

Structural and Symbolic Violence in South Asian Literature: A Comparative Analysis of Roy, Hosseini, and Ali

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Abstract

This paper seeks to compare the works of Arundhati Roy, Khaled Hosseini and Monica Ali to examine how their novels alter the nature of violence from a mere event into an enabling process of constructing identity, memory and cultural identity in south Asian and diasporic communities. The study examines how these authors place the female agency, strength and unity at the centre of the systemic frameworks of male oppression. Roy's novels give a fairly good picture of how caste, communal and gender structures remain resilient and how one could hope to create an archive of the unsaid and whichever sections of history remain hidden. In each realist story, Hosseini places the issue of ethnic discrimination, of patriarchy and domination, and the experience of war trauma against the backdrop of a wider injustice, while at the same time showcasing the capacity of women's solidarity and sacrifice to change their world. By contrast, Ali portrays the "slow violence" of migration, when women find themselves constrained by cultural alienation, economic precarity, as well as racial stereotyping, and when the ability to live outside is strategies for resistance and a practice of collective care. Based on the foundations of trauma theory, postcolonial criticism, structural and symbolic violence and intersectionality, the research presented here foregrounds the capacity of literature to be witness to oppression, but also as an ethical arena for the imagining of resilience, justice and transformative solidarity.

Keywords: Structural Violence, Intersectionality, Resilience, Trauma Theory, South Asian Literature.

Introduction

Western concepts of violence as occasional topic matter or approvable atmosphere of a story must be seriously reconsidered when applied to the literature of contemporary South Asia because the violence functions and subsumes characters, narrative strategies and the moral stance of the reader in relation to complicated social and political issues, often to the detriment of an understanding of the oppressive work performed by systems including symbolic and ritualized violence. Violence has been shown to be both a necessary and an integral part of the narrative in writers like Monica Ali, who build their answers to identity and memory and questions of culture and identity within the backdrop of violence. Even though caste and class are not explicitly mentioned in this novel, Arundhati Roy has seamlessly observed how these structures of violence are embedded in deep human relationships and norms, rather than merely public ones. In *The Kite Runner*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Khaled Hosseini's main characters' lives vividly trace the Afghan history of ethnic ranking, male dominance, and

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longstanding warfare, and show how trauma can seep into the psychology of people and then into generations that follow. *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* address, in the existence of the characters, the idea of hierarchy, the dominance of men over women, and long ethnic wars in Afghanistan and how they weave themselves through the people's psychological lives and affects them generationally (211). Invisible violence in migrant contexts includes three types of oppression: racial exclusion, economic exploitation and cultural alienation which make freedom and identity difficult in such contexts as migrants, and impede moral reflection (Ali 145). Perhaps in this way, the stories of South Asia can be said to subvert the violence as a background and make it the lens through which to look at the play of power, history and the subjectivity of humans.

South Asian and diasporic literature claims new significance as literary sites that call into question the mundane functions of power in the legacy of colonial rule, the founding of postcolonial nation-states and the experience of international migration in the present, all of which leaves those who follow in their wakelocked in conditions of insecurity and vulnerability. The authors-who include Arundhati Roy, Khalid Hosseini and Monica Ali-combine imaginative narrative forms and psychological insight to reveal, in varied and freely imaginative ways, the "structural inequality" of violence (155), the "symbolic domination" of injustice (586) through its gentler, more enduring forms, the "cultural marginalisation" of oppression (72, 204), and the "racial oppression" of injustice (122). And the "cultural marginalisation" of the oppressed is just as significant as "racial oppression" (72, 204), and there are other forms of powerlessness, not simply bodily ones, which exist, too (45). The forces of "community politics" (281) govern social hierarchies, they comingle with the most intimate forms of love and memory, revealing psychological mechanisms of exclusion as significant as any form of overt physical aggression. These authors all remind us of both structural violence's definition by Johann Galtung, as an "unavoidable damage to basic human needs perpetuated through entrenched social hierarchies, institutional inequalities, and systemic neglect" (171) and to challenge readers who opt to limit violence to violent episodes.

