

Power, Gender, and Loss of Identity in Brit Bennett's *The Mothers*

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Abstract. This article probes into the themes of power, gender, and loss of identity in Brit Bennett's celebrated novel, *The Mothers*, through the theoretical lens of Homi K. Bhabha's concepts of hybridity, mimicry, third space, and ambivalence. Drawing upon Bhabha's postcolonial framework, this analysis examines how these concepts intersect and contribute to the narrative of the novel, ultimately portraying the complexities of personal and social identity formation. Through an exploration of hybridity, the article investigates how the characters in *The Mothers* negotiate multiple cultural and social influences within a contemporary American context. It examines the ways in which the protagonists navigate the tensions and conflicts that arise from their overlapping identities, challenging normative expectations and highlighting the intricate intersections of race, class, and gender.

Furthermore, the article analyzes the theme of mimicry, whereby characters adapt and imitate cultural and social practices to negotiate their position within society. It investigates how mimicry acts as a tool for survival, while also exploring its potential to reinforce power dynamics and perpetuate inequalities. Building on Bhabha's concept of the third space, the article inspects the liminal spaces within the novel where characters negotiate their identities, neither fully assimilating nor completely retaining their original cultural or social markers. Through this examination, the article represents the transformative possibilities of these spaces and their potential to challenge traditional power structures.

Lastly, the article investigates the theme of ambivalence, which reflects the simultaneous presence of conflicting emotions, ideologies, and identities within the characters of *The Mothers*. It delves into how ambivalence operates as a site of tension, resistance, and agency within the narrative, ultimately shaping the characters' quests for self-discovery and empowerment. In sum, by employing Bhabha's theoretical framework, this article offers a nuanced exploration of power, gender, and loss of identity in *The Mothers*, and illuminates the complexities of identity formation, exposing the multifaceted ways in which individuals navigate and resist societal norms and power dynamics.

Key words: Ambivalence, Hybridity, Mimicry, Postcolonialism, Third Space.

1. Introduction

In Brit Bennett's acclaimed novel, *The Mothers*, power dynamics, gender roles, and the loss of identity form the core themes that unfold in the lives of the central characters. Bennett represents these complex issues through a nuanced portrayal of her characters, offering readers a thought-provoking examination of the societal pressures and individual struggles that shape their lives. To probe deeper into the intricate tapestry of power, gender, and identity, this article seeks to employ the theoretical framework of Homi K. Bhabha, specifically focusing on his concepts of hybridity, mimicry, third space, and ambivalence.

Through Bhabha's lens, the article aims to analyze how the characters in *The Mothers* navigate the challenges of their socio-cultural context, where identities are constantly negotiated, contested, and

sometimes even erased. Hybridity, a concept central to Bhabha's work, serves as a useful lens to discuss the complexities of identity formation in the novel. It emphasizes the characters' diverse backgrounds, their struggles to reconcile multiple cultural influences, and the resulting tensions they experience as they navigate their place within the broader community.

Furthermore, the concept of mimicry, as theorized by Bhabha, becomes crucial in unpacking the power dynamics in the novel. Mimicry refers to the way in which individuals attempt to imitate dominant cultural norms, often at the cost of their authentic selves. By examining instances of mimicry within *The Mothers*, this article means to show the characters' internal conflicts, as they struggle with societal expectations and the pressure to conform. The notion of the third space, as conceptualized by Bhabha, also offers a fruitful perspective to analyze the characters' negotiation of identity and power within a liminal and in-between space.

Moreover, this third space, characterized by ambiguity and possibility, becomes a site of resistance and transformation for the characters, allowing them to challenge norms and carve out a space for agency and self-expression. Lastly, to analyze the characters' complex inner worlds, this article will benefit from Bhabha's concept of ambivalence. As individuals navigate societal expectations and personal aspirations, their emotions and desires often exist in a state of contradiction and ambiguity. By examining instances of ambivalence within *The Mothers*, this article aims to unravel the multidimensionality of the characters' experiences, underlining the intricate interplay between power, gender, and identity.

2. Statement of the Problem

The focus of this article is to discuss the themes of power, gender, and loss of identity in Brit Bennett's novel, *The Mothers*, employing the theoretical frameworks proposed by Homi K. Bhabha. By analyzing the concepts of hybridity, mimicry, third space, and ambivalence, I aim to probe into the complexities of these themes and their interplay within the narrative. One of the central problems addressed in this study is the impact of power dynamics on individuals' sense of self and belonging. By examining the characters' experiences, I aim to investigate how power structures, both overt and subtle, influence the characters' identities. Additionally, I will explore how gender shapes their understanding of power, and the subsequent effects on their perceptions of themselves and others.

