

ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION

## Postcolonial Aesthetic Concerns in the Selected Short Fiction of James Joyce's Dubliners

Huma Ahmed<sup>1\*</sup>, Rasib Mahmood<sup>2</sup>

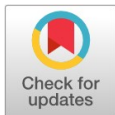
<sup>1</sup>Department of English, Lincoln University College, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia

<sup>2</sup>Department of English Language and Literature, Islamia College, Peshawar, Pakistan

**Abstract**— In contemporary postcolonial literary theory, few critics (Elleke Boehmer and Bill Ashcroft) have traced an academic gap that shows the need to evaluate postcolonial fiction's aesthetic concerns. The dominance of political concerns hardly leaves room to accept the argument of the simultaneous presence of politics and aesthetics in postcolonial literature. It is observed that the same academic gap can be found in literary research conducted on James Joyce's fiction, where political concerns are highlighted, and aesthetic traits of the literature are neglected. Boehmer argues that postcolonial writing, like any other type, is concerned with aesthetics, structure, reception, and perception. This essay aims to analyze James Joyce's selected short fiction to analyze the aesthetic concerns of postcolonial discourse. Utilizing Boehmer's theoretical stance, postcolonial aesthetics can be located in the writing structure and the act of reading, receiving, and perceiving the text that formulates a unique type of postcolonial poetics. In this way, she gives parallel importance to the author and the reader in determining the aesthetic dimensions of postcolonial fiction. The essay argues that Joyce's writing style/structure allows the aesthetic traits of the text to dominate and subtly neutralize the political overtones of the text. Moreover, the structure of his postcolonial writing influences the reader's reception and perception. His authorship gives birth to postcolonial poetics uniquely different from the simplistic view of postcolonial literature.

**Index Terms**— Aesthetics, Joyce, Political, Postcolonial, Short fiction

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### Introduction

Postcolonial theory and literature is a popular field of research in contemporary times. The theory has covered a wide range of issues concerning the British Empire. In the same way, the literature encompasses all the relevant areas in the field (Iverson, 2020). Elleke Boehmer finds a research gap in postcolonial theory, which is the need for more exploration of the aesthetics of postcolonial research. She contends that through reading and perceiving the fiction, the reader can formulate a unique type of poetic that helps him/her to grasp the text. This research utilizes her stance and applies it to the selected short fiction of James Joyce, a modern Irish writer, to appreciate the aesthetic elements in his writing, as much work is available on Joyce's fiction that focuses on the political dimension of the postcolonial. However, little or no work focuses on the poetics or aesthetics of his short fiction. This research intends to fill the mentioned research gap.

\*Email: humanaz096@gmail.com

As in other parts of the world, the impact of British colonial rule on Ireland is significant. It helped to form their cultural identity, socio-political scenario, and economic conditions. The dominance of the imperial political structure provided them an impetus to strive for independence and identity. (Hickey, 2023), This legacy is evident in almost all fields of life in Ireland. For example, they experienced the linguistic change from Irish to English and faced economic challenges throughout the 20th century. The colonial legacy left its impact on the diaspora, affecting Irish emigration patterns. The journey of postcolonial Ireland to reclaim and redefine its cultural and national identity continues. The reflections of its struggle resonate in art, literature, and political discourse, reflecting a history of resistance, adaptation, and resilience (Reynolds, 2020).

As a postcolonial author, James Joyce plays a vital role in challenging the intricacies of Irish identity during British colonial rule. Through his detailed portrayals of Dublin life in works like *Dubliners*, initially published in (1914) and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), Joyce captures the socio-economic and cultural paralysis imposed by colonialism, highlighting the struggles of ordinary Irish people. His innovative use of language, narrative techniques, and epiphanic moments serves to resist and subvert colonial cultural dominance, asserting a distinctly Irish voice (Kerr, 2024). Focusing on his characters' inner lives and consciousness, Joyce provides a profound critique of the colonial legacy and its impact on national and individual identity, positioning his work as a cornerstone of postcolonial literature that continues to influence and inspire the discourse on cultural independence and self-definition.

Joyce (2019), a collection of 15 short stories, offers rich material for postcolonial analysis. Many of these stories explore themes of national identity, cultural paralysis, and the impact of British colonial rule on Irish society. Here is a brief description of the three short stories "The Sisters," "Araby," and "Eveline" in Joyce (2019) that carry a nuanced understanding of postcolonial politics.

"The Sisters" revolves around the theme of paralysis, which can be found throughout the collection. The paralysis in "The Sisters" can be interpreted as a metaphor for the stagnation and repression experienced under colonial rule. The influence of the Catholic Church, depicted through the character of Father Flynn, can be seen as complicit in maintaining this paralysis, reflecting the church's role in sustaining colonial control over Irish society (Flannery, 2022).

