

Psychological Effects of Memory and Trauma in Other Rooms Other Wonders

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Abstract

This research focuses on ‘memory and trauma in Daniyal Mueenuddin’s *In Other Rooms Other Wonders*’ The stories reveal a diverse world where people’s aspirations and social standing are understood without being explained, and where poverty and the class structure are seen to have an impact on every choice made at pivotal points in the lives of the protagonists. The book is made up of eight interconnected stories that reflect Pakistani culture from within and were written in Pakistan in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. This study investigates how trauma affects individuals and how memory shapes their identities. Further investigation will be done through the lens of psychological effects of socio-political events on the characters of the story. Postcolonial theory is also used as part of the research framework. The concepts of Homi K. Bhabha and Edward Said are used to develop the theoretical framework to the research to know the effects of trauma on relationships, identities and social image.

Introduction

Authors of Pakistani Anglophone literature, empowered as subjects, portray a more nuanced, deep, and complicated view of Pakistan than the Western hegemonic discursive construction of the country as a hub of gender inequality. Contemporary Pakistani Anglophone literature sheds light on the intersections of social class, culture, modernity, and religion in Pakistan. This literature also helps to comprehend gender dynamics in contemporary Pakistani society. There is little research on how males and masculinities are represented in South Asian Anglophone literature, particularly in Pakistani Anglophone fiction. Examining texts with psychological consequences provides a tool for understanding the psychology, society, cultural, and religious constraints that shape patriarchy, command men’s activities, and regulate masculine conceptions of identity and self-worth. Each chapter delves into a distinct element of Pakistani masculinity, ranging from feudal and capitalist masculinities to portrayal of toxic masculine behavior in rural Pakistan in *Other Rooms, Other Wonders* to portrayals of toxic. Daniyal Mueenuddin is an American writer of Pakistani descent. In 2009, his short stories collection “*In Other Rooms, Other Wonders*” received several literary awards. He has received numerous accolades for his finest works. The short story “*In Other Rooms, Other Wonders*” is made up of eight related tales. In these short stories, the author depicts the intricacies of Pakistani society’s feudal system and stratification, where certain groups, owing to their wealth and high rank, enjoy all the comforts of life while taking advantage of the working class, particularly women. These tales also highlight the predicament of lower-class women who experience dual oppression—first as women and second as members of the impoverished class.

This highlights the patriarchal concept in the society of Pakistan. Although women are well educated and occupy prominent public jobs in urban areas. On the other hand, women in rural areas have a completely different outlook and way of life than women in urban areas. Patriarchy typically causes them to be victimized and suffer (Malik, 2021). According to Ramzan et al. (2021), politicians and other influential individuals are manipulating and taking advantage of the public. Print media serves as a tool in the hands of capitalists, according to Khan et al. (2017). According to Ramzan et al. (2023), pupils' motivation determines their Priorities.

The author clearly noted and documented the prevailing socio economic realities of a patriarchal Pakistani society. There are many instances of women being objectified, subjugated, and subservient throughout the collection of these tales. There are some situations where women appear to be treated like objects. Because of the reduction of women to objects, powerful men are able to use their influence on women. Because of this, women are reduced to objects in a patriarchal society where men predominate.

Daniyal Mueenuddin's collection of short stories is titled *Other Rooms, Other Wonders*. The stories focus around K.K Harouni, an elite class patriarch, and his family, friends, and servants. In *Other Rooms, Other Wonders* is the title of the short story, which follows Harouni in his later years, alienated from his wife and separated from his children. Harouni represents the elite level of society, endowed with all the bounties of life. K.K. Harouni recruits his young, ambitious family member Husna as a servant, who quickly moves into the Harouni home. Mueenuddin, a Pakistani author, brilliantly analyzes the pangs of persons and societies affected by established inequity and extreme change.

Background

The eight stories focus on the interactions of scions of the ultra-wealthy Harouni agricultural family who live near Lahore—those who serve it and those who marry (often unhappily). The stories are Chekhovian in their attention to indigenous detail and nuanced comprehension of their protagonists' complex experiences and fates. In "Nawabdin Electrician" (one of two stories previously published in the *New Yorker*), a resourceful Mr. Fixit, who is also the overburdened father of several marriageable daughters, scrapes by on his genius for mechanical improvisation, suffers grievous losses when robbed and beaten, and perseveres through sheer willpower.