Another significant problem I will tackle is the issue of loss of identity, which arises as a consequence of societal expectations and personal struggles. Through an analysis of the characters' experiences, I seek to understand how the pressures of conformity and societal norms contribute to the erosion of individual identities. Moreover, I will examine how the characters navigate this loss and strive to reclaim their sense of self through various means. Furthermore, this study intends to analyze the concept of hybridity in relation to power and gender. By investigating how characters negotiate their multifaceted identities, influenced by intersecting social and cultural factors, I will examine the ways in which hybridity challenges traditional power structures and norms. This analysis will shed light on the potential for self-discovery and growth within the complexities of hybrid identities.

Mimicry, as a theoretical framework, will also be employed in this study. By examining how characters imitate or embody societal expectations and norms, I will investigate the effects of mimicry on power dynamics and personal identity. Finally, the concept of the third space will be scrutinized in order to understand how characters navigate between various social and cultural contexts. By exploring the in-between spaces that challenge traditional binary constructions, this research will investigate how the characters negotiate their identities and redefine notions of power and gender.

3. Literature Review

3.1. On the Novel

"Race and Motherhood in Brit Bennett's The Mothers" (2021) by Zarj and Mousavi focuses on the themes of race and motherhood in the novel *The Mothers* written by Brit Bennett, published in 2021. The authors of the article, Zarj and Mousavi, analyze and discuss how race and motherhood intersect and influence the narrative in Bennett's novel. Zarj and Mousavi also discuss how race affects the experiences and perspectives of the mothers depicted in the novel.

They examine how the characters' racial background shapes their understanding of motherhood and how societal perceptions and expectations differ based on race. This analysis probes into the themes of identity, culture, and the challenges faced by women of different racial backgrounds as they navigate motherhood. Furthermore, the article discusses how Brit Bennett tackles the complexities of race and motherhood in her writing. Zarj and Mousavi additionally analyze the author's narrative choices, character development, and use of language to uncover the ways in which she presents and addresses these themes. They also explore broader social and historical contexts that inform the depiction of race and motherhood in the novel.

"Motherhood in Brit Bennett's *The Mothers*" (2023) by Kapoor is a critical analysis or scholarly discussion of the theme of motherhood in Brit Bennett's novel *The Mothers*. Kapoor, the author of the article, has discussed the portrayal, significance, and implications of motherhood within the context of the book. The article looks into various aspects of motherhood presented in the novel, such as the experiences, challenges, and choices faced by the female characters in their roles as mothers. Kapoor has similarly discussed the representation of motherhood in terms of cultural, social, or personal perspectives, providing a comprehensive analysis.

Moreover, Kapoor has investigated how Bennett's depiction of motherhood contributes to the overall themes and storytelling in *The Mothers*. This involves examining the characters' motivations, relationships, or the impact of motherhood on their identities and journeys. In addition, the article discusses how the portrayal of motherhood in Bennett's novel resonates with contemporary society, exploring themes of gender, race, and societal expectations.

3.2. On the Theory

Nation and Narration is a book written by Homi K. Bhabha, an influential cultural theorist and postcolonial scholar. Published in 1990, the book revolves around the complex relationship between nationhood, identity, and storytelling in the context of postcolonial societies. Bhabha's central argument in *Nation and Narration* is about the idea that nationhood is not a fixed, essential identity, but rather a construction that emerges through the process of narration. He emphasizes that the concept of a nation is grounded in narratives or stories that shape collective understanding and legitimize power structures within society.

The book is divided into several chapters, each tackling different aspects of nation and narration. Bhabha draws on a range of theoretical frameworks, including psychoanalysis, poststructuralism, and cultural studies, to inspect how narratives have been used to construct national identities and to challenge dominant narratives of colonialism and imperialism. One key concept discussed in the book is the notion of "ambivalence." Bhabha suggests that the relationship between colonizer and colonized is by ambivalence, as the colonized simultaneously desire and reject the authority and culture of the colonizer. This ambivalence manifests in the ways in which narratives of nationhood are constructed, often reflecting a hybridity or blending of different cultural elements.