Another story, "Araby," explores the impact of British colonialism on Irish culture and economy. The young boy, Araby, is impressed by the exotic bazaar that may symbolize the charm of the colonial "Other" and also may show an escape from the dullness of Dublin's life (Ismail et al., 2024). However, his disillusionment at the bazaar, which is less enchanting and more commercialized than he imagined, reflects the hollow promises of colonialism and the pervasive influence of British culture and economic interests.

The short narrative 'Eveline' poignantly depicts Eveline's internal conflict and her inability to break free from Dublin for a new life abroad, which can be interpreted as a symbol of Ireland's stagnation under colonial rule. Her choice to stay there, despite the opportunity to escape with her lover to Argentina, underscores the deep-seated fears and responsibilities that tie individuals to their colonized homeland. Eveline's narrative underscores the individual repercussions of residing in a colonized society, where aspirations for freedom and transformation are frequently stymied.

### **Postcolonial aesthetic**

The term 'postcolonial aesthetics' presents an intriguing paradox. While postcolonial theory and literature are deeply entrenched in political discourse and resistance against colonial power structures, 'aesthetics' is a term rooted in the philosophy of beauty. In literary theory, the concept of 'postcolonial aesthetics' stands out for its unique fusion of postcolonial politics and artistic expression.

Postcolonial literature is not just about politics. It is about giving voice to the voiceless, marginalized, and oppressed. It aims to deconstruct the colonial narrative and reclaim cultural and historical spaces, making its primary focus political rather than aesthetic. Contrary to the initial impression, aesthetics are crucial in postcolonial literature. The political project of postcolonialism inherently involves a reconfiguration of cultural representations, including an aesthetic dimension. How stories are told, the language used, and the adopted forms and styles contribute to challenging and reshaping the colonial legacy. Postcolonial aesthetics, therefore, can be understood as the artistic expressions that emerge from and respond to the historical and political contexts of colonialism and its aftermath (Ashcroft (2015; 410). Postcolonial aesthetics, as a crucial field of literary and cultural studies, scrutinizes the cultural production of colonized and formerly colonized societies, including literature. It unravels how these forms of cultural expression reflect and critique colonialism's political, economic, and cultural impacts. The discipline also investigates how these societies have responded to and resisted the cultural and ideological legacies of colonial rule. The term 'postcolonial' describes the period following the formal end of colonialism and refers to the cultural, political, and economic conditions shaped by the experience of colonization; the term 'postcolonial aesthetics' highlights the empowering role of literature and culture in resistance against colonialism. It analyzes how colonizers have represented and interpreted the literature and culture of colonized societies, often using these representations to justify and maintain colonial power. This field of study also examines how postcolonial societies have reclaimed their cultural heritage and re-imagined their identities in a postcolonial context.

According to Ashcroft (2015) and Boehmer (2018), postcolonial aesthetics/poetics is a less explored but crucial area in literary research. Ashcroft explains the reason, "Postcolonial theory has warily avoided the theory of aesthetics, perhaps for fear that it might

contaminate the political integrity of a field that has remained staunchly critical of the filiative hegemony of English literature" (Ashcroft, 2015; 410). Elleke Boehmer (2018) examines contemporary approaches to reading postcolonial literature and explores how the literary structures within these works influence readers' interpretation. Boehmer argues that literary writing establishes frameworks and guidelines that shape and direct our reading experience. These creative principles form the basis of these readings and constitute the poetics—specifically, the postcolonial poetics of the writing.

## Literature Review

Gonibala and Mariana (2022) examine the main characters' id, ego, and superego in each of James Joyce's five short stories. The authors selected five of Joyce's short stories and then gathered literary references related to the psychological approach. The findings indicate that each character in these five stories exhibits distinct id, ego, and superego aspects.

The researchers employ Sigmund Freud's theory to analyze the main character's id, ego, and superego. Psychoanalysis, a personality theory developed by Freud, posits that the id, ego, and superego drive humans. Initially intended to understand and treat mental disorders, this theory has since been widely applied to the study of literary works. The researcher identified a strong alignment between the theory and the plots and characters of these stories, underscoring the theory's relevance and applicability to literary analysis. Personality moderates every human biological impulse, rooted in a central instinct driven by the pleasure principle and the desire to fulfill all needs. As the fundamental personality system, the id is characterized by being selfish, immoral, and indifferent to reality. The id operates to maintain a constant state, avoiding unpleasant situations and seeking out pleasurable ones. It is the source of energy that drives both the ego and the superego. The ego, on the other hand, is the personality system that interacts with reality, guiding individuals to engage with the real world. According to Sigmund Freud, the ego emerges from the id, developing as a means to address external threats. It represents the psychological aspect of personality, formed out of the necessity to establish positive relationships in the real world. The ego acts as an intermediary, responding to environmental conditions to find appropriate objects to alleviate stress. It can be seen as the directing force of personality, as it manages the path, selects the needs that can be fulfilled, and determines how to satisfy them. The superego functions as the moral component of personality. It distinguishes between right and wrong, guiding individuals to act according to societal morals. The superego encourages the ego to strive for moralistic rather than purely realistic goals, often opposing the id and ego by promoting idealistic conceptions of behavior. In light of Freud's theory, the article analyzes five selected short stories to examine the implications of Freud's theory for the story's main characters (Gonibala & Mariana, 2022).

