TRAUMA, SURVIVAL, AND RESISTANCE: POSSIBILITIES OF RECOVERY IN MONICA ALI'S *BRICK LANE* AND ARUNDHATI ROY'S *THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS*

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____

Prof. Dr. Yaşar KONDAKÇI
Director

I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

____

Prof. Dr. Çiğdem SAĞIN ŞİMŞEK
Head of Department

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

____

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hülya YILDIZ BAĞÇE
Supervisor

Examining Committee Members

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elif ÖZTABAK AVCI (METU, ELIT) __________________

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hülya YILDIZ BAĞÇE (METU, ELIT) __________________

Assist. Prof. Dr. Selen AKTARİ SEVGİ (Başkent Uni., AKE) __________________

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Name, Last Name : Sermet Melis BAYSAL

Signature :

ABSTRACT

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BAYSAL, Sermet Melis

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Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hülya YILDIZ BAĞÇE

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This thesis analyses Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003) and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) through the perspective of cultural trauma theory in order to lay bare the ways in which survivors respond to trauma and strategies of survival and resistance and possibilities of recovery these responses point to. Building on but also criticising earlier and Caruthian approaches to trauma, this thesis argues that the novels under study stretch and extend the definition of survivor from a helpless victim imprisoned into an incomprehensible event and its uncontrollable traumatic symptoms to a complex characterisation which involves both elements of insightful resistance through means of silence, indifference, and bodily encounter against various *traumatogenic* systems, and destructive after-effects of trauma. By focusing on novels written in different styles and forms which not only illustrate *insidious* and *event-based* trauma models individually but also emphasise the need for divergent textual and narrative strategies to represent the experience of trauma, this thesis also problematises the gaps of earlier trauma theory and calls for a more contextualised and pluralistic approach to trauma to acknowledge and be attentive to the multifacetedness and variability of traumatic experience and its literary representation.

Keywords: trauma, resistance, recovery, *Brick Lane*, *The God of Small Things*

ÖZ

TRAVMA, HAYATTA KALMA MÜCADELESİ VE DİRENİŞ: MONİCA ALİ'NİN *BRICK LANE* VE ARUNDHATİ ROY'UN *KÜÇÜK ŞEYLERİN TANRISI* ROMANLARINDA İYİLEŞME OLANAKLARI

BAYSAL, Sermet Melis

Yüksek Lisans Tezi, İngiliz Edebiyatı

Tez Yöneticisi: Doç. Dr. Hülya YILDIZ BAĞÇE

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Bu tez, Monica Ali'nin *Brick Lane* (2003) ve Arundhati Roy'un *Küçük Şeylerin Tanrısı* (1997) romanlarını kültürel travma teorisi çerçevesinde inceleyerek hayatta kalanların travmaya nasıl tepkiler verdiklerini ve bu tepkilerin işaret ettiği hayatta kalma mücadelesi ve direniş taktikleri ile iyileşme olanaklarını ortaya koymayı hedefler. Erken dönem ve Caruthçu travma yaklaşımından hem beslenen hem de onu eleştiren bu çalışma, incelenen romanların "hayatta kalan" tanımını anlaşılamaz bir olay ve onun sebep olduğu kontroldışı travmatik semptomların mahkûmu aciz bir kurban olmaktan çıkararak bireyin hem kavrayışını ortaya koyan sessizlik, kayıtsızlık ve bedensel yakınlık gibi yöntemlerle çeşitli *travmatojen* sistemlere direnişinden hem de travmanın yıkıcı etkilerinden unsurlar taşıyan muğlak karakterlere esnetip genişlettiğini öne sürer. *Sinsi* ve *olay-bazlı* travma modellerini ayrı ayrı örneklemekle kalmayıp travma deneyiminin temsilinin çeşitli anlatı tekniklerini gerektirdiğini de vurgulayan farklı üslup ve biçemlerle yazılmış olan romanlara odaklanan bu tez aynı zamanda, erken dönem travma teorisinin eksiklerini sorunsallaştırır ve travmatik deneyim ve onun edebî temsilinin çok yönlülüğünü ve değişebilirliğini tanıyıp bunlara ihtimam gösterecek bağlamsallaştırılmış ve çoğulcu bir travma yaklaşımı için çağrıda bulunur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: travma, direniş, iyileşme, *Brick Lane*, *Küçük Şeylerin Tanrısı*

To x, for keeping my heart from rotting and my world from crumbling

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Aim of the Study

This thesis aims to explore the ways in which characters from Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003) and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) are traumatised in the face of different layers of "structural oppression" (Craps 26) and disclose social and political systems that beget traumas, the survivors' responses to them, along with strategies of survival and resistance these responses carry and possibilities of recovery. First, it presents an overview of the early approaches to trauma theory and problematises one of the early theories of cultural trauma theory, i.e., those of the Yale School trauma scholars and their understanding of event-based trauma, which overlooks insidious traumas and envisions trauma survivors solely as incapable victims imprisoned in an incomprehensible event and its inevitable and uncontrollable trauma symptoms by disregarding individual agency and any possibility of establishing a connection between traumas and the larger social contexts they are produced in and hence omitting possibility of recovery. Building on the criticisms brought to Cathy Caruth and other representatives of the Yale School in trauma studies, which eventually engendered different models for studying trauma, I intend to offer a more complex examination of trauma survivors represented in these two novels which lay bare survivors' symptomatic mental paralysation due to traumatic experience but also their means of survival and resistance in the face of their traumas by bestowing them with the however small spaces in which they exercise their agency and carry hope for the possibility of recovery.

The survivors depicted in the novels chosen for analysis use different strategies such as silence, indifference, and bodily encounter, sometimes just to get through the day, sometimes to make a statement of their rejection of any traumatogenic system to which they refuse to be a part of. However, they simultaneously suffer

from traumatic symptoms such as recurring dreams, repetition compulsion, dissociation, and fragmentation. Therefore, the analysis of these novels necessitates a pluralistic approach which is fostered by but also separated from one-sided overgeneralisations of Caruthian trauma theory not only because they represent various responses of trauma survivors but these texts also envision them as conscious and active agents.

While *The God of Small Things* is an oft-examined novel through the perspective of trauma studies, *Brick Lane* seems to have been overlooked in the field. One reason for that might be the predominant assumption in earlier approaches to trauma theory that trauma can only be represented through enacting its symptoms on the reader, i.e., using (post)modernist techniques of non-linear narrative, fragmentation, and repetition in order to convey the effect trauma has on its survivors. However, "attempts to construct a normative trauma aesthetic create a narrow canon of valued trauma literature" (Craps 5) and exclude from the canon other forms of representation of trauma, such as the realist mode, for which *Brick Lane* might be an example. Event-based model of trauma theory which counts extraordinary, catastrophic events among trauma stressors but which disregards everyday, ongoing discrimination and oppression minority groups have to confront might be another reason for the novel's under-examined position because what *Brick Lane* presents us with is nothing extraordinary or catastrophic but the usual, everyday trauma of an immigrant woman. Although *The God of Small Things* foregrounds event-based traumas, it does not precisely correspond to event-based model either because it represents the ignored, unnoticed, and unacknowledged everyday events such as domestic violence, rather than extraordinary events such as the Holocaust.

Both *Brick Lane* and *The God of Small Things* lay bare the specific systems that come to traumatise the characters in the first place and engage closely with their strategies through which they try to carve up a space for themselves in their suffocating environment, sometimes to gain agency and actualise themselves, sometimes only to survive. What they do amounts to resisting the forces that confine them to certain roles and begets hope that, although it might seem

idealistic, change/recovery is possible. Nevertheless, I refrain from equating these trauma survivors' responses solely as open and fully conscious rebellions and resistances because they also suffer from an intricate web of symptoms over which they have no control of. Therefore their responses can be considered both as destructive after-effects of trauma and strategies of survival and/or resistance.

The survivors from both of the novels use similar strategies which I group as silence, indifference, and bodily encounter. The latter's power, however, is dismissed by the end of *Brick Lane* which makes the survivor's earlier resistances to and supposed awareness of traumatogenic systems questionable. Furthermore, *Brick Lane* is more interested in creating an environment for its traumatised survivor, Nazneen, to integrate herself into, rather than presenting her as a challenging actor who inexhaustibly questions and thrives to change the very systems that result in her traumas. The novel contends itself with Nazneen's supposed integration into society as amelioration or recovery, whereas *The God of Small Things* does not arrive at such conclusions besides presenting a possibility which pictures recovery always in the making, and that stretches beyond the confines of the text, to the reader, to a future yet to come, where recovery is possible. Therefore, rather than following a chronological publishing order which would also suit the evolution of trauma theory, I posit *Brick Lane* before *The God of Small Things* in this thesis because the former settles for an assumed sense of recovery which fails at acknowledging multilayered traumas while the latter pursues the concept of recovery to the point that it stretches textual boundaries and reaches to the reader's possible future.

For the rest of this chapter, I will give an overview of the development of trauma theory, starting with Caruth's understanding of it and moving on to the criticisms it drew which brought forth different trauma models, and concluding with the concept of recovery.

1.2.Methodology and the Frame of the Study

1.2.1. Evolution of Trauma Theory and Caruthian Approach

Trauma derives from the Greek word for wound. Its first usage in English dates back to the seventeenth century and as a medical term, it used to refer to a physical condition; an injury inflicted on the body. However, with the rise of psychoanalysis, its connotations shifted in the late nineteenth century to include and rather allude to mental wounds. Sigmund Freud in his 1920 essay *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in which he contemplates on life and death drives, also dwells on, though not in detail, “a condition ... which occurs after severe mechanical concussions, railway disasters and other accidents involving a risk to life” which he calls “traumatic neurosis” (6). Despite this early interest in trauma, it was only in 1980 trauma was officially acknowledged as a mental disease as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in the diagnostic manual of the American Psychiatric Association. Trauma studies gained its momentum after this historical moment of recognition but it was not until the 1990s its resonances in literary and cultural studies found its voice, with its close affiliation with Holocaust studies and the Yale School.

The collection of Fortunoff Video Archives for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale incited scholars to delve into research on trauma, memory and testimony. The Yale School, the pioneers “who helped foster the boom in cultural trauma theory” (Luckhurst 4), which mostly comprises of the works of Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman, Geoffrey Hartmann, and Dori Laub, gave earlier cultural trauma studies its general frame in the 1990s. While this thesis is situated within the general framework of cultural trauma studies, I will be building on Caruth’s understanding of trauma throughout this study because she gives an overall view of and closely engages with traumatic events, symptoms, and their representation. Then, rather than predicating my study on Hartmann’s work which appertains itself to British Romanticism or on Felman and Laub’s exploration of witnessing and testimony, I will be in close communication with Caruth’s.

The description Caruth provides us with for trauma is the following:

> an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena. (*Unclaimed* 11)

In accordance with her connection to Holocaust studies, she regards trauma to be closely linked to an event that is "unbearable [in its] nature" (7) to a point that she at times claims that trauma is *the* event that "is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor" (4).

Caruth's is an event-based approach to trauma which claims that trauma stems from unusual, extraordinary, or catastrophic events that are beyond the survivor's control and comprehension. Due to the event's ungraspable nature, it is registered rather than experienced i.e., it enters the unconscious unmediated, creating a "temporal delay" which "carries the individual beyond the shock of the first moment" ("Introduction" 10). After this delay which is called *latency* that refers to an indefinite period of time, trauma "returns to haunt the survivor" (*Unclaimed* 4). It might reveal itself in survivor's dreams and nightmares or disrupt their daily activities with repetition compulsion. Therefore, for Caruth, trauma stands as an experience that is actually *beyond* experience which repeats itself in different forms.

Caruth explains this repetitive behaviour as follows: "the painful repetition of the flashback can only be understood as the absolute inability of the mind to avoid an unpleasurable event that has not been given psychic meaning in any way. In trauma ... the outside has gone inside without any mediation" (*Unclaimed* 59). Since "the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time" ("Introduction" 4) due to its nature, it is, in a sense, swept under the carpet or registered in the unconscious where the individual has no direct access to. Yet, as an absent presence, supposedly completely forgotten by the survivor, it continues to lurk around in the mind and the body. The mind tries to grasp its missing meaning by repeating and enacting the experience of trauma, which Caruth sees as "the unwitting re-enactment of an event that one cannot simply leave behind" (*Unclaimed* 2). Trauma for Caruth, then, is an unmediated material that is locked up in the unconscious which haunts the

survivor, begging to be acknowledged while remaining inaccessible and ungraspable because it resides in the unconscious.

Caruth's emphasis on forgetting as "a necessary part of understanding" (*Unclaimed* 32) entails a paradox at the core of her theory. According to her, "it is only and through its inherent forgetting that [trauma] is first experienced at all" (17). She does not count the time the individual is exposed to traumatic event because she regards it as something that is *beyond* experience that is registered rather than experienced, and claims that only after an indefinite period of forgetfulness can the individual come to experience this event that is reserved in the unconscious, waiting to be repeated. Then, Caruth requires the event to stay (at least for a while) forgotten and incomprehensible so that the individual's unconscious may, in the years to come, repeat this experience "exactly and unremittingly" (2) for the mind to grasp its meaning. This happens "through the unknowing acts of the survivor and against ... [their] very will" (2) and hence unconsciously.

At the heart of Caruth's theory lays this paradox of forgetting and repetition compulsion and she claims that trauma's power resides in it: "the impact of the traumatic event lies precisely in its belatedness, in its refusal to be simply located, in its insistent appearance outside the boundaries of any single place or time" ("Introduction" 9). Since the events "assume their force precisely in their temporal delay" (9), the forgetting and latency period that follow the event are the things that feed the trauma to a point it, in a way, expands to invade the individual's dreams and bodily reactions. Therefore, for the individual to be able to at least experience the event and its trauma, one should at first go through the forgetting period and "taking over of the mind ... by an event it cannot control" (*Unclaimed* 58).

By considering extraordinary and catastrophic events as traumatic factors, Caruth makes a connection between trauma and escape from death. Survivors of the Holocaust, crashes or other accidents face life threats whose "reality of the way [their] violence has not yet been fully known" (*Unclaimed* 6) by the individual and hence their "trauma consists not only in having confronted death but in having survived, precisely, without knowing it" (54). Besides this escape or confrontation, survival becomes problematic for Caruth as well and even turns into a crisis, not

only because of the survivor's guilt it might bring about, but also the fact of having faced an incomprehensible death threat and stayed alive after that. The repetitive behaviour the survivor is entrapped into also functions as a reminder of survival because it "is not simply the attempt to grasp that one has almost died but ... the very attempt to claim one's own survival" (64).

Imagining the survivor imprisoned by an event—over which one has no control or which one can never comprehend—to the unconscious where one has no direct access to and hence no control over, Caruth sounds only too pessimistic about trauma survivors until the point she considers them in connection to others. Though she considers survival as "an endless crisis," she at times equates it with being chosen which is fruitful with "the endless possibility of a new future" (*Unclaimed* 68). Since this future concerns and implicates others as well, survival turns into "the experience of being shot into a future that is not entirely one's own" (71). To relate this shared future to the idea of history, Caruth, who defines history as "a history of trauma" (18) and "the way we are implicated in each other's traumas" (24), also claims it to be "the passing on of a survival that can only be possessed within a history larger than any single individual or any single generation" (71). Hereby, trauma or history of trauma exceeds the survivor and turns into a sharing site thanks to which it might at last become comprehensible, not for the survivor but perhaps, for the next generations. In Caruth's words,

> perhaps it is not possible for the witnessing [and hence acknowledgement] of the trauma to occur within the individual at all ... it may only be in future generations that 'cure' or at least witnessing can take place. (136n21)

Another point where Caruth considers trauma's implication on others is when she argues, in an often-quoted passage, that trauma might function to "provide the very link between cultures" ("Introduction" 11). Then, trauma is yet again seen as a sharing site which emerges through listening to others' wounds and as a means through which not only individuals but whole cultures can take a step to understand both themselves and the others because "one's own trauma is tied up with the trauma of another" (*Unclaimed* 8).

As for traumatic factors and their relation to the individual and their environment, Caruth's theoretical understanding asserts that trauma is "not locatable in the

simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way its very unassimilated nature—the way it was precisely not known in the first instance—returns to haunt the survivor later on" (*Unclaimed* 4). This turns trauma into an "enigma" (58) whose roots cannot be traced to anything but itself, which is self-referent to its nature. Therefore the question of "What makes something traumatic?" is only answered by referring to trauma's nature and how it is experienced as a non- or beyond experience which is reserved in the unconscious of the individual survivor.

When it comes to narrating and the representation of this enigma, Caruth states that trauma "is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available" (*Unclaimed* 4). However, due to the very nature or (non-)experience of trauma, "[t]his truth ... cannot be linked only to what is known, but also what remains unknown in our very actions and our language" (4). Hence the language which tries to tell or convey trauma is only "a language that defies, even as it claims, our understanding" (5) which "resists simple comprehension" (6).

Caruth regards trauma and its story inextricably interwoven with one another to the extent that she claims trauma cannot be acknowledged without its telling. On her interpretation of Marguerite Duras' *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (1959) directed by Alain Resnais, which brings together and explores the communication and relationship between a French woman whose German lover died in WWII and a Japanese man who lost his family to the bombing of Hiroshima, Caruth utters: "the woman cannot know the death of her loved one [which refers to the trauma she endures] ... without sharing this knowledge, and addressing this story, to him" (*Unclaimed* 37). Therefore, according to Caruth, finding another person who would listen and telling them about trauma seem to be necessary components for the individual to acknowledge their trauma in the first place. However, the very language that survivors use to transmit their trauma betrays them because it is also affected by the unconscious. This brings about the fact that for Caruth, even after the act of telling, trauma stays unknown for the individual. The telling is seen, then,

as another form of repetition compulsion through which the mind tries to grasp the meaning of trauma but fails to do so.

Not only the act of storytelling but "the act of survival ... itself [is] a pure repetition compulsion, a repeated nightmare" for Caruth and it "can be transformed into the imperative of a speaking that awakens others" (*Unclaimed* 108). Caruth focuses on this idea of awakening in the last chapter of *Unclaimed Experience* which bases its argument on a dream Freud quoted in *Interpretation of Dreams* (1899) that was interpreted by Jacques Lacan later on as well. This dream refers to a father who leaves the body of his dead child (lost to a fever) in the presence of a guardian in a room lit with candles and goes to sleep in the next room. In his dream, the child approaches the father and asks, "Father, don't you see I'm burning?" The father wakes up and finds the guardian asleep and his child's arm burnt by candles.

Freud interprets this dream as the father's wish to prolong his sleep and not to wake up, both literally and figuratively, to the death of his child whereas Lacan points out that it is this very dream that actually awakens the father into the reality of his child's burning. Caruth takes after Lacan and sees this dream as an awakening which marks the father as a survivor of trauma and the child's words as a summoning to "*survive to tell the story of my burning*" (105, original emphasis). The father and his "re-enactment of the child's dying" in his dream as his trauma, become a vessel to the passing on an awakening that is "not an act of understanding but a transmission" (106). The words uttered in the dream belong neither to the father nor the child but they are "the words [that] are *passed on* as an act that does not precisely awaken the self but, rather, *passes the awakening on to the others*" (107, original emphasis). Thereby, the survivor becomes a transmitter of a knowledge that they cannot really possess and conveys what it means *not* to see, *not* to understand, *not* to comprehend. In Caruth's words, "[i]n opening the other's eyes, the awakening consists not in seeing but in handing over the seeing it does not and cannot contain to another (and another future)" (111).

Above, I tried to present an introduction to Caruth's canonical study on and understanding of trauma which helped to frame cultural trauma studies in the early 1990s as an influential and invaluable piece of work. Henceforth I will pass on to

insidious/pluralistic trauma models and the ways in which they differ from Caruth's event-based approach, meanwhile addressing other criticisms it brought.

1.2.2. Criticism on Caruth, and Insidious/Pluralistic Trauma Models

Caruth's understanding of traumatic experiences which considers them to be "experiences not of wholly possessed, fully grasped, or completely remembered events but, more complexly, of partially unassimilated or 'missed' experiences" (*Unclaimed*, 124n14) disregards the survivor's comprehension of the event, the experience of it, and the trauma it brings. By breaking off the tie between the survivor and the experience, Caruth also deletes the possibility of acknowledging and associating trauma to its causes and hence the possibility of recovery because trauma and its experience stay beyond the grasps of the survivor. Ogaga Ifowodo criticises this approach and states that "trauma is not beyond but is merely a more complex form of experience" (68) and proposes that through "linking it to its meaning-making referents in the social world, [survivors might] creat[e] the material condition for a proper burying of the past through its acknowledgement and working through" (xv). For Ifowodo, working through trauma comes only after the acknowledgement of it which is basically denied to the survivor in Caruth's theory.

The perception of trauma as something that stems from extraordinary or catastrophic events finds its root in the third edition of the diagnostic manual (DSM-III) of the American Psychiatric Association. Besides its recognition of PTSD, DSM-III declares PTSD's "essential feature ... [as] the development of characteristic symptoms following a psychologically traumatic event that is *generally outside the range of usual human experience*" (236, emphasis added). Though this definition applies to Caruth's theory, it is criticised and broadened in an early work by Judith Herman. In *Trauma and Recovery* (1992), Herman proposes to change the view of trauma as a response to an event that is "outside the range of usual experience" and coins a new term, "Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder" to extend the "spectrum of traumatic disorders" (3) to include the everyday, ongoing, "usual" traumas of, for example, domestic abuse. According to

her, “[t]raumatic events are extraordinary, not because they occur rarely, but rather because they overwhelm the ordinary human adaptations to life” (33).

Herman’s is still an event-based model but a significant study to examine the traumatogenic effects, i.e., the effects that social and cultural practices/convention and political and economic systems have in generating traumas, that “were hidden in the sphere of the personal, in private life” (Herman 28), and the means of, however incomplete, recovery in the face of trauma. In contrast to Caruth’s emphasis on forgetting, Herman assumes “[r]emembering and telling the truth about terrible events ... [as] prerequisites both for the restoration of the social order and for the healing of individual victims” (1).

In Herman’s understanding, only after its acknowledgement and sharing with a community, can recovery from trauma, both on communal and individual level, take place. Individual healing and communal action are not disconnected from one another because personal traumas (such as domestic abuse on which Herman mostly focuses) indicate social problems (such as patriarchy in this context). However, in Caruth’s theory this connection is completely omitted because trauma is seen as a locked material in the unconscious whose roots are found not in the larger social context it is produced but rather in its enigmatic features. Caruth not only disregards communal action and recovery in her individual-oriented approach but also removes any possibility of agency on the part of the survivor because they are seen as prisoners in a non- or beyond experience that they can neither control nor comprehend.

Laura S. Brown’s “Not Outside the Range: One Feminist Perspective on Psychic Trauma” which is included in Caruth’s edited volume *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995) also has a similar discussion with Herman. Brown goes beyond the scope of event-based model and uses the term “insidious trauma” (107) to include the “everyday assaults on integrity and personal safety in the daily lives of women and other nondominant groups” (105) as trauma stressors. She is in a sense a forerunner of what Michelle Balaev later calls “pluralistic trauma model” (6) because she aims at considering the “social context, and the individual’s personal history within that social context” (Brown 110) when dealing with trauma, in

contrast to the universalist and Eurocentric approach of the Yale School which turns a blind eye to the traumas developed among "non-Western or minority cultures" (Craps 2) and assumes their definitions to be applicable to every context.

Brown borrows the term "insidious trauma" from her colleague Maria Root according to whom the term "refers to the traumatogenic effects of oppression that are not necessarily overly violent or threatening to bodily well-being at the given moment but that do violence to the soul and spirit" (Brown 107). The mystic turn in the end aside, Brown reminds that "membership in ... [an oppressed social] group means a constant lifetime risk of exposure to certain trauma" (108) and points out that the everyday and usual mechanisms of social life can also be traumatic for some people, without the necessity of experiencing specific events. Discrimination, marginalisation, exclusion and constriction of these groups are closely related to and may lead to physical violence, i.e., to an "event" but even if such an event does not take place, this does not make the formerly named oppressive behaviour any less traumatic.

Another major criticism brought to Caruth concerns her textualist approach. According to Balaev, this approach "forget[s] that trauma occurs to actual people, in specific bodies, located within particular periods and places" (7). Undeniably, Caruth bases her theory on other written and visual texts which are mostly produced either in Europe or the USA, ranging from psychoanalytical works to the French New Wave cinema. Her choice of texts is closely linked to her Eurocentric and universalist approach which neglects non-Western cultures' traumas and "tend[s] to take for granted the universal validity of definitions of trauma and recovery that have developed out of the history of Western modernity" (Craps 2). Although trauma "is actually a Western artefact, 'invented' in the nineteenth century" (20) as Craps reminds us, it is not endemic to the Western world.

This issue of universality also discloses the ahistoricism prevalent in Caruth's work. According to her, history is "a history of trauma" (*Unclaimed* 18) and is "never simply one's own, ... [it] is precisely the way we are implicated in each other's traumas" (24). Her overgeneralised category of history and its unspecified

details not only disregard different social, cultural and political contexts and individual histories that give way to trauma but also, according to Balaev, engender

> a problem involving the assignment of responsibility for violence as well as understanding the relationship between direct and indirect action. The attempt to include everyone as victims of trauma runs the risk of including everyone as perpetrators. (7)

Taking into consideration of the time she is developing her theory, Caruth's non-contextualised approach to trauma might have been helpful in setting a framework to early cultural trauma studies but it cannot be ignored that it posits every trauma under the same category by diminishing the characteristics of different contexts.

Due to its disregard to contexts and individual histories, and also its locating trauma in the unconscious of the survivor rather than connecting it with "a wounding political, social, or economic system" (Craps 28), Caruth's theory fails at offering a possible amelioration for society because it is mostly interested in changing and healing the individual, i.e., her aforementioned individual-oriented approach, leaving aside the harming oppressive systems to stay unchallenged.

With the advancing of feminist and postcolonial theories, trauma theory undergoes a drastic change in the 2000s and begins to draw away from the earlier trauma theory's event-based, Eurocentric, universalist, textualist, and individual-oriented approach. Criticisms to this approach add up to a point that trauma studies in the 2000s can be seen as split up into two main groups: a) event-based model which builds itself on extraordinary and catastrophic events individuals go through, and b) insidious trauma model which closely engages with the everyday, ongoing, and "usual" traumas which are mostly caused by different layers of "everyday racism, sexism, homophobia, classisism, ableism, and other forms of structural oppression" (Craps 25-6).

