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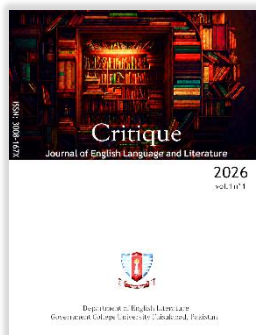
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Critique: Journal of English Language and Literature is a scholarly publication dedicated to advancing research and knowledge within the field of English language and literature. It aims to foster critical inquiry, promote scholarly discourse, and contribute to the advancement of academic discussion in the diverse and dynamic fields of English language and literature. The journal invites contributions that delve into literary analysis, encompassing the scrutiny of works, genres, and movements through close readings, thematic explorations, and comparative studies. It offers a forum for discourse on literary theory and criticism, and investigates how literature intertwines with culture, society, history, and politics, revealing and shaping cultural identities and ideologies. The journal also champions interdisciplinary scholarship that connects literature with fields such as psychology, philosophy, history, anthropology, and media studies.

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From the Founding Editorial Collective

Ghulam Murtaza and Farkhanda Shahid Khan

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Department of English Literature
Government College University Faisalabad, Pakistan

From the Founding Editorial Collective

The inaugural issue of *Critique: Journal of English Language and Literature* marks a notable moment in the intellectual and scholarly life of the Department of English Literature at Government College University Faisalabad. Conceived as a forum for rigorous academic inquiry, the journal is devoted to the study of literature, language, theory, culture, and interdisciplinary criticism in their varied and evolving forms. Its purpose is clear and intellectually serious: to encourage research that is critically alert, methodologically sound, and attentive to the larger human questions through which literary and linguistic study continues to matter.

This first issue brings together five articles that reflect the breadth of the journal's academic vision. They move across postcolonial fiction, diasporic identity, trauma studies, family and psychological criticism, multimodal discourse analysis, graphic medicine, cultural displacement, subalternity, and the ethics of representation. Read together, they show how English studies remains a field of living inquiry: one capable of addressing not only texts, but also histories, bodies, institutions, communities, images, technologies, and forms of social power.

The opening article examines cultural transduction and diasporic subjectivity in Zia H. Rahman's *In the Light of What We Know*, foregrounding the pressures of global capitalism, cultural proximity, and transnational dislocation upon South Asian identity. The second article brings literary character analysis into conversation with contemporary psychological research on stepfamily relations, tracing how emotional displacement, role ambiguity, and family transition may shape personality and conduct in selected literary works. The third article turns to postdigital health communication, offering a multimodal analysis of World Health Organization COVID-19 infographics within the framework of graphic medicine. Its emphasis on visual accessibility, public health messaging, and inclusive communication extends the scope of literary and language studies into urgent contemporary domains. The fourth article examines Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Afterlives* through the lens of subalternity, colonial violence, marginalisation, and survival under coercive structures of power. The final article reads Doug Boyd's *Rolling Thunder* through trauma theory, attending to Indigenous memory, historical trauma, resilience, storytelling, and culturally grounded healing.

As a new journal, *Critique* has sought from the outset to align scholarly ambition with transparent editorial practice. Considerable work has therefore gone into the customisation of the Open Journal Systems platform, with particular attention to the integrity of peer review, manuscript handling, record preservation, copyediting, reviewer documentation, early-view article management, software maintenance, and the generation of appropriate editorial and reviewer records. These are not merely technical refinements; they are part of the ethical architecture of a journal. A credible journal depends not only on the quality of its published scholarship, but also on the clarity, fairness, and reliability of the processes through which that scholarship is reviewed, revised, accepted, and archived.

We gratefully acknowledge the role of the IT Services Division at Government College University Faisalabad and the subsequent support of PASTIC experts in facilitating the journal's digital and technical development. We also record our sincere thanks to Professor Dr Rauf-i-Azam, Honourable Vice Chancellor, for his continued encouragement and administrative facilitation, to Professor Dr Nasir Amin, Pro-Vice Chancellor, for his support during the formative phase of the journal; and to Professor Dr Tanvir Shahzad, Director ORIC, for helping secure the technical coordination necessary for the journal's establishment and progress.

As the founding editorial collective, we regard this first issue not as a finished achievement, but as a formal beginning. *Critique* must now earn its place through consistency, intellectual seriousness, editorial fairness, and openness to rigorous scholarship.

We thank the contributors to this inaugural issue, the reviewers who gave their time and expertise, the Department of English Literature for its academic support, and the university administration for enabling the journal's foundation. It is our hope that *Critique: Journal of English Language and Literature* will grow into a respected forum for critical inquiry in Pakistan and beyond.

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Editor-in-Chief

Critique: Journal of English Language and Literature

Department of English Literature

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Cultural Transduction in Zafar's Identity: A Study of Zia H. Rahman's *In the Light of What We Know*

Atta-ul-Mustafa

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Department of English Literature
Government College University Faisalabad, Pakistan

Cultural Transduction in Zafar's Identity: A Study of Zia H. Rahman's *In the Light of What We Know*

Atta-ul-Mustafa¹ 

¹ Department of English & Linguistics, University of Agriculture, Faisalabad, Pakistan

ABSTRACT

This study explores how Zia Haider Rahman's protagonist Zafar in *In the Light of What We Know* (2014) becomes culturally transduced distancing him from the native culture in the aura of cultural imperialism. The study further investigates how the contemporary national and global realities created by capitalism and their cultural and political manifestations shape the conceptual model of this study. The theory of proximity and cultural transduction is applied to analyze the selected work. Furthermore, I employed Bourdieusian notion of reflexive research practice to inform my methodological choices and analysis. Besides analyzing the hegemonic schema of global capitalists in some other cultures, the study also shows how globalization creates an impression of smallness and diminishes cultural differences, forcing the South Asian diasporas to immerse in host culture. There seems to have been a general cultural turn that entails a greater emphasis on the personal self. My findings show that the global capitalist projects of transculturation and transnationalism have shaped the *mélange* identities of the South Asian subjects making them culturally transduced.

ARTICLE HISTORY

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KEYWORDS

Cultural transduction;
globalization; *mélange*;
proximity; South Asian
diaspora

Introduction

Bengali diaspora writer Zia H. Rahman interweaves the issues of love, literature, music, mathematics, physics, psychology, carpentry, law, religion, language, American and Britain social trends, the 1971 'Liberation' war of Bangladesh, the incident of 9/11, and the 2008 financial crisis in *In the Light of What We Know* (Rahman). Most of these issues are faced by the residents of a multicultural society. The novel depicts the rich English class through the eyes of a poor East-Pakistani born guy, Zafar. Rahman's unnamed narrator, born to Princeton-graduate Pakistani-parents in New Jersey, immersed in American society, becomes "American citizen" (Rahman 3) and is estranged from religion and Pakistaniness. His maternal grandfather was a Pakistani ambassador to the US whereas his paternal family is associated with industry (4) in Pakistan. His father is a professor of Physics at Princeton and Oxford Universities. The narrator, while equipped with economic, cultural and social capitals to play in the global field, starts his career as an investment banker in the ruthless financial sector of fine points. His wife, Meena is about to leave him when Zafar meets

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR Atta-ul-Mustafa  atta_mustafa71@yahoo.com

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him last time. He is sacked from job for trading the mortgaged-backed securities that has upset millionaires' fortune through "a small movement in exchange rates" (2) in the global market.

