

The Third Space and the Representation of Meaning and Discourse Crisis in the Short Story "The Sixth Sense" An Interdisciplinary Reading Based on Homi Bhabha's Postcolonial Theory

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Introduction

The short story "*al-Ḥāssa al-Sādisah*" (The Sixth Sense) by Iraqi writer Ali Husayn al-Khabbaz is situated within the post-2003 Iraqi socio-political context marked by cycles of violence, shifting power structures, and the emergence and collapse of armed groups. The present study examines how such a turbulent context produces instability in meaning and discourse formation within the narrative. Rather than treating violence merely as a thematic backdrop, the research approaches it as a generative force that disrupts semiotic systems and destabilizes fixed structures of signification. The study is framed within postcolonial discourse, particularly Homi K. Bhabha's concept of the "Third Space," which theorizes cultural meaning as emerging from in-between, hybrid, and liminal zones of interaction. The research problem lies in the breakdown of stable meaning systems and the proliferation of contradictory interpretations in war-related narratives. Accordingly, the study aims to analyze how discursive instability, crisis of naming, and the collapse of binary oppositions are represented in the selected text. It further seeks to demonstrate that "*al-Ḥāssa al-Sādisah*" does not merely reflect socio-political violence but actively constructs a narrative space where meaning is continuously negotiated, deferred, and reconfigured.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative interdisciplinary approach combining narrative analysis and postcolonial discourse theory. The theoretical framework is primarily based on Homi K. Bhabha's concepts of hybridity, liminality, and Third Space (Bhabha, 1994), supplemented by Michel Foucault's theory of discourse and power (Foucault, 1990). Additional theoretical contributions are drawn from hybridity studies in postcolonial criticism (Ashcroft et al., 2010; Huddart, 2006) and cultural identity scholarship. The analysis focuses on textual excerpts from "*al-Ḥāssa al-Sādisah*" by Ali Husayn al-Khabbaz (2023), examining how meaning is constructed, destabilized, and reconfigured through narrative structures, naming practices, and ideological binaries. The methodological procedure involves close reading of selected passages and their interpretation through a discourse-analytical lens, emphasizing three analytical levels: semantic

instability, crisis of naming, and deconstruction of binary oppositions. The study treats the text as a discursive field in which meaning is not fixed but produced through interaction between conflicting discourses.

Results and Discussion

Findings indicate that violence in *“al-Hāssa al-Sādisah”* functions as a discursive force that destabilizes meaning at multiple levels. First, semantic structures in the narrative are shown to be inherently unstable; concepts such as freedom, security, fear, and reality are constantly redefined depending on shifting socio-political conditions. The protagonist Ahmed occupies a liminal position between rational medical identity and intuitive “sixth sense” perception, which prevents the formation of a unified subject position. This liminality reflects Bhabha’s Third Space, where meaning emerges through negotiation rather than fixation. Second, naming practices in the text reveal a crisis of signification. Terms such as “sixth sense,” “doctor,” “Sayyid,” and “medical practitioner” fail to stabilize identity; instead, they generate ambiguity and multiple interpretations. Naming becomes a site of discursive struggle rather than a tool for clarification, illustrating the breakdown of linguistic authority. Third, political violence leads to the collapse of binary oppositions such as self/other, colonizer/colonized, and safe/unsafe. The narrative demonstrates that ideological categories are not stable but subject to inversion and rearticulation. The protagonist’s position neither fully aligns with resistance discourse nor with opposing ideological frameworks, reinforcing the in-betweenness of identity formation.

Conclusion

The study concludes that *“al-Hāssa al-Sādisah”* constructs a narrative space in which political violence directly contributes to the destabilization of meaning systems. Through the lens of Homi K. Bhabha’s Third Space theory, the analysis demonstrates that meaning is neither fixed nor singular but continuously produced through discursive interaction and cultural negotiation. The narrative reveals that naming practices lose their stabilizing function, semantic categories become fluid, and binary oppositions collapse under the pressure of socio-political conflict. Consequently, the protagonist’s liminal position reflects a broader epistemological condition in which identity and discourse are perpetually under construction. The study contributes to postcolonial narrative theory by shifting attention from identity hybridity to the discursive mechanisms of meaning production itself. It also expands the analytical potential of Third Space theory in reading Arabic war narratives, showing how literary texts from conflict zones actively generate epistemic instability rather than merely representing it.

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