Building on and fuelled by Herman's and Brown's early work, insidious trauma model closely engages with "systemic traumatizations" which are, according to Greg Forter,

> forms of trauma that are *not* punctual [i.e., event-based], that are more mundanely catastrophic than such spectacular instances of violence as the Holocaust. I am speaking here of the trauma induced by patriarchal identity formation rather, say, than the trauma of rape, the violence not of lynching but

> of everyday racism. These phenomena are indeed traumas in the sense of having decisive and deforming effects on the psyche that give rise to compulsively repeated and highly rigidified social relations. But such traumas are also so chronic and cumulative, so woven into the fabric of our societies, that they cannot count as "shocks" in the way that Nazi persecution and genocide do in the accounts of Caruth and others. ("Freud, Faulkner, Caruth" 260, original emphasis)

Forter's emphasis on the everyday and usual experiences of nondominant groups which are produced on the basis of their gender, race, class, and so on, reminds us Brown's statement that "traumatic events do lie within the range of normal human experience" (110) to the extent that they are normatively constructed and naturalised in the eyes of the community.

This naturalisation indicates that trauma is "a constant presence" for "many disempowered groups" (Craps 33) to which they are exposed simply because of belonging to or identifying as members to such groups. One should keep in mind that these traumas do not stem from events happening once or twice but are the outcome of a cumulative process which might cover a lifetime. In Craps' words, "[o]ne ... incident alone may not be traumatizing, but traumatization can result insidiously from cumulative micro-aggressions: each one is too small to be traumatic stressor, but together they can build to create an intense traumatic impact" (26).

Expectations and conventions of gender, caste, class, race, religion or any other structure that creates inequities and feeds on discrimination, lay at the heart of insidious traumas and acutely point out "the harm done to marginalized groups by continuous exposure to ... [stereotypes, which] leads them to develop feelings of inferiority, inadequacy, and self-hatred" (Craps 30). Then, it can be said that systems of domination and structural oppression may have traumatic impacts which are manifested in psychic suffering of not only individuals, but whole groups or even cultures.

Insidious trauma model's close involvement with and examination of structural oppression, bring about a contextualised and interdisciplinary approach to trauma which Balaev calls "pluralistic trauma model" (6). This model emphasises the variability of trauma in specific places and time, and also in specific individual

histories. What can be counted as traumatic for an individual or a culture may not be traumatic for another due to the context. This contextualisation also functions as a way of connecting postcolonial studies to trauma theory because it "acknowledge[s] the traumas of non-Western or minority populations *for their own sake*" (Craps 19, emphasis added) rather than the categorisation and universalisation of Western-originated definitions of trauma.

While Caruth considers trauma inaccessible in its nature because it resides in the unconscious where the individual has no direct access to, making its meaning ungraspable and hence trauma unsolvable, pluralistic model builds itself on

> [t]he knowledge that social practices are part of the context of even the most private violence ... accept[ing] the multiple contextual factors of trauma while also indicating that trauma is a lived experience, one that is *identifiable* to a greater or lesser degree. (Balaev 7, emphasis added)

By confining trauma to the unconscious, Caruth's approach not only turns the individual survivor into a prisoner of a knowledge that they can never fully possess, but also eliminates the possibility of recovery on the part of the survivor or amelioration of their community because their trauma will stay unacknowledged and beyond their grasp.

Pluralistic model, on the other hand, proposes that "trauma's meaning is locatable rather than permanently lost" in "the larger social, political, and economic practices that influence violence" (Balaev 8). Through not only identifying different traumatogenic systems but also connecting trauma and its meanings to them, pluralistic model thus opens a space for a possible working through because trauma becomes something that can be recognised both in the eyes of the individual and the community, for which they can do something about.

Pluralistic model's close engagement with social, political, and economic systems brings about a shift in concentration which is against "narrowly focusing on the level of the individual psyche" because of which "one tends to leave unquestioned the conditions that enabled the traumatic abuse, such as political oppression, racism, or economic domination" (Craps 28). Furthermore, it criticises this individual-oriented approach which induces

> [p]roblems ... [to be] medicalized, and the people affected by them [to be] pathologized as victims without agency, sufferers from an illness that can be cured through psychological counselling. The failure to situate these problems in their larger historical context can thus lead to psychological recovery being privileged over the transformation of a wounding political, social, or economic system. (28)

Hence, it can be said that pluralistic model aims at locating the individual and their trauma not only to the specific time and place they belong to, but also to the different social, economic, and political contexts they interact with, in hope of laying bare traumatogenic effects these systems have.

Broadening trauma studies' point of interest expose the liaison different layers of oppression/discrimination have with even the most private suffering. The supposedly personal and individual problems are seen not disjointed from the larger historical context they are situated in but rather as a reverberation. This means that even if an individual survivor is able to work through their trauma, it does not change the circumstances that enable such traumas to the point that even the said individual or the community they share with may be affected by the same traumas again. In order to shun such risks, pluralistic model concerns itself with "the transformation of [these] wounding political, social, or economic system[s]" (Craps 28) which facilitate traumas.

Regarding the individual, in contrast to Caruthian understanding of the survivor, pluralistic model does not envision individual survivors solely as victims of an event that is beyond their control and comprehension or as prisoners of an unconscious material or knowledge they can never fully, directly and consciously access or possess. Considering trauma as a "lived experience" (Balaev 7) rather than a non- or beyond experience that is registered in the unconscious without mediation, pluralistic model re-establishes the ruptured relationship between the individual and their experience, hence making trauma's acknowledgement possible as a first step. Furthermore, locating it in structural inequality rather than in the unconscious, pluralistic model makes trauma observable, identifiable and hence, solvable.

Making trauma acknowledgeable and identifiable through reinstating these aforementioned connections redeems the individual from their ineffectuality in the face of their trauma. Rather than perceiving the individual as a helpless victim affected by an event that is beyond their control and comprehension or trapped in a non-experience that elicits forgetting and unconscious repeating, pluralistic model recognises variability in survivors' responses to trauma and restores their agency. In contrast to earlier trauma theory which disregards individual agency by proposing that survivors unconsciously enact certain traumatic symptoms such as dissociation, repetition compulsion, and amnesia, pluralistic model asserts that these "are not exclusive responses" and it "allows determinate value and social specificity" by paying attention to "trauma's variability and ... the diverse values that change over time" (Balaev 6). Once again, pluralistic model requires a more contextualised approach, both on the social level and regarding individual histories and agency as well.

Contextualisation of trauma not only broadens the scope of its definitions but also its representation. First, let us look at how this representation is perceived in early trauma theory to highlight the differences between early approaches and pluralistic model. In line with its "psychoanalytic poststructural approach" which "suggests trauma is an unsolvable problem of the unconscious that illuminates the inherent contradictions of experience and language" (Balaev 1), Caruthian understanding of trauma rests on a language or representation model that re-enacts "the traumatic event as content, and the symptomatic response to the event as form" (Nadal and Calvo 7). Symptoms such as dissociation, repetition compulsion or disordering of time are reproduced through narrative strategies such as (post)modernist techniques of non-linear narrative structure, fragmentation and repetition, to faithfully and adequately represent the experience of trauma survivor which is otherwise regarded as unrepresentable. Trauma narrative, then, turns into another form of repetition compulsion through which details and symptoms of trauma are reconstructed and the reader is affected.

This approach is criticised on four grounds: a) it treats trauma narratives as another unconscious symptom over which survivors have no control, emphasising the

inaccessibility and hence unacknowledgement of trauma even during the very act of telling it, by removing any possibility of agency and consciousness on the part of the survivor/narrator, b) it does not pay attention to differences between experiencing trauma and reading it (Forter "Freud, Faulkner, Caruth" 281) and treats them as if they are equivalent, by perceiving the reader as another victim of ungraspable trauma (narrative), c) as a result of the first two, it completely disregards the possible "political intervention" which might come both from the survivor and the reader, because it pictures the survivor as a helpless victim who is not even capable of getting a grasp of the very trauma narrative they convey and the reader as yet another victim whose self-criticism on their complicity and responsibility regarding the trauma is precluded due to their supposedly equivalent traumatised position (Craps 42), and lastly, d) it overemphasises (post)modernist techniques as conveyors of trauma by presuming them to be the *only* possible way of representing it and hence excludes any other form of narrative which does not fall under its valued category of "high-brow works of art" that comprise "a narrow trauma canon ... of non-linear, modernist texts by mostly Western writers" (Craps 41-3).

Craps traces the roots for this approach's inclination to modernist aesthetics back to Theodor Adorno's famous statement regarding the representation of the Holocaust: "It is barbaric to write a poem after Auschwitz, and that is why it has become impossible to write poetry today" and its rearrangement as "literature must resist this [aforementioned] verdict" because "[i]t is now virtually in art alone that suffering can still find its own voice, consolation, without immediately being betrayed by it" (Adorno qtd. in Craps 39-40). Adorno objects to turning suffering into pleasure for the reader through a medium of art which "does an injustice to the victims" by aestheticising their horror and prefers "a morally acceptable post-Auschwitz aesthetic" that is exemplified in the works of Samuel Beckett "which allegedly evades the problem of pleasure through its refusal of realist figuration" (Craps 40).

Adorno's view, according to Craps, is shared by early trauma theorists such as Felman and Caruth who famously select fragmented and modernist texts by

European authors and directors for their interpretations. These theorists build on the assumption that

> [a]n experience that exceeds the possibility of narrative knowledge ... will best be represented by a failure of narrative. Hence, what is called for is the disruption of conventional modes of representation, such as can be found in modernist art. (Craps 41)

However, their preference of texts amounts to "construct[ing] a normative trauma aesthetic [which] create[s] a narrow canon of valued trauma literature consisting of high-brow, avant-garde works by mostly Western writers" (5) and exclusion of any other work which deviates from "the assumed standard" (Huyssen qtd. in Craps 40) of modernist aesthetics of trauma representation.

Pluralistic model, on the other side, does not fall into the error of squeezing not only the experience of trauma but also its representation into a single definition. It "highlights the ranging values and representations of trauma in literature and society" by paying close attention to "the many sources that inform the definitions, representations, and consequences of traumatic experience" (Balaev 6). Moreover, it acknowledges the variability of trauma which entails diverse forms of representation.

Rather than laying overemphasis on a single literary form of representation by positing ready-made assumptions that deem a certain kind of trauma representable only through using a certain kind of literary form, pluralistic model proposes to

> take account of the specific social and historical contexts in which trauma narrratives are produced and received, and be open and attentive to the diverse strategies of representation and resistance which these contexts invite or necessitate. (Craps 43)

Furthermore, due to its locating trauma in traumatogenic systems rather than the unconscious, pluralistic model allows room for both the individual survivor/narrator and the reader not only to acknowledge trauma but also to have a "critical self-reflection" which might reveal forms of complicity on the part of the reader or enable the survivor to view their "testimony ... as a political intervention" (Craps 42) which vents traumatogenic systems and holds them to account.

1.2.3. The Concept of Recovery

Event-based and pluralistic models approach the concept of recovery from trauma differently. The former presumes trauma to be an inaccessible and ungraspable "enigma" that thwarts any possibility of working through. Caruth considers survival from trauma rich with "endless possibility of a new future" (*Unclaimed* 68) and history of trauma as something that exceeds the survivor to the extent that trauma turns into a sharing site which she emphasises as a transmission between different generations and cultures. Nevertheless, she presents this transmission as a "*pass[ing] the awakening on to the others*" (107, original emphasis) which does not specifically awaken the individual survivor though it emanates from their unconscious. The awakening, then, refers to a transmitted knowledge which is actually impossible to access or possess. It stresses the unattainability and incomprehensibility of traumatic knowledge and conveys what it means *not* to know and *not* to understand. This model regards trauma as an unsolvable phenomenon of the unconscious whose very transmission accentuates trauma's unacknowledgement and hence allows no room for recognition of trauma, let alone its recovery.

Elizabeth Outka calls attention to dual meanings of the word recovery: "to retrieve what is lost, and to heal" (45). Although Outka refers to reclaiming of memory in her article and focuses on the complicated relationship between remembering and forgetting trauma, this retrieval may also indicate grasping a knowledge that event-based model considers to be hidden in the unconscious. Recovery, then, may imply recognition and integration of a traumatic knowledge that is supposedly ungraspable and forgotten by the survivor who only through acknowledging their trauma can start the process of healing. Pluralistic model which asserts that trauma is locatable in social, political, economic structures rather than in the unconscious by laying emphasis on trauma's recognition and identification, is more inclined to share this view.

The understanding that connects recognition of trauma to its recovery can be traced back to Herman's *Trauma and Recovery* in which she posits "[r]emembering and telling the truth [about trauma]" as "prerequisites both for the restoration of the

social order and for the healing of individual victims" (1). Although hers is still an event-based approach that I have above explained to be individual-oriented and tainted with ahistoricism, she takes communal healing into account and also asserts that "an understanding of psychological trauma begins with rediscovering history" (2) which might point to and disclose different traumatogenic systems.

Herman considers recovery as a process that develops step by step which she identifies as "fundamental stages of recovery" that consists of "establishing safety, reconstructing the trauma story, and restoring the connection between survivors and their community" (3). She at first suggests removal of the survivor from their traumatising environment in order for them to be secured from any other similar and upcoming danger for which providing shelters for battered women might be an example. However, the presumption that leaving the site of trauma is possible derives from her event-based approach which does not take cumulative, chronic, and insidious traumas—that are not specifically exclusive to certain places— into account.

The second stage indicates narrativisation of trauma or more simply, putting the trauma into words, such as a form of story-telling. Reminiscent of the idea of "talking cure" and also coinciding with Caruth's emphasis on language and the act of telling, Herman's assertion on the necessity of verbal expression for the recognition of trauma exposes her logocentricism which simply ignores any other form of acknowledgement other than verbal narrative. Although Herman considers story-telling as a necessary step, what this stage accentuates is the recognition of trauma and its sharing (however verbal or non-verbal, taking different shapes according to the context), which brings us to the third and last stage.

Reminding that "[t]raumatic events have primary effects not only on the psychological structures of the self but also on the systems of attachment and meaning that link individual and community" (45), Herman suggests re-establishing the bond —that might be broken due to traumatic experience— between the individual and their community. On the individual level, she proposes that "sharing the traumatic experience with others is a precondition for the restitution of a sense of a meaningful world" (70). Considering trauma as a

shattering experience that entirely transforms the survivor's perception not only of their selves but also of their community or of the world in general, Herman requires mending the relationship between the individual and their community because "[r]ecovery can take place only within the context of relationships; it cannot occur in isolation" (133). On the communal level, sharing the trauma with one's community is seen essential because only after its public acknowledgement can trauma bring a communal action which might not only involve self-criticism of complicity and responsibility but also potential striving to decimate traumatogenic systems that enable such traumas. Notwithstanding her prescriptive approach to the stages of recovery, Herman actually does not reckon recovery as something that can be attained or arrived at, it is seen rather as a process always in the making. In her own words: "Resolution of the trauma is never final; recovery is never complete" (211).

Regarding trauma and its connection to community, sociologist Kai Erikson brings forth another angle to discussion in his article "Notes on Trauma and Community" which is also included in Caruth's edited volume *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. Just like Herman, Erikson also argues that traumatised people "can be said to have experienced not only a *changed sense of self* and a *changed way of relating to others* but a changed *worldview*" (194, original emphasis) but with a tint, he proposes that this perception might be shared not with anyone but with those who are going through similar processes or as Erikson puts it, "others similarly marked" (186) with traumas. According to him, "trauma shared can serve as a source of communality in the same way that common languages and common backgrounds can" (186) which might "combine to create a mood, an ethos —a group culture, almost— that is different from (and more than) the sum of the private wounds that make it up" (185). Erikson calls this "a gathering of the wounded" (187) which offers itself as a "a source of kinship" (190) to traumatised people who "hav[e] an altered relationship to the rest of humankind, to history, to processes of nature" (186) which not everyone is familiar with except those "similarly marked."

In contrast to Herman who proposes the re-establishment of the bond between the individual and their community, Erikson acknowledges that “trauma has both centripetal and centrifugal tendencies ... draw[ing] one away from the center of group space while at the same time drawing one back” (186) which suggests that trauma separates survivors from their community but attaches them to another. Then, the so-called broken bond is actually not dissipated but transformed to embrace only a small group of people who “know one another in ways that the most intimate of friends never will” (187) due to their shared traumas, experiences, and perceptions.

Erikson, like Herman, asserts that recovery can only take place within a community whose tissues are actually damaged because of trauma. After trauma, the “we” of the community is eliminated:

> “I” continue to exist, though damaged and maybe even permanently changed. “You” continue to exist, though distant and hard to relate to. But “we” no longer exist as a connected pair or as linked cells in a larger communal body. (Erikson qtd. in Erikson 187)

The only possibility left for re-constructing a “we” for the traumatised depends on the very people who are “estranged” from and who become “unattached” to (186) their former communities due to their traumas. They are drawn to one another “as if persons without homes or citizenships or any other niche in the larger order of things were invited to gather in a quarter set aside for the disfranchised” (186). These people recognise each other from their wounds and stand as the only possibility that “can supply a human context and a kind of emotional solvent in which the work of recovery can begin” (187).

As we have seen, trauma theory often calls for an interdisciplinary approach which builds on and is heavily influenced by psychological and sociological frameworks that examine actual people’s traumas and I do not intend to appropriate them into textual characters. This thesis concerns itself only with the representation of trauma and trauma survivors in literary works which are nonetheless in communication with, if not entirely reflective of, material reality.

In the next chapters, predicating on both event-based and insidious trauma models, I will analyse how different characters from *Brick Lane* and *The God of Small*

Things respond to trauma and the ways in which these might be seen as a means of survival and resistance, meanwhile foregrounding possibilities of recovery as envisioned by Herman's and Erikson's work.

CHAPTER 2

BRICK LANE: AN IMMIGRANT WOMAN'S TRAUMA

The main focus of this chapter is Monica Ali's debut novel *Brick Lane* and its representation of trauma survivors and their responses to trauma. The novel foregrounds Nazneen's insidious traumas after her immigration to Britain. Although most of the novel takes place in London, Bangladesh is also integrated into the narrative through flashbacks and letters from "home". Ali weaves these seemingly dissimilar and incompatible locations into one another through displaying their traumatic impact on women and how women experience them. Rather than considering women's trauma exclusive to certain places, the novel suggests that this suffering is the outcome of patriarchal mindset which knows no boundaries of space and time. Women are exposed to violence, both on physical and psychological levels, in the little and constraining spheres that they are given to occupy, from which there seems to be no escape other than suicide. The novel, however, bestows women with other means not only to get through and survive their circumstances, but also to show their resistance. In contrast to Caruthian understanding of trauma which offers little or no agency to trauma survivors by simply deeming them as victims of and prisoners to uncontrollable and incomprehensible events and symptoms, the novel represents women as capable beings and active agents who connect their traumas to patriarchy and resist its causes by struggling to detach themselves from it. With this light, this chapter will at first give an overview of the novel and its reception to reveal different traumatogenic systems that affect women and various perspectives that are used so far in reading the novel. Then it will move on to explore the ways in which women respond to trauma and the possibilities of resistance and recovery these responses carry.

2.1. An Overview of the Novel

Brick Lane takes its title after a street in the East End of London which is regarded as the heart of the city's Bangladeshi community. Although the title seems to suggest a general outlook on the street and its inhabitants, the novel mostly focuses on the life of Nazneen, a Muslim Bangladeshi woman who migrates to Britain on the occasion of her arranged marriage to Chanu, a man who is twenty years older than her and also an immigrant from Bangladesh (or from East Pakistan, as it was called back in his time), to live in Tower Hamlets with him. As an eighteen year old woman who is expected to leave her family, home, and country for a man she has only seen a picture of, to live in an alien place whose spoken language she is unfamiliar with and hence rendered unable to communicate through words except with her close circle of Bangladeshi acquaintances, Nazneen faces harsh living conditions that she feels inadequate to adapt to and cope with in her first years in London, to the extent she displays suicidal ideations.

When Nazneen gives birth to her son, Raqib, she at last finds a solace and a meaning to life in her relationship with him until his premature death due to rash. After the tragic moment of Raqib's death, there happens to be a narrative gap of almost twenty years in the life of Nazneen which is filled through her sister Hasina's letters from Bangladesh throughout the years. We are given the details of her life and misfortunes in Dhaka. As a young woman who elopes and marries for love, Hasina faces her husband's unexpected cruelty and beatings, and leaves him. She works at a textile factory until she is sacked owing to a rumour about her having sexual encounters with other workers. Her landlord rapes her and she is driven to prostitution until she marries one of her clients who turns out to be another cruel man she later escapes from.

Hasina's overly tragic life story is followed by and contrasted with Nazneen's in the early 2000s where she works as a home tailor to pay Chanu's debts to Mrs Islam, an elder money-lender from their community, and is mother to two daughters, Shahana and Bibi. As the second generation of immigrants, these girls identify themselves with British culture rather than the Bangladeshi, and along with Nazneen's friend Razia who divorces her husband, learns English, and gains

British passport, they act like bridges between traditional Bangladeshi upbringing Nazneen received and British culture she is not really accustomed to due to her husband's age-long preventions. Her young lover Karim whom she meets through her work because he acts as a middleman, also has a similar function in Nazneen's life. Through him, she is not only introduced to bodily pleasure but also to communal gathering because he invites her to join the meetings of the Bengal Tigers, a local Muslim group in their neighbourhood, for which he acts as a spokesperson. When her husband decides to go back to Bangladesh with his family and borrows money from Dr Azad, their community doctor and Chanu's friend, to do so, Nazneen's world is shattered but she steps up and chooses to stay in London, leaving both her lover and husband, and runs a cooperative business as a tailor with her female Bangladeshi friends. Although Nazneen is the central character of the novel, her story is enriched and supported by other women's accounts of suffering. Both her companions in Brick Lane and her family in Bangladesh curl closely into Nazneen's story to the point that the novel can be regarded as an insight into women's condition.

By placing Nazneen as the central character, *Brick Lane* not only provides a female perspective to narratives of migrancy but it also highlights migration as a gendered process which brings about feminist readings of the novel. For example, Noemi Pereira-Ares in "The Politics of *hijab* in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*" considers the novel's focus as "female self-empowerment" and celebrates it for "redeeming the prevailing invisibility of female migrating experiences and counterbalancing the sheer number of male-centred accounts of migration" (204). She explores the practice of hijab in the novel which represents two "extreme" attitudes of women who either completely reject hijab in order not to be marked as "the Other" in the West or resistfully embrace hijab and even burkha to separate themselves as Muslims to "make their ... identity more visible" (206) in British society. Although Pereira-Ares offers a valid reading of women's dressing as an alternative mode of communication, what lacks in her understanding (which is shared by the novel's representation of hijab as well) is that it lays overemphasis on sartorial choices by marking them simply and solely as "individual" choices divorced from the society they are practiced in which bears heavy Islamic and patriarchal sanctions for

women's clothing. Pereira-Ares concludes that the novel presents an ambivalent attitude towards hijab by neither rejecting nor embracing it but offering a middle ground embodied by Nazneen who easily fuses both Muslim and British elements in her newly forged identity.

With a similar perspective, Sara Upstone in her *British Asian Fiction* (2011) reads the novel's representation of identity formation through the concept of protest. She argues that the novel as an example of British Asian writing attempts at embracing a new form of identity which bears the traces of and is nourished by both Muslim and British elements within a stable identity and without a hierarchical order between them in contrast to prevalent notion of fluid and hybrid identity represented in diasporic writing. Upstone regards migrant women's and their British-born children's acts of defiance both in public and private spheres as their way of defining themselves as British Asians/Muslims and claiming their space and voice in British society to make themselves heard and visible. These characters, according to Upstone, represent a "successful cultural fusion" (182) that optimistically bears the fruits of redefining Britishness. However, she seems to be too readily praising the characters' supposedly general tendency to reclaim both the city and citizenship rather than laying emphasis on their personal agendas. For example, she interprets a scene in which Nazneen goes out into the streets to look for her daughter Shahana and comes across a Muslim protest that she does not essentially participate in but rather coincide, as Nazneen's way of leaving her mark as a middle-aged Muslim woman in protests to carve up a space for herself in the city and British society. Therefore, Upstone seems to attribute the necessary consciousness to make statements about identity to characters although they, especially Nazneen, evidently lack such a consciousness.

Michael Perfect in "The Multicultural Bildungsroman: Stereotypes in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*" also dwells on Nazneen's consciousness and identity formation and concludes that she "achieve[s] both self-awareness and an understanding of the society around her" because she is able to "forge an economic and social role for herself as well as a familial one" (119). Highlighting the transformation Nazneen goes through, Perfect argues that the novel rejoices her "integration ... [into British

society and] the veneration of the potential for adaptation in both individuals and societies" (110). However, the novel falls short of picturing Nazneen's integration as it only ensures her seclusion into all-female and all-Bangladeshi community. Furthermore, the society whose adaptability Perfect emphasises and to which Nazneen is supposedly integrated does not signal any fundamental change although Nazneen herself as an individual goes through a drastic change. What is more intriguing in Perfect's argument is that he considers the novel as a *Bildungsroman* on the basis of its representing a character's transformation throughout the years and her final integration into society as a reconciliation. Such a classification not only overlooks the fact that almost none of the first eighteen years of Nazneen's life in Bangladesh and her subsequent twenty years in Brick Lane after her immigration are covered in the text at all, but it also disregards Hasina's and other women's life stories that fill the narrative gap in those missing years.

Taking up the discussion of *Bildungsroman* and turning it to the novel's genre, Alistair Cormack aptly connects the novel's written form with construction of Nazneen's identity. In "Migration and the Politics of Narrative Form: Realism and the Postcolonial Subject in *Brick Lane*" he argues that similar to the translation of Bengali letters of Hasina into English in the novel, Nazneen is also translated from one culture to another, from a postcolonial subject to "a Western bourgeois subject" (712). This formation is rendered visible, according to Cormack, by the novel's use of "intact" English and traditional realism, in contrast to predominant postcolonial writing which disarranges and remakes the language while using magical realism. Although Cormack rightfully denounces the novel's realism as "an act of untroubled translation" (718) for the postcolonial subject, we also have to keep in mind that Nazneen's is not a full and complete form of transition or translation from one subjectivity to another or from one culture to another because her newly forged identity is presented and celebrated in the novel as a "fusion" though its validity and plausibility might be questioned.