Paudel and Dahal (2024) use the Joycean lens to analyze the construction of epiphany in selected stories from *Dubliners*; James Joyce skillfully explores the inner lives of his characters and their socio-cultural environments. By highlighting simple, ordinary events, Joyce reveals the extraordinary within the mundane, offering profound insights into the characters in *Dubliners*. This study examines Joyce's use of the literary device "epiphany" in these stories, arguing that his style of developing epiphanic moments is achieved through the transformation of his characters, particularly the protagonists.

Through symbolic characters, Joyce presents a realistic portrayal of *Dubliners* as "living dead," reflecting the cultural, spiritual, and moral paralysis resulting from the impact of modern developments in Irish society. The main characters in the selected stories undergo psychological transformations, shifting from the private to the public, egoistic to social, idealistic to realistic, childhood to adolescence, and ignorance to knowledge. This transformation leads them to lose faith in the true nature of the universe they inhabit. Joycean epiphanies are more spiritual, often emerging from within rather than being triggered by external forces.

Ferhi (2021) explores Joyce's textual resistance to Celtic Revivalism and Irish Catholic conservatism in *Dubliners* (1914). Utilizing postcolonial theories, particularly Frantz Fanon's concepts from *The Wretched of the Earth* (1968) the study reveals that Joyce, unlike the Irish Revivalist authors and conservative Catholics, was more intent on exposing imperial power in its various forms. He placed blame where it was deserved, whether on imperial Britain, the Revivalist authors, or Irish Catholic conservatism, for the societal lethargy he depicted. The paper argues that while the colonial pathology of paralysis is a central theme in *Dubliners*, Joyce also delves into the theme of resistance against this paralysis.

The paper concludes that Joyce's interest in *Dubliners* extends beyond depicting paralysis or colonial pathology; he is equally focused on the resistance against it by naming and shaming the failures of the Irish petty-bourgeois class, much like Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth*. In his distinctive style, Joyce creates what Fanon would describe as "combat literature" or "committed literature," highlighting the pitfalls of the colonized Irish petty bourgeoisie in the urban context of Dublin. His rejection of the pastoral—a common feature in Irish Cultural Revivalist literature—demonstrates his desire to move beyond the "return-to-the-sources" phase in Fanon's categorization.

The study also examines how some Irish literary figures, such as Yeats and Gregory, complied with the anthropological clichés about the Irish propagated by English authors like Arnold. Regarding the assimilation phase, the first stage in Fanon's scheme of the colonized, Joyce offers a subtle critique by developing a writing style termed "naturalistic-symbolic," influenced by classical and modern French literature. Throughout the discussion, the concepts of typicality, as defined by Lukács, and militant irony, as described by Frye, are identified

as predominant characteristics of Dubliners. These elements of militant irony and typicality reveal Joyce's colonial resistance, with his critique of the Irish bourgeoisie proletariat foreshadowing Fanon's analysis in *The Wretched of the Earth*.

Kong (2024) in his essay "Multiple Themes in James Joyce's *Araby*" states that "*Araby*" tells the tale of a young boy who passionately pursues his love, only to face disillusionment—the period during which Joyce wrote witnessed a significant shift from realism to modernism, leading to an increased focus on depicting the people's mental state. Joyce conveyed his concerns about society through meticulous portrayals of daily life, and by examining the details in the story; one can perceive the spiritual emptiness of the time. This essay, drawing on previous research and the structuralist theory of Tzvetan Todorov, aims to elucidate the story's narrative structure and its themes of mental paralysis. It delves into the themes in *Araby*, analyzing each one individually. The title "*Araby*" serves as a driving force for the entire plot, representing the initial connection between the characters and the eventual dissolution of their relationship. The story was intended as a reflection of the spiritual state of Ireland, where the residents, numbed by years of struggle against colonizers, showed no signs of revival. The boy stands out as the only character eager to pursue his desires. According to Tzvetan Todorov's structuralist theory, a passage can be viewed as a combination of multiple sentences, with particular attention given to verbs and nouns that recur throughout the text. In *Araby*, the boy's experience can be distilled into three key actions: search, find, and lose—repeated several times throughout the story. This repetition emphasizes that the boy ultimately achieves nothing, rendering the story a tragedy and the boy a tragic hero.