Statement of Research:

This study highlights the psychological effects of trauma and memory in Daniyal Mueenuddin's *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders*. Through some of the selected stories, this study will cover the influence of trauma forming the complex individual identities and relationships. On the other hand, it will also investigate the class hierarchy and socio-political events contributing to the psychological and emotional struggle of the characters. This study will use the post-colonial application as a theoretical framework by Edward Said and Homi K. Bhabha to investigate the themes of class, oppression, power and identity formation under the specific circumstances.

Research Questions

How do memory and trauma affect the psychological states and identities of characters in Daniyal Mueenuddin's *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders*?

How does memory shape the identities, either individually and collectively?

Research Objectives

To study the influence of memory and trauma on the characters in Daniyal Mueenudin's *In Others Rooms, Others Wonders*.

To analyze how memory works as a mean to shape the identities either individually or collectively.

Significance of Research

Pakistan is largely a patriarchal society where women are often socially constructed as liabilities, with the birth of a daughter viewed as a burden due to dowry obligations and the honor code.

[1] Several

groups in Pakistan combat gender discrimination, legislation being enacted to protect women (such as the 2006 Women Protection Act), and women are becoming more conscious of their own rights. The violence against women in Pakistan is well documented and discussed; nonetheless, the status of women has not altered considerably. Reports on sexual and domestic violence against women frequently appear in Pakistani media, but there is no acknowledgement that if men are part of the problem, they should also be part of the solution. Feminism has assisted women in rethinking and reinventing themselves, but while there has been literature on the need to transform preconceived beliefs about women, [2] the simultaneous effort of probing and redefining 'masculinity' has been largely overlooked.

Delimitations of Research

This research primarily focuses on the selected short stories to extract and fulfil the purpose of this research. This study analyzes the psychological effects of the trauma memory rather than historical lenses or sociological lenses. Other than this, this study uses the post-colonial criticism without any extensive involvement of psychological case studies without any clinical approaches. This is a pure theoretical study to extract the meaning and purpose from the context. At last, it focuses more on the individual experiences within the story in place of general consideration of whole Pakistani society.

Literature Review

A literature Review is a critical exploration plus structured of scholarly work existing related to a specific research topic. It analyzes and compares then synthesizes prior studies in order to highlight findings already established. It also can have identified some knowledge gaps and certain contradictions and will provide a contextual foundation for this current research inquiry. The new study's relevance along with originally this process justifies and also maps the field's intellectual landscape.

A significant amount of research has been conducted. Like Zia Ahmed's analysis of Pakistani feminist fiction, "Pakistani Feminist Fiction and the Empowerment of Women," feminism is a significant topic that Pakistani writers address in the framework of post-colonialism, along with concerns of displacement, the fight for independence, and culture. They depict how women are impacted by colonialism in two ways. The statement "They are colonized and declared to be the 'others' and silent majority (subalterns)"

intentionally excluded women from the main stream of activity and denied them their rightful rights. Additionally, this subaltern position stems from earlier subcontinental customs. As a response in an attempt to uphold their cultural values, postcolonial men re-colonized their women's bodies and minds.

The objectification of women is a widespread issue in both developed and developing societies worldwide. Even though women make up a large portion of the global population and contribute to society in many ways, men still view them as weak. Many experts around the world have continued to focus on the topic of women being objectified. This study used three short stories from Daniyal Mueenuddin's "In Other Rooms, Other Wonders" to highlight the injustices and inequalities that exist in Pakistan's patriarchal society. It also looked into how these injustices and inequality affected Pakistan's oppressed women. One form of prejudice that women face in a patriarchal society is the objectification of women. The objectification of women is examined in this study via the perspectives of three short story female protagonists. The results of this study are derived from the theoretical frameworks of Martha Nussbaum and Rae Langton. The results of the study show that in Pakistan's male-dominated society, female characters are objectified and treated like objects by men. (Arshad, Nawaz, & Kakepoto, 2022)

Arshad, F., Nawaz, N., & Kakepoto, I. (2022). An analytical study of women objectification in *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders*. *University of Chitral Journal of Linguistics and Literature*, 5, 49–62.