Considering the postcolonial subject or more explicitly, migrant identities, Ulrike Tancke in her "'Original Traumas': Narrating Migrant Identity in British Muslim Women's Writing" offers a reading from the perspective of trauma theory and

examines *Brick Lane* along with Leila Aboulela's *Minaret* (2005). She quotes from Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2001):

> [I]t's something to do with that experience of moving from West to East or East to West or from island to island. Even when you arrive, you're still going back and forth; your children are going round and round. There's no proper term for it—*original sin* seems too harsh; maybe *original trauma* would be better. (161, original emphasis)

Tancke appropriates the term referred in the passage to the novels in her discussion. According to her, "migrant identities are often suffused with traumatic experiences" which are accompanied by "fundamental sense of loss, rootlessness and unbelonging" (1). She sees them exemplified in Nazneen and Karim, who try to "compensate for their mutual experience" (6) of "original trauma" through their relationship with each other. Nazneen idealises his supposed sense of belonging to a world that she never considers herself to be a part of and Karim idealises her as the embodiment of Bangladeshi values that he, due to his being born and raised in Britain, feels uprooted from. Although Tancke adequately points out migrant's trauma and traces its effects on the lives of individuals, she seems to have left a huge blank and made omissions to her understanding of women's trauma because she overlooks or completely disregards traumatogenic effects of gender-based discrimination and oppression Nazneen and her female companions are exposed to throughout all their lives.

In contrast to manifold feminist, postcolonial, and genre-specific readings of the novel, there is only one work (to my present knowledge) that studies *Brick Lane* through the lens of trauma theory and it is the one that I have quoted above. However, it falls short of examining and explaining women's and especially central character Nazneen's trauma which is affected not only by immigration but is multilayered. My main attempt in this study and in this chapter is to examine those layers and to demonstrate Nazneen's situatedness in different but interconnected traumatogenic systems by paying close attention to the implications of her gender, rather than erasing them.

Before moving on to exploring women's trauma in-depth, let us consider the under-examined position of *Brick Lane* in trauma studies. As a realist novel, it does not principally fall under the category of valued trauma aesthetics cherished by trauma

scholars who have been claiming that enacting trauma symptoms on the reader is "the best—and indeed the only—way to convey what is otherwise unrepresentable in traumatic experience" (Outka 31). This long-accepted and predominant assumption often celebrates (post)modernist modes of representation and narrative techniques such as non-linearity and fragmentation in the context of trauma fiction but the inclination to a certain form of representation and aesthetics nevertheless results in ignoring and excluding any other work that does not necessarily make use of aforementioned devices, such as *Brick Lane*. Furthermore, early trauma theory's event-based approach which counts extraordinary, catastrophic events as trauma stressors while disregarding insidious traumas stemming from everyday, ongoing discrimination and oppression minority groups have to confront, might be another reason that keeps the novel overlooked in the field because what *Brick Lane* presents us with is nothing extraordinary or catastrophic but the usual, everyday trauma of an immigrant woman. It engages with her traumas whose effects are represented not through enacting trauma symptoms but through voicing the character's inner thoughts and dilemmas, and her physical malaise.

Regarding the realist mode used in representation of trauma, Anne Whitehead in *Trauma Fiction* (2004) finds some commonalities between trauma narratives which, according to her, emerge from "postmodernism, postcolonialism and a postwar legacy or consciousness" (161) to represent event-based traumas. Although she is among the aforementioned camp of scholars who requires certain literary techniques to be applied to narratives in order to represent trauma, she also draws attention to some features trauma fiction shares with the realist novel as well, such as the image of ghosts. According to Whitehead, trauma fiction "novelists frequently draw on the supernatural. Alternatively, the realist novel is troubled by coincidences and fantastic elements which lurk just beneath the surface" (84) and we can find such an example in *Brick Lane* as Nazneen's dead mother keeps appearing frequently, functioning as a haunting ghost. Her appearances are explained through the realist mode, either by referring to it as a dream, hallucination, or the symptom of fever Nazneen is going through. Even though a rational explanation is given for them, they still draw attention to

themselves, as absent presences which "simultaneously conceal and reveal their origins" (Herman 96) as gender-based trauma that is spread across generations.

In the rest of the chapter, I will focus on women's trauma in the novel through using insidious trauma model. The reason for my exclusion of Chanu or Karim's migrant disillusions and possible traumas from discussion is not only because the novel does not focus on them, but it does not give them voice to focalise their experiences. In contrast, the women, or Nazneen to be specific, are provided with such a space that gives insight to the traumas they endure. Event-based model falls short of studying this kind of trauma because it disregards insidious traumas that stem from a continual exposure to gender-based discrimination that does not require any specific event to take place to have traumatogenic effects. Furthermore, this model offers no agency to trauma survivors since it locates the trauma in the unconscious where the individual has no access to and hence eliminates any possibility of grasping the meaning of trauma to work through it, survive it, or resist against its causes. However, Nazneen uses different kinds of strategies which make use of her silence and bodily pleasures so that she can carve up a space for herself in her suffocating, confined environment, and work to transgress and challenge the boundaries that ensnare and traumatise her.

2.2. Immigration Trauma

RoseMarie Perez Foster argues that immigration trauma consists of different parts that include "premigration trauma" (that may be a probable reason for migration), "traumatic events experienced during transit" along with resettlement period, and "substandard living conditions in the host country" (155). These terms are produced in the field of psychology to examine actual people's migration experiences, and I do not intend to appropriate them into textual characters. Nonetheless, they provide us with an overall outlook on immigration trauma and Perez Foster's view suggests that trauma stems not only through the act of migration itself but spreads across different places and ongoing processes, which I believe is important. Immigration trauma might generate from specific events, such as death threats and violence experienced before, during, and/or after immigration

but also from sense of insecurity, loss, or uprootedness that shatters the world of the individual.

Brick Lane represents Nazneen as a depressed and suicidal woman due to her immigration trauma which is triggered not only by the act of migrancy but also her prolonged adaptation to her newly changed environment. As a young woman who is made to abandon not only her family but also anything that she finds familiar, Nazneen suffers from immigration trauma which reveals itself in her first years in London though it is not delved into or not even implicated after the first forty pages of the novel to the extent in the end it is completely ignored owing to the shift in focus to gender-based discrimination. Nevertheless, her immigration as a shattering experience changes her perceptions and makes her want to leave this world. With little else to hold on to, Nazneen turns to and derives strength from the Quran and other women's hazy presences in her life. Her immigration trauma, then, rather than being an inescapable problem of unsolvable origin, is approached as an experience that Nazneen tries to work through in her own way, highlighting both her understanding of her situation and possible agency that is used to overcome it.

When we look at the novel, we see that Nazneen is depicted as an alienated migrant woman who is in need of human contact but denied one not only because of the language barrier she faces but also of invisible barriers that her husband sets before her. Having left both her familial and familiar ties to live with a stranger man, she suffers from loneliness:

> What she missed most was people. Not any people in particular ... but just people. If she put her ear to the wall she could hear sounds. ... In all her eighteen years, she could scarcely remember a moment she had spent alone. Until she married. And came to London to sit day after day *in this large box* ... and the muffled sounds of private lives *sealed away* above, below, and around her. (Ali 15-6, emphasis added)

Here, we see Nazneen's desperation to get in touch with people to the extent she listens through the walls in her flat in order to hear human voices. She feels as if she is in an enclosed box that she is imprisoned in and locked away from any possibility of human connection.

In her first six months in London, the only person Nazneen interacts with (besides her husband) is a neighbour, "the tattoo lady," from the opposite block, whom Nazneen watches through her window because the former does not have any curtains. They wave at each other from time to time (8-9) and Nazneen daydreams about going to her place where "they would sit together by the window and let the time pass more easily" (10). Even in her fantasy, Nazneen does not speak to the tattoo lady but they only smile at each other and sit in peace. Such an expectation for extralingual communication is actually signalled by their act of waving hands which functions as a way of acknowledging and appreciating the other's presence for both of the parties. Later in the novel, Nazneen's friend Razia reveals that the tattoo lady who did nothing all day but to sit by her own "like a painted statue" (135) was actually mentally ill and was eventually put inside "an institution" (134). It is significant that these marginalised characters find each other and create, however small, a bond outside language. Language stands as a barrier between them not only in the sense that they cannot understand one another, but also because it is tainted with biases and the dominant ideologies that mark them as the dangerous Other, one being a "madwoman," and the other as a migrant. Without that language, they (or at least, Nazneen) continue to enjoy each other's company, however aloof it may be. Ultimately, the tattoo lady's presence helps Nazneen to get through the day.

Nazneen in her boxed life is not only "sealed away" from interacting with other people, but also from the language they speak. To communicate with the tattoo lady, she wishes to learn English but when she mentions it to Chanu he dismisses her by saying "It will come. Don't worry about it. Where's the need anyway?" (30). Nonetheless, being the snob that he is, Chanu "sprinkle[s English] into his conversations" (30) and Nazneen inevitably learns a couple of words from him. It is considered as a big improvement for her because in her first six months she could only say "sorry and thank you" (10) and nothing else.

By setting up invisible barriers before Nazneen, Chanu not only furthers her alienation but also prolongs her adaptation period. He restrains her from learning English, or even leaving the house. Nazneen leaves the flat "[o]nce or twice" (36)

and it is only with Chanu. Later in the novel, when her friend Razia starts taking language courses, Nazneen brings the subject of learning English up only to be dismissed by Chanu once more. “You’re going to be a mother,” (75) he says, echoing his former protest, “Where is the need anyway?” (30). Consequently, Chanu basically locks Nazneen materially into the house and mentally out of English language and culture that he sees himself as a part of. Yet, I call his restraints “invisible” barriers because his are not the simple acts of a strict patriarch who detains his wife and does not “let” her do things. He does not straightforwardly reject Nazneen’s needs and desires but he stalls them while taking great pains not to appear so. For instance, on the subject of Nazneen’s going out, Chanu utters the following:

> Why should you go out? ... If you go out, ten people will say, ‘I saw her walking on the street.’ And I will look like a fool. *Personally, I don’t mind* if you go out, but these people are so ignorant. ... *I don’t stop you from doing anything*. I am westernized now. It is lucky for you that you married an educated man. (39, emphasis added)

He uses the gossip his “ignorant” fellow Bangladeshis would supposedly spread as an excuse and pretends to take sides with Nazneen. He may be right in his own way of interpreting the situation as “not stopping her” because he does not actually stop her physically or force her. However, he constantly reminds Nazneen to know her place as a woman and his wife, and hence sets “invisible” barriers for her, or “mind-forg’d manacles” (132) as William Blake more poetically puts it.

If we take trauma as a shattering experience that inevitably changes the individual’s views not only of themselves, but of their surroundings and of the world in general, then we see how Nazneen’s preconceptions of herself, her father, and her religion alter after the immigration. When she overhears Chanu on the phone describing her appearance, she begins to see herself through his eyes (14). This phone call which reveals the reason Chanu married her for, i.e., her being “an unspoilt girl ... [f]rom the village” (14) who would serve him, brings about her confrontation with her disillusionment with her marriage:

> What had she imagined? That he was in love with her? That he was grateful because she, young and graceful, had accepted him? That in sacrificing herself to him, she was owed something? Yes. Yes. She realized in a stinging rush she

> had imagined all these things. Such a foolish girl. Such high notions. What self-regard. (15)

This epiphanic moment and her change in conception are not actually due to her immigration. Nonetheless, since her marriage is the sole reason for her immigration, she starts to question the decisions her father, whom she trusted so much, made for her and his motives. She perceives herself as an object that has been "sent away" (9) and begins to have doubts about her father's love and care for her (16). Tested with Chanu's insufficiencies, she eventually blames her father: "*He just wanted to be rid of me*, she thought. *He wanted to me to go far away, so that I would not be any trouble to him. He did not care who took me off his hands*" (102, original emphasis). The image of the benevolent father and patriarch becomes ravaged for her. As a last stop, she questions the values of Islam regarding women and speaks of the hypocrisy of its imams (66), hence commits a heresy in the eyes of Muslims. Although these seemingly radical alterations in Nazneen's perspective do not solely happen on the basis of her immigration trauma and some of it is not explicitly connected to it, they take place only after her immigration.

Nazneen's immigration trauma is hard to follow because it is only implied and we do not see her suffering from the oft-cited traumatic symptoms such as repetition compulsion. However, she suffers from fragmentation. Her experience shatters her into two: she is fragmented into little pieces between Bangladesh and England, between her past and present, between her own desires and her father's decisions and so on. She experiences it also as a split in her material reality. To her, her new life in Brick Lane where she lives with Chanu does not seem real and she in a sense loses her touch with her immediate reality. It is something that she does not see herself as a part of, as if she is watching it behind a screen. It is also like a shadowy dream that she cannot escape from, but "real life c[omes] to her only at night, when she sl[eeps]" (16). In her first years, Hasina is the one who constantly appears in her dreams. In these dreams the sisters are either children again (39), as if Nazneen never migrated, or they are reunited in Nazneen's imaginations (94). Her separation from Hasina has a great part in her suffering which affects her physically as well: she experiences it as "a stab in the lungs" (13). Her feeling of fragmentation also stems from the improvements supposedly made in her life through her

immigration. She admits that she has "everything here. All these beautiful things" (12) and that she spends "tolerable ... [days and] evenings [with] nothing to complain about" (34). Although there seems nothing wrong in principle, she cannot help but feel unwell and unhappy due to her changed environment and prolonged and thwarted adaptation to it.

When her suicidal ideations are revealed, we get a more explicit reference to Nazneen's unrest and sufferings that are connected to her trauma. After the scene where she overhears Chanu's motives for marrying her and begins to awaken to her "sealed" and boxed life, we see Nazneen contemplating on bleeding to death, due to a cut in her finger: "How long would it take to empty her finger of blood, drop by drop? How long the arm? And for the body, an entire body?" (15). She also admits that "[s]ometimes she dreamed the wardrobe had fallen on her, crushing her on the mattress. Sometimes she dreamed she was locked inside it and hammered and hammered but nobody heard" (16). Her suicidal thoughts that once again signal and emphasise her feelings of entrapment, are Nazneen's way of silently crying for help though no one seems to listen to or even care about her. As her imagined act of "hammering" indicates, she does not helplessly contemplate on suicide but is drawn to it as an idea because it represents "a way out" of this life, which feels like an antidote to her suffering. In addition, it represents her unceased hopes, though they are only for a helping hand or a saviour that would come to her aid.

Later in the novel, when the news of a neighbour woman's doubtful death (they do not know whether she jumped off or fell from the window) is brought to Nazneen, we see how her perception of suicide has changed since her own ideations. At the night after she finds out the death, we see her leaning out to a window that secures an association between herself and the dead woman, whose missing name furthers the implication of trauma on other subjects as well. Nazneen contemplates on her:

> The woman who fell, what terror came to her mind when she went down? What thoughts came? If she jumped, what thoughts came? Would they be the same ones? In the end, did it matter whether she jumped or fell? Suddenly *Nazneen was sure that she had jumped*. A big jump, feet first and arms wide, eyes wide, silent all the way down and *her hair wild and loose, and a big smile on her face* because with this single everlasting act she *defied* everything and everyone. (33-4, emphasis added)

Nazneen at first tries to empathise with her not only because she is a fellow immigrant from her community, but also a woman who reminds Nazneen of her previous suicidal ideations. She identifies with her to the extent that the dead woman dissolves into her and disappears from her narrative because Nazneen begins to fabricate a story for her which only reflects her own renewed perception of suicide. It does not indicate helplessness or escapism for Nazneen anymore, but refers to an insubmissive "act" willed consciously. Furthermore, the details on the woman's imagined hair and smile recall *Jane Eyre*'s Bertha Mason, another defiant woman who is known for her laugh and whose hair is depicted as "streaming" (Brontë 428) when she jumps off the roof. Both Bertha and the unnamed woman (who is, in a way, a representative of all the women in their community) are members of a colonised or previously colonised country from which they "migrate" to Britain only to be locked up (both physically and mentally) and disempowered once more, perhaps not by colonialism, but by patriarchy. Yet, their deaths are greeted and even celebrated as acts of defiance which challenge male supremacy (and with it, colonialism/imperialism as well) by rejecting to submit to it. Both the connoted image and emphasis on women's defiance hence foreshadow Nazneen's gradual abandonment of the idea of a saviour and her evolving understanding of individual agency and power.

Besides the tattoo lady she greets with and some fellow neighbours she later befriends to keep her company, Nazneen has really few to hold on to in her first years. Her boxed life in London has little to offer in terms of support and solace which she finds only through her own. Upstone in her *British Asian Fiction* draws our attention to Nazneen's inclination to liken her present environment to that of Bangladesh and she regards it "as part of a larger strategy which secures [her] emotional survival" (120). Upstone gives examples of Nazneen associating the tattoo lady with "the sadhus ... [in] Muslim villages" (Ali 9), London traffic with "walking out in monsoon" and blaring horns with the voice of "muezzin ululating" (49). Nazneen, then, stands out as a character who seeks for the familiar in the unfamiliar, which would help her unrest to disappear and make her feel at home. However, "[t]hese metaphors and similes" Nazneen uses also characterise her "as archetypal diasporic subject, with one foot in present location, another in the

geography of the past" (Upstone 120) which in fact highlights her feelings of fragmentation.

The novel does not principally concern itself with the conventions of Islam and preconceptions of its followers which regard women as inferior and secondary beings that are seen only as a property of men, which have their share in Nazneen's gender-based trauma. In other words, the novel treats these conventions as working mechanisms of patriarchy but fails to connect them to religion. Consequently, Nazneen turns to religion rather than detaching herself from it. Especially in her first years, the Qur'an becomes and functions as the sole piece that evokes feelings of security and peace for her. She either reads from it or recites the suras that she memorised as a schoolgirl (12). She does not in fact understand what the suras mean because they are in Arabic but she still sticks to them because "rhythm of them soothed her. Her breath came from down in her stomach. In and out. Smooth. Silent" (12). Her breathing pattern and its decreasing tone suggest a meditation which is later re-invoked: "every afternoon ... Nazneen sat cross-legged on the floor. While she sat, she was no longer collection of hopes, random thoughts, petty anxieties, and selfish wants that made her, but was whole and pure" (34). Recalling Buddhist monks with her seated position and her wish to liberate from desires, Nazneen seems to be trying to align herself with religion or rather, any religion's meditative and repetitive practices that would unburden her heart. She recites prayers and performs salat five times a day (35) but she does not concern herself with the meaning behind the words or salat positions. They act only as verbal and bodily repetitions that provide her day with an order (35). Consequently, these mantra-like replications and meditative gestures can be regarded as her way of dealing with the chaos her hostile and traumatogenic environment brings to her life. They are also her attempt to gather the pieces of her shattered life back together, to give them the rhythm and serenity that her life essentially lacks.

2.3. Gender-based Trauma

Brick Lane reveals the ways in which immigration is a gendered process through contrasting Nazneen's and her husband Chanu's experiences as immigrants. Chanu migrates to find work and better his prospects and is able to learn the language

thanks to which he tries to integrate himself into British society whereas Nazneen's immigration is closely linked and due to her gender because as a woman, as a supposedly exchange piece between men, she is sent by her father to marry. Although Nazneen's immigration trauma itself is gendered, the novel specifically focuses on gender-based trauma that spreads across different countries and generations. For example, we hear Nazneen's mother's and other elder relatives' accounts of female suffering and get to read her sister Hasina's letters from Bangladesh which present nothing but a life full of misery for women in which they are beaten, bought, sold, and raped. These accounts exemplify event-based and gender-related traumas but in Nazneen's case, her traumas are mostly insidious ones which are "induced by patriarchal identity formation" (Forter, "Freud, Faulkner, Caruth" 260) rather than physical violence. Throughout her life, Nazneen as a woman is exposed to certain stereotypes that deem her ineffectual, fragile, vulnerable, and incapable. As Craps points out, these stereotypes affect marginalised groups and in this case, Nazneen as a woman, and cause her "to develop feelings of inferiority, inadequacy, and self-hatred" by changing and even shattering her perception of herself. What we have to keep in mind in Nazneen's situation is, however, what she faces is not any physical or extraordinary traumatic event but rather, "a continuous exposure" (Craps 30) to certain stereotypes and traditional expectations which she is unable to abide by but which nonetheless have cumulative traumatic impact in her life that fragments her into two.

Besides her gendered immigration trauma, other women's and especially her sister's life stories emphasise that Nazneen's or women's trauma in general, is not solely triggered by immigration or exclusive to their experiences in the host country, but has other layers whose roots date way before their immigration and whose span mostly covers these women's lifetime. These women come into being only through their roles as daughters and wives, which actually offer them nothing but to marry the ones they are ordered to, serve their husbands, and bear their children. These constraining expectations basically erase any possibility for these women to act, to speak, and even to feel and to think on their own. Faced with a never-ending clash with their own identity and what their roles demand of them, they inevitably experience fragmentation which result in their own condemnation

of their own individual desires. There is also the ever-present possibility and threat of violence for women who even slightly deviate from these expectations. Therefore, in such an environment where female suffering is the norm, not only what Nazneen personally experiences but also what she vicariously witnesses and inherits become traumatic.

With her first touch to the world and without a moment's delay, Nazneen is exposed to sexist and patriarchal ideology that discriminates her on the basis of her sex and stigmatises her. When the news of Nazneen's birth is brought to her father, he only reacts by saying "Never mind. ... What can you do?" (Ali 4) because she is a girl, not a boy. Her father obviously considers her as a secondary and inferior being compared to men and this understanding shapes her formative years in Bangladesh with the help of repeated stories concerning women and told by women.

The most revisited story in the novel is "How You Were Left To Your Fate" (5) which tells Nazneen's premature birth and not breathing for a few minutes only to return back from the dead as a weak baby (3). The midwife offers Nazneen's mother, Rupban, two solutions: either to take her to the city hospital which would cost them a fortune or to leave it to fate to decide. Rupban "wise[ly]" and "courageous[ly]" (4) decides to do absolutely nothing but wait for fate to decide what will happen to her sickly newborn baby. Nazneen eventually survives and is told of this story so many times throughout her life that it "develops into an oft-repeated explanatory mantra (its authority indicated by the capitals that give the tale official 'story' qualities)" (7) as Tancke argues. It indeed becomes an explanation but also an instruction for women not to take action but only to wait for other people or a supposedly greater power to come to their aid. Women are made to believe that they are incapable and ineffectual beings who have no say in the world or place to take an action against life. However, this story also suggests that Nazneen's life is a struggle for survival and she is fundamentally a survivor since her birth, which implicitly signals to her and to the reader what she is capable of.

The discourse that deems women ineffectual is especially widespread among Rupban's generation. They are frequently heard uttering sentences such as "If God

wanted us to ask questions, he would have made us men" (Ali 78), "[suffering] is all that is left to us in this life. ... We are just women, what can we do? ... God has made the world this way" (104), "*I am a woman alone. I put here on earth to suffer. I am waiting and suffering. This is all*" (158, original emphasis) and so on. These women are taught to believe that they cannot change or have any effect on anything and this leads Nazneen to conclude that "[w]hat could not be changed must be borne. And since nothing could be changed, everything had to be borne" (6). They have internalised their decreed and unquestioned inferiority which is used to restrain them and make them passive even towards issues that concern their own lives. Then, the possibility of acting on their own taken away from them, these women are expected and advised only to accept and endure whatever comes their way, meanwhile suffering and waiting.

Women through their close interaction with and acting as a source of information for especially the young Nazneen inevitably help to maintain patriarchy through teaching her to bow to the conventions and stereotypes offered by it which values women no more than objects. Women are regarded as mere exchange pieces travelling between men, between their fathers and their husbands, to serve what they are required of at any given moment. For example, Chanu wants "a good worker" (14) who would satisfy his wishes both in the kitchen and in bed, though he feels upset that Nazneen cannot organise his files due to her lack of English (15). Besides managing the house, Nazneen is also responsible for Chanu's personal hygiene. She cuts his corns, toe nails, finger nails, his hair and ear hair (32 and 90). Nazneen basically works for Chanu without a wage in every field he requires her of. Moreover, when Chanu quits his job and does nothing but sit at home, Nazneen starts to work as a tailor but she does not even know what she earns (220) because he takes it all to pay his debts. Therefore, he is an exploitative figure who feeds on her hard work.

Chanu's persistent demand to put women to use in every possible way includes his daughters as well. He asks them to do housework but it bothers him when they finish it and have their own time. He finds a solution to this and "*employ[s]* the girls as page turners" (216, emphasis added) who are expected to understand from

the signs on his face that he has finished reading a page and turn it for him. The image of employment recalls and highlights his approach to Nazneen as a worker without a wage but the scene depicts him as a ludicrous character that we should laugh at and not take seriously as if his treatment of women did not pose a problem. However, when his daughters fail to accomplish a task, he regards them as "disrespectful daughter[s] ... [w]ho fully deserved the lashing, verbal *or otherwise*" (216, emphasis added). There is unfortunately physical violence involved in his relationship with his daughters as he flogs them (189) or strikes Shahana with a mouse and threatens to kill her: "I am going to tie her up and cut out her tongue. ... when I have skinned her alive she will not be looking so pleased with herself" (212). Although Chanu's humorous scenes and portrayal draw the reader to underestimate, overlook or even laugh at his apparent inclination to sexism, his soon-to-be revealed violent behaviour makes it evident that everyday sexism and discrimination against women carry a solid probability to lead to and are closely linked to physical violence and even Chanu's ridiculously foolish portrayal is unable to hide it.

The lurking threat of violence hovers over the lives of women in the novel. Hasina is beaten by her husband and leaves him although her landlady advises her not to because "*it is better get beaten by own husband than beating by stranger*" (54, original emphasis) as if there is no other possibility than being beaten for women, as if it is a "natural" and essential part of their lives. Nazneen also finds it "foolish to assume [that Chanu] would never beat her" and suspects that he would "if she lapsed" (14). It is not Chanu that frightens Nazneen (because he has not displayed any violent behaviour yet) but the patriarchal mindset that he represents which legitimises objectification and oppression of women and violence against them. Since women are regarded as mere possessions owned by men, it is supposedly up to them to decide how to treat them.

