December. The month of December translates into cold weather and longer nights. Nights are interpreted as dark and turquoises are used to guard against the powers of darkness. Gemstone therapists recommend wearing turquoise beads for the treatment of depression and developing confidence. It is said to be a symbol of loyalty and commitment in relationships.

Hussain, by writing a story within a story crafts metaphors, complex characterization, implicit satire and sets the narrative in a situation that takes his reader to a historical journey of the social and political orders of British colonization in South Asia. Establishing an abstract relationship between the two different stories he informs his readers about the importance of social responsibility. Therefore, abstraction as a tool of diction takes a higher form in Hussain’s writing by its intersection with different types of metaphors he employs to craft his socio-historical critique of multilateral concerns regarding the post-colonial subjects of South Asia. Times Literary Supplement, acknowledging his literary density writes, “The symbolic and intellectual complexity of Hussain’s collection is

undeniable”. Hussain has employed different kinds of metaphors as semantic expedient in combination with to the stylistic weight of the narration.

An allusion is a literary device that is an indirect reference to another artistic craft or personality, happening or place. The author creates the allusion by referring to Ibsen and one of the characters of his famous play, “Doll’s House” to create a connotation with the main character of his narration to signify “Asian women” in the reader’s mind. When Nusra, one of Hussain’s characters aspires to arrange a seminar on Asian women character entitled ‘Nora is alive and well and still living in the doll’s house’ which is a critique on twenty-first-century Asian societies where the status of women is still of a commodity. Ibsen presents Nora as an obedient wife, an affectionate mother who enjoys the way she is overprotected and patronized. This “Allusion” is referring to the most prevalent stereotypical Asian wifehood and motherhood. Social stereotypes are so fixed in Asian societies that it is difficult “To leave the doll’s house” unlike Nora who realizing her individuality rebels against societal standards and leaves her husband and children, but Ibsen was unable to tell us “where Nora goes”. Hussain’s character Nusra also rebels against the cultural impositions and she, trying to liberate herself, came to London to research “a book on contemporary women painters” but unlike Ibsen, Hussain tells us where Nusra goes. Through this allusion, Hussain tends to develop an understanding of the contemporary reader that marriage as a social institution rests on a civil contract, the validity of which is dependent

upon the sense of responsibility recognized by both partners.

Patriarchy as a social reality of the South Asian region and its impact on women's psyche has been added in the story through the reference of a Bangladeshi woman who can't go anywhere "without permission from her husband" and has been supplemented by saying "Zuhayr never allowed" Nusra "to do anything away from home". Later in the story, the author tries to tell the readers the way patriarchal structures have affected women's thoughts. Losing many chances to go to America, Canada and Australia, Nusra's confession, "It's not that I don't like it at home" shows her stereotypical understanding of her social status but on the contrary, was hurt when her husband allowed her to go to London, feeling as "if he didn't need" her. She is obsessed with her wifedom and was not happy leaving home and her husband, which is again raising the psychological issue of the orthodox understanding of social and private affairs. These thoughts are the author's effort to highlight the prevalence of patriarchy in South Asia.

Nusra's rebel testifies to the human instinct and how it overpowers received cultural wisdom and logical understanding of life when trapped in foreign fancied thoughts on life. The contemporary reader should try to understand human individuals not as fixed entities but rather as impressionable and reactive beings, affected and influenced by their surroundings and by the people with whom they interact. In Pakistani culture (as presented in the story) however, this notion is rather revolutionary and especially for a woman having two grown-up kids and a well-placed husband. Whereas individual autonomy is guided by the principles of freedom and civil liberties and the notion of autonomy emphasizes this right to be unrestricted and free from all interferences, but Gibson (2000) points out, "[I]t is important to consider the types of external

factors that may influence our individual choices when we are faced with ethical dilemmas". Husain, in his story, seems to second Gibson when he tells his readers that Nusra had become "empty" and she says "I felt I'd done everything".

Hussain has set his story on a slightly larger canvas covering South Asians to legitimize the universality of the colonial practices. Indonesia with special reference to its colonial past also became one of the referents of his socio-historic critique. Surabaya, the second-largest city of Indonesia with a history of colonization has been mentioned as "left Surabaya" which is indicative of the author's image forming meaningful lexical choices creating a field of reference and beautifully linking the idea with the idea of learning by writing "for Yogyakarta", an Indonesian city known as a center of education. He then intertwines his socio-historical discourse with another historic reality of colonization by making his character move on to "Bali", an island of Indonesia and Sanur with a history of a landing site for the colonizers and the entry point of the Japanese forces during World War II to occupy the island. The story's setting and the plot have no special connection with these cities but their mention in the story is an implicit reference to the colonial brutalities making the critique gigantic. However, Husain's use of the structural metaphor, for example, sick child's restored health, suggests that he did intend the third world's native wisdom to be redeemed, whether or not agreed by the reader. As when the narrator tells us that "a little boy Danny", had been "very ill", he envisions a healthy civilization of Indo-Pak subcontinent gone ill and sick. When she says "He was new in town", it is about the post-colonial era, and while saying "he was getting better he wandered around a lot on his own", he is pointing towards the times of independence when the independent states are trying to locate themselves and struggling to establish their worth. Meeting a "wild child" with "blue eyes" and "a string of turquoise", specifies