In conclusion, while *Araby* is ostensibly about a boy's love, it carries a more profound significance. Analyzing various events in the boy's growth can uncover the roots of his pain and loneliness. Joyce intended to convey to the people of Ireland that societal numbness and paralysis would inevitably lead to the disillusionment of the younger generation's ideals. Without vitality and vigor, the local population and the nation are doomed to collapse. The story depicts the boy's enlightenment and reflects the author's patriotism, which may be one reason why *Araby* remains enduringly popular today.

A comprehensive literature review shows the lack of research on postcolonial aesthetic concerns on James Joyce's collection of short stories *Dubliners*. Therefore, the present research focuses on to address the neglected area in literary research.

### **Theoretical Framework/Research Methodology**

This is a qualitative work that employs textual analysis as the research method. Textual analysis is a widely recognized term among researchers engaged in qualitative research. It is a fundamental method within research methodology, particularly in cultural studies, and encompasses complex elements such as originality, creativity, inspiration, history, and the cultures we inhabit or study. As an interpretive approach, textual analysis is a form of qualitative analysis that delves into a text's underlying ideological and cultural assumptions.

The objective of textual analysis is not to uncover a single "true" or "hidden" meaning within a text but to offer multiple interpretations of the material under examination. Instead of searching for hidden meanings, the "subconscious" intentions of the author, or biases within the text, the goal is to understand the cultural and ideological assumptions that existed at a particular time. (Arya, 2020), This understanding is crucial as it enables us to comprehend why a text was considered acceptable and gained popularity, even to the point of becoming common sense. The power of textual analysis comes from offering a variety of readings and interpretations, which not only encourages the researcher to examine all the potential facets of the texts but also introduces diversity into the cultural and literary research field (Mezmir, 2020). Our unique perspectives and interpretations are invaluable in this process. Therefore reading of Joyce's selected short stories through this method helps explore the aesthetic dimensions of his postcolonial texts.

So far, the theoretical lens of the essay is considered; Elleke Boehmer's critical insights on postcolonial poetics/aesthetics offer a unique dimension to analyze the selected text. In *Postcolonial Poetics*, Boehmer addresses the poetry and fiction of Indian and African and contemporary diasporic Black British and Asian British writers Yiting (2021). However, this essay extends the discussion to appreciate Joyce's postcolonial poetics, as Boehmer's concept of postcolonial poetics can interpret postcolonial fiction of any geography. In order to appreciate the aesthetic concerns of a postcolonial text, she focuses on the act of reading, taking it as a conversation between the reader and the text. Boehmer quotes Benwell et al. who noted in their book *Postcolonial Audiences* (2012) that postcolonial studies have historically overlooked issues related to audiences and reception. She contends that reading entails an imaginative and cognitive engagement with a text involving the continuous application of inferential processes. In this sense, a text can be seen as a score for reading. Importantly, this interaction does not involve imposing a theoretical framework or predetermined meaning onto the text. Instead, the approach she is exploring is heuristic, cognitive, and focused on linguistics and communication. It acknowledges various reading practices- symptomatic, deconstructive, distant, algorithmic, and surface reading—that have been influential in academia since the 1970s and continue to be significant, including postcolonial criticism (Boehmer, 2018).

Since Boehmer does not offer a predetermined framework for reading and analyzing the postcolonial text, the interaction between the reader and the text offers diverse ways of interpretation. This essay, in its open-ended exploration, focuses on the aesthetic concerns in Joyce's selected short fiction through reading practices and examines how reading his text formulates the poetics of postcolonial. Boehmer's argument that an aesthetic analysis of postcolonial text does not demand a deliberate detachment from its political aspect is also the focus of the analysis of selected short stories by Joyce.

### Significance of the research

The research is significant due to its attempt to explore a relatively less focused area of postcolonial aesthetics in James Joyce's short fiction. The review of existing knowledge shows that researchers have examined Dubliners from various theoretical dimensions, but none have focused on the aesthetic dimensions of fiction. Another point that adds to the significance of the research is that Boehmer's theoretical stance focuses on Asian and Black writing. In contrast, this research implies her framework of a modern British writer's short fiction to examine the efficacy of her critical stance. Boehmer locates literary aesthetics of postcolonial fiction in the structure of writing and the act of reading, receiving, and perceiving the text that formulates a unique type of postcolonial poetics; future researchers can further explore the aesthetic concerns in socio-political aspects of the fiction of various origins.