Hasina, who functions as a foil to Nazneen in her emancipation story, has the most tragic life story in which she is beaten by her husband, slandered by her co-worker and boss, raped by her landlord, and driven to prostitution. Through her we get to hear the Bangladeshi side of gender-based oppression and learn that widowed and

childless women are required to return to their family home (231) as if they can expect nothing else from life, that teen girls aged eleven are bought and sold for prostitution (177), that there are women who have been tortured by their husbands who pour acid on their bodies (289) and so on and these stories increase the amount of examples given to point out sufferings and event-based traumas women are expected to face. The Bangladeshi side of the story and these examples also indicate that Nazneen's or immigrant women's trauma in London is not limited to immigration trauma but is closely related to their gender and function both as a reminder and warning about gender-based trauma that women experience in Bangladesh.

Together with her own experiences, what Nazneen gathers from other women and their misery add up to and further her gender-based trauma which one can observe even in the childhood of Nazneen. She is described as "a comically solemn child" (6) who carries the burden of her mother's teachings that bid her to stay passive and silent as a member of the female sex. Even at an early age, Nazneen believes that "[m]atters of life and death were beyond her scope" and when a beaten village man asks for her help, she simply refuses him on the ground of her supposed inadequacy, though in reality she is perfectly capable of aiding him (107).

The discourse of "We are just women, what can we do?" (104) works its way into Nazneen's mind and changes the way she perceives herself. Patriarchal ideology informs her through stereotypes of what she, as a woman, is capable of and what she is allowed and expected to do and think. This yet again fragments her between her own wishes and thoughts and what is expected of her to the extent that when she looks at the mirror she is unable to see herself (233) because her life is not her making but she just follows some instructions. She is unable to recognise herself because the one who is facing her is living another's life. When she sees her reflection in a shop window, she experiences a similar fragmented feeling: "For a moment she saw herself clearly, following her husband, head bowed, hair covered, and she was pleased. In the next instant her feet became heavy and her shoulders ached" (271). When she is able to view herself from the outside, leaving aside the teachings of female oppression she has internalised throughout her life, she feels

disturbed and unsatisfied with what she faces. She feels "trapped inside this body" over which she is made to believe she has no control of as a piece exchanged between men but nothing more, and "[trapped] inside this room, inside this flat" (74) from which there seems to be no way out other than suicide.

The image of Nazneen's dead mother Rupban, through her frequent appearance, both furthers Nazneen's fragmentation and acts as a reminder of gender-based trauma. As "a good and patient woman" (5) Rupban becomes Nazneen's idol and represents the embodiment of a saint-like (40) "good wife" which Nazneen aspires to become one day (7). Known for her "crying" (4) and "wailing" (249), Rupban is a phantom-like figure, not so different from the angel in the house, who preaches not to do anything but wait in the face of misery (40) and regards suffering as an integral part of women's lives, hence the assumption of women being "put ... on earth to suffer" (158). The myth of women's and Rupban's endurance skills is so forceful to the point that Nazneen believes her mother "didn't make a single sound when [Nazneen] was born" (68) although she gives birth in her house with the help of a midwife, most probably experiencing extreme pain.

With her mother's example before her, Nazneen starts to feel a sharp contrast between herself and her idol when she is married off to Chanu. Six months into her marriage, she acknowledges herself to be "*the wishing type*" (9, original emphasis) who wishes for a life away from Chanu, although she is unable to openly accept and express it even to herself. There seems to be a constant and silent war between her own thoughts/desires and those that are expected of her, which again highlights her feeling of fragmentation. Her mind does not seem to belong to her, as it "walk[s] off on its own" (92) and "becom[es] too loose ... tramping this way and that without discipline" (244). Due to her confinement in the house, she often spends her time day-dreaming and her mind "drift[s] off to where she wanted to be" (39) to the extent that when Chanu comes back home it surprises her (94) because in her mind she lives another life which is in clear contradiction with the one she is entrapped in. When she recognises her aspirations, she condemns herself as if she were a criminal, she makes promises to herself and her mother to be a good wife and stop dreaming altogether (94). Hereby, invisible barriers of

patriarchal mindset pierces even into the most private space she seems to have, i.e., her mind, preventing her from thinking and dreaming. Furthermore, recalling Eve and the creation myth in Genesis, Nazneen's thoughts are likened to a venomous snake:

> there was this shapeless, nameless thing that *crawled* across her shoulders and *nested* in her hair and *poisoned* her lungs, that made her both restless and listless. ... What do you want? it *hissed* ... She pretended not to hear, but it got louder. She made bargains with it [that she would not dream or miss her prayers but it] ... burrowed deeper into her internal organs. (103, emphasis added)

The snake metaphor marks Nazneen as an insubmissive and disobedient woman who defies, through a seemingly simple act of thinking, socially constructed expectations for her gender. With Rupban's silent and absent but insistent presence towering over her, Nazneen struggles to ignore and dismiss the drums of yearning rising inside her, however ineffectually. She acknowledges that her life is nothing "but a series of gnawings, *ill-defined* and impossible to satisfy" (81, emphasis added). A desiring woman is basically wrong and evil, she has been taught, and her wishes and needs can never be met because it is not the way "God has made the world" (104).

The symptoms that indicate Nazneen's gender-based trauma include her "anxiety" (323), "depression" (396), repetitive dreams and nightmares about her mother (474), numbing (350), and physical ailment which reveals itself through her "vomit[ing]" (348), fainting (350), and having hallucinations of her mother (348). When Nazneen is hospitalised after her fainting, Dr Azad, their community doctor, concludes that she has "nervous exhaustion" (351) and advises her to rest but nothing more. His prescription for Nazneen recalls early trauma theory's individual-oriented approach that prioritises psychological and temporary amelioration, if not recovery, of the individual by leaving the harming oppressive systems (that cause such nervous breakdowns) unquestioned. Likewise, as a representative of the status quo, Dr Azad suggests Nazneen nothing but to rest (which reminds Rupban's preaching on waiting) in her confined space which is the very thing that makes her physically ill.

Nazneen's sense of fragmentation also continues and she feels the need for her mother's approval as she sees a sharp contrast between herself and what Rupban represents and aims at forming herself into her idol's shape. She talks to her mother in her dreams, waiting for her to act as a guiding torch in a place where it feels too unfamiliar, and asks her: "What shall I do?" (473). What she gets as an answer is nothing she can cope with because her mother accuses Nazneen of being responsible for the death of her son. In other words, Rupban blames Nazneen because she does not leave her son Raqib's life to fate but she brings him to the hospital and later she concludes that she even fought for his life herself (474) which is in sharp contrast with "How You Were Left To Your Fate" story and Rupban's attitude and inaction in the face of baby Nazneen's sickness. Undoubtedly, it is not Rupban speaking but Nazneen's projection of her as a saint-like mother and wife, whose unattainable image Nazneen contests to fit into but fail to do so and also through which she castigates herself.

Even as a child, Nazneen regards her mother as a suffering but enduring woman, whose

> source of ... woes ... was *something to do with being a woman*, of that much she was sure. When she was a woman she would find out. She looked forward to that day. She longed to be enriched by this hardship. (104, emphasis added)

Rupban's suffering is closely linked to her gender-based trauma which vicariously affects Nazneen in her formative years as well until they rise to the surface after her own marriage. The suffering women have to bear is something to be praised and willingly arrived at in the eyes of Nazneen, which would supposedly refine her. Yet, she is unable to understand "[t]he cause of Amma's suffering" because Rupban claims that "I don't want anything from this life ... I ask for nothing. I expect nothing" (103). As a character who purports to be completely indifferent to life, she is excessively in pain, which Nazneen has difficulty in understanding. Towards the end of the novel Hasina through her letters reveals both to Nazneen and the readers that Rupban actually committed suicide after a long-continued argument over her husband's wish to marry a second wife. Only after this revelation Nazneen is able to understand her mother's suffering and see her as she is, not as a woman who waits but "act[s]" (477) willingly and defiantly, almost

identically to Nazneen's aforementioned understanding of suicide. Rupban meets her death as if she is celebrating, "wearing her best sari" as it is a "special day" for her (40). Consequently, only after this epiphanic moment Nazneen is able to ease her mind and make peace with her mother's haunting image which is not only broken but exposed as baseless and empty, and decides to take full control of her life as her mother did, though in different ways.

2.4. Silent/Bodily Resistances

One of the major problems of earlier approaches to trauma theory is that they offer little or no agency to the survivors and hence no hope to understand their trauma, to recover from it or to resist its causes. The survivors are imagined as helpless victims who are caught in a series of unwilled and uncontrollable symptoms whose meaning they are unable to grasp and to connect to traumatogenic social, economic and political systems they are situated in. However, Nazneen does not comply with this model because hers is not a character without agency. Although she does not consciously name patriarchy as the cause of her gender-based trauma, she resists its closest representative, i.e., Chanu. Neither does she openly revolt but she, in her own way, performs subtle rebellions that indicate both her agency and near-consciousness of her situation.

Nazneen realises that she is able to think whatever she likes as long as she presents herself and pretends as a mild and submissive wife. It takes her only a year to figure out what Chanu expects of her at any given moment and to act accordingly. Since Chanu regards her as a simple village girl, whenever she is asked of her opinion, she answers: "I am only a girl from the village. I don't know anything about" (46). After she recognises Chanu as an avid talker who is interested in his monologues rather than in communication, Nazneen learns how to reply to him and understands if she is "required" (89) to answer or to stay silent. If she is expected to contribute to his monologues, her speech is always delivered in a mild tone and with simple and approving sentences:

> 'If you say so, husband.' She had begun to answer him like this. She meant to say something else by it: sometimes that *she disagreed*, sometimes that she didn't understand or that *he was talking rubbish*, sometimes that *he was mad*. But he heard it only as, 'If you say so.' (100, emphasis added)

She in a way learns his ways and uses them against him to appear meek, which supplies her with a freer space she can furnish with her more defiant thoughts. Her chosen and strategic silence and use of short sentences function as a protective wall that serves her to distance herself from Chanu so that her thoughts become difficult to reach and pin down and ensures her survival in this patriarchal environment. Meanwhile, she comments on and criticises him for not praying (35), for being a talker who is incapable of acting (92), for being a hypocrite who forbids the household to speak English while he himself does (204), and finally makes fun of him with Razia (198), which are all unacceptable acts for a wife in a traditional Islamic context as theirs. The fact that Nazneen is able to act and think as such only in his absence perhaps undermines the strength of her statements. However, they also manifest that she is not the simple, mild, and weak woman she appears to be but that she has a mind of her own.

Nazneen's protest against Chanu is a sign that she is, at least to some extent, able to see her gender-based trauma's connection to patriarchy, although she does not challenge it directly but chooses to rebel against its closest representative. She uses her body and her house for such a goal, which are paradoxically the two spheres that Islam and patriarchy, hand in hand, entrap women in. As a first step, she changes her eating habits and refuses to eat in front of Chanu as if "food was no concern of her" (34). Her refusal makes a statement for her: "'Eat! Eat!' her husband told her at mealtimes. But for him she would not. She showed her self-restraint like this. Her self-denial. She wanted to make it visible. It became a habit, then a pleasure, taking solace in these midnight meals" (75-6). Taking "rolls of fat that hung low from Chanu's stomach" (14) and his exploitative behaviour into consideration, if we can draw a parallelism between food or its overconsumption with Chanu's inclination to feed on and gobble up women and their hard work, then we can consider Nazneen's act not as a simple rejection of nourishment, but as an attempt to separate herself from what Chanu or his food represents. Moreover, it is significant that she does not stop eating altogether but eats while cooking (34) or late at night after Chanu falls asleep (33). In the name of protesting her husband, she does not risk her own health to the point of self-destruction, yet she implicitly points out her wish to dissociate herself from him. Furthermore, as food-

giving/sharing has an important place in Islamic cultures and to refuse to eat basically insults the sharer, it can be said that Nazneen not only challenges Chanu's authority by declining to do what he bids, but also undermines and insults it boldly through her refusal.

Nazneen's resistances are full of subtlety which can be exemplified with this simple quotation: when in bed, she "began to regulate her breathing so that she inhaled as [Chanu] did. When she got it wrong she could smell his breath" (33). The first sentence reads as if she is trying to adapt herself to him, so that even their breathing would occur simultaneously. Whereas in reality, it points out her revulsion and amounts to her self-protection.

As a next step, Nazneen abandons her domestic "duties," or at least the ones that involve cleaning and washing Chanu's every possible belonging. She considers these as "her domestic guerrilla actions" (101). Then, her labour at home, which Chanu readily exploits, turns into her rebellion against him: "All her chores, peasants in his princely kingdom, rebelled ... [as small] insurrections, designed to destroy the state from within" (59). Although these sentences feel like overstatements (and indeed they are, since Chanu does not even notice these "rebellions") they also signal how Nazneen's perception of herself changes from the woman who waits to the woman who acts, and point out the significance and hope that she puts into her own seemingly small actions. Given her circumstances of enclosed domestic life, these are her way of expressing her dissatisfaction, irritation, and resistance, regardless of their scale and range. Yes, they are subtle acts that are prone to go "undetected" (73) but they show her what she is capable of and that she is not without agency, and it is that what counts.

There are three characters in the novel that influence Nazneen to recognise her own potential rather than to become the meek wife she aspires to be. The first one is Hasina, who principally "listen[s] to no one" (6) besides her heart's desire. Although her story is used to shine Nazneen's emancipation story, and hence following her heart brings her nothing but trouble, Hasina is the first woman that Nazneen knows who does not promote suffering and is against "*waiting around suffering around*" (167, original emphasis). The second one is Mrs Islam, an elder-

woman from their community, who points to Nazneen the inner power she carries: "If you think you are powerless, then you are. Everything is within you, where God put it" (62). Her approach is still closely tied to Islamic tradition and she relies on a supposedly greater power that would aid the individual, not the individual themselves, her words nevertheless have a potential stimulating effect on Nazneen to take her inner power into account. The last one is Mrs Azad, their community doctor Dr Azad's "Westernised" wife, whom Nazneen meets only once and briefly. Nazneen is taken into liking her (115) and regards her as a "street fighter" (117) because she is able to silence Chanu and to speak her mind (115). Mrs Azad compares women in their community to "walking prisons" (117) and expresses her disappointment in life because she did not "enjoy [herself] when [she] was young" (116). Her limited presence functions both as a warning against Nazneen to find pleasure in life and appreciate herself, and as a reminder of what a woman is capable of.

As an isolated woman who is in interaction with only a handful of people even after having spent twenty years in London, Nazneen's yearnings for intimacy and human connection are only answered when a young man named Karim starts to work as a middleman for her, distributing her tailored goods. When Nazneen starts having an affair with him, within the very walls of her family home that made her feel trapped, we get the impression that she learned her lesson from Mrs Azad to find pleasure and enjoy her life. She is drawn to him in an instant both out of loneliness and because he is the only man that she encounters and exchanges words with after her marriage. From the first moment she sets her eyes on him, Nazneen clearly feels sexual tension towards Karim, as she does not cover her head in front of him (224) because she "consider[s] him" (222) and is aroused when she watches him perform salat (249). Although they exchange some supposedly accidental touches (260 and 273), it is only after Nazneen goes to the Bengal Tigers' meeting that they have their first sexual encounter. Recalling her mother, she wears one of her best saris (297) that day to join the meeting. When she comes back home, she feels that Karim would follow her and is right, she welcomes him even before he knocks on the door (309). This seemingly telepathic communication probably stems from their understanding of each other's bodily gestures but it is significant

that their communication takes place extralingually because the verbal language they use and share is fundamentally tainted with and reflects sexist and patriarchal ideologies that deem Nazneen's desires nonexistent and unimaginable. Her desires, however, speak volumes in her own way, audible for the neighbours (327).

Nazneen begins to discover her bodily pleasures and acknowledge her own desires which are the things that she has been taught to ignore throughout all her life. Their relationship has a more sexual oriented dimension for her, though for Karim it is a "serious business" (323). Although she has been married for more than fifteen years, Karim becomes "the first man to see her naked" from whom she "t[akes] her pleasure desperately" (321). With him, "[s]he [becomes] aware of her body, as though just now she had come to inhabit it for the first time" (371). Karim, then, not only introduces her to pleasure but even to her own body, and ultimately, to herself. Through their relationship, she begins to accept herself as she is, a living and breathing woman made of flesh and filled with desires.

After their first encounter, Nazneen's life becomes "bloated with meaning" (321) to the extent that she thinks that "she had been born deficient and only now been gifted the missing sense" (324). She describes her relationship as thus: "It's like you're watching the television in black and white and someone comes along and switches on the colors. ... And then they pull you right inside the screen, so you're not watching anymore, you're part of it" (468). Her *Pleasantville*-like similes demonstrate that Karim not only gives her bodily pleasure, but also fills her dull and unsatisfactory life.

With Karim, Nazneen transgresses the boundaries that determine her relations to others as a Muslim, middle-aged, married woman, wife, and mother who transforms her boxed life and prison-like home into a more appreciating environment that acknowledges her own thoughts and desires. Her relationship makes her realise that she is capable of going after what she wants and hence, for the first time in her life it feels like her life is her own making:

> If ever her life was out of her hands, it was now. She had submitted to her father and married her husband; she had submitted to her husband. And now she gave herself up to a power greater than these two, and she felt herself

> helpless before it. ... the thought crept into her mind that the power was inside her, that she was its creator. (322)

At first she is actually unable to accept this thought owing to all those teachings that formed and marked her as "a weak woman" (322) and she is "as startled by her own agency as an infant who waves a clenched fist and strikes itself upon the eye" (6). However, her body resists social restraints that are fed both by patriarchy and Islam and she creates, within the limits of her confined home, a space in which she can exercise her agency and actualise herself. She also creates an alternative form of community consisting of two people, which carries the promise of or at least signal to a potential change in communities to become more embracing to the individual's desires and less restrictive, judging, and stigmatising against them.

2.5. One-to-One Relationships and Possibilities of Sharing/Recovery

Karim as a catalyst undeniably functions as stimulating or at least quickening Nazneen's transformation but they are able to forge a relationship only because they seem to provide each other what the other is lacking in their lives. In other words, their relationship does not have a solid ground to flourish and nourish them individually but it temporarily functions to fill the unavoidable void in their personal lives. Nazneen wants a way out of her entrapped life with Chanu whereas Karim tries to establish a connection with his cultural roots. For example, Nazneen frequently compares Karim with Chanu (279 and 281) and concludes that he is different, that he is a man of action who does not stumble but who has a "place in the world" (283) which she considers a lack in Chanu's and her own lives. Karim, on the other hand, is drawn to Nazneen because she is among the "older women" (250) who wear the same saris that his mother used to wear (225), representing the old generation that he approaches nostalgically. He states that he likes Nazneen because she is "the real thing" (419) that does not resemble the two types of girls of his generation who are either too Westernised or too religious. At that point Nazneen realises that Karim is actually no different than Chanu, who regarded her as a simple village girl. For Karim, Nazneen seems to be the embodiment of an "imaginary homeland" (Rushdie 428) that he pictures in his mind as a country he has never been to (Ali 376). Although he claims England as his country (224), racial and religious conflicts that he experiences prevent his identification with its

culture and induce his search for the supposedly lacking “real thing” in his life to complete it.

It is significant that Nazneen is the one who awakens to and expresses the misconceived nature of their relationship and abandons Karim, because it shows her growing understanding of not only herself, but of those around her. She admits that she “had patched him together” from bits and pieces to fit into her ideal and that she represented a “Bengali wife. A Bengali mother. An idea of home. An idea of himself that he found in her” (498) for Karim. She even dismisses the idea of their having a relationship by regarding it only as a “problem” on the ground that they “made each other up” (498). Indeed they did, and Karim is nothing other than Chanu’s replication, albeit a younger and a seemingly more open-minded one. For example, Cormack draws our attention to the lovers’ conversations which made Nazneen feel “as if she had said a weighty piece” (280) and hence important, and makes us “notice that she is merely adding phatic markers to the conversation: it is his own voice that he listens to and approves of” (Cormack 705) which inevitably brings Chanu’s monologues into mind.

Nazneen’s leaving both Karim and her husband marks her story as “a stereotypically ‘Western’ emancipatory tale” (Tancke 8) because she escapes the clutches of men around her and creates a female space which consists of her friends and daughters with whom she starts her own stitching business. Cormack regards her transformation as her “growth into a Western bourgeois subject” (713) which is highlighted and even furthered by the novel’s American-dream-like ending that depicts England as a place where “[y]ou can do whatever you like” (Ali 541). In that scene, Nazneen is about to ice-skate in her sari and Upstone considers it “a fusion of British and Bangladeshi influences: the vibrant colour of traditional dress against the cold whiteness of an English winter day” (179). The ending, then, presents an “[u]nrealistic and even utopian future” (Pereria-Ares 215) where Nazneen is unproblematically blended and integrated into British society whereas she substantially hides herself in an all-female and all-Bangladeshi community.

Jane Hiddleston remarks the “surprisingly little time [the novel devotes to] examining racial hatred” (68) and the same can be said for religious discrimination

and Islamophobia, especially when we think that one third of the novel takes place in post-9/11. There are only little instances where they are briefly mentioned as second-hand experiences such as a woman's hijab being "pulled off" or Razia being "spat at" (Ali 400). However, taking into account of the heightening appraisal of British people for their minding their own business and of the female community's tendency to disregard systemic racial and religious discriminations on the ground that there are good and bad people everywhere, but not racists, leads us to regard Nazneen's evolution, which is presented to us as an earned freedom, only as an absorption, not as integration, into British society. It is true that Nazneen gains some agency through her actions, but it might be only a false freedom she attains, in opposition to the implausible ending, because she completely disregards any other discrimination than that of gender.

What is problematic with the novel's American-dream-like ending which heralds a cultural fusion and integration on Nazneen's side in Britain where she can do whatever she likes is that it erases migrant's trauma for the sake of polishing Nazneen's "emancipated woman's tale" by "push[ing] the narrative in a feel-good feminist direction" (Falconer qtd. in Upstone 169) and declines a) the racial and religious discrimination prevalent in the society which Nazneen is supposedly integrated but is in no way in connection with, and b) the significance of sexual politics which plays no small part in Nazneen's actualisation of herself. Option A not only brings about the fact that "the novel presents an idealistic and incomplete resolution [which reveals that] nothing has changed materially for Nazneen or her community" (Upstone 171) but also undermines Nazneen's evolving understanding of both herself and of her surroundings and renders it questionable. For example, when a visiting councillor asks Nazneen if she is "finding it hard to cope," she, without a moment's hesitation, replies with a "No" (Ali 532). With this scene, she completely ignores her immigration trauma and suicidal ideations for the sake of creating a reversed image of the "weak woman" (322) she had accepted herself to be and hence makes us feel that she has actually no fundamental understanding of her position that is situated between different layers of traumatogenic systems. Option B, on the other hand, ignores the potential her one-to-one relationship with Karim carries as an alternative site of communal sharing and recovery and simply

underestimates the potential power that Nazneen's sexual awakening has to the point of its full dismissal, and it not only reminds conventional and patriarchal teachings that deem women's desires nonexistent, but also reinforces their validity.

Nazneen's dismissal of sexual awakening and its implications is problematic but one-to-one relationships and their potential power to offer communal sharing and recovery are not fully obliterated from her life in the end of the novel. Nazneen starts a cooperative business with the women in her neighbourhood. The all-female and all-Bangladeshi community she builds for herself consists of other immigrant and Muslim women with similar backgrounds and possible traumas that draw these women to one another. This feminine space represents solidarity among women from which they take their strengths and are offered with a possibility of recovery as it is a communal sharing site for their traumas. They also run a cooperative business as tailors which supplies them the economic freedom they need to detach themselves from any representative of patriarchal ideology that entraps them. Nazneen, besides doing the arm work, designs the patterns to be stitched hence she is engaged with the creative process which provides her with a space and medium to express herself after years of keeping herself to herself and remaining silent.

As we have seen, *Brick Lane* represents Nazneen both as a suffering and a resisting woman in the face of her insidious trauma. She experiences traumatic symptoms over which she does not have control, but she is not completely without agency like a helpless victim. She is suicidally depressed but seeks a way out of her imprisoned life and finds different mediums such as her body and strategic silence that help her to get through the day, to make room for her to express herself and to resist to the causes of her traumas. She even nestles into a community which might help her to share, express and work through her traumas. However, the novel's ending which represents Britain only as an emancipating and trauma-free zone by ignoring any trauma that is not related to gender (which supposedly only generates in Bangladesh and continues in London when Bangladeshi men are around) renders both Nazneen's understanding and possibility of working through her traumas questionable because it fails at acknowledging her interconnected and multilayered traumas and her situatedness between them.

Reading *Brick Lane* from the perspective of trauma theory helps us recognise the interconnection between women's immigration trauma and their gender by exposing immigration as a gendered process. It also offers a fertile ground to examine gender-based discrimination and the ways in which it impacts the lives of women and provides the reader with insight to women's suffering. Insidious trauma model prevents us from regarding this suffering as an inescapable and unsolvable problem for women which turn them into helpless victims, but demonstrates women's and Nazneen's ability to exercise their agency in the face of trauma to survive and resists its causes.

CHAPTER 3

THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS: MEANS OF SURVIVAL AND RESISTANCE SITES IN TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE

This chapter focuses on Arundhati Roy's debut novel *The God of Small Things* and its representation of trauma survivors and their responses to trauma. Similar to *Brick Lane*, the novel presents us traumatised characters but their responses to trauma vary from forms of protest and resistance to survival. While Caruth imagines trauma survivors solely as helpless victims who are imprisoned in inescapable and inevitable traumatic symptoms, the novel brings forth a more complex view of trauma survivors by giving them both the awareness which compels them to connect their traumas to the social and political systems that generate them and recurring traumatic symptoms they trouble with and are unable to disentangle themselves from. They at times find a means to protest and express their resistance to traumatogenic systems from which they struggle to dissociate themselves from and stop to participate in. However, they also display different traumatic symptoms, such as repetitive dreams, numbness, and fragmentation. With these in mind, this chapter will at first give an overview of the novel and touch upon prominent studies that have so far discussed the novel from different perspectives. Then it will continue with laying bare the central traumatogenic systems and traumatic events that affect the characters, the ways in which they respond to trauma and possibilities of resistance, survival, and recovery their responses point to.