Bhabha also discusses the idea of "mimicry," which refers to how colonized subjects adopt and imitate the culture and practices of the colonizer. He argues that mimicry is a form of strategic resistance, as it allows the colonized to negotiate their own identity while challenging and subverting dominant norms. Throughout the book, Bhabha underlines the importance of language and discourse in shaping national narratives. He emphasizes the role of the "third space," a conceptual space between colonizer and colonized where new meanings and identities can emerge. This third space disrupts fixed notions of identity and offers the potential for cultural hybridity and subversion.

The Location of Culture is a book written by the renowned postcolonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha. Published in 1994, it has become a significant contribution to the field of postcolonial studies. In this book, Bhabha examines the ways in which cultural identity is produced and negotiated in a globalized world. He argues against the notion of fixed and stable identities, instead emphasizing the hybrid and fluid nature of cultural identities. Bhabha introduces the idea of "third space," which refers to the in-between spaces where cultures intersect and new identities are formed. This liminal space is characterized by dislocation, ambiguity, and hybridity.

The book also discusses the concept of colonial mimicry, wherein the colonized imitate the colonizers in an attempt to gain power and legitimacy. Bhabha proposes that mimicry is a form of resistance but also exposes the inherent instability and fragility of colonial power. Likewise, Bhabha discusses the role of language and translation in the construction of cultural identities. He emphasizes how the use of language can both reinforce and challenge existing power structures. In fact, *The Location of Culture* offers a complex and complete understanding of cultural identity and the dynamics of power in postcolonial societies. Bhabha's work has been influential in shaping postcolonial theory and has had a profound impact on various academic disciplines and cultural studies.

Homi K. Bhabha (2006) by Huddart is a scholarly work that probes into the theories and concepts of influential postcolonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha. The book provides a thorough analysis of Bhabha's ideas such as hybridity, mimicry, and colonial discourse, and examines their impact on postcolonial studies. Huddart offers a comprehensive examination of Bhabha's contributions to cultural theory and provides insight into power dynamics in the postcolonial world. In general, the book is a valuable resource for anyone interested in analyzing Bhabha's work and its significance in the study of postcolonialism.

4. Methodology

This article employs a qualitative literary analysis approach to examine the themes of power, gender, and loss of identity in Brit Bennett's novel *The Mothers*. The analysis is conducted using Homi K. Bhabha's theoretical framework of hybridity, mimicry, third space, and ambivalence. These concepts are applied in order to discuss the complex intersections of race, identity, and class in the narrative. First, a comprehensive reading of the novel was conducted to identify relevant passages and instances that illustrate the themes under investigation. Close attention was paid to the interactions and dynamics between the characters, as well as the broader socio-cultural context in which the story unfolds.

Drawing on Bhabha's conceptual tools, the researcher analyzed the selected passages to unveil the instances of power relations between characters, gender roles, and their impact on the characters' sense of self. Hybridity was utilized to examine the interplay between different social and cultural identities, while mimicry was employed to inspect how characters negotiate and perform aspects of their identities. Third space was also employed to investigate the spaces in which characters navigate, negotiate, and challenge dominant power structures. Finally, ambivalence was utilized to uncover the conflicting feelings and attitudes characters have towards their own identities and the societal expectations placed upon them.

To ensure the accuracy and validity of the analysis, multiple readings of the novel and in-depth discussions were conducted. Additionally, secondary sources such as scholarly articles and critical essays with the author were consulted to provide further insights and context. The analysis was conducted in a systematic and iterative manner, allowing for constant comparison and refinement of the findings.

5. Discussion

5.1. Race and Power

In Brit Bennett's novel, *The Mothers* the themes of power, gender, and loss of identity are central to the narrative. To discuss these ideas further, we can apply Homi K. Bhabha's concept of hybridity, which examines the intersection of race and power within the novel. Bhabha's concept of hybridity refers to the blending, mixing, and crossing of different cultural, racial, or social identities. It recognizes that identities are not fixed, but fluid and constantly shaped by the interactions between different cultures and power structures (Bhabha, 1994, p. 10). In *The Mothers*, this concept becomes particularly relevant in exploring the experiences of the characters as they navigate the complexities of their racial identities within a society that has its own power dynamics.

One way in which hybridity manifests in the novel is through the characters' biracial identities. Nadia, the protagonist, is the daughter of a black mother and a white father, which positions her between multiple racial and cultural backgrounds. This liminal space of being neither fully black nor fully

white creates a sense of displacement and ambiguity in her identity, affecting her understanding of power and her place in society. Furthermore, the concept of hybridity is evident in the interactions between the characters and their attempts to navigate the power structures of the community they inhabit.