Authors of Pakistani Anglophone literature, empowered as subjects, provide a more complex, multi-layered, and nuanced picture of Pakistan than the Western hegemonic discursive construction of the nation as a center of terrorism. Modern Anglophone Fiction from Pakistan gives a glimpse of how Pakistani culture, modernization, and religion collide. Additionally, this literature provides a framework for comprehending gender dynamics in Pakistani culture today. There is a dearth of research on how men and masculinities are portrayed in South Asian Anglophone literature, particularly in Pakistani Anglophone fiction. In order to close this gap, my research focuses on fiction written by four male authors: Daniyal Mueenuddin, Muhammad Hanif, Mohsin Hamid, and Nadeem Aslam.

This study draws attention to the potentially potent presence of male narratives that reveal, critique, and oppose gendered injustice, misogyny, and male violence. This study investigates how these writers construct the story of Pakistani masculinity and how broader cultural, political, economic, and religious settings influence these portrayals. For the analysis, I consult a variety of masculinities-related scholarly works as well as performativity and intersectionality theories. In addition to contributing to the growth of scholarship aiming to examine and analyze Pakistani masculinities, this study aims to broaden the critical conversation around gender in relation to Pakistani Anglophone fiction. (Ali, 2022)

Ali, S.(2022). Hegemony, marginalization, and hierarchies: Masculinities in contemporary Pakistani Anglophone fiction [Doctoral dissertation, University of Waikato]. University of Waikato Research Commons In another research, (P.94, Ahmed, 2009) Ahmed examines the roles and representations of women in Pakistani fiction by authors ranging from Mohsen Hamid to Zulfikar Ghose. He comes to the conclusion that the authors depict women in a variety of ways, from impoverished and suffering to educated and self-sufficient, from those who are triumphing against strong patriarchy to those who are fighting to survive in the face of marginalization. His goal was to look at the ways that Pakistani authors are advancing feminism. According to Nighat Pervez (2010), of the different marginalized groups of society depicted in *In Other Rooms Other Wonders*, women seem to be the most abused. They draw attention to the patriarchal structure that is common in third-world nations.

Further studies, evaluated articles address women's oppression and the interaction between men and women in Daniyal Mueenuddin's works, where women play an important role but are marginalized members of their society. One recurring theme that connects all of these tales is the oppression and exploitation of women. This study aims to examine these tales under the prism of Gayatri Spivak's definition of the "subaltern." According to Spivak, subalterns are not given representation. "Everything that has little or no access to cultural imperialism is subaltern—a space of difference" (Kock, 1992, p. 45) in post-colonial terminology. Spivak's concept argues for a thorough examination of the methods used to exclude the subaltern from the mainstream.

Another study which is descriptive in nature and mainly supports the qualitative research criteria, which are verified by tabulating the frequency of the lexical elements. It considers a short tale called *Provide*, provide that was taken from Daniyal Mueenuddin's 2009 collection of stories titled *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders*. Marx's theory of class stratification, according to which history is split into two major classes—oppressor and oppressed—has been applied to the chosen book. By using Halliday and Hassan's (1976) model of lexical cohesiveness, the researcher has examined the text even more closely.

For further clarification, the corpus tool AntConc 3.5.9 is used in conjunction with manual analysis to assess lexical cohesiveness. The results show that the characters belong to two different social groups, highlighting the text's strong Marxist viewpoint. Furthermore, the author's use of words supports the same theme that runs throughout the narrative. This explanation is important since it makes use of both literary concepts and linguistic tools to make the analysis clear. Thus, by developing a complex of theoretical frameworks, it opens the door for scholars to unleash the potential in the social sciences.