3.1. An Overview of the Novel

The God of Small Things is set in Ayemenem, in the district of Kerala, India. It introduces us to the Ipe family whose three different generations we encounter with and those who are around them, such as servants and workers. The novel uses a non-linear narrative structure which mostly shifts back and forth between the years 1969 and 1993 and gives numerous characters (among whom are some of the

members of this family's different generations) voice to share their sides of the stories whose gaps will be filled through every different account along the way, revealing traumas lying underneath as the bits and pieces of these stories are told through different perspectives and brought together.

The Ipe family is upper-caste and upper-class Syrian Christians who are depicted as Anglophiles. Pappachi, who worked as an Imperial entomologist, is the ill-tempered father of the house who beats his wife, Mammachi and his daughter, Ammu. Ammu, in order to flee his violence, marries a man and gives birth to the twins, Estha and Rahel but her husband turns out to be an alcoholic and beats her. When his attacks begin to be directed at the children, Ammu leaves him and returns to Ayemenem, where Mammachi, Pappachi's sister Baby Kochamma, and Ammu's brother Chacko who has returned from England after his divorce from his English wife, Margaret, live after Pappachi's death.

Meanwhile, Mammachi makes pickles and jams and sells them from her kitchen but Chacko turns it into a factory business and takes control of it because he is the son of the house. Ammu, no matter how hard she tries and works in the factory, is constantly reminded that she has no place in the family home or factory because she is a daughter and a divorcee. Her soon-to-be lover Velutha, an Untouchable according to the caste system, works in this factory as well.

When Margaret's second husband dies, Chacko invites her and their daughter Sophie Mol to Ayemenem to spend Christmas with them. The family stays at a hotel in the city and goes to the cinema before greeting them at the airport. On the road, they encounter a communist march in which they see Velutha participating and because of this Ammu feels close to him and sees in him a reflection of her rage against the world. After that, in the cinema, the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man, a man who sells refreshments, molests Estha.

Ammu and her children are made to feel excluded and unwelcomed in the family house at every opportunity but after Margaret and Sophie's arrival, the farcical attitudes of the other members of the family in showering love to them become unbearable. On the very day of their arrival Ammu initiates her "scandalous"

relationship with Velutha, an Untouchable whom she is not even supposed to talk or have any interaction to. When their relationship is made known, tragic events follow. Sophie Mol drowns and Velutha is beaten to death. Ammu is made to separate from her children and send Estha to live with his father. Estha never sees his mother again and she dies whereas Rahel lives far away from her twin in the USA until they return to Ayemenem twenty-three years later and make love.

As the Man Booker Prize winner of 1997, *The God of Small Things* offers a fertile ground for discussion for a myriad of perspectives regarding both the content and form of the novel. One of the most renowned early criticisms comes from Aijaz Ahmad's "Reading Arundhati Roy *Politically*" in which he openly and highly praises the novel as "the most accomplished, the most moving novel by an Indian writer in English" (111) though he finds three major faults in it, i.e., Roy's sentimentally poetic prose, her misrepresentation of an actual communist figure (hence her anti-communism) and her overemphasis on individual sexuality as a "personal solution ... offered for ... social conflicts" rather than focusing on "the actually constituted field of politics" (114). In his (mis)reading of the novel, Ahmad reproaches Roy's "portrayal of the erotic as the real zone of rebellion [... and] the personal [... as] the only arena of the political" (119) and fails to consider even the title of the novel which foregrounds "small things" but never asserts them as *the* real and *only* zone of reaching *the* truth or political action.

Brinda Bose's feminist response to Ahmad in her "In Desire and in Death: Eroticism as Politics in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*" offers a more thorough understanding and reading of the novel which pays close attention to the interconnection between "personal politics" (122) and what Ahmad calls "the actually constituted field of politics" (Ahmad 114). Bose in her meticulous reading contends that attraction and eroticism Ammu experiences in the novel are not divorced from politics but are closely tied up and even emanates from her appreciation of her lover's red and communist politics. In contrast to Ahmad's understanding of ideal politics, then, Bose considers erotics as *a* politics rather than dismissing any individual act as unpolitical and argues that it is a viable politics as

any other, reminding that "the most personal dilemmas can also become public causes" (129).

Alongside its delicate approach to personal and national histories, transgression, and trauma, *The God of Small Things* also distinguishes itself with its remarkable handling of time. It breaks linearity and jumps backwards and forwards in time as well as in places through the sensations created in the characters by their surroundings and their recollections of them. Émillienne Baneth-Nouailhetas in her "The Structures of Memory" elaborates on this non-linear narrative structure and concludes that narrative movement is more of a circular and even spiral origin with its repetitive return to certain moments seen through the eyes of different characters whose "recollections come together to produce a whole" (147), feeding on the details offered in each perspective. Narrative style, according to her, not only accompanies the content with its focus on "smallness" and small voices of characters in contrast to hegemonic discourses, but it also draws a parallelism with processes of remembering by demonstrating on a memory-driven story which inclines the characters to re-evaluate not only their pasts, but also their present and future. Her time-centred narratological analysis, however, overlooks or fails to consider space as a component of narrative structure, which Susan Stanford Friedman carries out with her spatial analysis. In her "Spatial Poetics and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*" Friedman emphasises the novel as a story of transgression, which highlights borders and border crossings and these are reflected in the novel's representation of space and buildings. According to her, the novel does not approach space as a mere setting in which the events take place, but rather, it is regarded as a memory capsule that "contain[s] history" (199) itself. Buildings become the embodiment of the narration through which events sprout, marking space as "the generator of story" (203) rather than a mere background. Although Baneth-Nouailhetas and Friedman focus on time and space respectively and their triggering effect on the characters, what they have in common is their recognition of memory as the ultimate force that furthers and maintains the narrative.

Memory plays a central role in *The God of Small Things* as it closely engages with and puts forth time shifts in the process of remembering that presents a complex relationship between characters, their pasts, and traumas which brings about the novel's prolific exploration in trauma studies. L. Chris Fox in his "A Martyrology of the Abject: Witnessing and Trauma in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*" claims that the novel presents a "textbook portrayal of symptoms of trauma" (54) and this may offer an explanation to the vast number of critical texts examining the novel through perspective of trauma theory. Fox in his article makes the connection between trauma victims and martyrdom, building on the word's etymological root *martur* (witness) in Greek and regards the characters as witnesses to history and the novel as a testimonial writing which bears the fruits of possible social healing (57). However, his argument amounts to turning Velutha into "the martyred Christ-figure ... [who] dies for (because of) the sins of the world" (50) and risks attributing sacredness to his murder and hence elevating trauma victims to messiahs.

Elizabeth Outka offers another time-oriented approach to the novel but she connects it with trauma in her "Trauma and Temporal Hybridity in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*." She dwells on trauma survivors' way of experiencing time, which she calls temporal hybridity, i.e., being haunted by the past and repetitive memories of trauma meanwhile locking and not accessing those memories as if time froze the moment you experienced them. This simultaneous process is experienced as a disordering of time which is, according to Outka, reflected by the fragmented, non-linear narrative structure of the novel. In her article, Outka also deals with the possibility of recovery represented in the novel, which she regards as "one of the most neglected aspects of trauma theory" (44) and concludes that the novel is heavily burdened with "authorial tricks" (49) by its way of offering a dual ending for the reader but not giving a space for the characters to actualise it. Therefore, for Outka, the novel puts emphasis on recovering the traumatic memory but not on recovery as a healing for its characters.

Regarding the possibility of recovery, Margaret Herrick in her "New Ways of Thinking Recovery from Trauma in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* and

Two Other South Indian Narratives of Caste-Based Atrocity" offers a comparative reading of the novel with South Indian narrative traditions. Introducing us to *rasa* aesthetics (the notion that art does not merely imitate the world but it recreates it) and the concept of *lila* (play as an act of creation) she argues that the creative plays the characters (especially Velutha, Estha, and Rahel) engage with among themselves is a way of making the world anew, which in turn might promise the possibilities of communal recovery.

As a response to Fox' assertion of the novel's "textbook portrayal" of trauma symptoms, Herrick argues that the novel "resists a 'textbook' source of healing" (3) though it offers some possibilities. My main attempt in this chapter is to lay bare different social and political systems that beget trauma in the novel and the characters' responses to them, along with their connection to strategies of survival, resistance, and possibilities of recovery. I will dwell on possible social healing without regarding Velutha's murder as a sacrificial element in this end. Furthermore, rather than focusing on the concept of *lila*, I will put forward the recuperative effects of bodily encounter which imply a social sharing site and hence possibility of recovery.

For the scope of this chapter, I will be dealing with seemingly more "personal" traumas that affect characters in line with the novel's foregrounding of "small things" as opposed to "Worse Things" happening in India, such as "the terror of war" (Roy 19). In other words, I will not be focusing on colonial trauma although I acknowledge it as another layer of traumas represented in the novel. It is put forward mostly through the character of Chacko and his description of what he calls the "History House," which trapped their ancestors in but also "trapped [the current generations] outside their own history, and [rendered them] unable to retrace their steps because their footprints had been swept away" (52). This very quote establishes a link between colonial trauma and other traumatogenic systems because in the novel footprints being swept away is a mark of the caste system. The novel delicately demonstrates how "traumas produce traumas, ... [and] discrimination in one area augments discrimination in others" (Outka 39) by exposing the interconnectedness between these systems. Greg Forter takes this

connection a step further and considers colonial trauma as the generator of other traumas because he associates "the violation Estha suffers" with "the failure of India to materialize and confront the spectre of colonial Eros" ('Colonial' 95) and therefore runs the risk of regarding unacknowledged colonial past and its traumas as *the* reason for other traumas to come. These traumas are indeed intermingled and unresolved colonial trauma *may* be one of the causes for other traumas but it is hardly the only one, especially when we think of the novel's approach and urgent call to reconsider and re-evaluate India's pre-colonial history which was already patriarchal and caste-based and hence traumatogenic itself, without colonial interference.

The God of Small Things presents us with a wide spectrum of traumas, including event-based and insidious ones but rather than regarding these traumas inescapable or unsolvable, the novel lays bare these traumas' close relation to the very systems and contexts that generate them and heralds that recovery is possible. In the rest of this chapter, both of these event-based and insidious traumas will be explored through the responses of the trauma survivors but in line with my reading of *Brick Lane,* I attempt to concentrate on the possibilities and strategies of survival, resistance, and recovery that are in close connection with these responses in the novel, rather than seeing them solely as symptoms of trauma.

3.2. Gender and Caste-Based Traumatogenic Systems

Unlike *Brick Lane* which separates gender-based trauma into insidious and event-based ones, placing the former in Britain and the latter in Bangladesh (though it indicates they are, in fact, correlated), *The God of Small Things* more explicitly discloses the close liaison and co-dependence between social conventions and expected identity formation for the underprivileged and the violence they are exposed to on the basis of their sex and caste. I will be dealing with violence in the next part but before moving on with that, I would like to give a general information on the society represented in the novel and the ways in which it reflects both caste-based and patriarchal norms to elucidate the path that ideology follows to lead up to that violence.

As in *Brick Lane*, *The God of Small Things* offers stories of different generations in order to highlight trauma as an ongoing process between generations that are affected by different layers of "structural oppression" (Craps 26), rather than regarding it a personal and temporary problem. The novel represents a society where "edges, borders, boundaries, brinks and limits" (Roy 3) are of vital importance where they classify the individual and restrict them accordingly. How a person should behave, what to do for a living, where and where not to live, whom to love, whom to marry and so on are limited and predetermined on the basis of their gender, religion, ethnicity, class, and caste, as if there were rules or laws to abide by to which non-conforming individuals are segregated and punished. However, the position recalcitrant individual holds affects how their transgression (if there is any) is treated by society, e.g., what is seen as an unacceptable and disapproved act for a woman for which she is punished might go unnoticed or even encouraged for a man. In such an environment, then, trauma stems not only from discriminative and stereotypical expectations and limitations on certain subjects, but also from the ever-present threat of segregation, punishment, and violence that would possibly follow acts of defiance and transgression. In contrast to *Brick Lane*, however, the novel does not focus on the clash between the individual and social conventions they struggle with which eventually leads to the individual's fragmentation. It rather lays emphasis on the anger and grief that this clash unleashes which turn into a driving force for the individual to bring a change into their lives, momentarily and seemingly fragile though it may be.

One of the earliest examples for gender-based discrimination presented in the novel reveals itself in the life of Baby Kochamma whose family considers a university degree as "an unnecessary expense *for a girl*" (38, emphasis added) though she is granted with the opportunity because she "was unlikely to find a husband ... [therefore] there was no harm in her having an education" (26). The family's presumption on women's education does not change in the next generation and Ammu is denied the university education that her brother, Chacko, is readily granted. Married life is the only end that women can hope for and achieve at, according to this logic, which turns every opportunity into a male privilege that women are shut off from. As in *Brick Lane*, women are regarded nothing more than

exchange pieces between men and the only thing they are allowed to decide in the matters of their own lives is "choosing between [their] husband's name and [their] father's name" (37) but nothing more. As a matter of fact, a woman is not even expected to decide whom to marry. Ammu's marriage to a Bengali Hindu, which is much to the disappointment of her family, is not approved of because her family is Syrian Christians who are excessively proud of their origin and obsessed with keeping their bloodline "pure" even with inbreeding.

Ammu marries to escape her father's beatings in her family home but she finds out that her sufferings were not exclusively caused by her father but a common, shared ideology that condemned women into certain roles and regarded them as properties of men. Her husband not only beats Ammu and their children, but he also bargains with his boss to keep his job, in exchange of Ammu "spending time" with him (42). Consequently, Ammu divorces him and returns back to her family home but neither her family nor their neighbours welcome her. Instead, they show their disapproval (43). On the subject, Baby Kochamma utters:

> a married daughter had no position in her parents' home. As for a *divorced* daughter –according to Baby Kochamma, she had no position anywhere at all. And for a *divorced* daughter from a *love* marriage, well, words could not describe Baby Kochamma's outrage. As for a divorced daughter from an *intercommunity love* marriage – Baby Kochamma chose to remain quiveringly silent on the subject. (45-6, original emphasis)

Here, Baby Kochamma acts as a mouthpiece for and is representative of their community which rejects Ammu and deems her as an outcast. Ammu is confined to the set of norms that order her to abide by certain rules as a woman, a daughter, a mother, and a divorcee and is exposed to certain stereotypes that she is expected to assimilate herself into but cannot conform to. Rather than offering solidarity and a sheltering home for a woman who was exposed to severe violence, her society and even her closest relatives ostracise her and she is constantly reminded of her place, or rather, reminded that she has no place in their community at all. Chacko, the son of the house, however, faces no such consequence though he similarly transgresses his familial and communal "Laws" when he marries (and also divorces, like Ammu) a lower-class British woman. Furthermore, when Ammu returns home and starts to work as hard as Chacko in their family factory, she receives absolutely

nothing in return because she "as a daughter, had no claim to the property" which basically means that "what is [hers] is [Chacko's], and what is [his] is also [his]" (75) as the son of the household. Ammu, very much like Nazneen who relates her suffering to "something to do with being a woman" (Ali 104), is able to see that theirs is a "male chauvinist society" (Roy 57) that maintains patriarchy and oppresses women accordingly and openly links it to the causes of female suffering they have to bear.

In contrast to Forter's aforementioned interpretation of the novel which prioritises colonial trauma as the generator of other traumas, the novel concerns itself with the implications of pre-colonial history, i.e., the caste system, which "actually began thousands of years ago" (Roy 33) before the coloniser's interference. The caste system is based upon heredity and categorises people, creating a hierarchy between them, according to the families they are born into while limiting and dictating what they can or cannot do as members holding a certain position in the system. While Brahmins are of highest rank, Paravans or Untouchables are regarded as the lowest status which Velutha and his family hold. The novel presents different generations of Paravan origin to demonstrate the changes made throughout the years. In "an Old World Paravan" (76) Vellya Papen's (Velutha's father) time,

> Nobody would [allow Paravans into their houses]. They were not allowed to touch anything that Touchables touched. ... Paravans were expected to crawl backwards with a broom, sweeping away their footprints so that Brahmins or Syrian Christians would not defile themselves by accidentally stepping into a Paravan's footprint. ... Untouchables were not allowed to walk on public roads, not allowed to cover their upper bodies, not allowed to carry umbrellas. They had to put their hands over their mouths when they spoke, to divert their polluted breath away from those whom they addressed. (73-4)

Here, the discrimination and segregation that Paravans confront with are made evident and they are to the extent that there is an expectation of erasing the traces of Paravan existence because it is considered as an insult to and even a violation of Touchables' "pure" lives. After Paravans convert to Christianity in hope of leaving their Untouchability behind, their situation worsens because they become casteless on paper (since caste stands as a Hindu concept) but in the eyes of their community they are still of the lowest rank. In Velutha's generation, however, Paravans' circumstances are said and presumed to be changed and ameliorated while

prejudices, resentment, and disparagement against Paravans still continue and are predominant. Paravans are still judged according to their caste and expected to follow some unwritten but long-accepted and domineering rules which Velutha does not abide by and hence later is punished for.

As we have seen in Ammu's and Chacko's contrasting marriage stories, there are some community rules that can be transgressed in certain circumstances by certain people while others are condemned. Some of Velutha's transgressions are welcomed and even encouraged as well, such as his vocation as a carpenter. As a Paravan, he "wasn't supposed to be a carpenter" (73) because Paravans are generally fisherfolk who at the same time run for errands for their "superiors" if they are needed. However, Mammachi, one of the highest of Touchables, notices Velutha's skills with his hands and insists that he is to be trained as a carpenter. Furthermore, she is also the one who appreciates Velutha's marvellous way of handling machines which would make him an engineer if he were not a Paravan (75).

Velutha is constantly reminded of his place and position as a Paravan who is supposedly a dirty, impure and useless being whose accomplishments are greeted and regarded only as a good job *for a Paravan* but nothing more. However, his skills are readily exploited by the Ipe family. As Chanu demands every second of the supposedly inferior women to be put to use in *Brick Lane* and hence exploits them, Velutha too is expected to be of use to his "superiors" and serve them while gaining little, if not nothing, in return. He acts both as a family carpenter and mechanic who not only makes the Ipes' furniture and fixes and tends their every electrical device, but also works at their pickle factory for which he is practically the one who is running it. Yes, Velutha gains access to a Brahmin house (though from a back door) to which he is forbidden to enter as a Paravan in principle and works both as a carpenter and in a factory which are, according to the caste system, considered as unreachable and even unthinkable positions for a Paravan but he is still taunted about his caste. His colleagues do not want him to rise above their positions in the factory or receive more salary than they do even though he works harder than them and does most of the work. Then, although there is a presumable

amelioration in their community for Paravans, general biases and discrimination on the basis of caste did not disappear but became more insidious by subtly creeping inside the fabrics of everyday life and paving the path for tacit exploitation.

When we look at Velutha's family members, we can see that they bear the marks of the caste system and exploitation as its inevitable result on their bodies. They are materially wounded as his father Vellya Papen loses his eye while working with stones (76), his brother breaks his spine when he falls off while coconut-picking and his mother dies of tuberculosis (77) which might be connected to heavy working conditions and agricultural chemicals used in their environment which is both their home and working place. The caste system, then, not only determines the living conditions for these people which are themselves nothing but harsh, but also regards their lives and bodies as secondary and disposable that can be dispensed with *only* after they are exploited. Therefore, what makes the caste system traumatogenic is not only its way of attributing inferiority to certain subjects and paving the path for their oppression and exploitation, but its standing as an ever-present reminder for these certain subjects that their lives and bodies are more vulnerable and open to wounds (both physical and psychological ones) that may even bring about their own deaths.

The novel represents traumatic impact of the caste system on the individuals that witness Velutha's murder and feel guilty about it, but not necessarily on the subjects that are directly affected by caste, i.e., Paravans themselves. Therefore traumas that Paravans go through are hard to follow because they are not focalised apart from little instances. For example, we hear Velutha's voice from time to time, though rarely and only before he is murdered, but since he is murdered, he is more of a dead victim rather than a traumatised survivor. However, the little glimpses that reveal Paravans' way of viewing themselves and those around them help us to recognise the shattering effect of trauma which alters the individual's worldview. Coming from an older generation of Paravans, Vellya Papen, for example, is unable to recognise and question the system that oppresses him and his family because this ideology melts into his very being as if injected into his veins.

Whenever he looks at his son, Velutha, he feels frightened because he senses something different and wrong in him:

> Perhaps it was just a lack of hesitation. An unwarranted assurance. In the way he walked. The way he held his head. The quiet way he offered his suggestions without being asked. Or the quiet way in which he disregarded suggestions without appearing to rebel. ... While these were qualities that were perfectly acceptable, perhaps even desirable in Touchables, ... in a Paravan they could (and would, and indeed, *should*) be construed as insolence. (76, original emphasis)

Here, from Vellya Papen's thoughts it is evident that he has internalised a system that deems him secondary and inferior to the point that he is unable to think outside it. Adding that "should" to his line of thinking demonstrates that not only he agrees with the system that oppresses them in return, but he also propagates for it. According to him, Touchables and Untouchables are two separate categories and they cannot act in the same manner. What one side can do, when performed by the other side, is considered unacceptable. Vellya Papen's internalisation of this logic goes to the extent that he offers the Ipes to kill his own beloved son because of his "insolence" and unacceptable behaviour, i.e., his relationship with Ammu. Then, Vellya Papen is indoctrinated into believing and unconsciously supporting his own imprisonment into an image that marks him (and his family) impure and worthless. His internalisation of his supposed inferiority is closely connected to his inability to "see", both literally and figuratively, due to his glass eye. Although Vellya Papen loses his eye because of a work accident, he is unable to link it to a larger system that readily exploits him according to his caste. For example, when Mammachi pays for his glass eye, he feels nothing but thankful towards his employers to whom he is devoted because it is a debt he feels he will never be able to repay (76). As if they paid for it out of their good nature and pure heart, Vellya Papen feels great and extreme gratitude towards them, whereas in reality it is a commercial concern for them to make him keep working. This traumatogenic environment, then, makes him lose or prevents him from gaining (in)sight on his circumstances and brings about not only his submission to but also support of his own oppression.

As for Velutha, compared to his father, he seems to have a more thorough understanding of their society, though his vision seems to be limited to class struggle. As a member of the communist party he is aware that their society is built

on some divisions that praises and glorifies one party while dehumanising and demonising the other. Unlike his father, however, Velutha does not internalise or advocate for his own degradation but acknowledges that such detrimental divisions exist. For example, to him, Ammu is simply "*one of them. ... Just another one of them*" (214, original emphasis) whom he tries to hate because of his class rage. His mind works in binaries and according to "us versus them" logic, which promptly marks the other as a potential enemy. Therefore, it can be said that he rejects the supposed codes, qualities and expectations of his caste and class while evaluating himself, however, he still judges others according to same values. In other words, despite being able to escape embracing his disparagement in the eyes of their community, his view of and relation to others, i.e., adults, not Rahel and Estha with whom he has a close relationship, are still (at least at first, though it changes after his relationship to Ammu) determined and limited by certain set of norms that creates binaries and boundaries between people. Velutha's line of thought and view of others signal how effective his traumatogenic environment is in creating a ground for him to mark sole individuals as enemies, without him being able to take into account of that individual's own position in different structural and oppressive systems that would actually turn them into potential allies. Insidious traumas generated by the caste system, then, are glimpsed in these Paravans in their way of altering, determining, and at times shattering their value systems regarding both themselves and the world.

3.3. (Domestic) Violence, Abuse, Molestation, Death

As I have demonstrated in the previous part, in the society represented in *The God of Small Things* where strict patriarchal and caste-based rules and norms are at work, the individual's identity formation is heavily influenced by and sometimes in conflict with such codes. If such a conflict shows itself as nonconformity, then the said individual is quite likely to be regarded as an outcast in their community. Although these misfits are subjected to segregation and hence psychological violence, what they are exposed to is not only and basically a form of isolation, but they are also confronted with an ever-present and obstinate lurking threat of violence. We should not think of this violence only as an open physical intervention directed at the individual, but also as something that determines whose

bodies to be considered as vulnerable and disposable, as aforementioned in the examples of Velutha's dead and/or injured family members. Then, we have to keep in mind that in such a community, being born a female or being of lower caste is more than enough to be subjected to violence, though the individual's nonconformity and transgressions are used as excuses by perpetrators for physical violence, which is supposedly "a history lesson for future offenders" (Roy 336). Therefore, stereotypical identity formation and constant exposure to threat of violence which insidiously traumatise individuals are not sharply separated from, independent of or unrelated to physical violence and event-based traumas that they generate, but rather, they induce to maintain one another and hence, are closely interconnected.

Before moving on to the impact of event-based traumas on individuals, I would first like to give examples of physical violence inflicted on certain bodies which generate traumas. As with insidious traumas caused by oppression and exploitation, the novel represents violence as an intergenerational issue which is neither personal nor temporary, but an ongoing social problem. Earliest examples start with Ammu's father, Pappachi, who is depicted thus in one of his photographs from his youth:

> His light brown eyes were polite, yet *maleficent*, as though he was making an effort to be civil to the photographer while *plotting to murder his wife.* ... He had an elongated dimple on his chin which only served to underline *the threat of a lurking manic violence. A sort of contained cruelty.* (51, emphasis added)

This photograph and passage clearly denounce Pappachi as a grievously violent man who through pretence and heavy restraint try to hide his true face from the outside world. He gains the acceptance of others because he presents himself "as a sophisticated, generous, moral man" meanwhile "turn[ing] into a monstrous, suspicious bully" at the confines of their family home where he beats, humiliates and flogs both Mammachi and Ammu for years on end (180-1). Theirs is not a pain that they experience solely on their bodies but they are also "made to suffer the envy of friends for having such a wonderful husband and father" (180) because of Pappachi's highly civil, polite and kind mask that he presents to the outside. Then, Mammachi and Ammu are faced with a clash concerning their own lived experience and what their community regards their family life as which

undoubtedly removes any possibility of their connecting to other people who might offer them solidarity. The community's blindness or indifference to their suffering inevitably damage the communal tissue that could function as a support for these women who are by now twice denied, both on familial and communal level, any care and concern for their wellbeing.