Over a long term, literary criticism has persistent mechanisms that mark violence as a focal problem: the classification of violence, instead of the realization of a violent role in shaping (textual) lives. Research on the theme of violence in South Asian fiction is done in isolated categories e.g., Colonial Trauma, Gender Oppression and Ethnic conflict. Instead of the violent nature being reduced to analysis, as usual, and the interpretive complexity hidden behind jargon, the present analysis would intend to avoid this pitfall of a complex manifestation of violence, a multifaceted and intersubjective quality because Arundhati Rai's novels *The God of Small Things* and *The Ministry of Almost Happiness*, Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*,

Thousand Splendid Sons and Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* and related texts would reveal how structural and symbolic violence would be the core of coming together as a narrative. Through these texts, violence is not situated on the periphery, situated in the life of others, but rather in the life of the person: as a structural part of identity, memory and culture, this violence forms characters experiences in social worlds—and a permanent moral reference point for readers to respond to histories of injustice. In Hosseini's account of war and patriarchal oppression, the reader documents that oppression, challenges that hegemonic structures and, more importantly, embodies what Dominique LaCapra calls "empathetic unrest"—psychological, cultural, and intellectual wounds and traumas of migration, dislocation, and racial exclusion in Britain—and is alerted to the subtle yet equally devastating power of alienation and marginalisation (LaCapra 41). It expands the archive and yet does not conceal histories from people, political, structural, and institutional injustices – rather raises questions about them – and suggests avenues of resiliency and opportunity for change.

The central hypothesis underlying this investigation is that selected novels demonstrate violence as a destructive force and as a construction in identity formation, as a continuity in cultural memory, and as a co-ordinating force in social relations in both postcolonial and diasporic situation. From a comparative lens informed by works in Trauma theory, Post colonial criticism and approaches from the lens of different disciplines that help to shape how communities maintain or dismantle collective memory and/or connections in the face of systemic oppression, this study makes the argument that writers like Arundhati Roy, Khaled Hosseini, and Monica Ali. Roy's *God of Small Things* and *Ministry of Ultimate Happiness* and others used some particular narrative strategies to uncover the interweaving of gender inequalities with ethnic difference and cultural displacement; these inequalities sustain caste and communal violence in the socio-political lives of India, and how from the structural hierarchies of personal tragedy emerges the interconnectedness of the subject matter in the case of Hosseini's '*The Kite Runner*' and '*A Thousand Splendid Sons*' reveal war, patriarchy, and race as generational traumas that influence the subjectivity of individuals as well as the moral fabric of the Afghan social-political discourse (Roy 87) By revealing the subtle but deadly power dynamics of immigrant disenfranchisement, exploitation, and dehumanization, this narrative highlights the psychological and cultural violence of immigrant experience while still showing potential for resistance, solidarity, and agents of transformation (Ali 119). Together, these characters lead the reader to believe that there are other ways to react to trauma – ways to survive and ways to exert moral agency in the responses to trauma – ways to hope for redemption, for resistance, for change in social relations, and change in worlds.

Theoretical Framework

Trauma Theory and Literary Representation

The pioneering work of Cathy Carruth that established trauma theory contains valuable lessons about how violent experiences can fragment memory, disrupt identity and leave deeply enduring psychological scars, outside the limits of the traditional narrative format. According to Carruth, unclaimed experience occurs when memories of widespread trauma are documented "after" instead of "in," and is manifested as the "return" of intrusive elements, such as flashbacks and nightmares, and somatic discomforts, which operate outside the realm of conscious experience (4). Trauma, however, does not lend itself to linear narrative, and requires other modes of representation that consider and convey the disjointed temporality and psychic displacement of trauma. This theory is of special use for the interpretation of South Asian fiction where collective history of colonial violence, 1947 Partition, ethnic oppression and perpetual communal conflicts, provide what Caruth calls "unreflective experiences" that are too traumatic to seize on the spot, for which he proposes that they appear only in "delayed, indirect, and often symbol" to be incorporated into the consciousness (Caruth 5). *Calaveras* showcases the polyphonic voices and poly-chronological timelines of writers such as Arundhati Roy, Khaled Hosseini and Monica Ali, in which the unspeakable aspects of violence are manifested and mourned symbolically. Caruth's framework draws attention to the moral and aesthetic dilemmas of experiencing events that can never be completely simultaneous, but are always remixed in memory and in the narrative, rendering them at once partially inaccessible and yet in some sense calling for recognition and engagement. Trauma theory can therefore uncover the complexities of the individual and collective but also remember to celebrate the ways in which literature, as a medium, is uniquely positioned to testify to silenced histories, fragmented subjectivity in South Asian contexts.