The objectification of women is examined in this study via the perspectives of three short story female protagonists. The results of this study are derived from the theoretical frameworks of Martha Nussbaum and Rae Langton. The results of the study show that in Pakistan's male dominated society, female characters are objectified and treated like objects by men. This study used three short stories from Daniyal Mueenuddin's "In Other Rooms, Other Wonders" to highlight the injustices and inequalities that exist in Pakistan's patriarchal society. It also looked into how these injustices and inequality affected Pakistan's oppressed women. One form of prejudice that women face in a patriarchal society is the objectification of women. (Arshad, Nawaz, & Kakepoto, 2022) Due to the numerous feminist campaigns that have led to women's equality, these issues have already been resolved in the first world. However, women in the third world still have to struggle for their rights, and perhaps more importantly, they are not allowed to earn money for themselves or receive pay. Women are supposed to serve their husbands, and the only place they have is in their homes. The aforementioned projection has a similar design in Daniyal Mueenuddin's *Other Rooms, Other Wonders*, which is analyzed by Marxist feminists. The investigation is theoretically grounded in Marxist feminist theory. According to the report, women face prejudice and are excluded from the workforce for no other reason than that they are supposed to follow men's directions. (Riaz et al., 2023)

The gender relations in Mueenuddin's collection of short stories, *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders* (2009), are examined in this essay. Using literary analysis as the method, it examines two stories, "Provide, provide" and "In Other Rooms, Other Wonders," to identify situations in which positive alternatives are offered and the limits of patriarchal gender norms are stretched. The primary theoretical framework used in the research is Cornell's ideas of diverse masculinities, hegemonic masculinity, and emphasized femininity. Other feminist theories have also been applied, including intersectionality, gender roles, and patriarchy. According to the study, Mueenuddin has a tendency to undermine the dominant position of masculinity through the actions of ambitious, aggressive, and self-assured women who want to alter their situational reality. Strongly ingrained patriarchal systems take back the area and put these women back in their socially determined roles. (Afzak & Imran, 2023)

Daniyal Mueenuddin, "In Other Rooms, Other Wonders" (2009). Marx's theory of class stratification, according to which history is split into two major classes—oppressor and oppressed—has been applied to the chosen book. Using Halliday and Hassan's (1976) model of lexical cohesiveness, the researcher has examined the text in greater detail. The gender relations in Mueenuddin's collection of short stories, *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders* (2009), are examined in this essay. Using literary analysis as the method, it examines two stories, "Provide, provide" and "In Other Rooms, Other Wonders," to identify situations in which positive alternatives are offered and the limits of patriarchal gender norms are stretched. The primary theoretical framework used in the research is Cornell's ideas of diverse masculinities, hegemonic masculinity, and emphasized femininity. Other feminist theories have also been applied, including intersectionality, gender roles, and patriarchy. According to the study, Mueenuddin has a tendency to undermine the dominant position of masculinity through the actions of ambitious, aggressive, and self-assured women who want to alter their situational reality. Strongly ingrained patriarchal systems take back the area and put these women back in their socially determined roles. (Butt, Qasim, & Javed, 2022)

Marxist critics go into great detail regarding the origins and consequences of socioeconomic loads. These influences frequently transform people into something that society finds unpleasant. The current study has been influenced by Marx's theories regarding society in particular and Marxism in general. Because they depict authentic Pakistani society, three tales from Mueenuddin's book "In Other Rooms Other Wonders" have been examined. The detailed study reveals how economic issues have affected and changed the lives of regular people. Through a critical examination of these consequences, the research will demonstrate its effectiveness in bringing about practical changes in society. (Waheed, 2017)

Research Methodology

Research Design

This research follows a qualitative research design based on literary analysis. Since the primary focus is to understand how memory and trauma influence the psychological states and identities of characters of Daniyal Mueenuddin's *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders*, a purely textual and theoretical approach has been adopted. The research is interpretative in nature and is based on thematic, psychological, and postcolonial readings of certain stories of the book.

Theoretical Framework

This study employs two significant theoretical paradigms:

Postcolonial Theory:

As proposed by Edward Said and Homi K. Bhabha, this theory is used to analyze how colonial habits and socio-political power structures shape the construction of individual identity, especially in postcolonial Pakistan. Subalternity, hybridity, and mimicry concepts provide to unravel the marginalization of characters—especially women and the working class.

Psychological Literary Criticism:

This methodology analyzes the effects of trauma and memory on the inner lives of characters. The critique is particularly concerned with how suppressed feelings, past experiences, and social conditioning are expressed through behavior, decision-making, and relationship patterns. It questions trauma as both personal affliction and socio-political construction.