From Ammu's perspective, she is not only attacked by her father but she is also abused as a child by both of her parents who are either violent or absent and inefficient. Mammachi endures her husband's "beatings with mute resignation" (180) which reminds us of Nazneen's mother's generation who accepted any female suffering as predestined and inescapable in *Brick Lane* though Mammachi has her own subtle ways of resistance such as playing the violin and starting a pickling business. However, she also fails Ammu, pretty much like their community, because she simply watches her daughter to be beaten (181) and does not do anything about it. I do not intend to consider Mammachi as a mother who is incapable of "saving" her daughter and playing the "hero", because she is herself traumatised into a state from which it might be difficult to shake herself off, but she nonetheless fails Ammu at a different level. Although they both suffer in the hands of Pappachi, which creates a communality between them since they are "similarly marked" (Erikson 186) by violence and its traumatic impact, a healing bond does not flourish between them as envisioned by Erikson's "gathering of the wounded" (187) which draws similarly damaged people to one another and act as a fertile ground for creating a renewed sense of community for them. On the contrary, Mammachi merely stands by her daughter's sufferings not in the sense that she does not grab Ammu and escape from this environment, but she neglects her both as her daughter and a fellow sufferer. Ammu, then, is thrice abandoned as a child by her caregivers, not only by her parents but also by her community.

Ammu later thrusts herself into marrying the first man she meets, believing that "anything, anyone at all, would be better than returning to [her family home where she is frequently beaten]" (Roy 39). Her husband —whose very namelessness indicates an anonymous commonality between the image of men represented in his character and hence again emphasises Ammu's suffering as a common and social

problem for women rather than a personal one— however, turns out to be an alcoholic who beats her as well. When he starts beating their twins, Estha and Rahel, Ammu leaves him and returns "[t]o everything that she had fled from only a few years ago" (42). Although Ammu "saves" her children from their violent father, unlike Mammachi, she too abuses her twins. For example, she threatens to leave her children (148) and to smack them (100) which she eventually does from time to time (50 and 71) and she becomes utterly dysfunctional after Velutha's murder and leaves her children, though it is upon Mammachi's request (161) which in turn results in Rahel's neglected childhood in the hands of Chacko and Mammachi (17). Ammu somewhat justifies her occasional harsh behaviour against her children "as an education, a protection" because "their wide-eyed vulnerability, and their willingness to love people who didn't love them ... made her want to hurt them" (43) so that they in a way will be equipped for the harsh reality outside thanks to her. Based on her own experience, Ammu clearly has an insight on miseries that are awaiting the children but her method for preparing them merely echoes and reproduces the very violence (on both physical and psychological levels) that she is trying to protect her children from.

Ammu's life seems to be entrapped in a vicious circle in which she leaves and returns to houses of dread where not only herself, but also her mother and her children are abused and beaten. However, the novel does not represent these as inevitable results of the ways and circles of life, but as "edifice[s] constructed by the human mind" (287) which feed on "civilization's fear of nature, men's fear of women, power's fear of powerlessness" (308) and so on. Therefore, Ammu's suffering is neither endemic nor inherent but rather closely tied to the very systems that are socially constructed, such as patriarchy. As demonstrated earlier, patriarchy generates both insidious and event-based traumas for Ammu whose most obvious symptom is her recurring dreams that haunt her with images of battered women. Her health also rapidly deteriorates after Velutha's murder and Chacko kicks her out of the house (claiming it as *his* house) meanwhile threatening to kill her (225) because he holds her responsible for Sophie Mol's death. She is also troubled with time and tries not to acknowledge its passing but rather attempts to freeze it (160) as if wanting to undo the traumatic events that shattered her life. She dies of lung

failure, unable to breathe, which metaphorically recalls her suffocating and traumatogenic environment that brought her into that state.

What is remarkable about Ammu's account is that trauma plays a vital part in her identity formation. It does not simply damage her "ability to maintain a stable sense of reality" (Granofsky 8) but provides her with a different point of view to judge and comment on her situation. For example, although she continues to live in a place which is not seen by others as rightfully hers in which she attempts to carve up a place for herself, i.e., her family home that stands for a microcosm of the outside world that deems her inferior as a woman, she always keeps her distance from it, in a way stating that even though she lives *in* it, she is not *a part of* it. As a woman and a divorced mother, she stands *outside* of the life, the order, or the world in general, that her family home represents. Her stance posits her both *in* and *out* of the house and this is due to her iconoclastic attitude. Even though she lives in it, she is not integrated to or coalesced into it, unlike Baby Kochamma. Ammu is like an outside eye, looking in, questioning, criticising, accusing, and challenging the established order and also like an iterative voice, constantly reminding the injustice and hypocrisy that lie behind all these. For example, she defines their community as a "male chauvinist society" (Roy 57) and points its connection to female suffering. She is the one who questions Chacko's Marxist attitude (which is by no means disturbed by his opportunities of seizing property and exploiting women's hard work thanks to his male privilege) by laying bare his capitalist and feudal stance (70) which is revealed by his "playing *Comrade! Comrade!*" with women factory workers while "forcing his attentions on [them] who depended upon him for their livelihood" (65). Furthermore, when others (especially Baby Kochamma) try to ingratiate themselves with the newcomer British, Margaret and Sophie Mol, who treat the Ipes as the exotic other, Ammu distances herself from them and reminds her family that they are not "some damn godforsaken tribe that's just been discovered" (180).

Ammu's iconoclasm is regarded as "effrontery" by her family which leaves them wondering where she got that attitude from because she "had not had the kind of education, nor read the sort of books, nor met the sorts of people, that might have

influenced her to think the way she did" but "[s]he was just that sort of animal" (180). This early and essentialist explanation which claims that Ammu is innately nonconformist is not only partial but also misleading because her stance is closely connected to and affected by her experiences:

> As a child, she had learned very quickly to disregard the Father Bear Mother Bear stories she was given to read. *In her version*, Father Bear beat Mother Bear with brass vases. Mother Bear suffered those beatings with mute resignation. (180, emphasis added)

Although she is presented with hegemonic discourses that secure and maintain the institution of family by presenting images of happy family members and benevolent parents that have nothing to do with reality, Ammu is able to see through this façade due to her traumatic experiences that she goes through and witnesses in her formative years which in a way impel her to challenge any construct that enables such traumas to happen. Her experiences become the driving force that alters her stance against the world:

> As she grew older, Ammu learned to live with this cold, calculating cruelty [of her violent father]. She *developed* a lofty sense of injustice and the mulish, reckless streak that *develops* in Someone Small who has been bullied all their lives by Someone Big. She did exactly nothing to avoid quarrels and confrontations. In fact, it could be argued that she sought them out, perhaps even enjoyed them. (181-2, emphasis added)

Here, it is made even more evident that hers is not an innate but a fostered sense of understanding that separates her from the crowd and provides her with a vision of the ways that the world works in creating binaries and hierarchies that end up inventing inequalities and inequities that deem her and others, perhaps not in the same but similar ways, inferiors who are readily exploited, abused, beaten, and even murdered. Her traumatic experiences, then, do not simply paralyse her into a state of immobility and despair, imprisoning her into inescapable and uncontrollable symptoms of trauma and hence hindering her from confronting with, resisting, and challenging any traumatogenic system that wounds her, but rather, obtain her with a perspective that scrutinises the working mechanisms of her social environment.

I see a link between Ammu and what bell hooks utters about black women's experiences:

> Living as we did—on the edge—we developed *a particular way of seeing reality*. We looked both from the outside in and from the inside out. We focused our attention on the center as well as on the margin. We understood both. ... This sense of wholeness [which implied that margin and center composed the whole and the people on the margin were a necessary part of that whole] ... provided us *an oppositional world-view*—a mode of seeing unknown to most of our oppressors, that *sustained us, aided us in our struggle*. (IX, emphasis added)

Contrary to earlier approaches to trauma theory and their tendency to disregard the survivor's agency or to locate trauma in the unconscious rather than the oppressive systems that beget trauma in the first place, Ammu seems to have gained a "particular way of seeing reality" that leads her both to criticise and challenge such systems in her own way. Not only her position as an outcast that places her on the margin but also her traumatic experiences (which are closely related to and even sprouts from that position) provide her with an insight of her circumstances which propels her to take a stance and struggle against anything or anyone that lives on and helps to sustain the systems that oppress her. It is important to note here that I do not intend to turn her trauma basically into a lesson or an experience that fuels her anger and transgressions by ignoring the destructive after-effects of trauma (which in a way even lead her to her death) but rather to see her actions *both* as a result of trauma and as an impetus to challenge the social and political conditions that make such traumas possible. Yes, her experiences mark her with a tint of understanding which turns her into an iconoclast and an opposing figure in hope and pursuit of change in the face of traumatogenic systems but she also becomes utterly dysfunctional not only in her role as a mother but also in her own life, incapable of moving on and continuing to live. These seemingly contradictory after-effects of trauma simultaneously exist, precluding us from considering Ammu either as a helpless victim or a fully conscious and functioning resister.

As for the twins, Estha and Rahel, like Ammu, they are also abused and exposed to violence as children. Apart from their parents, Rahel is also subjected to a school principal's caning (16) and Estha is slapped by Margaret Kochamma "whenever she could" (31) for days on end because she holds him responsible for her daughter Sophie Mol's death. They also witness the beating and (death) threats Ammu receives which affect Rahel severely to the point that for years she dreams the same

dream which flashes “a woman’s corpse” whose bones are broken by a fat man (225). These recurring dreams, a common pattern in both Ammu and Rahel’s lives, reveal the impact of traumatic events on their psyches. In Caruth’s words, these characters are “possessed by an image or an event” (“Introduction” 5) that perpetually haunts them, in a way unconsciously repeating the things they have experienced and witnessed. These dreams are undeniably uncontrollable symptoms of trauma, which highlight the role of the unconscious and the individual psyche in receiving and containing trauma. Nevertheless, the very image of beaten/dead women in these dreams evince the material reality of misogyny as the origin of a systemic violence and trauma these women suffer from rather than representing trauma only as a personal problem of the individual’s unconscious.

Along with the violence they bear witness and are subjected to, Estha’s molestation by the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man, Sophie Mol’s drowning and Velutha’s murder are probably the most traumatising events that the twins go through. When the family goes to the cinema to re-watch *The Sound of Music*, Estha feels unable to keep quiet and sings along which results in his dismissal. As an unaccompanied seven-year-old child, he is approached by the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man, a man who sells refreshments in the cinema, and he molests Estha. Estha’s immediate response to this traumatic event is to alienate himself from his body parts as if he dismembered them (105) which is followed by his vomiting (119). If we consider vomiting as a reaction body gives when it feels threatened by the incorporated substance and an attempt to take out what makes it sicken, we can see that Estha is trying to distance and keep himself away from the “substance” i.e., the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man’s sticky semen that generates his trauma. Despite his bodily reaction, Estha’s mind is instantly affected by this event which alters his perception of himself and of the world. His environment suddenly becomes fearsome where the molester can appear before him at any given moment and hence he feels the need to be always prepared (109 and 194). He also begins to view himself as dirty because of what happened to him and develops an obsessive attitude to clean (90-1) which continues even twenty-three years after the event.

As for Sophie Mol's drowning, the twins (are made to) feel guilty and responsible for her death because she drowns in the river that the three children try to cross together and get to the "safe" place, i.e., the History House, where Estha "prepares" to hide and escape from any possible danger that could come from the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man. When their boat topples over, the twins manage to swim to the shore whereas Sophie Mol drowns for which they are blamed as guilty. Estha and Rahel, then, as two seven-year-olds, not only bear witness to another child's and their cousin's death but are also accused of being "murderers" who "pushed her out of the river" (317). Too heavy a burden for the children's growing heart, Sophie Mol's death turns into another image or another trauma that dominates the children's lives:

> It is curious how sometimes memory of death lives on for so much longer than the memory of the life that it purloined. Over the years, as the memory of Sophie Mol ... slowly faded, the Loss of Sophie Mol grew robust and alive. *It was always there*. Like a fruit in season. Every season. As permanent as a Government job. It ushered Rahel through childhood ... into womanhood. (16, emphasis added)

Here, it is seen that although Sophie Mol ceases to occupy a place in the twins' minds, her image and her memory (not of her but of her loss) become an ever-present entity, almost like a ghost, which accompanies the children throughout their lives. Carrying her everywhere, almost like a wound on them, turns into a "natural" process that periodically repeats but also becomes a permanent duty from which they cannot resign. This passage is invoked and echoed word for word later in the novel: "Sophie Mol became a Memory, while The Loss of Sophie Mol grew robust and alive. Like a fruit in season. Every season" (267). This deliberate repetition reminds us of and similarly functions as the recurring dreams of Ammu and Rahel, which is once again symptomatic of trauma as an image "possession" the individuals are tangled into and cannot cut themselves loose from. They have "terrible pictures" in their heads (32) that they cannot escape from.

The novel uses different sensory perceptions other than sight as memory containers and smell is one of them. When it comes to Velutha's murder, it can be said that the twins are "possessed" by the smell, rather than the image, of their friend who is fatally beaten by the police in front of their eyes because Baby Kochamma reports

him as the kidnapper of the lost trio who has run away from home. Very much like recurring dreams or repeated passages, Velutha's smell which is "[s]icksweet. Like old roses on a breeze" (32) returns to haunt the twins' present for numerous times (6, 32, 55 and 310, to name a few) as a traumatic memory. Recalling Caruth's approach to trauma, the novel treats these as haunting (72 and 191), lurking (55), and trapping (236) experiences which are even mentioned as "trauma" (313) that one cannot leave behind but is imprisoned in. The impact of trauma on the twins' lives is so extreme that it spreads and invades their adult lives and though it does not kill them, it brings "the end of living" (321) for them. They "spent [their] whole life in" (326) a trauma, a feeling, a punishment that they cannot free themselves from.

Traumatic events alter the twins' lives irrevocably not only in the sense that they become imprisoned in repetitive memories and dreams that they cannot shake off, but their relation to and perception of the world change as well. For example, Ammu's abandonment and later death result in Rahel's entrustment to Mammachi and Chacko who leave her utterly alone though they continue to supply her monetary needs (15). Their neglect, however, "seemed to have resulted in an accidental release of the spirit" (17) which was heavily confined and prohibited, for example, in Ammu's case. Rahel "remained free to make her own enquiries ... [i]nto life and how it ought to be lived" (17) by herself, which, as we have seen in the elder generations of the Ipe women, was considered as an unacceptable and condemnable behaviour for a woman in their community. As for Estha, who he becomes as an adult turns out to be in heavy contrast with what Chacko or the men in their community represent. He rejects his college education, stays at home and occupies himself with doing what is considered to be "women's work" such as housekeeping (11). Contrary to Ammu's predictions which presumed that he would "grow up to be a Male Chauvinist Pig" (83), Estha seems to have turned down or at least distanced himself from the male privileges that he is readily given. This attitude, I believe, arises from his growing understanding of "how [the world] worked" (262) which brings him and the ones around him nothing but traumas and hence he tries to participate in it less and less in order not to reproduce the same traumas for others. Similar to Ammu's case, then, the traumas they are exposed to

in a way help the twins to acquire a "particular" understanding of and way of relating to the world around them which provide them with the necessary space to go beyond their traditional and stereotypical roles as men and women. This refreshing and freer space is, however, nothing to be celebrated because it not only paralyses and imprisons the twins into a trauma but also comes with the "small" cost of Velutha's life.

3.4. Silence, Indifference, and Body as a Means of Survival and/or Resistance Sites

Up until now, I have tried to lay bare different traumatogenic systems and significant traumatic events that govern the novel. In this part I will dwell on the characters' responses to trauma although I have touched upon some of their reactions earlier.

The God of Small Things does not represent the characters' responses to trauma as simple, straightforward and one-sided behaviour that is easy to pin down, but rather, as something with contradictory elements, coexisting paradoxes. There always seems to be a "but" which compels us to refrain from considering these characters easily as helpless victims of trauma without agency, though their lives are shattered and they become incapable of sustaining highly functioning lives because we get to see various instances where they maintain a stance against the very systems that traumatise them, either by debunking or distancing themselves from and refusing to be a part of them. I group these responses as silence, indifference, and bodily encounter which I will try to clarify in the rest of this part.

To begin with Ammu, she is a complex character who eliminates any classification that delineates her plainly as a weak and ineffectual victim because she manifests her awareness and understanding of traumatogenic systems by enunciating her dissatisfactions and criticisms which are evocative of her stance that reminds people (both the people around her and herself) that she is not "one of them" who are intertwined into and help to maintain these systems. With her sarcastic remarks and constant criticism on patriarchy, she verbally registers her resistance and rebellion against the oppression that she faces as a woman. Although she speaks her mind, she does not entirely reveal herself, in a way preserving some sides of

her to herself. Consequently, she turns into a "wonder" (180) for people around her who are unable to follow and far from understanding her motives or way of thinking through which Ammu eludes being pinned down and seizable by their grips. It can be said that, to some extent, she stands beyond the reach of meddling people and initiators of traumatic events by refusing to participate in the world order they impulsively represent, preserve, and defend. Even though Ammu is materially present with these people, living in the house that victimise and traumatise her, on the inside, she wanders off from it and heads for a place that others do not have access to. As a sign of the distance she puts and her impenetrability by others, "*Her eyes were always somewhere else*" (217, original emphasis), for example, recalling her grandmother's portrait which depicted "her eyes ... look[ing] in the direction that her husband looked. With her heart looked away" (30). These women and especially Ammu, find their own ways to get away and dissociate themselves from their suffocating surroundings, though they seemingly continue to be a part of it. It is sometimes through dreams that Ammu "travel[s] away from them" (221) or music becomes as a means of escape that shows her another world is possible:

> occasionally, when Ammu listened to songs that she loved on the radio, something stirred inside her. ... *she walked out of the world like a witch, to a better, happier place*. On days like this, there was something restless and untamed about her. As though she had temporarily set aside the morality of motherhood and divorceehood. (44, emphasis added)

This passage demonstrates that Ammu finds different means to break away from not only the traumatogenic environment she lives in, but also suffocating expectations and roles required of her as a woman and a divorced mother. Little instances like this show Ammu (and also the reader) that she is not completely imprisoned into a life that there is no way out but she is capable of creating an alternative world for her own, even if it is only in her imagination. Although her actions are regarded as "quarrelling with ... fate" (45), it is through her refusal to participate in this heavily patriarchal world and her pursuit for an alternative, that she is able to find an outlet for and express her resistance not to become someone who helps to maintain the status quo.

Ammu's little escapades, her daring remarks and critiques of their community and her wish to dissociate herself from it disclose her insight of her own situatedness in such a society and its traumatogenic systems. Despite her awareness, however, she still feels stuck in a life that does not satisfy her needs or desires, or that does not even acknowledge she has desires of her own as a woman. For example, at the age of twenty-seven, "in the pit of her stomach she carried the cold knowledge that for her, life had been lived" (38) and "that there would be no more chances" (43). She is unable to shake off

> that cold feeling ... that Life had been Lived. That her cup was full of dust. That the air, the sky, the trees, the sun, the rain, the light and darkness were all slowly turning to sand. That sand would fill her nostrils, her lungs, her mouth. Would pull her down. (222)

Despite her notably young age, Ammu feels as if she has reached the end of her life, as if she is being buried by the very thing that is supposed to vitalise her. Even before she dies of asthma, unable to breathe, she feels suffocated not only by her hypocritically expectant and violence-loving community but also by the wounding awareness that her life is and will be nothing but a monotonous, never-changing enslavement to the people and systems that she has cordially opposed and protested since her childhood. Perhaps this very feeling and acknowledgement of the fact that there is no exit and that their community has nothing to offer her, she feels the urgent need to create it herself, which brings us to her forbidden relationship with Velutha.

In consequence of the caste system, Ammu and Velutha are not actually allowed to interact with or speak to each other. Even if they do, they are not supposed to become familiar with another. Nevertheless, even when they are in their teens, they find a way to communicate. Young Velutha carves "boats, boxes, small windmills" (175) as presents for Ammu although he delivers them without touching her in case he pollutes her as an Untouchable. These figures, especially boats and windmills, by their link to the river which will become their meeting place in the years to come, can be seen as foreshadowing their future relationship. As for the boxes, they may be denoting the closed and boxed lives they are imprisoned in or they might be a call to think "out of the box." Then, these figures are actually a way of communicating and interacting which helps Velutha to speak to Ammu through his

craft. Their relationship does not blossom in phallogocentric language which is a part of the world that creates borders between them and closely reflects the mindset of this world in which they are given no space to occupy as a man of lower-caste origin and a woman. Thus, they reject language (recalling Nazneen's communication with the tattoo lady in *Brick Lane*) and find other means of communication, which is an early example of how they transgress boundaries that separate them according to their castes.

When Ammu divorces and comes back to her family house, Velutha becomes the twins' "most beloved friend" (71) though Ammu is still not supposed to interact with him. Yet, they exchange looks. Not a word is passed between them regarding their meeting by the river where they are to have their sexual encounter, but only "her eyes had told him" (332). They understand each other. They know. Aijaz Ahmad considers theirs as a metaphysical interaction because "not a word of intelligent conversation passes between them" (116) but what he fails to take into account is the language of the eyes, gestures, and the body, which are by no means restricted by or inferior to spoken language.

Ammu initiates their relationship on the very night that Margaret Kochamma and Sophie Mol arrive at their house. Ammu has been made to feel out-of-place ever since her return by every member of her family and even their servant, but when the British visit them, their attitude turns into a farce, a Play, which "was designated to exclude Ammu and her children, to inform them of their place" and consequently, every "conversation [they had] circled like a moth around the white child and her mother as though they were the only source of light" (Roy 329) which brings Ammu to her limit where she cannot take it anymore not only because of their hypocrisy but also of their blind and boundless Anglophilia. At such a moment she leaves and seeks for Velutha, both the untouchable and Untouchable, and they make love by the river. She is drawn to him not simply because he is the epitome of what she is forbidden to have but also because there is a common ground which they can come together; a common feeling that binds them to each other and creates attraction for one another. This feeling is identified as rage by Ammu. When one of her twins tells her that they have seen Velutha in a

communist march, she "hope[s] that ... he housed a living, breathing anger against the smug, ordered world that she so raged against" (176). Even though what they rage and revolt against is different, i.e., gender *and* class-based society respectively, how they feel towards them or how they stand against them, in a way, turn them into allies and unite them. "Ammu is not dismissive of Velutha's red politics," according to Brinda Bose, "but sees in its inherent anger a possibility of relating to Velutha's mind," (125) which, she believes, reflects the rage that enfolds her. Therefore, their relationship stands as an extension of their own politics and serve as a site for the ultimate and most powerful expression of their resistance and rebellion to the world order that they rage against, which gives Ammu hope to hold on to. After their encounter, "on Ammu's Road ... a small, sunny meadow appeared" (337), as if a consolation or antidote to her life-long misery.

While Ammu uses both her words and body to make a statement for her resistance, Estha and Rahel come up with other means to claim themselves a stance against the world, resisting it by refusing to become a part of it. For example, Estha who "[s]topped talking altogether ... [a]s though he had simply run out of conversations and had nothing left to say" (10), "occupied very little space in the world" (11), as if trying to minimise his association with and impact on it. Considering his molestation, his role as a "perpetrator" (he helps Baby Kochamma to identify Velutha as the man who kidnapped the children) and bystander of Velutha's beating, his separation from his twin, his mother, and his home, and his years with his drunkard and prone-to-violence father (Estha is sent to his father after Sophie Mol's death) it seems only understandable that he desires to participate and converse less and less in the world and then "withd[raw] from [it]" (12). The more "quietness ... spread[s] in him" (11) the wider the "world inside his head" (21) becomes.

Estha's resignation from the world can be read as passivity or indicative of escapism, but it can be also said that there is resistance in his withdrawal. In a way it is a means of protecting himself from other possible traumatic dangers that might befall him, but he is also resisting against the things which resulted in his traumas, and which could result in others' as well if he does not stop being a part of his

gender/caste/class/ethnicity-based society which, by Ammu's predictions, could turn him into a "Male Chauvinist Pig" (83) that keeps the system going, just like Chacko. Therefore, we might see his silence as a reaction not only to the traumas he experiences which deprive him of spoken language, but to the way "how [the world] worked" (262). Rather than becoming the Chacko of his generation, then, he distances himself from anything that Chacko gets his power from, among which spoken language takes its part. Nevertheless, we cannot consider his reaction purely as resistance because he is also heavily burdened by his trauma which still haunts him after twenty-three years. His mind is invaded by "terrible pictures" (32) and "sounds" (300) that will not leave but make their presence felt and conjure up the ghosts of the past. Although he is thirty-years-old now, his gestures are stuck in and carried out by his seven-year-old self who "wait[s] to be arrested" (295 and 327) as a criminal, because of what he did to Velutha. He also develops an obsessive-compulsive behaviour of cleanliness which by echoing his mother's words "Water always helps" (108), signal his wish to wash off both his "crimes" and traumas. His silence, then, though it helps him to separate himself from the traumatogenic systems that he refuses to be a part of, is not completely divorced from his traumatic experience as a fully conscious choice of resistance. His

> silence was never awkward. Never intrusive. Never noisy. It wasn't *an accusing, protesting* silence as much as a sort of aestivation, a dormancy, the psychological equivalent of what lungfish do *to get themselves through* the dry season, except that in Estha's case the dry season looked as though it would last for ever. (10, emphasis added)

Here, it is seen that Estha's silence is not necessarily directed at someone or something, but it functions similar to a coping mechanism. Rather than an open rebellion or challenge, then, it is a matter of survival for him to get through the day or every day of his life.