According to Bennett (2017), "it's easy feel separate when you got a dad who lives else, separate when're not connected by or name to those around" (p. 54). This quote emphasizes Nadia's mixed heritage, and reflects her struggle to find her place and her identity in a society that often defines people's position based on categories. The differing power subtleties based on race, gender, and social status shape the characters' experiences and the choices they make. For instance, Aubrey, Nadia's best friend, is a black woman who faces oppression and discrimination due to her race, which influences her decisions and agency within the story.

Bhabha's concept of hybridity allows us to view the characters' experiences as a result of the merging and clash of different cultures, races, and power structures. It emphasizes that these experiences are not static or homogenous, but rather constantly evolving and shaped by the complexities of their identities. Another important quote in this regard is the following:

Oh girl, we have known littlebit love. That littlebit of honey left in an empty jar that traps the sweetness in your mouth long enough to mask your hunger. We have run tongues over teeth to savor that last littlebit as long as we could, and in all our living, nothing has starved us more. (Bennett, 2017, p. 22)

The quote accentuates the experience of longing and the pursuit of love and intimacy. The metaphor of the "littlebit of honey left in an empty jar" represents a scarcity or lack, where there is only a small amount of sweetness remaining. This scarcity can be seen as a metaphor for power forces at work and societal limitations that impact individuals in their pursuit of love and fulfillment. The phrase "that traps the sweetness in your mouth long enough to mask your hunger" also suggests that the taste of love and intimacy is fleeting and temporary.

It implies that individuals, particularly women, may use these moments of love to momentarily escape or suppress their deeper desires and hunger for more substantial and sustaining relationships or identities. The concept of hybridity comes into play when considering the phrase "run tongues over teeth to savor that last littlebit as long as we could." This line suggests an active engagement with multiple identities or experiences. It means that individuals, despite their hunger and longing, are still able to find solace in these brief moments of love, even though they may not fully satisfy their desires.

The final part of the quote, "in all our living, nothing has starved us more," reveals the profound impact of this scarcity, specifically on the characters' identities and sense of self. It suggests that the pursuit of love and intimacy, limited by societal constraints, has resulted in a loss of identity. This can be seen as a consequence of the power subtleties and gender expectations that restrict individuals from fully exploring and embracing their multifaceted selves.

In relation to Bhabha's concept of hybridity, this quote thus highlights the complex ways in which power, gender, and societal expectations intersect and shape individual experiences. The characters in *The Mothers* circumnavigate these constraints and find moments of comfort and connection despite the restrictions imposed upon them, reflecting the hybrid nature of their identities. The quote actually underscores the struggle for self-actualization within a society that restricts and starves individuals of their full potential.

Likewise, in *The Mothers*, the themes of power, gender, and loss of identity can be discussed through the lens of Bhabha's concept of third space. Bhabha's theory of the third space examines the in-between spaces where identities are negotiated and constructed. In the context of race and power dynamics within the novel, Bhabha's theory offers a valuable framework to probe deeper into the complexities of the characters' experiences (Bhabha, 1994, p. 4).

One way we can apply Bhabha's theory is by looking at the character of Nadia Turner, the protagonist of the story. Nadia, as a young black woman, finds herself navigating the intersections of race, gender, and power within her community. She embodies the notion of the third space, existing in-between

societal expectations and her own desires. Throughout the novel, Nadia's choices and actions stem from her attempts to define and assert her own identity. She rejects the traditional paths set by her community and seeks autonomy and agency in her decisions. Bhabha's concept of the third space thus allows us to see Nadia's struggles with power dynamics in a clear way, as she negotiates the expectations placed upon her by society while also struggling with her own desires and ambitions.

Another aspect to consider when applying Bhabha's concept is the Mothers' community itself. They serve as a collective voice, representing not only the specific experiences of black women but also the broader dynamics of power within the community. The Mothers' group occupies a unique position, acting as gatekeepers of traditions and societal norms. Their influence shapes the lives of the characters, especially Nadia, as they try to assert control over her choices. By examining the power forces at work within the community through Bhabha's theory of the third space, we can see how Nadia's interactions with the Mothers become a site of negotiation between the dominant and subjugated culture. This negotiation underlines the complexities of power and identity, showing how individuals must navigate and resist societal expectations in order to forge their own path.