### Discussion

The aesthetics of a postcolonial text can be evaluated on two levels, i.e., ideological (political) and formal (aesthetic). On the ideological level, Joyce (2019) offers a rich exploration of Irish life under British colonial rule. In a postcolonial context, the work can be seen as a critique of the cultural, social, and political stagnation imposed by colonial dominance. Joyce's short fiction carries postcolonial themes of identity, hybridity, mimicry, nationality, and gender issues. The significant point is that these themes can only sometimes be found explicitly. Instead, these can be located under the guise of emotions, feelings, and daily life experiences. The intricate portrayals of his characters' struggles reflect the broader national identity crisis and the longing for self-determination. Joyce (2019) thus serves as a poignant commentary on the complexities of colonial and postcolonial identity, illustrating the deep-seated impacts of colonialism on everyday life and consciousness in Ireland.

On an aesthetic level, the poetics of Joyce's postcolonial writing are embedded in the writing's formal characteristics, including narrative and thematic structure and the use of literary/stylistic devices. "The Sisters," the opening story in his short story collection, is meticulously crafted to reflect themes of ambiguity, paralysis, and revelation. The story is narrated from the perspective of a young boy, providing an intimate and subjective view of events. This creates a sense of immediacy and personal connection to the story, inviting the reader to step into the protagonist's shoes (Nassira, 2023). It opens in *Medias Res*, in the middle of events, with the boy contemplating Father Flynn's recent death. This technique immediately immerses the reader in the narrative, inviting them to piece together the context. Information about Father Flynn's life and death is revealed gradually through conversations and reflections, mirroring the boy's process of understanding and the community's incomplete knowledge about the priest's life. (Nuhiu, 2020)

The theme of paralysis is central to the story, both physically (in Father Flynn's illness and death) and metaphorically (in the boy's confused emotions and the community's stagnant state). The narrative reinforces this theme by presenting events and information to emphasize stasis and uncertainty. The story builds toward a subtle epiphany. The boy's final realization about Father Flynn's complex and troubled life is a moment of sudden clarity, though it is understated and leaves lingering questions. This structural element is critical in Joyce's style, focusing on moments of insight that profoundly affect the characters. Recurring symbols and motifs, such as the mention of "gnomon," "simony," and "paralysis" in the opening lines, weave deeper meanings into the narrative and serve as structural anchors that tie the story's themes together. Conversations between the boy and other characters, such as his aunt and Old Cotter, are interspersed with his internal thoughts. These dialogues reveal societal attitudes and hidden tensions, contributing to the overall atmosphere of ambiguity. The boy's internal monologues provide insight into his inner world and his gradual understanding of the adult complexities surrounding him, allowing readers to experience unsaid power. "Had he not been dead I would have gone into the little dark room behind the shop to find him sitting in his arm-chair by the fire" (Joyce, 2019; 22).

Joyce uses a stream of consciousness to depict the boy's internal struggles and the vividness of his fears and imaginings, effectively conveying the psychological impact of Father Flynn's death. The story's structure can be circular, beginning and ending with the boy contemplating death. This circularity underscores the themes of repetition and entrapment, suggesting that the characters are caught in an unending cycle of paralysis (Sultan, 2023).

### Role of imaginative understanding in interpreting Joyce

Boehmer contends that postcolonial literature, when interacting with an imaginative understanding of the reader, formulates a unique type of poetics that might differ from the simplistic view of postcolonial writing. A commitment to realism marks Joyce (2019). He meticulously depicts real places, authentic human experiences, and plausible situations. His attention to detail in the setting of Dublin provides a vivid, almost documentary-like representation of the city. Joyce's characters come to life with psychological depth, reflecting the complexities and nuances of actual human behavior. His narratives encompass a range of mundane and significant events, reflecting the subtle dramas of real life. His stream-of-consciousness and free indirect discourse further enhance the realistic portrayal, providing an intimate glimpse into the characters' minds and the world they inhabit.

An imaginative understanding of the reader plays a crucial role in drawing meaning from Joyce's realistic writing style in his short fiction. This engagement goes beyond merely processing the text; it involves an active, creative participation in the narrative (Ellis, 2021). By immersing themselves in the characters' psychological depths, readers can emotionally connect with their experiences. This imaginative empathy allows readers to feel the characters' joys, frustrations, and epiphanies, making the narrative's impact more profound and personal. Joyce's detailed depiction of Dublin and its social milieu is not just a backdrop but a living, breathing part of the narrative. It requires readers to vividly visualize the setting, fostering a more profound sense of connection to the narrative's context. Imaginative understanding helps readers reconstruct the early 20th-century Dublin landscape in their minds, enabling them to appreciate the nuances of the socio-political context that shapes the characters' lives. Joyce often embeds subtle themes and symbols within mundane events. An imaginative reader can uncover these layers, interpreting subtexts and metaphors that might not be immediately apparent. This active engagement is functional to appreciate the text's nuanced meanings better.