When we look at the most traumatic events in Estha's life, we see that they are all somehow related to his speaking. He meets and is molested by the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man when he is made to leave the cinema and his mother because he sings along to the film songs and is unable to stop. His one word "Yes" (320) helps the police to identify Velutha as a criminal and kidnapper whose beating Estha witnesses and now stands as an accomplice to because his testimony supposedly

justifies the police for fatally beating him. Finally, when he is about to leave to return to his father and Ammu tells him that they will be together soon, he says to her "that will be never" (325), meaning that it would take too much time. However, he takes that "never" too seriously when his mother dies: "It was *his* fault that the faraway man in Ammu's chest stopped shouting. *His* fault that she died alone in the lodge with no one to lie at the back of her and talk to her. ... Because he was the one that had *said* it" (325, original emphasis). Due to the importance he puts into power of language, it seems to him that his speaking brings him and the ones he love the most nothing but disasters and traumas. Therefore we can consider his silence neither solely as a traumatic symptom nor as an undoubtedly clear resistance. His silence has both of these elements which emphasise his wounds and inability to cope, and which procure him the necessary space to dissociate himself from and refuse to be an agent to his traumatogenic environment.

Estha and Rahel are referred as "Quietness and Emptiness" (32) respectively because "the emptiness in one twin was only a version of the quietness in the other" (20). In other words, what Estha does with his silence Rahel does with her emptiness, or indifference as it is later called in the novel, because "whatever She was, He was too" (86). First of all, Rahel tries to break off with the world and through her indifference, she is not only able to stand outside the world order that traumatise her, but she also renders herself impenetrable by others. In high school, she had no friends whom she accepted to give access to her inner world (17). In college, she turned into an enigma whose motives and actions her classmates were unable to explain (18). Her indifference is also made explicit in her relationship with her (now ex-) husband, Larry:

> [w]hen they made love he was offended by <u>her eyes</u>. They behaved as though they <u>belonged to someone else</u>. ... He was exasperated because he didn't know what that look *meant*. He put it somewhere between indifference and despair. (19, original emphasis, underlines added)

The emphasis on his regarding Rahel as "someone else" and his inability to comprehend the meaning behind her looks or actions point out the fact that through her indifference, Rahel shuts him out of her world, stays out of any form of connection, creates a barrier between herself and her husband, or others in general. She does not give out pieces of herself, in a way, withholds information, whose

acquirement could result in her being subject to others' power and meddling. As "[b]eing in one's sight means that they can pry into you; it means that they can define, name and classify you" (Ergüden 39) it is significant that Rahel renders her thoughts and feelings inaccessible to others because she escapes the mapping down of who she is and what her actions mean. In a community as theirs where barriers and classifications heavily determine and dominate the individual's life and even the slightest form of deviation from the status quo requires punishing (hence may be traumatogenic), Rahel's refusal to be pinned down itself turns into a protest. Her "*[d]rownable in*" (Roy 92, original emphasis) eyes, which bring to mind her great-grandmother's eyes in her portrait or Ammu's which "carried magic secrets" (44), reverse and even avert the gaze and turn Rahel into something unknown, which is a means for her to express her stance against the world. In a way, she locks herself in herself, to expand the distance she puts between herself and the world that she refuses to be a part of. Rahel, then, similar to Ammu and Estha, stays "just beyond the grasp of their [the meddling people and perpetrators] power" (44) by dissociating and separating herself from the dominant world order. However, as with Estha, her indifference is also symptomatic of trauma, which is closer to numbness. Being indifferent or numb in a way turns again into a matter of survival, a coping mechanism to move on. With the sheltering and guarding protection of fragmentation (e.g., her eyes that belong to *someone else*) Rahel in a way is preserved from the overpowering and haunting dominance of trauma. Then, her response is an intermingling of resistance, thriving for survival and symptom of trauma.

3.5. The Possibility of Recovery

The God of Small Things by using a non-linear narrative structure, offers us dual endings: a) the chronological ending which is set in 1993 when the twins have their sexual encounter and b) the ending which completes the narrative and is set in 1969, when Ammu and Velutha have their sexual encounter for the last time and promise each other to meet the next night. In this part I will argue that the chronological ending, which is actually fuelled by the latter, points to the possibility of recovery.

The second ending gives us the last night of Ammu and Velutha they spend together and posits the word "Tomorrow," as the last sentence of the novel which gestures beyond the confines of the text itself, to a future yet to come, to an alternative vision of the world where the likes of Ammu and Velutha are given space to actualise their desires without being discriminated, stigmatised, traumatised, abused, and even murdered for them. Outka considers this anachronic ending as one of the novel's "authorial tricks" (49) which stretch out to the reader, to a possible future beyond the text for a sense of recovery or social change, rather than dealing with it in the text itself. Although the novel literally ends here, its narrative time ends somewhere else, in the future. Therefore this ending does not only refer to a time outside the text, to the reader, but it also appeals to the future that the twins are to experience in their own time. Therefore, this ending's call to a possible future is a resonating (and hence never-ending) one which in a way evokes and fuels the twins' lovemaking scene and also invites the reader to make and remake their future as well.

As for Ammu and Velutha's lovemaking, I discussed that their attraction to one another is closely related to and stems from their shared anger. Their relationship gives them a space to share a common ground which makes it possible for them to relate to the other. This space, then, serves as a possibility of a renewed form of community, an alternative reality in which these two people can more easefully breathe, live, and exist without being harassed and marginalised, which is itself a newly planted seed for a sharing and recovery site from which they can take strength because they have now found the proof that there is at least one another person whose thoughts, feelings, and experiences are similar to theirs and with whom they can stand together while standing against the dominant world order they rage against. They are also fellow sufferers but their recovery does not take place or even herald that it is possible because they acknowledge only their anger, not their sorrows.

The first ending is marked by the reunification of the twins after twenty-three years of separation and their sexual encounter. Since they regard themselves "together as Me" (2) and their relationship is "experienced not as love of one being for another

but as the identity of a single existence" (Ahmad 118), their reunion is more like a merging together of lost pieces and embracing "a part of [themselves]" (Roy 164) that has been lost for years. Then, their reunification at first serves as an illusionary return to their mother's sheltering womb which they yearn for because it is the last place that they felt safe (since their childhood is imbued with traumas) and they were not separated. Estha's wish to return to the womb is on the foreground in the novel. For example, his silence "rock[s] him to the rhythm of an ancient, *foetal* heartbeat" (11, emphasis added). He also "rock[s] himself in the rain" (15). The image of "rocking oneself" is significant and it can be read as his attempt to give his existence a harmony, a rhythm (which the world or the disorder it creates in him, by insisting on its smothering structure, deprives him of) that would make him feel safe and in comfort. This sense of safety and comfort that rocking oneself gives can be linked to the foetus' movement in the womb as Estha's encounter with rain, or water imagery in general, can be linked to the amniotic fluid that protected and nourished him. Furthermore, later in the novel, in the face of their traumatic reality, adult Rahel dreams of "curl[ing] together [with Estha] like foetuses in a shallow steel womb" (118) so that they would not be harmed in any way. Therefore their lovemaking serves for them as a revival of their safe, protected states in their mother's womb in which they were not separated, but One. Since "[t]hey had known each other before Life began" (327) they try to turn back to the times before they were exposed to life, or to the world, which in return gave nothing but traumas to them.

As Ammu breaks "the Love Laws" (33) by "touching" what she is forbidden to touch, the twins break a more primal law which is against incest. It is as if they are following their mother's footsteps to have their way regardless of the society's expectations, norms, and rules which is itself a form of protest that reveals their wish to challenge and resist such structures. However, this reunion cannot be regarded solely as a means of protest because it is closely connected to their unresolved traumas. After the twins make love, it is stated that "[w]hat they shared that night was not happiness, but hideous grief" (328). They are not grieving over what they have just done but it is this very grief that makes them come together and turns their encounter into an embracing site for sharing it. They are not drawn to

one another simply because they are twins but they are fellow sufferers who go through similar and sometimes even the same traumas. Their shared history and suffering function as a driving force that brings the similarly wounded together, recalling Erikson's understanding of "the gathering of the wounded" (187). The commonality of their traumas makes it possible for them to relate to and understand the other more than anyone else could. They start an alternative community between them in which they can express themselves openly, in any way they choose. Then, as the "[r]ecognition of suffering serves as a necessary first step toward the amelioration of that suffering" (Craps 127) their however incestuous act bears the fruits of possibility of recovery because a) they acknowledge their grief in the first place and, b) they attempt to share it with another person. As "sharing the traumatic experience with others is a precondition for the restitution of a sense of a meaningful world" (Herman 70) they create that world within themselves with their small community and become the sole proof that another world where they can heal themselves is possible.

It is significant that the novel envisions the possibility of recovery only when it takes place between a community, rather than addressing a need for a professional, psychological help. The twins are

> [u]nable, [to] purchase, for a fee, some cheap brand of exorcism from a counsellor with a fancy degree, who would sit them down and say, in one of many ways: 'You're not the Sinners. You're the Sinned Against. You were only children. You had no control. You are the *victims*, not the perpetrators.' (191, original emphasis, underlines added)

This passage underlines the need for a larger, communal recovery and change, rather than one individual's being supposedly "cured" off their symptoms through therapy and medical help because the traumas that affect these characters also wound the communal tissue and point to a social and political problem that needs mending, rather than personal counselling. The novel, then, also puts forward the importance of one individual reaching out to the other for communal healing, rather than separating and treating trauma survivors individually, which is in heavy contrast with the blind and indifferent community that Ammu, Estha, and Rahel are surrounded with before their own attempts to recreate it.

As we have seen, *The God of Small Things* represents various responses of trauma survivors which prevent us from regarding them solely as helpless victims or resisters. Although the characters experience traumatic symptoms i.e., recurring dreams, numbness, fragmentation, and so on, it is impossible for us to see them as ineffectual characters without the slightest agency. They use different means such as silence, indifference, and bodily encounter for resistance and survival which help them to take a stance against the world that they refuse to be a part of and sometimes just to get through the day. We see them "striv[ing] not to enter a part but to escape it" (231) as capable actors in their lives which highlight their agency. However, they are also at times mentally paralysed into a state, into a traumatic symptom that bids them from moving on and living their lives. They also create their own little and alternative communities consisting of two people from which they take strength to rebel (in Ammu's case) and find a platform to share, express and finally work through their traumas (in the twins' case).

Studies on *The God of Small Things*, and especially the ones from the perspective of trauma theory, although they provide a thorough understanding of event-based traumas and their symptoms, fail to consider the complex characterisation of trauma survivors who are neither mere victims nor fully conscious and functioning resisters. In my reading I tried to contribute to the field by regarding them as both. On the one hand, drawing attention to the responses to trauma as a means of resistance and survival helps us to unravel the fact that these characters exercise their agency and thrive for a change in their lives and in their community which they clearly oppose and struggle to detach themselves from. On the other hand, by exposing the shattering and destructive after-effects and symptoms of trauma, we obviate from equating these responses as constructive ends of trauma and considering trauma as a lesson or an experience that brings only positive change, which would lay the burden of bringing change/recovery into society on the backs of trauma survivors. Furthermore, considering symptomatic impact of trauma helps us to point to and necessitate the need for recovery which takes place only within a community, emphasising both the individual and communal side of healing.

Before moving on to the conclusion, let us consider the commonalities and differences these novels have and what it means for us to study them together. First of all, the novels rather than regarding trauma survivors solely as incapable victims of and prisoners to an incomprehensible event and its uncontrollable symptoms, disclose their agencies that they exercise through using different means to survive and resist their traumatogenic environment. In addition, both of the novels offer possibilities of recovery though the ending of *Brick Lane*'s plausibility might be questioned. Moreover, by representing not only event-based but insidious traumas as well, the novels illustrate the applicability of specific trauma models to specific traumas rather than overgeneralising one form of trauma while disregarding the others. For example, while *Brick Lane* mostly focuses on insidious traumas, *The God of Small Things* closely engages with event-based ones which call for various strategies and forms to represent these divergent traumatic experiences. *Brick Lane* employs the realist mode, uses English as an "intact" language rather than remaking it, and follows a mostly linear narrative structure to convey Nazneen's experiences. *Brick Lane*'s form, according to Cormack, echoes Nazneen's "growth into a Western bourgeois subject" (713) but it can also be regarded as reflective of her insidious traumas which supposedly do not disrupt either her world or the narrative but is preserved within the very boundaries of the seemingly orderly, traditional, and normative structures of both her everyday life and language/narrative. In contrast, *The God of Small Things* uses (post)modernist techniques of fragmentation, repetition, and non-linear narrative which are often celebrated and sometimes even accepted as the only means to represent trauma, while disarranging, playing with, and remaking the English language. Studying these novels together, then, not only exemplifies various trauma models and approaches that are necessary to examine specific traumas for their own sake, but also asserts the need to be attentive to and include the overlooked or disregarded genres, forms and strategies that are used to represent trauma.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

In this thesis Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* are analysed through the perspective of trauma theory which lays bare trauma survivors' responses to trauma and possibilities of resistance, survival, and recovery these responses carry. This thesis argues that these novels do not represent trauma survivors simply and solely as helpless victims entrapped into incomprehensible traumatic events and their uncontrollable and inescapable symptoms as postulated by earlier and Caruthian approaches to trauma, but rather, they conceive the traumatic impact as a developing and driving force which bestows the survivors with the necessary insight to connect their traumas to the social, political, and economic systems that enable and generate their suffering in the first place. Such a consciousness is absolutely denied to the survivor in Caruthian understanding of trauma which envisions survivors basically as prisoners to an unconscious material that they can never fully access or possess but that nonetheless irrevocably affect their psyches which perpetually try to grasp the meaning of the traumatic event through unconsciously and symptomatically repeating it with repetition compulsion, dreams, nightmares, and so on. Furthermore, Caruthian approach not only omits any possibility of agency and consciousness on the part of the survivor but also completely disregards insidious traumas i.e., the traumas that stem from everyday, usual, and normative mechanisms of social life which enfold the individual and expose them to never-ending stereotypes that bring about their discrimination, marginalisation, and oppression which are traumatogenic without the necessity of experiencing a specific event, and fails to connect these traumas to the larger historical and social contexts they are produced in. Both of the novels, however, challenge and offer an alternative to Caruthian approach by creating more complex trauma survivors who not only suffer from traumatic symptoms but also accuse and debunk traumatogenic systems which they refuse to be a part of and try to distance

themselves from through using different strategies such as silence, indifference, and bodily encounter, and hence exercise their agencies. However, these strategic responses which mark the survivors as active agents are nothing to be celebrated or regarded as undoubtedly constructive because they are not simple and straightforward lessons or experiences that bring and fuel positive changes both in the survivor and their environment but they also have destructive after-effects which shatter the world of the individual and sometimes even cost people's lives. Therefore, the characters and trauma survivors depicted in these two novels are neither mentally paralysed and incapable victims nor fully conscious and functioning resisters but their responses to trauma vary and carry these seemingly contradictory elements which problematise and call for a reassessment of Caruthian approach to trauma.

This thesis manifests the commonalities shared by *Brick Lane* and *The God of Small Things* in representing trauma and trauma survivors which are a) their broadening the scope of trauma by avoiding to focus solely on event-based traumas to include insidious traumas and expressing the interconnectedness and co-dependence between the two, however explicitly or implicitly, b) their approach to trauma survivors which hinders from regarding them as ineffectual victims by introducing us to their different means of survival, resistance, and recovery, and lastly, c) their envisioning the recovery site as a communal space, rather than presenting an individual-oriented healing approach which prioritises psychological recovery of one individual but ignores the need for mending the communal tissue. This thesis also suggests that the dissimilarities these novels have in representing trauma is significant in terms of offering a fertile ground to discuss, oppose, and extend the validity of Caruthian approach because as novels written in different genres and forms (the former uses English as an "intact" language i.e., it does not disarrange or play with the language to remake it as postcolonial novels frequently do, and offers a mostly linear narration to convey trauma whereas the latter disrupts and remakes the language while using a non-linear narrative structure which echoes and enacts traumatic symptoms on the reader) whose consideration on and attention to event-based or insidious traumas vary and thus not only problematise and point to the gaps of the oversimplified and overgeneralised approach of earlier trauma

theory, but also emphasise the fact that different contexts and individual histories require different models for trauma other than event-based, Eurocentric, universalist, textualist, and individual-oriented earlier approaches. In other words, the close examination of these two novels together reveals and helps us to acknowledge that specific traumas necessitate various genres and forms for their representation in literary works and different models and pluralistic approaches for their examination.

The first chapter of this thesis draws a theoretical frame and gives an overview of the evolution of cultural trauma studies. In the early 1990s with the rise of Holocaust studies also comes the emergence to explore national and individual memories and memory containers e.g., literary works in terms of trauma and testimony to delve into the impact traumatic and disastrous events have both on individuals and their representation in literature. Caruth's work among these early studies stands out as she offers a general outlook on trauma, its symptoms and its representation. Caruth considers trauma as an enigma which stems from an extraordinary and catastrophic event which is registered into unconscious without mediation that makes its meaning ungraspable by the survivor. This ungraspable nature drives the survivor to unconsciously repeat the traumatic event in order for them to understand its meaning. However, reaching at this meaning is never possible, according to Caruth, because of trauma's enigmatic, ungraspable, and unconsciously mediated features even if the survivor attempts at recognising and expressing their trauma. Although Caruth's work gives a general framework to cultural trauma studies, it is later criticised because of its event-based, universalist, and individual-oriented approach which is blind to insidious traumas, to traumas minority groups or cultures other than European experience, and to the connection between traumatogenic systems and the traumas individuals go through. These criticisms come to a point that different models for trauma are offered which are insidious and pluralistic models that take various social contexts and backgrounds of individuals into account before examining their traumas. This chapter also focuses on the concept of recovery which is not only disregarded but basically non-existent in earlier approaches. However, pluralistic model entails the need to

acknowledge traumas as a community and connect them to their causes which heralds possibilities of communal sharing and recovery.

The second chapter offers an analysis of *Brick Lane* within the framework of trauma studies discussed in the previous chapter. More in line with insidious model, the novel presents us with traumas of an immigrant woman and the women around her that generate due to immigration and gender-based discrimination. Event-based model falls short of studying this novel not only because it overlooks insidious traumas but it also denies any agency on the part of the survivor since trauma is treated as an enigma located in the unconscious and eliminates any possibility of working through, surviving, and resisting the causes of trauma by grasping its meaning. However, Nazneen uses her silence and bodily pleasures as different means through which she expresses both to the reader and herself that she is an active agent who opposes and challenges, however implicitly, social constructs (or at least their representatives) which suffocate her into stereotypical roles as a woman and traumatise her. She is also vicariously affected by the sufferings of her relatives and friends which point to traumatogenic impact of patriarchy as a social and ongoing problem rather than only Nazneen's temporary one. Nevertheless, Nazneen also suffers from trauma's destructive after-effects that are revealed in her suicidal ideations and feelings of fragmentation which preclude us from regarding her trauma solely as a constructive end. This chapter also focuses on Nazneen's one-to-one and all-female relationships which offer possibilities for communal sharing/recovery sites and problematises Nazneen's "growth into a Western bourgeois subject" (Cormack 713) and the novel's American-dream-like ending which marks Britain as a trauma-free zone by rejecting different forms of trauma that are not gender-based.

The third chapter focuses on *The God of Small Things* and its representation of trauma survivors' responses to trauma. The novel by narrating the Ipes' family history discloses intergenerational and event-based traumas that haunt the survivors which point out and more explicitly make the connection between event-based/insidious traumas and patriarchy and the caste system. This chapter argues that the novel offers a complex characterisation of trauma survivors who are both

protesters and accusers of traumatogenic systems from which they try to detach themselves through using their silence, indifference, and bodily encounters but are also mentally wounded and entrapped into a series of traumatic symptoms such as recurrent dreams, numbness, and obsessive compulsive behaviour. Through analysing Ammu's, Estha's, and Rahel's traumatic experiences, this chapter discusses trauma's both constructive and destructive after-effects. Traumatic experiences provide these survivors with "a particular way of seeing reality" (hooks ix) which impels them to question, accuse, oppose and protest the very systems that traumatise them and to take a stance against them to stop participating in and maintaining the suffering of others. However, these characters are also haunted by images, sounds, and smells that thwart them from moving on with their lives which demonstrate their unresolved traumas that are keeping them back and entrapping them into an abyss of memory and traumatic symptoms. This chapter also takes bodily encounter and one-to-one relationships into account and asserts them as alternative communities that offer possibilities of sharing/recovery which take place only between similarly wounded survivors and that are actualised through acknowledging commonalities between traumas, offering an open and embracing site to share experiences and find an outlet for long-repressed memories.

By focusing on an oft-examined novel (*The God of Small Things*) and an overlooked one (*Brick Lane*) in the field of trauma studies, this thesis offers a pluralistic approach which is attentive to both event-based and insidious trauma models, the ways in which they are interconnected to traumatogenic systems, different genres and forms that are used to represent these models, the gaps in and criticisms of earlier approaches to trauma and the need to acknowledge the variety of trauma rather than accepting a close and exclusionary event-based form as trauma in order for us to pave the way for their exploration. This thesis questions Caruthian approach's assumption on trauma survivors which envisions them only as incapable victims and prisoners to a knowledge beyond their grasp and discusses the agency the survivors have in these novels in their strategies of survival and resistance. However, it also avoids and refrains from regarding the survivors as highly functioning resisters so as not to turn trauma into a simple experience with positive ends because the survivors also acutely suffer from symptoms that shatter

their lives. This thesis, then, manifests trauma's both constructive and destructive after-effects and argues that while the former effect ensures going beyond Caruthian understanding and its ignoring agency and any critical or positive insight gained after trauma, the latter emphasises trauma as a shattering experience and calls for a communal recovery. In consequence of my argument and for the scope of this thesis, I have omitted possible immigration and colonial traumas experienced by men i.e., Chanu, Karim, Chacko, and Pappachi. A further research might focus on their responses, how they differ from the women's and Estha's that I have discussed, and if they gained any similar insight on their traumatogenic environment which would make them refuse to be a part of it or rather, if they are too coalesced into it to the extent that they feed on it on different levels.

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APPENDICES

A. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Bu tez, Monica Ali'nin *Brick Lane* (2003) ve Arundhati Roy'un *Küçük Şeylerin Tanrısı* (1997) romanlarındaki travmatik geçmişi olan karakterlerin tasvirini, bu karakterlerin travmaya verdikleri tepkiler ve bu tepkilerin barındırdığı hayatta kalma mücadelesi, direniş ve iyileşme olanakları üzerinden inceler. Teorik çerçeve olarak kültürel travma çalışmalarını esas alan bu çalışma, temsilcileri arasında Cathy Caruth'un da yer aldığı Yale Ekolü'nün geliştirdiği erken dönem ya da klasik travma yaklaşımını sorunsallaştırarak travmaya *çoğulcu* bir bakış getirmeyi ve bahsi geçen romanları bu ışıkta irdelemeyi amaçlar. Erken dönem travma teorisinin travmayı yalnızca olağandışı olayların yol açtığı bir deneyim olarak addetmesine ve bireyin bilinçdışına konumlandırıp çeşitli sosyal, ekonomik ve politik *travmatojen* sistemlerle ilişkisini göz ardı ederek hayatta kalan bireyi anlamlandıramadığı ve ilişkilendiremediği birtakım bilinçdışı bilgiye ve bunlardan doğan semptomlara hapsolmuş aciz bir kurban olarak tasavvur edişine ters düşen bu romanların, cinsiyetçilik, ırkçılık ve kast sistemi gibi yapısal tahakküm şekillerine hayat boyu maruz kalmanın yol açtığı ve gündelik hayata sirayet eden *sinsi travmaları* da tasvir ettiğini ve travmatik geçmişi olan karakterlere küçük de olsa bir alan temin ederek onların travmaları ile bu travmalara geçit veren tahakküm sistemleriyle olan bağını teşhir eden ve bunlara sessizlik, kayıtsızlık ve beden/bedensel yakınlaşma gibi stratejilerle karşı koymalarını sağlayan bir bakış veya anlayışa sahip olduklarını tartışır. Benzer travmalardan etkilenen karakterlerin birbirine çekilerek iki kişiden dahi olsa oluşan ve bedensel yakınlaşmadan doğan ya da beslenen alternatif topluluklar meydana getirdiğini ve bu yakınlaşmaların travmanın tanınması, paylaşılması ve çözümlenebilmesi için umut taşıyan hem bireysel hem de toplumsal boyutta iyileşme için gerekli olduğunu savunur. Öte yandan, travmanın yalnızca olumlu ve yapıcı yanlarına odaklanarak travmayı bireyi karşı duruş ile teçhiz eden ve toplumu değiştiren salt olarak dönüştürücü bir deneyim ya da ders olarak görmekten imtina eden bu çalışma, karakterleri

tamamen bilinçli ve faal direnişçiler olarak değerlendirmek yerine, karakterlerin tekrar eden rüya ve kâbuslar, uyuşma ve parçalanma gibi travmatik semptomlar da sergilediklerini ortaya koyarak travmanın bu karakterler üzerinde aslında birbirine zıtmış gibi görünen ama eşzamanlı olarak var olabilen etkileri olduğuna işaret eder. Bu tez, travmanın tek yönlü, aşırı genellenen ve aşırı basitleştirilen, her durumda gözlemlenebilir semptomları olan bir deneyim olarak tanımlanmasına karşı çıkmasının yanı sıra, erken dönem travma teorisinin travmanın temsilinde (post)modernist anlatı tekniklerini şart koştuğu yaklaşımın aksine, farklı travma modellerinin edebiyattaki temsilinin çeşitli anlatı türleri ve üsluplarını gerektirdiğini savunup buna biri realist diğeri postmodernist teknikler kullanılarak yazılmış iki roman örneği sunarak hem farklı travma deneyimlerine hem de bunların temsiline *çoğulcu bir yaklaşım* geliştirme çağrısında bulunur.