Ali's characters' preferred immigrant lives, fraught with unending associations of identity, are similarly fragmented, as are the narratives of recall of the past, as are the letters between the past and present, and as are the memories of the past that reappeared within the present moment, as delusions of loss, betrayal, and guilt haunt a lifetime of experience, decades and decades later, in Roy's "God of Small Things" and in Hosseini's "The Kite Runner. Unfinalized: The Paradox of Temporality in Trauma, as mapped above by Kathy Carruth, is "an experience not fully known even as it happens, yet it returns, albeit belatedly, via intrusive memory and symbolic repetition" (Carruth 4), a structural dissonance that pervades these works. Trauma theory offers important lessons, beyond the formal, about seeing and testimony, and its concepts of both are important when considering the way these authors attempt to make the reader the moral eyewitness to the narrative, not just the passive recipient of it. Marginalizing the narrative voice of the underclass, it creates conditions of destabilizing narrative

engagement, which forces readers to confront silenced, absent, and unresolved tensions, to witness forms of violence and suffering(s) about which mainstream historical narratives may be incomplete or even erased.

Postcolonial Criticism and Power Structures

The term 'Orientalism' originates from the seminal work of Edward Said, and serves as a cornerstone in grasping the nature and dynamics of violence as material domination, in addition to the power to represent and control the other through epistemological control. In his groundbreaking work, "Orientalism" (1978), he demonstrates how colonial literature created the East or "the Orient" as inferior, irrational, foreign and subordinate to Western authority. Exposing the deep entanglements of power and knowledge: shaping how colonized people see, understand and govern textual, academic, and artistic representations as instruments of domination themselves the novels are swallowed up by these legacies of epistemic violence and how South Asian domestic and international conventions continue to shape international understandings: Said's frame of reference will shift the focus on cultural representation to the realm of conflict, seeking to understand violence as an "active process," one that operates at a number of intensities at once, through both physical action and institutional organization and through words and the symbolic economy of representation.

Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak in her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Where subjects such as women, peasants or the colonized are already at a critical social margin and marginalised, they are doubly marginalised for their lack of representation in the systems of knowledge and power that are privileged within a dominant society. Spivak extends her postcolonial analysis to this systematic silencing, misrepresentation, or abuse of marginalised voices in dominant systems of knowledge and power, locating the problem in the imposition of Western knowledge frameworks that overlook, distort, or lapse the indigenous systems of knowledge, thereby taking away the room for self-representation. The theoretical, in particular, is highly informative because the narratives of the characters often oscillate between conflicting cultural codes and epistemologies, as opposed to hegemonic globalizing discourses, in a dramatic contrast of cultural annihilation in which their lived experiences are systematically erased from the state and cultural circles (Roy 131). In the same way, the testamentary suffering and resistance of Afghan women, silenced by a patriarchy and an authoritarian regime, is foregrounded in the novel, often essentialised or stereotyped, and produces an epistemic violence of dominant speeches that impedes the development of immigrant identities (Ali 187). These novels help to demonstrate the way in which Spivak has both subordinate voices absent from the hegemonic systems of representation and actively silenced. As a whole, this framework emphasises the ethical dimension of literary analysis, inviting

readers to remember that engaging with these texts involves noticing what is not -- absent, silenced, and mediated -- in order to form sub-ordinates without assigning them roles they do not desire to occupy.