While Joyce (2019) is firmly grounded in specific cultural and historical contexts, its themes are universally resonant. Readers can draw parallels between the characters' experiences and their lives, making the stories relevant and resonant across diverse contexts and times. Joyce's stream-of-consciousness and free indirect discourse demands that readers navigate characters' fluid and often fragmented inner dialogues. An imaginative approach helps readers combine these fragmented thoughts, creating a cohesive understanding of the characters' internal worlds. Readers, through their imaginative engagement, visualize the detailed descriptions of Father Flynn:

It was always I who emptied the packet into his black snuff box, for his hands trembled too much to allow him to do this without spilling half the snuff about the floor. Even as he raised his large trembling hand to his nose, little clouds of smoke dribbled through his fingers over the front of his coat (Joyce, 2019; 63)

The text describes the fading influence of the Catholic Church in postcolonial Ireland, symbolized by the deteriorating physical state of a priest. It also critiques the Church's imposition of an alien culture and language and reflects the internal conflict faced by many in postcolonial societies. Additionally, the text invites readers to consider colonialism's generational impact and its enduring influence on Irish identity.

Imaginative understanding, a powerful tool, not only encourages readers to question and reflect on societal norms and personal choices depicted in the stories but also has the potential to transform the reading of Joyce (2019) from a passive activity into an interactive, interpretative experience. This critical engagement can deepen appreciation of Joyce's commentary on human nature and societal constraints, allowing readers to draw rich and varied meanings from his intricate and realistic portrayal of Dublin life (Ellis, 2021).

### **Co-existence of political and aesthetic concerns**

Boehmer (2018) argues that texts can be compared to musical scores, with readers playing the role of performers. She believes we should not only analyze texts for themes or symptomatic meanings. Instead, she suggests that every text has inherent formalistic structures and rules that shape our reading experience. According to Boehmer (2018), we should not consider its political and significant issues to separate our appreciation of a text's formal aspects. She asserts that it is through a text's poetic properties that essential messages are conveyed. Boehmer emphasizes that literary structures are our thoughts, indicating that postcolonial texts do not simply mirror social or political issues, as critics often argue. Instead, these texts contain unique poetic structures and rules that, when read, stimulate creative engagement and the reader's imagination. Boehmer describes these as 'inferential patterns' and 'flows of implication,' which, during the reading process, can inspire the reader to generate new thoughts and perspectives about the world and even motivate political action. This potential for new insights and perspectives is a powerful motivator for engaging with these texts (Borzaga, 2020).

In the short story "Araby," the intertwining of postcolonial politics and aesthetics reflects the complex dynamics of Irish identity under British rule and the yearning for escape and self-fulfillment. The story, set in Dublin, subtly critiques the impact of colonialism on Irish society while employing rich aesthetic elements to convey the protagonist's internal and external struggles. The story takes place in a colonized Ireland, where British influence permeates daily life. The setting of North Richmond Street symbolizes the stagnation and oppression experienced by the colonized Irish populace. The pervasive British cultural presence is felt through various elements, such as the English accents of the people at the bazaar and the imported goods on sale, reflecting the dominance of British culture and the marginalization of Irish identity. The protagonist's journey to the bazaar, a symbol of exoticism and escape, is hindered by economic limitations and the mundane reality of his life. These represent the limited opportunities available to the colonized, who are economically and socially constrained by their colonial status.

The story is rich with symbols that enhance its postcolonial critique. The blind street symbolizes the lack of direction and agency in the lives of the colonized. The bazaar, "Araby," represents an alluring escape and the ultimate disillusionment with the reality of colonial life. Joyce uses vivid imagery to contrast Dublin's drabness with the bazaar's exotic allure. The protagonist's romanticized vision of the bazaar, influenced by Orientalist fantasies, contrasts sharply with the disappointing reality he encounters, highlighting the gap between colonial desire and reality (Ferhi, 2021). The first-person narrative provides a deep insight into the protagonist's psyche, capturing his innocence, idealism, and eventual disillusionment. This personal journey mirrors the more significant political and cultural disillusionment

experienced by the colonized Irish society.

Joyce's lyrical and precise language captures the protagonist's heightened emotions and the dreary atmosphere of Dublin. The contrast between the lyrical descriptions of the boy's fantasies and the stark, simple language used to describe his reality underscores the theme of disillusionment.