One instance is "Reckless white boys became politicians and bankers, reckless black boys became dead" (Bennett, 2017, p. 51). In the given quote, the speaker highlights a stark contrast between the outcomes for reckless white boys and reckless black boys. This contrast can be seen as a result of the hybridity in society, where different races and their experiences are intersecting. However, instead of leading to equal opportunities or outcomes, the quote suggests a lopsided distribution of power, favoring white boys who have the privilege to become successful politicians and bankers.

Secondly, the concept of the third space can be applied to this quote as well. The third space is a point of negotiation and interaction between different cultures or identities, where new meanings and identities can emerge. In this case, the reckless white boys occupy the dominant position in society, representing the mainstream culture. On the other hand, the reckless black boys occupy a marginalized position, enduring the consequences of their recklessness with their lives. The third space, in this context, represents the space where these unequal power dynamics and their consequences are negotiated and presented.

5.2. Loss of Identity

Mimicry, as defined by Bhabha, refers to the imitation or adoption of the dominant culture's characteristics by marginalized groups. It is a process where the marginalized individuals try to assimilate into the dominant culture, often resulting in a loss of their own identity (Bhabha, 1994, p. 16). In *The Mothers*, the characters struggle with their own sense of identity and the societal expectations imposed upon them. Through Bhabha's concept of mimicry, we can probe deeper into how the characters handle this complex dynamic.

One way to examine mimicry in the novel is through the character of Nadia. As an ambitious young woman, Nadia enters into an affair with Luke, a pastor's son, which ultimately leads to an unplanned pregnancy. In response, Nadia decides to have an abortion, defying societal expectations and challenging the established power structures. Her decision can be seen as an act of resistance, as it allows her to maintain control over her own body and assert her agency because "she had known pregnant girls. She had seen them waddling around school in tight tank tops and sweatshirts that hugged their bellies. She never saw the boys who had gotten them that way—their names were enshrouded in mystery, as wispy as rumor itself—but she could never unsee the girls, big and blooming in front of her" (Bennett, 2017, p. 15). However, despite her attempts to break free from societal constraints, Nadia also finds herself caught in a mimicry space.

She tries to conform to societal expectations by pursuing a successful career, but still struggles with feelings of loss and guilt related to her choices. This internal conflict reflects the tension between asserting her individuality and conforming to societal norms. Moreover, the character of Aubrey can also be examined through the lens of mimicry. Aubrey, Nadia's best friend, comes from a more conservative background where conforming to societal norms is highly valued. Throughout the novel, Aubrey constantly struggles with her own conflicting desires and the weight of societal expectations.

She attempts to mimic the dominant culture's expectations of a proper woman, but at the same time, she longs for more independence and self-fulfillment.

Additionally, the concept of mimicry can be applied to the religious community portrayed in *The Mothers*. The church exerts a significant influence on the characters, shaping their identities and imposing strict rules and expectations. The characters within the community often find themselves torn between adhering to these expectations and finding their own individual paths. Their attempts to mimic the dominant religious culture highlight the power dynamics and the struggle for autonomy within the community.

Similarly, Bhabha's concept of ambivalence refers to the simultaneous existence of contradictory feelings, attitudes, or identities within an individual or community (McEwan, 2018, p. 77). In *The Mothers*, this concept can be observed through various characters and their struggles. One example of ambivalence in relation to identity is seen through Nadia. Nadia faces a profound loss early in the novel, leading to a wavering sense of self. She grapples with the religious and social expectations placed upon her as a young Black woman. This struggle is exacerbated by her relationship with Luke, a white man from a privileged background. Nadia's pregnancy further complicates her identity as she battles feelings of both empowerment and vulnerability. Bhabha's concept of ambivalence can be applied here, as Nadia experiences conflicting emotions and uncertain positioning within her intersecting identities.

Another instance of ambivalence in gender and identity can be observed through the character of Aubrey. Aubrey is depicted as someone who challenges traditional gender roles and expectations. She refuses to conform to societal norms and chooses to pursue her own aspirations outside of the traditional trajectory. Aubrey's struggle with her identity, particularly in regards to her role as a woman in society, exemplifies Bhabha's concept of ambivalence. She embodies contradictory feelings and attitudes, circumnavigating a space between societal expectations and her own desire for individual autonomy.