Zafar was the narrator's class fellow in mathematics at Oxford in 1987. Instead of "biological parents" (Rahman 43), his maternal uncle raises Zafar (137). A Pakistani soldier had raped his virgin mother (137) during the 1971 Bengali liberation war. At five, his maternal uncle migrates to England where his father (maternal uncle) works as a driver and waiter and Zafar calls his parents as "staff" or "peasants in the sense that connotes nothing pejorative" (481). At eight, Zafar introduces himself as George among his white would-be friends since he has become conscious of class and status particularly after he is bullied in white London school. Zafar, the brown-skinned poverty-ridden Bengali is racially discriminated in London (279). At twelve, his parents decide that he should visit Bangladesh. There he visits several places including that of his birthplace. He happens to see his real mother as well but feels no proximity to her. On his way to village in Bangladesh, Zafar feels worried to see a "large white car" (84) of the UN resembling Land Cruiser that aid organizations often use in developing countries. The issues of electricity, running water, and decent roads make the land "generations away from modernity" (84) and a place rejected as Kissinger's "international basket-case" (162). In one instance, when the narrator urges Zafar to write a book, he reacts to narrator's suggestion so adroitly that it obstructs both narrator and the act of writing as a general investigation of novel's boundaries.

Zafar quips what the world requires right now is an answer to the questions about the history of Bangladesh. He says to the narrator that since the world considers him "a bloody authority" and "a leading international luminary on the history of Bangladesh, it needs to hear those answers from me", whereas he knows that he is an outsider in his own country and a stranger among his hosts (Rahman 310). Zafar is a transduced character; he is unaware of the ground realities of his homeland, Bangladesh which he left in his childhood. Similarly, he is taken as an alien in the host land despite his acculturation. He compares him with axolotl, a *mélange* character occupying the third space. He rejects narrator's idea of writing a book (311-12) because writing one's own story or using first-person means the presentation of exaggeration. Zafar is a dual *émigré* since he is not only "an exile, a refugee, if not from war, then of war, but also an exile from blood" (51). He grows ashamed of his parents for poor getup. At Oxford, they happen to see him only once and react with the mildest of interest. Homelessness is the "unmooring of his body" (271) caused by his "unmooring soul" (271).

Given this context, this paper problematizes how post-9/11 phase of globalization marked by the capitalist forces' aggression has brought about their cultural monopoly denting the very identities of diasporic characters and forcing them to embrace transduction as order of the day. Neo-imperialists are still seeking to attain homogenization of culture. Zafar is a culturally transduced character in the multicultural milieu of global world where the prevailing trends have hegemonized the South Asians like him, alienating them from their native culture. The article uses theory of proximity and cultural transduction to analyze the selected work. Furthermore, I employ Bourdieusian notion of reflexive research practice to inform my methodological choices and analysis.

Review of Literature

Globalization has multifaceted connected communities of one part of the world to the advancements happening in another region. Giddens argues that hardly any human being

on the planet is free of its influence (Giddens). “Globalization can be examined as a way of resurrecting past colonial relations, though without the essentiality of physical captivation of other lands – save that even the metropolitan cities of London or New York are under the colonial entrepreneurs of those people whose own lands were once colonized by the West” (Held 16). Cultural globalization poses severe threats to the local identity; the developing countries face various cultural, psychological, and socioeconomic problems such as poverty, social inequalities, extinction of local cultural norms, heritage and values, and lack of development. The issues of cultural displacement scatter cultural traits, practices and occupations (Islam et al.). Tomlinson argues that a truly cosmopolitan culture cannot be materialized unless cultural divergences are respected. Globalization as a complex connectivity is not in disorder, and that local cultures are in Jean-Paul Sartre’s phrase condemned to freedom (Sartre). Being closely associated with a place, culture is normally immovable. But under the impacts of globalization, there emerges a renewal in relationship between the place and culture. Apart from implying the meanings of travel and change of culture, deterritorialization also connotes ever-broadening horizon of everyday experience (Tomlinson). Only the gush of a deterritorialized culture renovates other cultures or constructs a fresh culture by hybridity. Deterritorialization may engender cosmopolitanism/ cultural deposition which is not confined to locality, but assimilates others’ apprehensions in routine doings. Cultural globalization convenes cosmopolitanism to help project joint understanding, common support, and a sense of responsibility for remote others. Criticizing this inappropriate approach to the relationship between the nation-state and cosmopolitanism, Changxue Xue says that globalization has replaced imperialism since 1990s and is popular in academic research and representation of reality. The world has transitioned from cultural imperialism to globalization and culture. Cultural imperialism implies that a country, by using force, imposes its own culture and ruins the native culture. Moreover, deterritorialization and cosmopolitanism are two active agents which help develop cultural globalization (Xue). Tomlinson’s view confirms his passion for humanism.

The revolutionary changes affirm the dawn of a universal ‘Empire’ different from the past European imperialism which sought hegemony and capitalist expansion by subjugating other nations. The universal Empire borrows the traits of hybridity and multiculturalism from the US Constitution to expand its frontiers through globalism while lowering the national geographical borders of states (Hardt & Negri). Globalization has projected a border-free citizenry. Connell & Marsh observe that the spatial divisions among the first, second, and third world have diminished besides a merger of the first world into the third world and vice-versa while eliminating the second world. Deterritorialization of proletarian and the debate between productive forces and system of domination resulting from Empire’s totality and expansive energy have caused subversion in the subject negating the geopolitical place. Through the circulation of multitude, however, the subject re-appropriates space and constitutes itself as an active subject capable of reclaiming an already existing global citizenship. These subverting attitudes win the subjects as sympathizers and facilitators of globalization (Connell & Marsh). Cultural imperialism is attained by reducing cultural differences around the world for which culture as a commodity is either purchased or retailed in the market system. Global culture is Westernized or Americanized because it disseminates Western trends to strengthen its economic interests. Cultural imperialism does not present global cultural flows as a civilizing or development process, but engrosses cultural nuisance and dominance much less gently or proportionately (Held).

Jan Nederveen Pieterse says that cultural hybridization takes place across locations and identities, brings up a postmodern susceptibility of mobile culture quite roving in its nature and helps render global identity (Pieterse). The pervasive perception of increasing global unification escorts toward rising cultural homogeneity and consistency, as it is observed in the global storm of consumerism. This impetus is better visible nowhere else but in the account of Americanization or Western culture. The worldwide market culture is healthy and voluntary but to some, it is avariciously corrupt. The double standards of the world are responsible for most of its mess. The fundamentalist terrorism and setting up of a religious government are undesirable as it is oppressive colonialism but grasping market affairs and colonizing human life by money-making industrialism is considered commendable in the name of freedom (Buck-Morss).

Large scale settlements in other worlds for earning and other purposes have affected the original cultures. The immigrants carry along their home cultures developing transculturality and cultural plurality. Home communities living in a host country cannot reproduce homegrown cultural forms or transfer their knowledge to their progeny (like when at home). The environment constructs cultural classification as a wary selection for community members to select the best as a conscious object. However, the enormous mobilization of people and the global economy have made this reproduction difficult for locals (Spencer and Wollman). Besides the evolution of culinary styles, innovation has also occurred in fields like media. Time-space compression under late capitalism weakens the experience of 'othering' (Harvey). The mishmash street culture shows divergence and fragmentation of space in city life, emphasizing otherness. Literature apprehends the issues of transculturation. Said states that "[p]artly because of empire, all cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated, and unmonolithic" (xxix). Critics such as Wolfgang Iser observe an increased blending between cultures as amazingly new when taking it as a puzzling form of culture. His

Objective [...] is to use ['transculturality'] to describe a strikingly new, contemporary feature of cultures originating from their increased blending. The main idea is that the differences between cultures are diminishing, that contemporary cultures are characterized by cross-cutting elements— and in this sense are to be comprehended as transcultural rather than monocultural ... [T]he inherited concept of cultures as homogenous and closed entities has become highly inappropriate in comprehending the constitution of today's cultures (Welsch 4).