### **The intersection of politics and aesthetics**

The protagonist's longing for the bazaar and subsequent disappointment reflects the enormous colonial desire for a different, more glamorous existence and the inevitable disillusionment that comes with the realization of the harsh colonial reality. The protagonist's fascination with Mangan's sister and the bazaar symbolizes a yearning for an identity beyond the constraints of colonial Dublin. His disillusionment at the bazaar signifies the realization that this "other" identity is unattainable, reinforcing the postcolonial theme of the elusiveness of true freedom and self-determination under colonial rule. The protagonist's personal journey mirrors the more significant political and cultural disillusionment experienced by the colonized Irish society, where the promise of a better life under British rule often leads to disappointment and disillusionment.

Through the protagonist's journey, Joyce critiques the superficial allure of British and exotic cultures imposed on Ireland. The bazaar, a potent symbol of colonial exploitation, is ultimately revealed as a hollow and disappointing spectacle. This mirrors the emptiness of colonial promises and the disillusionment that often followed colonial subjects' initial excitement and hope. The protagonist's disenchantment at the bazaar reflects the more considerable disillusionment experienced by the colonized Irish society under British rule, thereby emphasizing the symbolic power of the bazaar in the context of postcolonial themes (Ismail et al., 2024).

The formal structure of "Araby" is crucial in engaging the reader's imagination and influencing interpretation, particularly within a postcolonial context. When the short days of winter came, dusk fell before we had eaten our dinners. When we met in the street, the houses had grown somber. The sky above us was the colour of ever-changing violet, and towards it, the lamps of the street lifted their feeble lanterns. The cold air stung us, and we played till our bodies glowed. Our shouts echoed in the silent street (Joyce, 2019; 10).

The passage's lyrical and descriptive quality, with its detailed observations and evocative imagery, draws readers into the narrator's world, prompting them to visualize the scenes and sensations described. By using color imagery, such as the 'ever-changing violet' and 'feeble lanterns,' the text not only establishes a mood of melancholy and longing but also reveals a hidden beauty in this melancholy. This interplay of light and shadow, exemplified by the dim street lamps and the figures hiding in shadows, symbolizes the interplay of hope and despair, innocence and experience, in the colonial Irish context, inviting the reader to appreciate the complexity of the narrative.

The stark contrast between the children's play and the cold, dark environment is a poignant reminder of their harsh realities. The description of the 'dark muddy lanes' and 'dark dripping gardens' evokes a sense of decay and neglect, reflecting the socio-political decay and neglect experienced under colonial rule. This setting not only situates the narrative in a specific socio-political context but also invites readers to contemplate the starkness of the situation under colonialism. The detailed attention to Mangan's sister and her actions underscores themes of idealization and disillusionment. Her figure, illuminated by the "light from the half-opened door," symbolizes a beacon of unattainable desire and hope, mirroring the larger aspirations and frustrations of a colonized nation yearning for freedom and identity.

Thus, through its formal structure, the passage mobilizes the reader's imagination to explore the nuanced interplay between personal desire and broader socio-political realities, offering a profound commentary on postcolonial conditions. In the story "Eveline," the protagonist's life in Dublin is not just a personal struggle but a societal one, characterized by economic hardship and a feeling of being trapped. Her father's inability to provide financial stability and his oppressive control mirror the economic constraints imposed by British colonial rule on Ireland (Morash, 2022). Eveline's job at the Stores, where Miss Gavan mistreats her, reflects the broader context of exploitation and limited opportunities for the Irish under colonial rule. Frank, Eveline's suitor, represents the possibility of escape and a new life abroad, particularly in Buenos Aires. This mirrors the historical emigration of many Irish people seeking better lives due to the dire economic conditions at home. Eveline's contemplation of leaving Ireland for Argentina highlights the diasporic movement caused by colonial oppression. However, her ultimate decision to stay signifies the powerful hold of colonial and familial ties, a decision that is not without its societal implications.

Eveline's inability to leave Dublin reflects the paralysis that Joyce often attributed to the Irish psyche under British rule. Her indecision and ultimate inaction symbolize the struggle of the Irish people to break free from the colonial mindset and assert their identity. Eveline's sense of duty and promise to her mother to keep the home together also speaks to the colonial-induced guilt and obligation that stifles personal liberation.

Joyce uses rich symbolism and imagery to convey Eveline's inner turmoil and the weight of colonial influence. The "dusty cretonne" and "yellowing photograph" symbolize stagnation and decay, mirroring the stifling effects of colonialism on Ireland. The vivid contrast between her mundane domestic life and the vibrant descriptions of her memories with Frank illustrates the allure of escape versus the reality of her entrapment. Joyce employs a stream-of-consciousness technique to delve into Eveline's thoughts and emotions, providing a profound psychological portrait of a character caught between desire and duty. This narrative style allows readers to experience Eveline's

paralysis firsthand, emphasizing the internalized oppression that stems from colonial rule and societal expectations. The story is infused with dramatic irony as readers understand the futility of Eveline's hope for a better life if she stays. The tragic realism of her situation underscores the harsh realities faced by many Irish people. Eveline's final, passive stance at the quay, where she clutches the iron railing, is a powerful visual metaphor for her inability to break free from the constraints imposed by her environment.