At the heart of Bhabha's argument is "cultural hybridity", an understanding of how colonial and postcolonial subjects create and negotiate "in between" culture's 'Hyde' strategy of writing in 'the space of culture' is the theory of cultural hybridity, which "in the space of culture" describes the way in which colonized subject adopts the tongues, practices, and codes used by the colonizer, but whose use appears to validate agreed to norms, yet destabilizes them by revealing their constructedness (Bhabha 86). Equally important." The idea of a "third place" that produces resemblance is uncomfortable for the right to what it seeks to emulate a liminal space in which cultural dialogues occur, that in which hybrid identities surface, that in which distinctions cannot be made between colonizer and colonized, and homeland and diaspora (Bhabha 112). Narratives such as Ali's Brick Lane, have characters who continually struggle to balance between homes of their birth and the culture and economics of other nations that will accept and embrace them; Heroine Nazneen embodies this struggle as her exposure to a culture of a different country or countries other than her own, creates new possibilities for her, subordination and resistance; the tensions she experiences between the familiar and unfamiliar culture, subordination and resistance are tensions that reflect Bhabha's assertion that cultural identity is not fixed with originality; Becomes (ali 204) brings forward rigid cultural hierarchies which offer her new understanding and express new forms of identification which challenge colonial legacies and contemporary structures of marginalisation.

Structural Violence Theory

If structural violence is not just a matter of direct physical attacks, then it is the framework that is needed to understand how oppression is manifested by social and institutional norms and systems that marginalizes people or groups with regard to their ability to participate in social and political life (Galtung 175). and ways that hierarchical power relations and marginalisation prevent a group or individual from accessing their full human potential (Galtung 171). These are all "natural" mechanisms that establish inequality as beyond the control of nature. This is a theoretical model which could be useful for the analysis of caste oppression in Arundhati Tirai's novels. In addition to being directly veiled and the denial of political representation, systematic exclusion of marginalized communities – Dalit, Muslim, transgender – also prevents other communities from enjoying basic rights and recognition, which is less visible but more pervasive and devastating than direct violence, and which cause social misery and evoke the moral imperative to eliminate systems that exclude people

Paul Farmer's truly important work in medical anthropology can be used to illustrate the reality and impact of structural inequality: when inequality becomes a structural reality, suffering is realized in his book "Power Pathology: Health, Human Rights, and New War on the Poor." For literary analysis of the harrowing consequences of Roy's "Ministry of Ultimate Happiness," the singular value of the care, opportunity, and dignity of some of the groups, on whom inequality is "stamped" on the body in various forms of malnutrition, disease, psychological trauma, and shortened life expectancy, gains even more importance than an abstract explanation of health disparity and educational disparity and economic marginalization among the vulnerable populations of which it is a part (Farmer 40). Beyond a social problem of being socially excluded, they are physically deprived, something that affects their health and humanity, "literally permeating under the skin" (Farmer 50). It gives a clear medium for voices of oppression to be heard very clearly, and a call to consciousness of the systems in which human suffering is valued and desired.

Symbolic Violence and Cultural Domination

Pierre Bourdieu's idea of symbolic violence is useful in explaining how systems of domination are not just enforced through the law, but also through acts of subordination, such as the cultural norms, values and practices that come normally, naturally and inevitably to groups of oppressed individuals. Patriarchal power is made natural by the norms of family responsibilities and social conventions that make women feel obliged towards submission and responsible for cultivating it as a duty and honour, as in the above book *One Thousand Magnificent Suns* by Khalid Housseini that gives examples of how expectations of women are learned and internalized – not just through violence, but also through cultural practices and institutional structures that present their duty and honour as an easy-to-be-responsible-for cultural truth, which is an effect of symbolic violence (Hosseini 214). In the book *Brick Lane*, author Monica Ali explores the plight of immigrants who face double symbolic violence – IRA stereotypes and marginalization in the Western world and oppressed by traditional patriarchy in their country of origin (Ali 178). Helping to explain how inequality is reproduced by seemingly neutral practices that privilege dominant groups and marginalize others, the concepts of cultural capital related to forms of knowledge, education and cultural competence that offer social advantage and the practice of the nature of these languages influenced by social settings (Bourdieu 101) support one another. Importantly in relation to the novels, who have a lower status, like Roy's characters in the novels, are denied cultural capital for social mobility, and Ali's main character Nazneen is subjected to the shame of immigrant marginalisation, and to the self-consciously ascribed expectations of his community. Together, the following stories suggest that hegemony is maintained, but also that it is maintained in significant ways through these "mechanisms," which are hidden and therefore

normalized, in the ways they are inculcated into the very texture of the cultural institutional life around us.