This pluralism is shown in fiction which portrays characters wandering around the globe without having an awareness of their world, a perception of their identity, and a sense of direction. McHale says that this postmodern ontological landscape is a space of several worlds collapsing upon one another that can be compared with the accumulation of commodities in a supermarket. The byproduct of such an environment appears in split personalities that disturb private life in favor of (an)other reality. Postmodern fiction reflects the fragmented real world of today and insists upon ephemerality (McHale).

Repeating Homi K. Bhabha's ideas on hybridity and third space, Welsch argues that transculturality is not aimed at attaining uniformity of cultures but fairly to "the emergence of a diversity of a new type" (Welsch 11). Mélange of cultures leads to a third space by developing a new, diverse, and hybrid culture (Pieterse) dissimilar to the source

culture. The term Trans-culturation, first coined by Ortiz further explains Welsch's diversity of a novel kind which takes place in the third space.

Transculturation develops a changed reality by modifying the culture of the subject who occupies a third space. It implies an exchange between the two cultures to jointly produce a unique, complex, and self-determining new reality rather than involving one culture toward which the other must tend (Ortiz). Mary Louise Pratt notes that marginalized groups choose only from what a dominant metropolitan culture conveys. Since the subjugated groups cannot manage what comes from the dominant culture, they need to discover what they want to receive, and what to use it for (Pratt).

Global trends develop transcultural sensibilities (Dagnino) by increasing transculturality through writing. The in-between-space created by transcultural texts has linguistic, cultural, and literary dimensions. [T]ranscultural writers show determination to make a home of any place as self-inhabits. Culturally and physically itinerant writers can distinctively express cultural sensibilities because they write in exile or as part of some diaspora community. Epstein explains that a transcultural orientation is acquired by living diffused in a new dimension (a continuum), simultaneously inside and outside of all existing cultures (Epstein).

The present study extends the transcultural framework by using the concept of cultural transduction to examine Zafar's identity in Zia Haider Rahman's *In the Light of What We Know*. Unlike transculturality, which highlights coexistence among cultures, transduction examines the process of conversion, mediation, and re-signification through which identity undergoes cultural and psychological reconfiguration within transnational and diasporic contexts. By focusing on Zafar as a culturally transduced subject, this research diverges from previous transcultural readings and contributes to the ongoing debate on post-9/11 subjectivity, globalization, and South Asian identity in diaspora.

Theoretical Framework

Drawing upon the theory of proximity, Straubhaar in *Beyond Media Imperialism: Asymmetrical [sic] Interdependence and Cultural Proximity* has introduced the concept of cultural proximity to describe the forces in close interaction with cultural imperialism (La Pastina & Straubhaar). Through polysystem approach, he concluded that notwithstanding the hegemony of cultural imperialism, audiences regularly select audiovisual programs from within their own culture or an adjacent culture. The concept is also applicable to literary works now (Straubhaar). To Bourdieu, it includes national, regional, and transnational aspects because the characters with variegated cultural experiences receive several impacts of cultural capital in respect to their religion, class, language, dress, gender, body language ethnicity, education, music, and storytelling preferences (Straubhaar). Cultural proximity and distance impact the transfer of media content between different cultures or genres (Cattrysse). The success or failure of this transfer depends on factors such as the stability of desired genre or context, and the level of conservatism or innovation in the adaptation. If cultural proximity becomes a core challenger for cultural imperialism, other norms may be exempted from this rule; the audiences/ characters may recline to media content produced outside (Cattrysse). The theory of proximity describes how humans perceive and interpret cultural stimuli. When cultural elements are placed near each other, they are seen as belonging together, and tend to be perceived as a single entity. Proximity can be geographical, temporal, social, or even conceptual. When cultural practices are in proximity, there is a higher likelihood of interaction, exchange, and influence between

Uribe-Jogbloed and Espinosa-Medina introduced cultural transduction, expanding its application within the realm of research. The theory implies transformation of cultural elements, ideas, or practices from one context to another. It investigates the movement of audiovisual goods and activities between cultural markets in global context (Uribe-Jogbloed and Espinosa-Medina). The transduction paradigm takes a multidisciplinary approach, creating a meeting point for different (sub)disciplines to help draw on cross-disciplinary concepts, techniques, and knowledge (Cattrysse). Cultural transduction occurs through cultural diffusion which is the spread of cultural traits from one society, group, or individual to another. It happens through various channels such as trade, migration, media technology, or interpersonal communication. When cultural elements are transduced between different contexts, they undergo adaptation, modification, or even hybridization leading to the emergence of new cultural forms. Physical or conceptual proximity between cultures facilitates the transformation of cultural traits, leading to new cultural phenomena or modification of existing ones.

To Bourdieu, transduction refers to the process of adaptation or transformation that a cultural product (or character) undergoes when crosses different habitus or fields. Transduction involves changes in form, content, meaning, or function of the product depending on how it is received and interpreted by different agents. It changes habitus or practices of the agents themselves, as they encounter new or unfamiliar cultural products which modify their existing dispositions (Bourdieu). Bourdieu has based his theory on three major conceptual tools: habitus, field, and capital. The theory includes the notions of struggle and strategy, which suggest internationalism in individuals, families, and social groups who use their position in several social fields (Grenfell).

Habitus, for Bourdieu, is a property of social agents: individuals, groups, and institutions. It is structured by the conditions of existence including present and past circumstances, family, and education, and generates practices, beliefs, perceptions, and feelings in line with its structure. However, it does not function alone since we have no pre-programmed autonomy to cause our upbringing; our practices are the outcomes of an unconscious relationship with habitus and the field in which we perform. Habitus comprises objective social structure and subjective personal experience which to Bourdieu is the internalization of externality and externalization of internality (Grenfell). He clarifies his concept through following equation: [(habitus)(capital)] + field = practices.

The joining property of 'three thinking tools' of Bourdieu's approach is that practice is the outcome of relations between one's disposition (habitus) and one's position in a field (capital) within the present scenario of that social space (field). Bourdieu's habitus focuses on our ways of acting, feeling, thinking and being (Grenfell). It captures how we carry within us our history, how we bring this history into our present circumstances, and how we make choices to act in a specific way. Field refers to the social field where agents come, without much knowledge about the art of play, positions, beliefs, and skills of other agents, or the outcomes of their actions. They learn everything with time and experience. Field is a social world divided into social spaces such as education, religion, and law, each having its own set of rules, forms of capital, and knowledges. The agents invest capital in their respective fields to maximize their positions. The relational structures of habitus and field with evolving relations help us understand the practice (Grenfell). Bourdieu conceptualizes that the agents use different plans to maintain their position in their respective social spaces. Accumulation of capital is at stake in the field: the capital may be both the process within a field or a product of the field itself (Bourdieu). However,

Bourdieu enumerates three forms of capital: economic capital comprises money and assets, cultural capital refers to cultural preferences (language, voice, and narrative), forms of knowledge, aesthetics, and taste, and social capital points to affiliations and networks, family, religious and cultural heritage (Grenfell).