Furthermore, the community of *The Mothers* itself embodies ambivalence in its collective identity and power dynamics. The Mothers, a group of older women in the church, symbolize a traditional source of power and authority. However, they also face ambivalence within their roles, as they are both revered for their wisdom and experience, yet are limited and marginalized within the larger community. This ambivalence underscores the complexities of power and identity within the novel.

Also, "Maybe all women were shapeshifters, changing instantly depending on who was around" (Bennett, 2017, p. 99) can be a good instance. In this quote, the idea of women being shapeshifters suggests a tendency for women to adapt and change their behavior depending on the social circumstances or individuals they interact with. This can be seen as a form of mimicry, as women may feel compelled to conform to societal expectations or mimic the behavior of others to fit in or maintain their relationships.

The concept of ambivalence also comes into play in this quote, as it refers to the simultaneous experience of conflicting emotions or attitudes. The idea that women are shapeshifters, constantly changing depending on who is around, implies a certain ambivalence towards their personal identity. Women might feel torn between expressing their authentic selves and conforming to societal norms. This ambivalence arises from the tension between individuality and the desire for acceptance or social validation.

Another quote which can be a good example is, "she'd already learned that pretty exposes you and pretty hides you and like most girls, she hadn't yet learned how to navigate the difference" (Bennett, 2017, p. 7). This quote emphasizes the protagonist's understanding that physical attractiveness can have both positive and negative implications in society. The phrase "pretty exposes you" suggests that being perceived as physically attractive can make someone vulnerable and subject to objectification or unwanted attention. Here, mimicry can be seen as the act of conforming to societal expectations of beauty and femininity, only to find oneself exposed and susceptible to external judgment.

On the other hand, the phrase "pretty hides you" implies that physical attractiveness can also act as a shield, allowing someone to conceal their insecurities or vulnerabilities behind a facade of beauty. In this context, mimicry can be noticed as a form of survival or protection, where individuals adopt certain appearances and behaviors to fit into societal norms and expectations. The line "like most girls, she hadn't yet learned how to navigate the difference" also suggests a sense of confusion or uncertainty regarding the power undercurrents and expectations tied to physical appearance.

Here, ambivalence comes into play, representing the conflicted emotions and experiences that arise from the act of mimicry. The protagonist, like many girls, hasn't yet learned how to successfully navigate the line between being exposed and hidden, between conforming to societal norms and maintaining one's uniqueness and authenticity. Bhabha argues that mimicry can create a sense of ambivalence within individuals, as they often simultaneously desire to conform and resist dominant cultural norms. This concept aligns with the protagonist's struggle to find her identity and reconcile the conflicting messages she receives about the power and implications of her physical appearance.

In relation to Bhabha's concept of mimicry and ambivalence, this quote thus underlines the complex relationship between power, gender, and the construction of identity. The protagonist's experience reflects the broader struggle that many individuals face in conforming to societal expectations while also navigating their own desires for authenticity and self-expression. In fact, this quote suggests that the protagonist's journey involves learning how to assert her agency and navigate the differences between societal roles and her own individuality. It portrays the ambivalence and internal conflicts that arise when attempting to conform to societal norms while also seeking personal fulfillment and self-acceptance.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, Brit Bennett's novel, *The Mothers*, offers a profound exploration of power, gender, and loss of identity. By applying Homi K. Bhabha's concepts of hybridity, mimicry, third space, and ambivalence, this research portrayed the complex lives of the characters and their struggling with societal expectations. Through the lens of hybridity, we witness Nadia's fluid navigation of her biracial identity, constantly negotiating between two worlds and challenging traditional notions of race.

Mimicry also served as a tool for examining the ways in which gender roles are performed and enforced, highlighting the limitations and dangers of conformity for characters like Aubrey. The third space was similarly stated to emerge as a site of resistance, allowing the characters to create alternative identities and challenge the dominant narratives surrounding power and social constructs. Finally, ambivalence served as a driving force behind the characters' internal conflicts, exemplifying the nuanced ways in which power dynamics shaped one's sense of self.

In conclusion, *The Mothers* was found to function as a poignant literary work that brings attention to the intricate intersections of power, gender, and identity. Through the application of Bhabha's theoretical framework, this study presented a deeper understanding of the complexities faced by the characters in their quest for self-discovery and self-acceptance. Bennett's masterful storytelling illuminates the urgency for society to address the limitations placed on individuals based on their gender and race, ultimately emphasizing the need for a more inclusive and equitable world. This novel thus serves as a powerful reminder of the significance of representation and the impact it has on shaping our collective understanding of power, gender, and identity.

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