On the other hand, Pierre Bourdieu's habitus – deeply-rooted attitudes, practices and perceptions privileges – are reproduced not only at the material level, but through practices that appear to be neutral. (Bourdieu 101) These ideas together depict a tracking of inequality across generations as though it is based on merit and opportunity. Such lack of access to education and employment opportunities for women also means that they are less able to provide cultural capital thereby reinforcing the patriarchal hegemony and therefore less able to be independent as in the case of *A Thousand Splendid Sons* by Khalid Hosseini. (Hosseini 217). They are important examples of how they work as hidden mechanisms that operate in the service of social institutions (claiming to offer neutral routes to opportunity) and that privileges Western and devalues forms of expression of knowledge as immigrants (Ali 189).

Intersectionality and Multiple Oppressions

Kimberly Crenshaw's intersectionality theory is an indispensable analytical tool for recognizing that race, gender, class, ethnicity, religion, sexuality and nationality are all axis of oppression that work together to create complex and particular, multiple dimensions of marginalization which are beyond being addressed with one-axis theories (1989) and “Mapping the Margins”. What Crenshaw does in her pioneering essays is shed light on the structural heterogeneity and simultaneous interdependence of oppressions, revealing that oppression is not only connective but relational, and leading to unique vulnerabilities and types of resilience – specifically for black women and the oppression they undergo, but also for South Asian migrants and the experiences of which Harper stresses the importance of dysfunctional alignment for understanding structural hetero-interdependence. This framework is useful for illuminating migrant communities from South Asia, with its multiparfaceted oppressions and interdependence, and highlights the structural heterogeneity of oppressions, as well as their simultaneous interdependence, such that oppression is not merely connective but relational, producing different kinds of vulnerabilities and forms of resilience for different communities. A member of an oppressed caste community and as divorced mother, she illustrates how interlocking oppressions limit her autonomy and dignity in her everyday experience as a woman of marginality, as race, gender, religion, migration and economic status all take a heavy focus. The consequences of the cultural stereotyping and social isolation experienced by immigrant women translate into an experience of marginalization which is neither identical to men's experience in their home nations nor can it be represented as ubiquitous racism in the host country (Ali 203). For the characters of each of the other novels, intersectional analysis suggests deeper understanding;

simultaneously fore-grounding multiple atrocities, it also highlights the important task of making literature visible: of the intersections of power and of the exclusion and vulnerabilities of each character in a lived reality, and of the act of challenging reductive understandings of lived experience.

Case Studies

Arundhati Roy: Structural and Symbolic Violence

This is a film that documents the ability of someone like Arundhati Roy who transcends structural and symbolic violence.

The stories of Arundhati Roy provide a good example of the way in which structural and symbolic violence interact in the Indian sociocultural and political context; both types of violence can operate directly, but also do so in natural ways and through cultural norms which are apparently 'nonsense', 'traditional' and have simply been 'always there'. Deep-rooted anomaly as a biological expression: the infamous "love laws" (Roy 33) operated via unsaid rules and codes that regulated intimacy, kinship and desire to maintain caste-hierarchy and gender subjugation as a seemingly benign cultural tradition. The relationship of Ammu, a divorcee from the upper caste, with Velutha, a carpenter from the lower caste, illustrates the violent exchange of the oppression of race, gender and class, which deprives people of opportunities for social mobility—a condition he aptly calls "structurally conditioned poverty": "Where race marks an indelible obstacle to human-development, despite competence and qualification..." (Galtung 171). In the way Roy's unsettled story alternates between childhood and adulthood, flirts with chronological order and remains with the trauma of those events, which Kathy Carruth describes as an 'accident of violence that lingers over time on the mind and in the body,' the construction of the narrative demonstrates that the memories of such acts of violence impose themselves on the experience of identity in Estha's silence and estranged adult relationships. Accordingly, the violence in Roy's novels permeates from generation to generation, reaching beyond the subject to the generational and communal realm, and beyond the individual to the family.