Bourdieu's methodological approach works at three levels: at first level, the position of the field is analyzed by comparing it with the field of power. Here, the individual field is compared to international business or to political power or government. At the second level, the objective structure of relations between agents' positions is analyzed with reference to their contest for specific authority. Capital in all three forms – economic, cultural, and social – earns positioning for the agent in field. At the third level, the habitus of agents is evaluated in context of their background, chosen course, and positioning; the past or present qualities of the individuals are examined with particular reference to their relevant field (Grenfell).

Analysis and Discussion

Zafar's Cultural Transduction

Zia H. Rahman's *In the Light of What We Know* illustrates cultural transduction through the protagonist's negotiation of multiple identities and spaces. The individuals in globalization, in Bourdieusian view, are at losing end in their economic, cultural and social capital. Zafar, being the other has no economic and social capital to play in the global social arena; i.e. field in Bourdieu's concept (Grenfell). His craving for home i.e. poor habitus –structured by the past and present condition, family origin, and education– as cited in Bourdieu (Grenfell), drives him to books (Rahman 51) where he finds “a sense of belonging” (178) besides “glimpses of a kind of truth” (44): mathematics i.e. Bourdieusian cultural capital (Grenfell) purges his mind from everything “banging [his] head” (Rahman 29). Zafar's analytical mind takes him from a humble origin to Harvard, Wall Street and London's Inns of Court where he gets equipped with capital to play in international market. After jumping into the global field, he equips him, as Bourdieu argues, with cultural capital, particularly, language and knowledge (Grenfell). His quest for roots is quenched when he is called “Anglo-Banglo” (Rahman 163) by Bill and Dave, the Chippies carpenters in Kensington, London; this shows his proximity to multiculturalism, distancing from nativity (Cattrysse).

Pointing to Zafar's cultural transduction, the unnamed narrator says that Zafar is “every bit a [Sic.] part of an age, a West, that identifies pathology in the strong emotions, in jealousy, hatred, rage” (Rahman 419). During his search for means of living to afford his educational expenses, Zafar goes from house to house in the streets until he is engaged by Bill and Dave Carpenters in a renovation work of a five-story Georgian house on the condition that he may be paid after one week's assessment of his work; thus Zafar, who landed in international arena without any capital at hand, has now transduced into Western culture, receiving impacts on his religion, class, language, dress, gender, profession, and education, as Bourdieu conceptualizes (Bourdieu). Zafar learns about carpentry and its tools. In an episode, Zafar overhears both discussing him as a *Pakiman* for dedication to his work, which is very bitter leading him into a period when Pakistan's elite committed atrocities against East Pakistanis; Cattrysse's concept of periodization denotes adaptation in terms of transposing present-day stories into the past causing him distanced from a culture adjacent to his Bengali culture. Zafar feels him conceptually closer to Chippies when Dave shifts to ethnic politics of *Redskins* and *neo-Nazis* explaining to Bill that being far- right extremists, Skinheads cause intimidation, threat and insult to browns or blacks. Politically Redskins, Dave continues, are not different from neo-Nazis but by dressing and behaving like those of the right-winged thugs, they have distorted the skinhead movement.

A skinhead, he adds, may be less intimidated if people become aware of this; all this provokes in him the feelings against discriminatory measures that the people of his homeland faced while being part of United Pakistan (Cattrysse's periodization). Zafar adds that original skinheads had used the term to imply in one way but the band has changed its definition troubling the originals to achieve their motives. Skinheads cannot be understood to imply whatever they want. Dave and Bill look at each other, seeking confirmation of Zafar's argument. Dave says to Bill that perhaps Zafar has not liked their calling him *Pakiman* because it is "a derogatory and offensive" (160) for some people. On Bill's query, Dave says that 'Paki' is a charged word and nobody needs to be highly qualified to understand its derogatory implication. Zafar says that sometimes words cannot signify exactly what one wants them to. His claim that he is a Bangladeshi surprises Dave and Bill. They comment that since good Bengalis had not fought a bloody war with Pakistan, it will not be just to call them *Pakimen* (Zafar's conceptual distance from native culture).

Zafar's Religious Transduction

Besides proximity to English culture, Zafar occupies a third-space religiously; he transduces in global secularity distancing him from Islam. He is on the verge of postmodernist conversion; he finds faults with Islam but equally he depreciates his belief in Christianity. On narrator's question whether he is a Christian, Zafar criticizes Islam saying it could not guide him when he needed God (Rahman 181). He argues that Islam is ritually practiced; Koran is recited without understanding its commandments. Similarly, prayers are said thoughtlessly as if special steps were arranged in a dance with the patterns of "standing, kneeling, and falling prostrate" (182). All this, Zafar continues, offends him because of irrational following and interpretations of Islam. In Bourdieusian perspective, Zafar with his variegated cultural experiences has received several impacts of cultural capital, including religion, class, language, dress, ethnicity, gender, profession, and education preferences; but native religious trends are no more appealing to him. His adaptation based on Western cultural and global market mores distances him from Eastern cultural capital including that of religion and brings closer to Western cultural capital. Christianity is inappropriate, yet its simplicity and its message of love impress him (Rahman 186). Soon, he becomes fed up with Christianity too for its impracticality; it is English with an English God and an English heaven. He is led to conversion when his soul that is restless due to homelessness, 2008 financial crises and Emily's indifference transduce him into, what Spencer and Wollman conceptualize, a *mélange* character occupying a third space. Equally he shows affinity to his motherland and Sylheti language despite his immersion in a multicultural society. Zafar, later on, confesses that religious conversion ultimately leads him to destruction. Safety of one's life, he adds, is bound to one's recourse to God (198). He predisposes to God when he accompanies Emily to meet Pastor Anwar Daniel M.A. at St. Thomas Catholic Church in Islamabad to seek favor regarding their expected engagement. The Pakistani pastor, after knowing Emily is an Anglican (484-85) and Zafar a Bangladeshi by birth shows closeness (proximity) to Zafar distancing him from Emily. He talks to Zafar to know the reason of marrying Emily. Zafar replies that he is not going to marry Emily for passport. The pastor advises him to think seriously before marrying a moneyed woman especially when he himself is not from a rich family. Pastor Anwar questions the validity of love calling it, "a tricky business" (486).

Zafar feels himself closer to *Nicene Creed* instead of European version of Christianity –Anglican or Catholic– because Nicene-followers trust in God instead of believing in Him (496). His transposition from Islam to Christianity and then to postmodernist secularity shows his religious transduction; in fact, this is acculturation that

involves cultural proximity to the prevailing Western culture ([Cattrysse](#)) distancing him from his native culture. Zafar and narrator are in proximity to each other in religious and multicultural trends as the narrator also has no taste for religion because of secularity prevailing in his family; his father takes prayers as the private affair of a man and his mother has abhorrence for all religions with her venomous attitude towards Islam ([186](#)). In Bourdieusian concept, Zafar's habitus, structured by his poor existing conditions, humble family origin and meager education, generates in him impoverished social practices, outmoded religious beliefs, and outdated perceptions. Moreover, he enters the global world (field) without economic, social or cultural capital. In global arena, Zafar's position, if compared with that of international power structures, is miserable due to lack of knowledge and skills, as Bourdieu conceptualizes ([Grenfell](#)). It takes him time to adjust to the global field; nevertheless, despite his capital-based position in international business Zafar is compelled to recalibrate his habitus and reshape his embodied perceptions as he negotiates new cultural fields. Zafar's transduction, however, reveals that his identity is not fixed but transformed by the cultural codes he encounters, reinterprets, and sometimes resists as is obvious from his religious stance shifting time to time from Islam to Christianity, from Catholicism to Nicene Creed; from belief in God to disbelief and belief again.