The intersection of postcolonial politics and aesthetics in "Eveline" creates a poignant narrative that captures the complexities of individual and national identity under colonial rule. Joyce's detailed portrayal of Eveline's psychological state, framed within the socio-economic and historical context of colonial Ireland, offers a critique of the lingering effects of colonialism on the personal lives of the colonized. The story's aesthetic elements—imagery, narrative style, and symbolism—enhance this critique, making Eveline's plight a microcosm of the broader national struggle for self-determination and freedom. For instance, Eveline's decision to stay in Dublin despite the opportunity to escape with Frank can reflect the Irish people's struggle to assert their identity and maintain their cultural heritage in the face of British colonial rule. Joyce deftly weaves postcolonial themes of oppression, migration, and identity into the fabric of the protagonist's life.

This interplay between politics and aesthetics not only enriches the narrative but also underscores colonialism's profound and enduring impact on the individual psyche and the collective consciousness of a nation, leaving the audience with a deep sense of the gravity of this issue.

## **Conclusion**

A comprehensive analysis of Joyce's three short stories "The Sisters," "Araby," and "Eveline," under the theoretical stance of Boehmer (2018), concludes that aesthetic traits of postcolonial short fiction produced by Joyce can be located in the poetics (structure) of his writing. The question Boehmer raises, whether we can speak of a postcolonial poetics that interacts with readers' imaginative understanding and engages in postcolonial politics, is discussed with textual support. By her stance that it is through a text's poetic properties that essential messages are conveyed, the essay asserts that the structure of Joyce's writing facilitates the readers' reception and perception of the text, enabling them to develop a unique understanding of the fiction. In compliance with Boehmer's claim that political and aesthetic concerns of postcolonial fiction co-exist in the text, the essay concludes that in those mentioned above selected short narratives, postcolonial political and aesthetic traits run side by side. Moreover, his writing style, characterized by experimental techniques and dense, multi-layered prose, allows the short fiction's aesthetic traits to dominate and subtly neutralize the text's political overtones. Joyce's commitment to the aesthetic is evident in his meticulous attention to language, his intricate use of stream of consciousness, and his innovative narrative structures. Joyce's meticulous attention to the interior lives of his characters, his use of precise, evocative language, and the careful structuring of these narratives create a world of aesthetic experience that captivates the reader, overshadowing any explicit political messaging.

In "The Sisters," Joyce takes us on a profound emotional journey through the psychological complexity of a young boy and his struggle with the death of a priest. The story's structure, cyclical conversations, and contemplative tone draw readers into the boy's inner world, fostering a sense of empathy and connection. The political context of the Catholic Church's influence in Ireland is subtly woven into the narrative through the boy's interactions and the lingering mysteries surrounding Father Flynn. The emphasis is on the boy's evolving perception and the aesthetic experience of his internal reflections, which neutralize the political critique of clerical authority.

"Araby" further exemplifies Joyce's technique. The coming-of-age narrative centers on a young boy's infatuation with a girl and his disillusionment at a bazaar. The setting and the boy's mundane reality subtly indicate the political undertones of colonialism and economic disparity. However, Joyce's lyrical prose and the rich, sensory descriptions of the boy's longing and subsequent disappointment dominate the text, allowing the audience to vividly feel the story's atmosphere and emotions. Ultimately, the boy's epiphany is portrayed through a poignant aesthetic moment rather than a political realization, focusing readers on emotional and sensory experiences (Kong, 2024).

In "Eveline," Joyce presents a young woman's struggle between duty and the desire for escape. The political themes of gender roles and the oppressive social environment are present in Eveline's reflections on her domestic life and the promises she made to her deceased mother. However, the stream of consciousness and the vivid portrayal of Eveline's internal conflict prioritize her emotional landscape. The story's climax, marked by Eveline's paralysis and ultimate decision, is rendered intensely personal and aesthetically. The political implications are thus neutralized by the focus on Eveline's psychological depth and the sensory details of her environment.

In these stories, Joyce's intricate prose, psychological depth, and focus on sensory and emotional experiences ensure that the text's aesthetic traits take precedence. This approach subtly integrates and neutralizes the political overtones, embedding them within the broader human experience that Joyce masterfully depicts. Thus, postcolonial literature is transformed into a work of art.



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