In *Ministry of Extreme Happiness*, Roy exposes how the overlapping systems of oppression facing many of the marginalized at the intersections of gender nonconformity, religious minority and economic uncertainty creates unique vulnerabilities, while also foregrounding the resilience and strength of the protagonist Anjum — who is a transgender woman — by highlighting her ability to affectively construct alternative family structures alongside Khwabgah and eventually in the cemetery, which she terms counter-archives of belonging and "forms of kinship that are absent from the situated realm of institutional nodes"

(Crenshaw 1245) In both novels there are considerable indications that both resistance and alternative communities are manifest in the structures of small and large everyday experiences, contesting and negating resistance to the hegemonic structures of power: in *God of Small Things*, Roy discusses how the structure of symbols is an instrument of violence in behalf of men, while also resisting the ones that are issued by men against them; in *The Ministry of Almost Happiness*, Roy demonstrates how structural and symbolic violence are present in the most intimate experiences of the human body and how they form multiple kinds of resistance and alternate power communities.

Khaled Hosseini: Trauma and Ethnic Violence

In hundreds of scenes, thousands of Pashtuns are directly and indirectly exposed to political violence and ethnic discrimination in Afghanistan's fragile sociopolitical environment, while societal institutions and interpersonal relations are also infected by these root causes of deep-seated ethnic subjectivities and ethnic identities. Selecting the privileged Pashtun Amir as the confidant of his Hazara servant friend Hassan illustrates how difference is represented as a formal matter of class while in fact, a system of ethnic difference and class exploitation is determining and dramatizing difference on a small scale in the form of acts of individual violence (Crenshaw 1245). Reflecting this interplay between the gradual “acting” and “working through” of the traumas, the narrative structure, – such as Hassan returning with an attempt to confront and work through personal and national histories in relation to his unsolved crime and acts of violence – suggests a tension between narrative and action to face the personal and national trauma in an everlasting way or at least to the extent of Amir's eventual return to Afghanistan. 144) the structure of the novel corresponds with the incompleteness of childhood innocence, and its current time of exile, and ultimately, return home, are witnessed by trauma's impermanence; the foreground of the migrant situation is present as a result of displacement, lived guilt and fragmented cultural memory.

In *A Thousand Splendid Sons*, Hosseini takes up these themes and explores how ethnic violence is replaced with multiple layers of oppression against women through patriarchal systems and religious dogma faced by Maryam and Laila. Taliban restrictions on women's education, employment and mobility represents one of Galtung's work on “structurally conditioned repression”, by way of enforcing women's life chances by imposing a systematic and legal obstructions for her in the aspects of human development. Indeed, constraining female bodies, restricting women's movements and denying them public existence legitimizes the rule of men (Bourdieu 164), but it is the strength and solidarity that seem to bond between the two women, Mariam and Laila, that Hosseini does not make House Maid of Vietnam women into victims. Their friendship is a place of agency and resistance, as well as a space in

which feminist theories that challenge patriarchal oppression can be dramatised by Hosseini's own narrative strategies: His account has rich insights into the intersections of political violence, ethnic hierarchy, and patriarchal oppression in shaping life in Afghanistan, and into the moral obligations imposed by memory, testimony, and community strength in the face of trauma and injustice and inequality.

Monica Ali: Migrant Violence and Cultural Oppression

Ethnic difference is foregrounded in all of Khalid Hosseini's novels as an interlaced phenomenon: in *The Kite Runner*, a series of individual acts of violence in the name of ethnic difference justify the institution of the Taliban, whereas in *The Red Flag*, thousands of Pashtuns, like Amir, are isolated in a frozen, Kafkaesque socio-political world where acts of systemic ethnic discrimination and class exploitation are naturalized as “ethnic difference.” Both Hassan and Amir suffer as witnesses of the other's silence: further, the form of Hassan's suffering also serves as a stand-in for the longer-term consequences, as his actions becomes Amir's actions, bearing on both of their own and their nation's histories, to address the unsolved crime, Consequences of Hassan's external wounds, Amir's eventual return to Afghanistan also attempts to confront the personal and national histories to “work through” and “act” on the unsolved crime, violence (LaCapra 144). The episodic nature of the novel—first childhood innocence, then exile, then homecoming—conjures the transient nature of trauma, and the lived guilt and the fragmented collective memory of the immigrant is highlighted as living condition of the foreground.