Zafar's Political Proximity with Homeland

1971 Bangla liberation war affected South Asian politics; its memories are still alive to diaspora character, Zafar. The narrator is surprised when his father asks Zafar about his origins as his parents had never talked about South Asia before that. On Zafar's reply that he was born in Sylhet, the narrator's parents discuss 1971 tragedy. Their debate gives the narrator a notion that the past of both Pakistan and Zafar is very similar. The war fought between the Eastern and Western wings of Pakistan had stemmed from divergence of languages, foodstuffs, and religious attitudes of the people of both wings besides their geographical distance from each other ([Rahman 215-16](#)). Narrator's father says that they had opposed the military operation by the West Pakistani establishment to suppress insurgency in East Pakistan ([216](#)). He seems closer to Zafar when he criticizes his motherland's holocaust-like conducted in East Pakistan. His father continues that they had detached themselves from Pakistan in protest ([216](#)). He refers to the letter which they had written to New York Times from Princeton to condemn West Pakistan's 'Operation Searchlight' ([218](#)) conducted to target Bengali intelligentsia, journalists, lawyers, doctors, engineers and other professionals; some were killed, others were pursued. Both also show conceptual closeness in their critique of the American role during Bengali liberation-war. Zafar identifies the alleged hypocrisy of Americans highlighting Kissinger's diplomatic visits to Pakistan and China while relying on Pakistan as an intermediary even though the victimization had increased in East Pakistan ([218](#)). The narrator's father regrets over the fate of his motherland, soldiers and countrymen narrating how Kissinger was playing Cold War games instead of solving the issue.

Both agree that Indian Junta comprising a divergent bunch –Manekshaw, a Zoroastrian Iranian Parsee, and Jacob, an Indian Jew from Iraq, and Jagjit Singh Aurora – showed unity because they were qualified from the same British military college. They all also belonged to same socioeconomic class. The father continues that everyone had made a big deal about the diversity of Indian army even though they were concentrating too much on the issues of race and religion while failing to see that all these commanders had hailed from the same social class. Under the British patronage, army generals including those of Pakistani had attended the same military college. They were not diverse in the

most crucial way (Rahman 220-21). South Asian and international elites are in proximity to run the regional affairs without bothering about masses. The narrator's mother adds that the war had barely been over for 20 years, but the American role is yet to be exposed. Pointing to American intervention in her homeland, she says, since they had ruled over thirty years, they should have released their official records now. Finding nobody aware, she says that American misdeeds in Pakistan following inquiries had surfaced in 2001-2002. Nobody needs Pakistan as a middleman for anything (221-22). This shows how South Asian characters proximate to each other and highlight the elites' exploitation back in their home countries.

Zafar's Social Proximity and Transduction

Connected by religion and Pakistan's complicated relationship with Bangladesh, the narrator and Zafar diverge along social classes. This division propels the plot forward from the moment Zafar enters the narrator's Kensington townhouse and tells tales about Oxford, New York, Dubai, Kabul, and Bangladesh mostly using his diaries to supplement his story. Zafar's tales have a lot to say about the injustice and 'meritocracy' fallacies that characterize the global economic system today. His dejection is reflected through his reaction to the disloyalty of Emily, a rich English lady. Men fall like ripe fruit (Rahman 420) for her despite her flirtatious disposition in both love and war.

Despite his acculturation, Zafar feels alienated in high-class Western culture. He hides identity from participants of the parties which he attends with Emily because the English lady has never introduced him in her high-culture social circle. At Fiona's party (Emily's friend), Zafar meets Emily's compeers such as Gemma, Hugh and Toby (Rahman 228) none of whom knows him even though he is living with Emily under the same roof for the last few months.

However, even his immersion in English society makes him isolated. Zafar's wandering around the world and blending without any clear sense of direction leads him to transculturality, as Welsch also argues. Zafar learns how snobbish elites impress each other by ogling, flirting and misusing their social status. Unlike other characters, Zafar does not reveal his identity. He experiences the dilemma of a postmodern world as McHale argues that people having split personalities interact ephemerally with dispersed thoughts (McHale). Zafar avails himself of a space in this postmodern ontological landscape where several worlds collapse on one another just like commodities accumulated in a supermarket. Despite his transduction in westernization, he is taken as 'other' in respect of culture, race, and class. In one instance, when the narrator asks Zafar why he did not marry Emily in spite of his liking for her, he tells the narrator that Emily's laughing away of his proposal had revealed that she would not marry him (Rahman 381).

He is not sure whether he could ever adjust to the romantic image of Emily who hailed from a different nation, a country that does not even share a boundary with his own. Zafar adds that neither were they proximate in conceptual, racial, national or geographical borders, nor did he equate with Emily in status or class. He could not be intimate with Emily, Zafar discusses with narrator about his interaction with Tomaso, an Italian friend and Emily's business partner. Tomaso (under)estimates Zafar's caliber and social stature and lets Zafar down calling him a trader and not a banker. He questions how Zafar can be in the business of derivatives if he is only a law-graduate (Rahman 387-88). When Zafar mispronounces the French name of the bottle as Beaucham instead of Beecham, Emily corrects Zafar making him realize that the English will detect his error even if it is through French. Again, Zafar feels him an alien in a society he is immersed in: "I had been put in

my place” (389). Zafar realizes that Emily’s proximity to both Tomaso and French language distances her from him.

Zafar’s Geographical Proximity with Neighbouring India

Tomaso mocks at Indians asking Zafar why Indians believe that the earth sits on a big turtle, he becomes exasperated for calling him Indian. Tomaso asks him ironically that if India has an acceptable history, culture and tradition, why he is a British. Zafar, feeling himself closer to English culture says Tomaso that he is degrading England. Tomaso ridicules the Indian Muslims for their closeness to Christians and Jews, remarking that it is strange if they believe that the earth rests on a giant turtle (Rahman 392-93). Zafar appreciates the varied cultural heritage of India for being the neighbouring country of his homeland but equally he affirms his affinity with host land before the white Tomaso. Zafar shares all this to the narrator, explaining how and why Westerns are now taking the colonized people very seriously. Zafar’s identity is not fixed; rather, his conversation with Tomaso renders him an ambivalent character. He demonstrates not only his physical closeness to Indians but also his transduction within a multicultural society, whose neo-colonial binaries treat him as alien -- an ‘other’. We find Zafar maltreated by C18 a racial neo-Nazi group committing violence against South Asians. He faces discrimination from his white class-fellows in the school (Rahman). Hence, Zafar discovers himself in every bit of his life as an outsider and excluded in different land both at political and personal levels.