the author's metaphoric description of "West". Wilderness points towards the colonial purposes and blue eyes as a mark of identification for West. Whereas, "Turquoise" metaphorically stands for their wisdom which has always remained a source of inspiration for the colonized societies. Hussain emphasizes his point of view by writing, "He taught Danny", a teacher is always more knowledgeable and inspiring for the students. Danny's relation with the wild child in the story shows the level of wisdom carried by them. The relationship is indicative of the place West occupies in the minds of the post-colonial societies. Danny "didn't find the wild child there" is the author's depiction of post-independence times, when the colonizers went away leaving their social products behind. Those products are always aspiring to hear what Danny experienced in the ontological metaphors of the narrator "a voice calling to him" and saying "Come on in. It's cool here", which has always been a heartfelt aspiration of South Asians to receive a call from West to attain fulfillment. Hussain has once again endorsed the relationship of East and West with a "teaching" ontological metaphor in the story where the wild child says, "I'll teach you". Hussain critiques his people by using ontological metaphor of Danny stepping "into the blue water". Blue water structural metaphor stands for vastness and liberties one can enjoy in the West, which he has explained saying "He'd never seen so much blue before". This is the point of intersection for the two stories. In the main narrative, Nusra came to London as Danny entered the lake in the second story. She has all those liberties which were not there for her in Pakistan, so here Hussain is comparing the two cultures as well with reference to the social norms and practices. He further links the feelings of Nusra to those of the child in the second story through the ontological metaphors like "Swimming" and "flying". He has juxtaposed one metaphor on the other and enhances the rhetoric of the narrative, he says "swimming was like

flying" swimming by someone new to the field explicates the new exposure of Nusra and comparing it with flying shows Nusra's emotional gratification in London. By comparing structural metaphors "the stones at the bottom of the lake" with "the jewels in the SimSim cave" Hussain is mentioning the magical effect of the Western culture as proposed by Said (1993). Wild child's act of leaving Danny alone in the lake, being ontological metaphor, is the author's critique on the British when they liberated the subcontinent with chaos and insurgencies. Then the list of ontological metaphors such as "he couldn't breathe" is pointing towards the post-independence situation of the societies and "he was falling, falling" refers to the social and political inabilities to develop and govern to rise and to earn prosperity and gain dignity among the independent countries of the world. Nevertheless, despite all the bleakness depicted, he gave an encouraging end to the story by using description "In autumn, he joined a new school. He never saw the wild child again" where ontological metaphor "autumn" refers to a season in which the old leaves of plants with all their toxicity fall and the season ends with blossoming of plants with new and fresh leaves with new vigor and health to prepare food for themselves and for those who ecologically depend upon them. Joining a new school is another ontological metaphor of hope which means new learning indicative of self-reliance as he later writes "He never saw the wild child again" which envisions the society free of psychological imperialism. (Equality: social, political and ethical)

Nusra manifests her purity of devotion to her moral and social duties by going back to Islamabad to look after her ill husband. First, Hussain provides insight to his character that counters the bitterness of her past experiences, revealing the moral aspects of the human responsibility manifesting a virtuousness that Nusra attains and that inspires her genuine and

realistic struggle to restrain her moral soul. According to Barret (1990) "the grounds on which moral responsibilities can be ascribed to agents—include our past actions, our roles, and our developed moral agency". Nusra's previous "role" as a loving wife and a mother is an ontological metaphor. It embodies social respect in a context where she comes from is indicative of author's intentions to make his character decide going back home with the safe liberties carrying respect and contentment in life.

The act of Nusra's decision indicates upholding the ideal of cultural norms and values. The ontological metaphor of determinism infuses the mental crisis and saturates the basis for family's organization, this resolves the conflict between culture and an individual's very basic right to judge his/her salvation. Such a compromise enabled Nusra to leave Danny by accepting the fact that the human sense of responsibility is the consequence of moral actions and socially accepted practices. Danny's decision, on the other hand, reflects his adherence to progressive hegemony by abiding by the European luxuries of life because as per Asian social norms, he can marry a European lady and is free to enjoy his freedom. Therefore, besides the central theme of disenchantment, is another prevalent theme, that of colonial hegemony endorsement.

Conclusion

Long subjection of a people and the denial of freedom bring many evils and perhaps the greatest of these lies in the spiritual sphere of demoralization and the sapping of the spirit of the people (Nehru, 1961).

Metaphors employed 3% metaphor out of total number of words of text to project authors' disappointment with the state of third-world illusions and characters' transformation. He emphasizes the idea that the characters of the

story have developed fantasy for European life but they cannot embrace the Western norms, as those norms are in conflict with their cultural norms and do not guarantee their success either.

The author ends the story with the metaphorical message that we as a nation should maintain our freedom at any cost. He says that he feels like sowing the seeds of words there so that he could have good trees moving along the waterways in the future. The future is anyhow upon this planet, a worth tending flower. It must be kept in view to enjoy its beauty and fragrance permanently.

David Grey rightly describes such writings as "ethnocentric justifications of European colonialism", adding that: "The colonial perspective lingers on today in what might be termed the "invasion theory" of Indian history. This narrative assumes (usually implicitly) Hegel (1900) idea that India is an intrinsically static, passive civilization, incapable on its own of having a history." He goes on to counter the notion that India "has only undergone historical change when motivated by outside forces, namely active aggressors." (Hegel et al., 1995)

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