Bu tezin ilk bölümü, tezin teorik çerçevesini oluşturan kültürel travma çalışmalarının tarihsel gelişimine dair genel bir bakış sunar. Travmanın kökeni, Yunanca "yara" kelimesine dayanmaktadır. Önceleri yalnızca bedensel yaralara ithafen kullanılan tıbbî bir terim olan travmanın taşıdığı anlam, on dokuzuncu yüzyılın sonlarına doğru psikanalizin yükselişiyle birlikte değişir ve travma daha çok zihinsel ve ruhsal yaralar için kullanılmaya başlar. Amerikan Psikiyatri Derneği'nin travmayı Travma Sonrası Stres Bozukluğu (TSSB) adında zihinsel bir rahatsızlık olarak 1980 yılında resmî olarak tanımasının ardından ise travma çalışmaları hız kazanarak edebî ve kültürel çalışmalar gibi alanlarda da kendine yer açar. Aralarında Caruth'un da bulunduğu Yale Ekolü temsilcileri, 1990'larda kültürel travma teorisini geliştirip iskeletini oluşturur. Caruth'a göre travma; bireyin kaza, felâket ya da soykırım gibi olağandışı olayları deneyimlemesiyle ortaya çıkar ve hayatta kalan kişi bunlara sık sık tekrar eden, kontroldışı semptomlarla tepki verir. Bahsi geçen olaylar insan zihninin anlama kapasitesini aştığı için, bu olayların deneyimlenmesi de deneyimden ziyade *deneyim-olmayan* ya da *deneyim-ötesi* olarak değerlendirilir. Anlaşılamaz bir *deneyim-ötesi* olan travmatik olay, hayatta kalan kişinin bilinçdışına doğrudan geçerek kaydolur ancak bu kayıt, herhangi bir bilinçli bilgi ya da kavranabilir bir anlam taşımadığından kişinin zihni bu anlama varabilmek için olayı çeşitli yollarla tekrar eder. Kişinin travmatik olayı bilinçsizce yeniden ürettiği bu tekrarlama şeması, bireyin içine

hapsolduğu semptomatik ve bilinçdışı bir eylem olarak görülür ve kişi travmanın anlamına hiçbir zaman varamaz. Erişilemez bu anlam, kişinin travmatik olayı anlatma çabası esnasında bile ulaşılamazlığını sürdürür çünkü Caruth'a göre bu çabanın kendisi bile travmatik olayın semptomatik olarak tekrarlanmasıdır ve anlatı esnasında aktarılabilen tek şey travmanın anlaşılamaz olduğudur. Bu yüzden de Caruth, çalışmalarında travmayı yalnızca travmatik semptomları taklit ederek ve çeşitli anlatı teknikleriyle yeniden üreterek canlandıran Avrupalı yazar ve yönetmenlerin metinlerine odaklanmış ve travmanın ancak bu şekilde temsil edilebileceğini savunmuştur.

Caruth kültürel travma teorisinin öncülerinden olsa da çalışmaları sonraları oldukça eleştirilmiştir. Öncelikle, travmatik olayı *deneyim-ötesi* saydığı için birey ile travmatik deneyim arasındaki bağı tamamen koparır ve bu bağın tanınmasıyla gelebilecek bireysel ya da toplumsal düzeyde herhangi bir iyileşme olasılığının da önüne geçer. Öte yandan, travmayı yalnızca olayların tetiklediğini ya da başka bir deyişle, travmanın *olay-bazlı* olduğunu varsaydığı için cinsiyetçilik, ırkçılık, sınıfçılık gibi yapısal tahakküme uzun süre maruz kalmaktan kaynaklanan *sinsi travma*ları tamamen göz ardı etmiştir. Caruth, travmayı bireyin bilinçdışına yerleşen erişilemez bir kayıt olarak görüp yalnızca bireyin bu problemle nasıl baş ettiğine (veya edemediğine) yoğunlaşarak *birey-odaklı* bir yaklaşım geliştirmiştir oysaki *sinsi travma*ların da gösterdiği gibi, travmanın tarihsel bir arka planı vardır ve çeşitli sosyal, ekonomik ve politik *travmatojen* sistemlerle yakından ilgilidir. Bu sistemlerin travma üretmedeki etkin rolü teşhir edilerek travmanın bilinebilir ve izi sürülebilir olduğu gösterilerek travmanın tanınması ve paylaşılmasıyla başlayacak bir iyileşme sürecine girilebilir. *Sinsi travma* modeli ve *çoğulcu travma yaklaşımı*, travmanın travmatojen sistemlerle yakın bağına vurgu yaparak hayatta kalan bireyi travmatik semptomların ve asla erişemeyeceği bilinçdışı bir bilginin mahkûmu olan aciz bir kurban konumundan çekip bireyin *eyleyiciliğine* yer açar ve travmanın gözlemlenebilir, tanınabilir ve çözülebilir bir problem olduğunu ortaya koyar. Caruth'un *Avrupa-merkezli* ve *metin-odaklı* genelgeçer yargılarının travmayı tek bir tür ve tanımlamaya sıkıştıran ve her duruma uygulanabilir olduğu varsayımından hareket eden evrensellik iddiasındaki yaklaşımının aksine *çoğulcu travma yaklaşımı*; travmanın yalnızca kâğıt üstündeki karakterlerin değil, gerçek

insanların başına geldiğini, bu insanların iletişimde olduğu sosyal ve politik *travmatojen* sistemler kadar kendi kişisel tarihlerinin de neyi travma olarak deneyimleyebileceklerini etkilediğini, bağlamına göre birden çok travma çeşidinin, bunlarla gelen farklı semptomların olduğunu ve bunları yazılı ya da görsel herhangi bir şekilde temsil etmenin farklı anlatı teknikleri kullanmayı gerektireceğini savunarak travma deneyiminin ve temsilinin çok yönlülüğüne vurgu yapıp bunlara ihtimam gösterilmesini salık verir. Ayrıca, travmayı bireyin bilinçdışına değil, yapısal eşitsizliklere konumlandırarak travmanın belirlenmesi ve tanınmasının önünü açar ki bu tespit, bireysel ve toplumsal düzeyde gerçekleşebilecek iyileşmenin ilk adımıdır. Caruth'un *birey-odaklı* yaklaşımının aksine, *çoğulcu yaklaşım* toplumsal iyileşmenin gerekliliğine vurgu yapar ve Herman ile Erikson gibi düşünürlerin disiplinler-arası çalışmalarından nemalanarak bireysel iyileşmenin de ancak küçük de olsa kurulan topluluklar arasında gerçekleşebileceğini öne sürer. Herman bunun herhangi bir topluluk olacağını varsaysa da Erikson'a göre bu yakınlaşma ancak ve ancak benzer şekilde yaralanmış ya da diğer bir deyişle benzer travmalara maruz kalmış kişilerin birbirine çekilmesiyle meydana gelen alternatif topluluklarla mümkün olur. Birbirine yakınlaşan bu insanlar hem travmalarını paylaşabilecekleri ve anlaşıldıklarını hissedebilecekleri güvenli bir alan kurarak bireysel iyileşmeyi, hem de travma ya da travmaya olan kayıtsızlık sebebiyle kopmuş olabilecek toplumsal bağın yeniden kurulmasıyla toplumsal iyileşmeyi başlatabilecek bir sürece girerler. Teorik çerçevesi psikoloji ve sosyoloji gibi alanlarla da etkileşimde olan bu tez, bahsi geçen çalışmaları temellük etme değil, bunların edebiyattaki temsilini araştırma ve inceleme amacında olduğu için tezin sonraki bölümlerinde bu çalışmaları doğrudan uygulamak yerine birer yol gösterici olarak onlardan istifade eder.

Tezin ikinci bölümü, Monica Ali'nin *Brick Lane* romanının kültürel travma teorisi ve *sinsi travma modeli* ışığında metin çözümlemesini içerir. Roman, büyük bir çoğunlukla, yalnızca fotoğrafını gördüğü ve kendinden yirmi yaş büyük olan bir adamla (Chanu) on sekiz yaşındayken görücü usulü evlendirilerek Bangladeş'ten Londra'ya göç etmek zorunda bırakılan Nazneen'in hayatına odaklansa da, "memleket"ten kardeşi Hasina'nın yolladığı mektuplar ve annesi Ruphan ile ailenin

diğer yaşlı kadın akrabalarını andığı geçmişe dönüş sahneleri yardımıyla Londra ile Bangladeş'i birbirine bağlayan göçmen ve/veya Bangladeşli kadın hikâyelerini birbirine örer ve kadınların travmatik deneyimlerini açığa çıkarır. Bu deneyimlerin bireysel ya da geçici problemler olmadığını ama *kadın olmak* ile ilgili olduğunu, dolayısıyla ataerkil sistemden kaynaklandığını ortaya koyan bu roman, travmayı bireyin bilinçdışına hapsetmek yerine travmanın *travmatojen* sistemlerle bağını yalnızca teşhir ettiği için değil, aynı zamanda *sinsi travma*lara yoğunlaştığı, travmayı realist üslupla temsil ettiği ve travmatik geçmişi olan karakterlerin *eyleyiciliği*ne dikkat çektiği için *çoğulcu travma yaklaşımı*nı gerektirir. Bu bölüm, göçmenlik ve toplumsal cinsiyet bazlı travmaları ortaya koyduktan sonra hayatta kalanların bunlara ne gibi tepkiler geliştirdiğini ve bu tepkilerin taşıdığı direniş ve iyileşme olanaklarına odaklanır. Hikâyesi, Bangladeşli göçmen bir kadın olan Nazneen'in hayatına yoğunlaşan *Brick Lane*, çoğunlukla erkek deneyimlerini ön plana çıkaran göçmen anlatılarının odağını genişleterek ona kadın sesi katmakla kalmaz, göçmenliğin de aslında cinsiyetlendirilmiş bir deneyim olduğunu gösterir. Aralarında nesil farkı olsa da Nazneen'in evlendirildiği Chanu da Bangladeşli bir göçmendir ancak o Londra'ya kendi isteğiyle göç etmiştir. Nazneen ise bir kadın olduğu için baba ile koca arasında bir takas nesnesi addedilerek Chanu'nun yanına göç ettirilmiştir. İngilizce bilen ve evrak memuru olarak çalışan Chanu istediği kişilerle iletişime geçip dışarıda dilediği gibi dolaşırken Nazneen evliliğinin ilk yıllarında ev hapsine maruz kalmış ve yanında Chanu yoksa dışarıya çıkmasına izin verilmemiştir. Nazneen'in İngilizce öğrenmesine engel olan Chanu, onun bedensel hapsini zihnini de kapsayacak şekilde genişletmiş ve her ne kadar ikisi de göçmen deneyiminden geçiyor olsa da kendininkinin farkını erkek ayrıcalıklarını ortaya koyarak vurgulamıştır. Sadece ailesini değil, aşina olduğu her şeyi yabancısı olduğu bir ülke ve tanımadığı yaşlı bir adam için terk etmek zorunda kalan Nazneen'in göçmen travması, temdit edilen ve hatta önüne geçilen uyum süreci sebebiyle iyice tetiklenerek parçalanma ve intihar düşünceleri/meyli gibi semptomlarla açığa çıkar. Göçmen topluluklarından bir kadının intihar haberini duymasının ardından Nazneen'in fikirleri değişmeye başlar. İntiharı güçsüzlük veya çaresizlikle bağdaştırmak yerine bir eylem, bir karşı duruş olarak nitelendirerek ona bir güç atfeder. Nazneen'in intihar hakkında değişen bu fikirleri,

travmatik deneyimin kişiyi salt bir kurbana çevirmediğine ve hayatta kalan kişinin *eyleyiciliği*nden bahsedilebileceğine dair romandaki ilk örnektir.

Romanın yaklaşık ilk kırk sayfası Nazneen'in göçmenlik deneyimi ve travmasıyla ilgili olsa da devamında bunun neredeyse bahsi bile geçmez çünkü odak toplumsal cinsiyet bazlı travmaya çevrilir ki bu da *olay-bazlı* değil, *sinsi travma*lardan oluşur. Nazneen'in hayatı boyunca maruz kaldığı ve ataerkinin şekillendirdiği stereotipik kimlik inşası, ailenin yaşlı kadınlarının anlattığı ve kadınların acılarıyla dolu olan hikâyeler, bu hikâyelerin yaydığı kadınların dünyaya cefa çekmeye geldiği ön kabulü ve fikri, kadınların her daim ikincil ve aşağılık mahlûklar olarak addedilmesi vb. aslında belirli bir olayın yol açmadığı ama yine de travmatik olan deneyimlerdir. Nazneen bunlara depresyon, parçalanma ve bedensel hastalık gibi semptomlarla tepki verir. Bunlara ek olarak, Nazneen kendi yaşamasa da fiziksel şiddete, tecavüze, kadın ticaretine maruz kalan kadınların hikâyelerine tanık olur ve bu tanıklık da onu etkiler. Chanu, o yönde hiçbir belirti göstermese de Nazneen Chanu'nun bir gün onu dövebileceğini düşünür. Nitekim, Chanu Nazneen'i olmasa da kızları Shahana'yı döver ve ona ölüm tehditleri savurur. Dolayısıyla Nazneen'in bir kadın olarak erkekler arası bir takas nesnesi olarak ele alınıp evlilik kisvesi altında Chanu'nun muhtelif alanlarda her türlü ihtiyacını karşılayacak ücretsiz bir ev işçisine dönüştürülmesi ve burada sömürülmesi, fiziksel yöne ilerlemese de psikolojik şiddete maruz kalarak evin içine ve göç edip sözde parçası olacağı kültür ve hayatın dışına hapsedilmesi aslında başka kadınların hayatlarında tasvir bulan fiziksel şiddetle yakından ilgilidir ve onun yalnızca farklı ve belki önceleyici bir tezahürü olarak görülebilir çünkü her iki durum da ataerki ve temsilcilerinin kadını ikincil atfetmesinin sonucudur. Nazneen de daha küçük yaşından itibaren bu bağlantıyı kurar ve çektiklerinin *kadın olmak*la ilgili olduğunu söyler. Böylelikle roman, travmayı bilinçdışına hapsetmek yerine onun ataerkiyle bağını göstermekle kalmamış, karakterin de bu bağın farkında olduğunu okura yansıtmıştır. Nazneen, bu farkındalığıyla, erken dönem travma teorisinin tasavvur ettiği gibi bihaber ve aciz bir kurban olmadığını, *eyleyiciliği* olduğunu göstermiş olur.

Nazneen'in farkındalığı genişleyerek eyleme de dökülmeye başladığında onun aslında travmatojen bir sistem olan ataerkiye bir karşı duruş geliştirdiğini görürüz.

Gerilla eylemleri olarak adlandırdığı birtakım stratejilerle Nazneen öncelikle Chanu'ya incelikli bir şekilde karşı durmaya, onun dediklerini/buyurduklarını yapmamaya başlar. Onu Chanu'nun kölesi haline çeviren ev işlerinin bir kısmını yapmayı ve onun önünde yemek yemeyi bırakır. Chanu'yla konuşmasını kendini açık etmeyecek ama yine de ondan taraf olmayacak şekilde değiştirerek stratejik sessizliklerle tefriş eder. Bu kendi içinde belki çok küçük olan ve Chanu tarafından fark bile edilmeyen eylemler, Nazneen'in hiç kimseye olmasa dahi kendisine eyleyen, karşı duran, baş kaldıran bir kadın olduğunu ifade etme biçimidir. Nazneen'in en büyük baş kaldırısı ise, terzi işinde aracı olarak çalışan Karim ile başlattığı "yasak" ilişkidir. Bu ilişkiyle yalnızca Chanu'ya değil, onu orta yaşlı, evli ve Müslüman bir kadın ve anne olarak sınırlayan ve bu kimliğin getirdiği stereotiplere hapseden ataerkil normlara da baş kaldırmıştır. Dolayısıyla Nazneen, travmadan ötürü hareketsiz kalan, bilinçdışı semptomlara mahkûm bir hayatta kalandan ziyade, eyleyen ve direnen bir kadın olarak resmedilmiştir. Yine de, travma tek yönlü olarak ele alınamayacağı için, Nazneen'in depresyona ve intihara meyilli, halüsinatif hallerine de dikkat etmemiz gerekir. Nazneen aciz bir kurban olmasa da, tam teşekküllü ve faal bir direnişçi de değildir ancak iki taraftan da belirli unsurları barındırır. Nazneen'in kitabın sonunda göçmen topluluklarındaki diğer kadınlarla birlikte kurduğu kooperatif terzi işi ise benzer travmalara (bu durumda göçmenlik ve toplumsal cinsiyet bazlı travmalar) muhtemelen maruz kalanlardan oluşan alternatif bir topluluk kurmaya denk düştüğü ve Nazneen'e sadece kol gücünü değil, hayal gücünü de etkin olarak kullanabileceği (dolayısıyla kendini ve travmalarını ifade edebileceği bir kanal sunan) tasarım işiyle de donattığı için hem bireysel hem de toplumsal boyutta bir iyileşme olanağı taşır.

Tezin üçüncü bölümü, Arundhati Roy'un *Küçük Şeylerin Tanrısı* romanının hem *olay-bazlı* hem de *sinsi travma modelleri*nden faydalanarak bir yakın okumasını sunar. Hindistan'ın Ayemenem köyünde geçen roman, Ipe ailesinin üç farklı kuşağının etrafında gelişen travmatik olayların hikâyesini anlatır. Roman iç içe geçmiş ve birbirini besleyen birçok travma şeklini ortaya koysa da, bu bölüm daha "kişisel" olduğu varsayılan ataerki ve kast sistemi kökenli ve fiziksel şiddetten ayrı düşünülemeyen travmalara odaklanır. Ailenin babası olan Pappachi, eşi Mammachi ve kızı Ammu'yu yıllar boyunca döver. Ammu, bu şiddetten kaçabilmek için

tanıştığı ilk erkekle evlenir ve ikizleri Estha ve Rahel'i doğurur. Eşi, hem kendisini hem de çocukları döven, Ammu'yu patronuna peşkeş çekmeye çalışan alkoliğin biridir. Bu yüzden de Ammu ondan boşanarak aile evine geri döner. Mammachi, Pappachi'nin kız kardeşi Baby Kochamma ve Ammu'nun İngiltere'de yaşayıp bir İngiliz'le (Margaret) evlenip boşanmış erkek kardeşi Chacko'nun yaşadığı bu evde Ammu ve çocukları hiç hoş karşılanmaz. Ailenin turşu ve reçel fabrikasında ne kadar çalışırsa çalışsın, Ammu Bengalli bir Hindu'yla aşk evliliği yapıp ondan boşanmış çocuklu bir kadın olduğu için ailesinin evinde ya da fabrikasında yerinin olmadığını ona sürekli hatırlatırlar. Ammu'nun sonradan aşk yaşayacağı ve kast sistemine göre Paravan ya da Dokunulmaz olarak anılan en düşük pozisyona sahip Velutha da bu fabrikada çalışır. Chacko, eski eşi Margaret ve kızları Sophie'yi yılbaşı için Ayemenem'e davet ettiğinde, Ipe ailesi onları karşılamak için şehre gider. Yolda Velutha'nın da katıldığını gördükleri komünist bir eyleme denk gelirler ve Ammu, dünyaya olan öfkesinin bir yansımasını onda da gördüğü için Velutha'ya yakınlık hisseder. Aile, havalimanına varmadan önce sevdikleri bir filmi izlemek için sinemaya gider. Bu sinemada Estha, içecek satan PortakalSuyu LimonSuyu Adam'ın cinsel saldırısına uğrar. Aile evine döndüğü andan itibaren dışlanan ve istenmediği hissettirilen Ammu, Margaret ve Sophie'ye sunulan sevgi "gösteri"lerine katlanamaz ve onların gelişinin akşamında Velutha ile olan "yasak" ve "skandal" ilişkisini başlatır. Bu ilişkinin açığa çıkmasının ardından trajik olaylar birbirini izler. Sophie nehirde boğulur ve Velutha polis tarafından dövülerek öldürülür. Ammu'yu çocuklarından ayırıp Estha'yı alkolik babasının yanına gönderirler. Estha annesini bir daha hiç göremez ve Ammu bu ayrılıktan üç yıl sonra ölür. Bu olaylardan yirmi üç yıl sonra Rahel ve Estha Ayemenem'de bir araya gelir ve sevişirler. Olay örgüsünün ortaya koyduğu üzere, roman nesiller arası çok katmanlı birçok travmayı açık eder. Ancak bu travmalar, bireyin bilinçdışına konumlanan erişilemez bir muamma olarak tasvir edilmekten ziyade, ataerki ve kast sisteminin getirdiği düzenin sonuçları olarak anılır. Kimlerin bedenlerinin yaralanabilir ve harcanabilir olduğunu da belirleyen bu sistemler, herhangi bir olayı ve fiziksel şiddeti gerekli kılmadan da bireyleri ikincil ve dolayısıyla vazgeçilebilir olarak addettikleri için daimi bir tehlike unsuru olarak hayatlarını tehdit ederek sinsice travmatize etmektedir. Bu *sinsi travma*lar,

sonrasındaki fiziksel şiddet, cinsel saldırı ve cinayet gibi deneyimlerle de *olay-bazlı* olarak ifade bulur. Bu yüzden de romanın, *sinsi travma*lar ile *olay-bazlı travma*lar arasındaki yakın bağı açıkça ortaya koyduğu söylenebilir.

Bu bölümde yoğunlaşılan Ammu, Estha ve Rahel'in travmatik deneyimlere verdikleri ve sessizlik, kayıtsızlık ve bedensel yakınlaşma olarak tasnif ettiğim tepkiler, bu karakterleri aciz birer kurban olarak değerlendirmemizi engeller. Deneyimleri yalnızca kendilerini nasıl gördüklerini değil, dünyaya bakışlarını ve onunla ilişkilenme şekillerini de değiştirmiştir çünkü. Kendilerininki gibi başkalarının da travmalarına gebe olan ve bu yüzden de parçası, taşıyıcısı ve azmetticisi olmayı reddettikleri çeşitli sosyal ve politik sistemlerle aralarına mesafe koyarak karşı duruş sergilerler. Özellikle Ammu, ataerkiyi sürekli sorgulayıp hem kendisinin hem de çevresindekilerin travmalarından mesul tutarak alaşağı etmeye çabalar. İkizler duruşlarını sözlü olarak dile getirmeseler de, kurdukları ensest ilişki; sınırlar, kurallar ve normları yıkmada annelerini örnek aldıklarını gösterir. Öte yandan, kendilerini korumaya almalarını sağlayan sessizlik ve kayıtsızlık gibi tepkilerde direniş izleri gözlense de, bu karakterler bir yandan da travmatik semptomlar sergiler. Ammu ve Rahel'in tekrar eden rüyaları, Estha'nın obsesif kompulsif temizlik ihtiyacı gibi örnekler, bu karakterlere salt birer direnişçi gözüyle bakmamızı engeller çünkü bir yandan hayatlarını idame edemeyecek kadar yaralanmış ve neredeyse zihnen felce uğramış olduklarını görürüz. Dolayısıyla bu karakterler ne tamamen aciz birer kurban ne de faal birer direnişçi olarak değerlendirilebilir.

Bu bölüm aynı zamanda ikili ilişkilere ve bunların taşıdığı iyileşme olanaklarına da odaklanır. Ammu'nun Velutha ile kurduğu ilişki, Estha ile Rahel'in yıllar sonra kuracağı ilişkiyi çağırmasının yanı sıra, bu karakterlerin benzerlerinin ötekileştirilmeyeceği, şiddete uğramayacağı ve hatta öldürülmeyeceği başka bir dünyanın mümkün olduğunu müjdeler. Ammu ile Velutha, kederlerini değil, dünyaya olan öfkelerini paylaştıkları için onların ilişkisi henüz bir iyileşme alanı olarak görülemeyecek olsa da yakınlaşmanın, ilişkilenmenin ve hissî paylaşımın mümkün olduğunu hem ikizlere hem de okura göstermiş olur. Estha ve Rahel'in cinsel yakınlaşması ise, Erikson'ın "yaralılar toplantısı" olarak andığı ve benzer

travmaları yaşayanların birbirine çekilerek alternatif topluluklar kurup iyileşme sürecini başlattığı yakınlaşmaları andırır çünkü ikizler bu yakınlaşmalarının ardından birbirleriyle kederlerini paylaşır. Travmanın ifade bulabilmesi ve tanınması, iyileşmenin ilk adımı sayıldığından, ikizler de kendilerine yalnızca bunu paylaşabilecekleri değil, zedelenmiş toplumsal bağı da yeniden kurabilecekleri ve yaratabilecekleri iki kişiden de olsa oluşan alternatif bir topluluk kurduğundan deneyimledikleri bu yakınlaşmanın hem bireysel hem de toplumsal boyutta iyileşme olanağına işaret ettiği söylenebilir.

Sonuç olarak, *Küçük Şeylerin Tanrısı* gibi çok sık incelenmiş ve *Brick Lane* gibi alanda gözden kaçmış iki romanı kültürel travma teorisi çerçevesinde inceleyen bu çalışma, *olay-bazlı* ve *sinsi travma modelleri* ile bunların temsilinde kullanılan farklı anlatı tekniklerine ihtimam gösteren *çoğulcu yaklaşım*ı benimseyerek öncelikle erken dönem travma teorisinin eksiklerini sorunsallaştırmış ve bu teorinin göz ardı ettiği travma model ve temsillerine farklı örnekler sunmuştur. Hayatta kalanları erişilmez bilinçdışı bir bilgiye ve ondan kaynaklanan kontroldışı semptomlara mahkûm aciz birer kurban olarak görmekten imtina eden bu tez, örneklenen romanlarda karakterlerin travmaları ile bu travmalara sebep olan çeşitli ekonomik, toplumsal ve politik sistemler arasındaki bağı yarı-bilinçle de olsa fark edebildiğini ve buna uygun olarak kendilerince çeşitli direniş alanları kurup *eyleyicilik*lerini ortaya koyduklarını savunmuştur. Bununla birlikte, travmanın tek yönlü ve basit bir deneyim olmadığını, birbirine çelişkili görünen ve tutarsız addedilebilecek çeşitli tepkilere yol açtığını ileri süren bu çalışma, hayatta kalan karakterlerin aynı zamanda uyuşma, parçalanma, tekrar eden kâbuslar gibi kontroldışı travmatik semptomlar da sergilediğini göstermiş ve bu karakter tepkilerini iki cepheye bölüp hayatta kalanları direnişçi ya da kurban olarak işaretlemektense onların iki tarafın da unsurlarını taşıyan muğlak karakterler olduğunu savunmuştur. Böylelikle bu tez, erken dönem travma anlayışında tamamen yoksayılan birey *eyleyiciliği*ni karakterlere teslim etmekle kalmamış, travmanın yıkıcı sonuçlarına da yoğunlaşarak bireysel ve toplumsal boyutta iyileşmenin gerekliliğine vurgu yapmıştır.

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