Emily’s indifference frustrates Zafar so much that he is admitted to some mental institution for treatment but Emily never comes to see him. The unfaithful Emily is allegedly pregnant with the unnamed narrator’s child. After recovery, Zafar becomes an international human-rights’ lawyer and leaves the Wall Street business. Meanwhile, Emily has gone to Afghanistan as part of a UN reconstruction project. Knowing this, Zafar who is still infatuated with her, also travels Afghanistan as the UN Rapporteur. Zafar, however, becomes annoyed to know about Western agencies’ avaricious and self-centered businesses in Afghanistan; he observes globalization has affected the geopolitical issues in Afghanistan. In Paul Jay’s concept, globalization functions as a postcolonial phenomenon and borrows practices from colonization (Jay). The 21st century’s phenomenal occurrences in third world countries have established the issue of globalization through a network of international organizations. Deviating from its purpose of lessening skirmishes and raising peace network, however, has taken over the governing system there. By imposing policies, these organizations are running a supranational government there, as Hardt & Negri view it, to make them dependent for a long time and as Zafar observes the network of UNAMA, AfDARI, ISAF managing Afghan affairs. Though his anger is mainly the outcome of his reactionary feelings for a changed Emily, yet the global nations dealing of the postcolonial subject in the center and periphery aggravates his anger.

The story ends highlighting two men's friendship and intellectual compatibility, a cause of their proximity. Following his departure from narrator's home, Zafar sends a thank-you postcard to narrator bearing a picture of Einstein and Gödel strolling side by side which suggests his appreciation for knowledge and Western intelligentsia; novelist's proximity and transduction into a global world. It also symbolizes Zafar’s relation with West, just as Gödel and Einstein, who despite their intellectual differences, remained closer to each other. Zafar, being the part of global world, is transnational though his postcoloniality and cultural hybridity cannot be overlooked. His life in the complex global system, willingly or unknowingly, is somehow affected since the politics ensnares him causing to recognize his ‘self’ or ‘individual’ within the territorial confusion emerged in

him due to his ambivalence. He expresses his reactionary feelings on seeing how West has disturbed the peace of South Asia capturing Afghan land in the name of humanitarian inventions. Talking to Philip, a white man who is on a humanitarian mission in Afghanistan, Zafar complains:

What worries me is that there might be questions out there that I haven't thought to ask. Isn't that the history of international development and Western beneficence: unknown unknowns invoked to legitimize excuses for what comes to pass when their preponderance should be a restraint on intervention in the future? [...]. One question I don't know the answer to is what the hell I'm doing here in Kabul. Isn't there a lot to be done? [...] it's not my war. It's dreadful, I said. The war itself is over. The Taliban are ousted. The war has only started. And the country should be left to rot? The white man's burden. How far will he go in the name of helping his inferiors? The country should be left alone (Rahman 431-31).

Zafar is not rooted in the financial and conflictual spheres of global modernity despite his cultural transduction. Being in such confusion, he perceives his 'self' belonging to a certain nation and culture while sharing a strong bond with another nation. He is a *mélange* character whose presence in several spaces is often marked by ambivalence and alienation, reflecting the postcolonial condition of being close yet excluded.

Thus, this study while originating from numerous literary concerns of South Asian Anglophone fiction has shown the post-9/11 global trends and the current phase of globalization with its effects on South Asia. Moreover, the critical evaluation of the text shows that the novel addresses transcultural and transnational issues of globalization by showing how global society affects the South Asian subject making him culturally transduced. The novel centers on the neo-imperialist hegemony in South Asia and its expression in tripartite globalization – economic, cultural, and political transnationalism. Since Z. H. Rahman is a hybrid, his work depicts economic, cultural, and political realities of the post-9/11 phase of globalization in South Asia. Neo-imperialist hegemony operates in South Asia due to the global, political and monetary institutions such as IMF, World Bank, TNCs, MNCs, and NGOs.

Conclusion

The study has shown that Proximity and Cultural Transduction shape the character and cultural interactions of Zafar. Zafar adapts and reinterprets cultural elements and blends them with existing beliefs or practices which cause the emergence of new cultural forms in him. Zafar encounters cultural traits through external sources such as travel, migration, trade, or exposure to technology which open up new ideas, customs, or perspectives to him. Global characters also transmit beliefs, values and practices in him through dialogues, storytelling episodes, or personal experiences of another world making him distanced from native culture and closer to global culture. As Zafar encounters new cultural elements his identity is shifted, evolved, and becomes transduced into a *mélange* character. The conflicts or harmonies arising from the cultural exchange contribute to Zafar's growth, inner struggles, or external conflicts. Zafar, as a UN rapporteur to Afghanistan, observes how global forces use neo-orientalist assumptions to gain economic goals. AfDARI and UNAMA, he observes, run transcultural and transnational entrepreneurs in Afghanistan in the name of welfare and thus operate as metonyms of neo-imperial governance. The

campaign of constitutional reforms in Bangladesh aims to purge it from institutional corruption through a bureau working under the UN rapporteur, Zafar. Zafar and Nicky are transcultural agents of global forces spying for the global nations besides rendering advisory services for the Afghan government. Zafar concludes that the West emphasizes individuals' rights but acts against them thrusting the cultural imperialism. The paper has also shown how national domains of others are endangered. Afghanistan's border sanctity is violated by the military and civilian personas having transnational identities.

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Notes on contributors

Atta-ul-Mustafa has been teaching at the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad, as an Assistant Professor since 2003. He holds a PhD in English Literature, with research focused on globalization and its effects on South Asian subjects in both home and host countries. His areas of interest also include Orientalism, Postcolonialism, and cultural imperialism. Dr Mustafa has authored fourteen research articles, many of which explore his perspectives on globalization and the war on terror.

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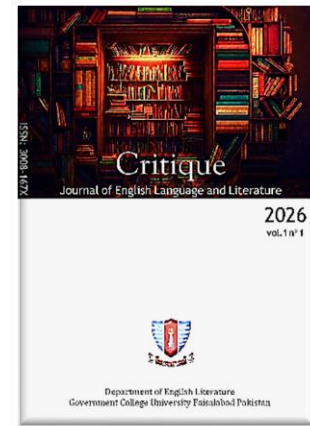
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Muhammad Kashif Jan and Sardar Ahmad Farooq

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Department of English Literature
Government College University Faisalabad, Pakistan

Stepchildren's Personality and Character Flaws: A Critique of Selected Literary Works

Muhammad Kashif Jan¹ and Sardar Ahmad Farooq² 

¹ Department of English, Government Postgraduate College Mandian, Abbottabad, Pakistan

² Department of English, Government Postgraduate College Mandian, Abbottabad, Pakistan

ABSTRACT

The number of stepfamilies has increased globally over the past six decades, making stepfamily relations a significant area of emotional, social and psychological concern. Contemporary psychological research suggests that stepchildren face complex challenges arising from family transitions, such as parental detachment, altered household roles, unclear stepfamily boundaries, emotional displacement, and the lack of clear social and legal recognition in stepfamily relationships. These grave dimensions may have serious long-term consequences for their emotional stability, personality development, and ability to perform social roles. However, these concerns of stepfamily relations have so far received limited attention in literary criticism, particularly in the light of recent psychological insights. This paper, therefore, explores and analyzes the lasting impact of stepfamily relations on the personality and behavior of specific characters in literature, such as Hamlet in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*; David Copperfield in Dickens' *David Copperfield* and Khelleye Withers in Franzen's *The Corrections*. The paper analyzes the nature and causes of some related issues, including family transitions, role ambiguity, emotional and psychological consequences, repression, and academic and socioeconomic challenges. These issues are analyzed and discussed by adopting a mixed-method approach, comprising comparative analysis of stepfamilies and intact families, turning - points analysis, and a combination of role theory, systems theory and transition theory. The findings specify multiple lasting implications for stepchildren, including the emotional and psychological impact; loyalty conflicts and relationship maladjustment; developing externalizing and internalizing problems and lower academic and socioeconomic outcomes. This paper, therefore, examines the substantial challenges faced by an increasing number of stepchildren in modern societies.