Data Collection:

The primary data for the present study are selected short stories from Daniyal Mueenuddin's *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders*. Short stories such as "In Other Rooms, Other Wonders," "Provide, provide," "Saleema," and "Nawabdin Electrician" were analyzed for their representation of memory, trauma, gender, class, and identity. These short stories have been selected because there are psychology-traumatized characters available whose experiences very well reflect the effects of trauma and memory.

Secondary data comprise journal articles, literary critiques, research papers, and previous theses for postcolonial literature, trauma theory, Pakistani society, and gender studies. They situate the analysis in context with broader scholarly debates.

Analysis and Discussion

Daniyal Mueenuddin's *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders* is a lens through which we studied the psychological complexity of human beings hammered out in the crucible of memory and trauma in a class-divided Pakistani society. The characters of the interrelated short stories tend to operate in a world that is controlled by rigid class divisions, gender roles, and personal disillusionments, which make indelible marks on their psyche.

Memory is used as a fundamental psychological mechanism throughout the tales. For instance, individuals like Husna in the title story carry affective marks of past poverty and marginalization, informing their decisions and identity-making. Trauma, both implicit and explicit, assumes many forms—class exploitation, emotional rejection, manipulation, and broken relationships. In "Nawabdin Electrician," close brush with death brings on a confrontation with mortality, summoning resourcefulness in addition to psychological exhaustion.

These stories don't just melodramatize trauma as episodic; rather, trauma permeates the everyday awareness of characters, affecting self-respect, ambition, and notions of justice. Memory is the source of pain as well as the instrument of survival, and it configures relations in terms of power imbalance, emotional exposure, or existential terror. Through postcolonial and psychological theory, with particular appeal to Edward Said and Homi Bhabha's theories of identity formation under cultural domination, we see how personal and collective memories intercross to reformulate the self as a response to systemic pressures.

Moreover, trauma in Mueenuddin's fiction tends to be presented in subtle, nearly banal guises—emotional abandonment, economic vulnerability, and the quiet suffering of humiliation. This psychological verisimilitude enables the writer to demonstrate how trauma is internalized, rather than over-the-top dramatized, thereby making the characters more human and the suffering more credible. Thus, for example, Saleema's slow descent into helplessness is not announced by great tragedy, but rather by being systematically deprived of power—a form of trauma that is long and imperceptible.

The overarching theme is the inability of characters to overcome patterns of social and psychological repression. The memories are not merely personal recollections but are educated by collective histories of oppression. Husna and Saleema are victims of trauma that stems from social abandonment, patriarchal privilege, and commodification of female bodies. The trauma then becomes self-perpetuating as it gets passed generationally, instilling fear, restraint, and emotional control in those who succeed them.

Masculine identities, seemingly more privileged, also point to psychological burden. K.K. Harouni is a case in point—a powerful looking man who lives in a state of spiritual solitude, isolated from intimate connection and real relationships. The emotional desolation is a trauma with patriarchal foundations—where men are conditioned to suppress vulnerability, therefore draining their inner landscapes.

Finally, language and narrative composition in Mueenuddin's fiction also function to consolidate the psychological breakdown of his characters. The disjunctive chronologies, absence of interior monologue, and emotionally managed prose reproduce the dissociation of so many characters as a defense against trauma. This narrative strategy approximates the fragmented consciousness of those stuck between memory and survival, identity and cultural obligation.

Overall, the psychological interpretation of these stories illustrates that trauma is not a secondary theme, but an organization power that shapes character's sense of self and sense of others. Memory, rather than being static, is an active power that converges on trauma to create rich, often cataclysmic, interior lives.

Conclusion

The analysis of in *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders* suggests the manner in which memory and trauma are dominant factors in the construction of psychological states and the establishment of character identities. Mueenuddin creates a dense and rich characterization of characters confronting internal and external strife arising from social repression, gender discrimination, and class contradictions. The trauma that they experience—either directly exploitative, emotionally ignored, or socially excluded—appears to be an abiding presence in their mind and affects life decisions and self-perception. Memory is a ghostly recall of the past and a structure in which characters seek agency in the present. Trauma, by contrast does not remain an isolated event, it becomes a continuous psychological condition and transforms into a structuring event ensnared in the ordinariness of life. Drawing on postcolonial and psychological theories of literature, this study discovers that identity in Mueenuddin's fiction is never static but always in the making, built by power, resistance, and the residual traces of memory.

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