In *A Thousand Splendid Sons*, Hosseini builds on these themes by focusing on the intersection of multiple forms of oppression experienced by the feminists and Laila characters, in their descriptions of what social theorists for the feminist movement call, 'intersectional oppression,' in which numerous axes of subjection combine to create new vulnerabilities." Women's rights in Afghanistan, which include educational constraints, work avenues, and movement restrictions placed on women, are typical examples of “structurally conditioned repression” (Galtung 173), which is a condition in which there are legal and cultural measures that systematically limit women's life chances. Despite this, Hosseini does not portray his female characters as helpless victims, and he emphasizes the ways in which agents of resilience and friendship—Mariam and Laila—emerge from the tragedy and resistance of their lives, things that can be seen as feminist theories (Bourdieu 164): the transformative power of alliances with other women in the gaze of patriarchy. In each case, however, Hosseini does not portray his female characters as helpless victims, and he emphasizes the ways in which agents of resilience and friendship emerge from the tragedy and resistance of Woman's lives through their alliance with one another: possibilities, dramatized by Maryam's

ultimate sacrifice for Laila's children, for ways of agency and resistance to and defiance of patriarchy and injustice, and to ways of confronting trauma, injustice, and inequality through memory, testimony and communal resilience.

Comparative Analysis

A study of the themes of violence in the works of Arundhati Roy, Khaled Hosseini, and Monica Ali clearly reveals that violence in these narratives plays a role far beyond that of a mere recurring incident. Rather, it functions as a structural and symbolic force embedded within the cultural, political, and economic frameworks of everyday life. It should therefore be understood as a systemic and intergenerational phenomenon that shapes identity and cultural memory. Roy's story foregrounds the oppressive nature of caste oppression and the communal hierarchy that underlies India and how seemingly benign traditions like the "laws of love" in *The God of Small Things* are instruments of symbolic violence that camouflage institutionalised exclusion as continuity of tradition. Hosseini's novels, by contrast, focus on the violent dynamics of war, on ethnic hierarchy and the oppression of men over women, and on Ali's *Brick Lane* migrant story; the strikes, betrayals and fear between family members driven by these forces in Afghanistan are traced through generations, thus creating and reinforcing pockets of cultural isolation, racial stereotyping, and economic exploitation among migrant groups in Britain, creating the "slow violence" of marginalisation and oppression.

While contextual differences are present, these are, of course, the three authors who point to the fact that apparently natural and unsurprising potential of the human being is limited because of structural violence. While readers see what's missing, and sufferers see what's there, Ali's story in *The Kite Runner* is one of many that depict "witness:ness" and "work" for trauma theorists, and is the experience of intersectional oppression, defined by its race/gender/mechanisms_of_belonging cross-determined nature, as Ali's story starts with his tribal mother's experience of migration oppression, his skirts being hemmed to the ankle by the "sairik" (twisted rope) of a gun-wielding man known as a "khambibar" (one who touches on one's right side), culminating in Hijab, a noose knotted by his own mother onto his lap in a direct reference to the fate of Marian and Laila's Hijab, the nooses of the Taliban that hit them in the head, neck, and right foot." (Galtung 171)_traits that trauma theorists call "structural intersectionality" or "representational intersectionality" when they experience it (Crenshaw 1283). In terms of its narrative, it channels the image of Muslim immigrants as produced by media stereotypes that are nonetheless restricted by patriarchal traditions.