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Introduction

The ratio of stepfamilies has increased globally over the past 60 years, as recent research in psychology has revealed that “more than 40% of adults have a step-relation” (Pew RC). For example, “in 1960, 73% of American children lived with both biological parents but

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR Sardar Ahmad Farooq  sardarahmad.farooq@gmail.com

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this has reduced to 46% in 2014” (Botwe 5-6). Contemporary research in psychology also reveals that stepfamily relations seriously impair the personality and character of stepchildren in the long-term, as they face numerous challenges which can be attributed partly to family transitions, parental detachment, and “the lack of legal and social clarity surrounding stepfamily relationships and roles” (Jensen et al. 2).

Literary studies lack examination of this nature; however, causes and implications of stepfamily relations of some well-known literary figures, and certain pertinent insights from contemporary psychological studies can be productively used in this regard. Stepfamilies are formed by blending “two sets of pre-established family traditions, routines, patterns of interaction, and shared meanings” (Sanner et al. 893). As family transitions upset children’s feelings of belonging (O’Rourke and Worzbyt), the child may feel totally banished or excluded and hence “feelings of unworthiness and selfhate may become evident” (Johnson and Deanna 19-20). Attachment with at least one of the parents is crucial, as distance brings grief and stress in children. Because of unsettled stepfamily relations, children may develop a sense of loss, stress, and emotional instability (Cummings et al.). Moreover, in case of ambiguity in parents’ role, stepchildren may also not get required emotional assistance (Carlson and Meyer).

Parental remarriage is also linked to many other challenges that children may face, such as “housing relocations, potential loss of friends, neighborhoods, schools, and communities” (Sanner et al. 885). Moreover, parental remarriage mostly causes changes, such as family income, lesser time with either of the parents, developing relationships with new and extended family-members, getting in terms with changed family environments and schedules.

Some of these psychological insights are employed in the paper for the analysis of the acquisition and development of personality and character flaws commonly termed in literature as tragic flaws or hamartia (Aristotle) of some well-known literary figures who experience stepfamily life. This paper, therefore, analyzes the nature and the underlying factors of such flaws which have hitherto not been registered in literary research and criticism.

Literature Review

Even though many literary characters suffer from problems in stepfamily relations, its causes and its grave implications for themselves and for those associated to them are not rendered convincingly in the existing body of literature. This study explores the selected literary works representing stepfamily relations in light of current psychological insights to develop a valid and timely literary perspective on the issues.

Family Transitions

According to recent research in psychology, stepchildren’s inability to rely on stepparents the way they do on their biological parents mostly generates emotional disorder and anguish in them, which can prompt disruptive behavior in them (Fraser and Fraser 248). If nobody in the family is willing to deal with the unease caused by such contradictions, stepchildren may develop flawed behaviors which linger into their adulthood and later stages, as they have no other option but to devise their own strategies to protect themselves from the sense of disarray, uneasiness and emotional erasure (Fraser and Fraser 248). Personality problems may also be caused by stepparents’ unwillingness to perform their basic roles in disciplining stepchildren.

Some of stepchildren’s personality problems point to “structural transitions in family (i.e. separation, divorce, and parental repartnering)” (Sanner et al. 885), and its related

processes, like inability to interact with parents, diminished emotional support from parents, and parents' skirmishes with ex-partners (Jensen et al. 2). Many stepchildren report dread, possessiveness, and sorrow perceiving that their associations with their parents have been receded because of their parents' desire to develop closeness with their new spouses and their offspring (Sanner et al. 888). Furthermore, stepfamily establishment takes place in the background of "cultural narratives that paint stepfamilies as either dysfunctional (e.g., Cinderella) or harmonious (e.g., The Brady Bunch)" (Sanner et al. 885-895), which do not truthfully portray the intricate, significant, and subtle implications of most stepfamily relations.

Parental Detachment

Family transitions may also cause higher degrees of parental stress, sometimes leading to uninvolved and abusive parenthood (Cooper et al.), or to less ideal childrearing (Anthony et al.). Stepfamilies are also distinct as parent-child ties precede the new spouse relation, implying that the parent-offspring dyad shares a longer history. Therefore, parents try to make stepparents feel like family insiders by investing more time and involvement in creating stronger ties with new spouse, whereas decreasing their involvement with their kids. Consequently, adolescents view their relationship with parents as showing lesser attachment, affection and parental response after repartnering. Stepparents also report a lesser responsibility for caring for their stepchildren, and are found to cater lesser financial resources to stepchildren in comparison to their biological children (Aquilino; Killian). Moreover, complexities in stepfamily structures can cause strain because of competing household demands. For example, Caroline Sanner et al. (895) report that transitions in stepfamily relations create new family substructures as well as associations with new relations who do not share a common history—a situation loaded with intrinsic strains and contradictions.

Academic and Psychosocial Challenges

Unlike intact families, stepchildren "have lower school performance on average, higher dropout rates and lower graduation or general educational development (GED) rates as well as low self-esteem, depression and poor overall mental health" (Coleman et al.). Reasons for such problems include the facts that after remarriage, parents frequently allot lesser time to supervise everyday school assignments and set lower academic goals for their children. Resultantly, children are highly expected to withdraw from school and lose interest in meeting their academic goals (Pong).

In terms of psychological impact, stepfamily formation may drastically change a child's worldview, rousing a sense of uneasiness and humiliation, which frequently results in social avoidance and alienation (Johnson and Deanna 4). Similarly, Ganong and Coleman argue that stepchildren mostly consider the family condition stigmatizing, so, they keep it as a private matter and also try to conceal it (Ganong and Coleman).

Research Methodology

Mixed-method approach is employed for the discussion and analysis of stepfamily relations as evidenced in the literary works under study. Firstly, comparative analysis of stepfamilies and intact families is applied, as recently many analysts have investigated "how adult parent-child relationships are shaped by family instability" (van Houdt 660-661). Secondly, the study applies the Turning Points (TP) analysis concentrating on incidents that characterize "sudden and dramatic relational breakthroughs ... [or] small, patterned, relational changes" (Mongeau et al. 332). The highest recurrent TPs reported are: transitions in family structure and organization; in-house bitterness and domestic crises (Baxter et al.), house-hold shifting, and unfulfilled expectations or frustration (Payton 7). Moreover, "common TPs across stepfamilies are helpful to understand the shared

experiences and critical events that many stepfamilies face” (Waldron et al. 4).

Furthermore, this study also takes into consideration a combination of related theories most widely applied in stepfamily research i.e. role theory, systems theory and transition theory. With regard to role theory, scholars concentrated on “three concepts of role theory: anticipatory socialization, role conflict and role reciprocity” (Fraser and Fraser 241). Family systems theory argues that provided a family is able to harmonize its structure, expected roles, rules, goals, and boundaries; it can achieve homeostasis and grow beyond the stagnation that can occur when there is rapid change which can create instability and disharmony. Transition theory analyzes challenges of stepfamilies, “considering stepchildren of all ages and their relationships with biological and stepparents” (Fraser and Fraser 242).