The point of view is also different in these authors, with mode of narration making a difference. Plot is charged and emotional with clarification and moral engagement, causing readers to experience the freshness of memory and its intergenerational effects, Ali's realist emphasis on the mundane highlights the mechanisms of structural violence in the common routines of daily life, including arbitrary marriage and labour arrangements, domestic life beneath the surface that shaped migrants' lives. Put together, these narrative techniques engage readers as moral observers, not mere victims of suffering, and make them question dominant historical accounts, which, as LaCapra calls them, “unsettle” them, forcing readers to think about the events and to feel guilty.

This also influences the perspective of each writer's cultural location. Roy as an upper caste, English-speaking, Indian woman questions the representation of Dalit outsiders, and Ali, an Afghan American distinctly intimate with Afghan history and outsider to the diaspora, withstood the British-Bangladeshi attempt of Orientalist ideas about the migrant's other, also alive to the pressures of lives lived in common within the migrant community; an insider out of the box, he has something to say about the risks of Orientalist reception.

The comparative analysis demonstrates that the discourse of violence as a mere background of the story in South Asia becomes a forth right lens that can be used to question power, history and human subjectivity in diasporas. Combined, the works of Arundhati Roy, Khaled Hosseini, and Monica Ali present a compelling portrayal of structural and symbolic violence that penetrates the most intimate spheres of human life, particularly family, love, memory, and identity, while also offering insights into the forms that resilience and resistance may assume. From Ammu and Velutha's challenge to racialized taboos to Laila and Mariam's feminist alliance, and Nazneen's assertion of her power in the face of constraint, these stories argue for agency and change in contexts of intense marginalisation—even as their stories witness to unspeakable trauma and oppression they make literature as evidence of aliens' lives demand respectful readings of the silenced histories, of its ability to challenge the dominant and hegemonic discourses, and of the imagination they offer for imagining alternatives to those narratives of trauma and oppression.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates that South Asia and diasporic depictions of the violence in the writings of Arundhati Roy, Jalaludin Jalali in *The Kites*, and Monica Ali in the novel *The Ringershow* shift violence away from episodic storytelling tropes and into becoming a core component of identity, memory and social relations. In their novels, they demonstrate violence that goes beyond discursively recognizable violence or experience of material brutality, and that is

instead exercised by forms of structural inequality, symbolic domination and epistemic silencing that structure central discourse of everyday life. These authors place personal suffering in the context of other cultural and political structures, uncovering how systematic oppression is integrated within families, communities, and institutional structures and how it continues to manifest in the intergenerational remembering.

These writers - with their uniquely textual modes of conveying time, trauma, and perspective, as well as ruptured time, feminist and postcolonial critiques, and the voices of the marginalized other - cast new light on trauma theory, postcolonial criticism, and intersectionality in new cultural spaces. They force readers into the stance of an ethics witness, my first concern turned to the "empathic unsettlement" Dominick LaCapra suggests and that there would be no erasure and no forgetting of silenced histories or marginal voices. Simultaneously these texts diverge from the mere reporting of suffering to reveal the potential for resistance, solidarity and transformation: in every instance, characters act against the established social norm, either breaking caste barriers between themselves (between Ammu and Velutha) or seeing the possibility of a feminist alliance of two women (between Mariam and Laila) in the midst of the harsh oppression by the Taliban, or imagining the possibility for agency in diasporic constraints (for Nazneen) in environments of intense marginalization.

The comparative approach adopted here only highlights the fact that the study of violence, here as a destructive and as a constructive phenomenon, is a necessary condition in South Asian and diasporic literatures. Through the use of trauma theory, structural violence theory, symbolic violence and intersectionality, this analysis confirms literature's suffering and its capacities as a counter-archive which stifles marginalized histories and withstands the hegemonic discourses. By doing this these novels question morals and question society and allow for imaginative space in which ideas of justice are explored.

In conclusion, the takeaway messages from this analysis are not only literary but have wider significance in terms of issues of global injustice, cultural memory and social justice. The writings of Roy, Hosseini, and Ali show how literature can contribute to the challenge of dominant narratives, give voice to the voiceless, and help to bridge cultural differences. Through their exploration of race, caste, gender and migration, these stories invite readers to see how deeply entrenched the violence is in everyday life and how very powerful the ability of empathy, resilience and transformative solidarity can be as a human community.

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