Discussion

When children inevitably have to adjust to complex changes linked with parental repartnering, various responses and complexities are likely to be experienced. This study analyzes complexities of some literary figures experiencing stepfamily relations, and in the subsequent sections, attributes it to several related factors, including, “stepparent-stepchild relationship, boundaries and structures, roles, emotional responses, and divided loyalties” (Johnson and Deanna 7). Besides, stepfamilies can have long term psychosocial, interpersonal and academic impacts on children (Ganong and Coleman). In literature, impact of such factors is reflected in some of the characters like Hamlet (Shakespeare), David Copperfield (Dickens), and Kelllye Withers (Franzen) who experience stepfamily relations.

Emotional and Psychological implications

Personality growth of stepchildren may be hindered, as they consistently undergo various emotional stressors such as “hostility, anger, confusion, guilt, shame, hurt, frustration, loneliness, embarrassment, powerlessness, and abandonment” (Johnson and Deanna 4-5). If persisted, such distresses mostly engender internal disarray and impulsive conduct. In *Hamlet* (Shakespeare), for example, the protagonist Hamlet, the prince of Denmark, experiences a severe emotional blow due to his mother’s prompt remarriage to his uncle Claudius, who has also assumed the throne after the death of Hamlet’s father. He vents it in such words:

That it should come to this!
But two months dead...
Let me not think on’t—Frailty, thy name is woman! ...
Within a month ... She married (Shakespeare I. II. 141-161).

Hamlet condemns his mother’s instant remarriage as a ‘foul incest.’ In the same way, in *David Copperfield* (Dickens), “Clara and David have an affectionate mother-child relationship until Clara remarries Mr. Murdstone” (Eskins 6-7). Young David, with the change in family structure, experiences a sense of insecurity, as his mother does not protect him from her second husband’s harsh treatment. Consequently, David is compelled either to accept the abandonment, or totally reject it as a loss. David, in his early adulthood, acknowledges his emotional ‘vacancy’ which he articulates in such words: "In short, I was not a favorite there with anybody, not even with myself; for those who did like me could not show it" (Dickens 177). This perception lingers and influences David’s behavior even when he attains maturity (Eskins).

Relationship Maladjustment

Due to turbulent stepfamily relations, children may also suffer from relationship maladjustment. As a family’s lifespan expands, “stepfamilies may discover new opportunities to cohere or come apart” (Braithwaite et al. qtd. in Waldron et al. 7). In line

with Turning Points (TP) analysis, stepfamily environment can be constructive or damaging in the longer run. Some turning points occur much later in the lifespans of families, as in cases of a non-residential parent's death or a stepchild starting his own family (King). In the same way, the hasty remarriage of Hamlet's mother serves as the turning point that leads him to develop a perception of women as 'frail.' This feeling, subsequently, frustrates his already thriving love relationship with Ophelia during his later adolescence and he starts treating her with disgust and cruelty. He yells at her, abuses her, even advances to strike her and leads her to cry. Ophelia too laments the derangement of Hamlet's noble mind:

O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!
The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's eye, tongue, sword...
Th' observ'd of all observers, quite, quite down! ... O, woe is me
T' have seen what I have seen, see what I see (Shakespeare III. I. 164-175).

It shows that due to the transition to a stepfamily, even such a comprehensive education as Hamlet's goes entirely wasted, as Ophelia is deeply perturbed by his transition to an unsettled, filthy, insulting, shaky, and pale appearance. Such a violent treatment by Hamlet, who had until then adored her and had always been gentle to her, puts Ophelia under so much strain that eventually she is driven to commit suicide. (Payton 11).

Loyalty Conflicts

Other serious repercussions of stepfamily structure include domestic conflict and loyalty struggles, communication and interpersonal problems (Gonzales). As a stepchild, Hamlet too develops similar ramifications. He wittily describes his uncle, Claudius as "A little more than kin, and less than kind" (Shakespeare I. II. 67). In case of family transition, most children act upon what their parents decide about the change of family or household (Nahkur and Kutsar 3), but Hamlet is frustrated by his mother's wedding to his uncle and endures loyalty conflict as he does not accept him as his father. In his opinion, his step father is a lustful person and is no match for his righteous father: "So excellent a king; that was, to this, /Hyperion to a satyr ... My father's brother, but no more like my father/Than I to Hercules" (Shakespeare I. II. 143-157).

Similarly, in *David Copperfield* (Dickens), although David's father passes away before his birth, he feels intrinsically bound to his father by blood and by title. Having a deep desire to identify himself with his father, he calls himself "David Copperfield the Younger" (Dickens 6). His loyalty to his biological father is further established through Eskins's observation that "Mr. Copperfield was a gentleman, and David looks to his father's grave for assurance of his own gentility" (Eskins 6). He gets upset by the intrusion of others between him and his father as it is metaphorically described when he visits his father's grave, "See... how the grave beneath the tree is blotted out by intervening objects" (Dickens 6).

Depression and Repression

Another complexity that stepchildren face is "feeling caught in the middle" (Payton11). Hamlet also feels 'caught in the middle' after his father's ghost reveals to him that he has actually been murdered by his brother who then married Hamlet's mother. Hamlet bemoans the situation: "The time is out of joint:/O cursed spite/That ever I was born to set it right!" (Shakespeare I. V. 189-190). These words reflect Hamlet's emotional battle and his feeling of being loaded with the stress of the situation after his mother's second marriage. David Copperfield is also affected by family transition in his early life as he "senses that the early events of his life are responsible for his weak sense of self and the emotional fluctuations he undergoes ... As a result, he feels that he cannot know who he

really is” (Eskins 8-9). Hence, both Hamlet and David are depressed and distressed as stepchildren which is one of the factors contributing to their adversity.

Children in stepfamilies may also suffer major long-term psychosexual consequences, like Oedipus complex (Pew Research Center). Adult stepchildren are not much contented with their living conditions (McLanahan and Sandefur), and feel emotional urge towards parents of the opposite sex, whereas jealousy and conflict towards the same sex. Likewise, David deeply resents his separation from his mother after her remarriage. David has recognized his stepfather's aggression towards him which becomes more evident by his father's calling him 'dog' (Dickens 60). However, he is not aware of his oedipal urge and his inherent sexual conflict with his stepfather. His mother's response to the tussle between the father and the son further puzzles his sentiments and creates a sense of guilt over his oedipal drive when she whines, "Oh, Davy-that you could hurt anyone I love ... I am so grieved, Davy, that you should have such bad passions in your heart" (Dickens 95). The implications of the denials of his motherly instincts in childhood and subsequent depression become evident when he reenacts his repressed instinctive urge in his unsatisfying wedding to Dora. He does so to overcome the conditions that created his original anguish and to avert another parting like the one from his mother in his childhood.

Such repressed feelings exacerbate the problems in spouse relationships, “escalating negative communicative patterns such as belligerence, contempt, criticism, denial, and ineffective problem-solving characterize marital transactions” (Hetherington qtd. in Johnson and Deanna 5). Because of the same ‘negative communicative patterns,’ the divergence in the personalities of David and his wife Dora becomes even more evident (Eskins 16). David's "old unhappy feeling" deepens as he finally outlets his pent up resentment against his mother. He transmits the mental strength and will-power that were missing in his mother, into his wife Dora's personality. Resultantly, “Dora dies ... He does not even feel conscious satisfaction in the fulfillment of any of his repressed desires (Eskins 18).

With regard to repression theories, David's feelings can be explained like this: after a kid is distanced by either of the parents, "he may find the lack of love so intolerable that unconsciously he decides to destroy his "bad" self and create a new self that will be loved and accepted” (Watkins 8, qtd. in Eskins 12). David also “combats not only the embarrassment of belonging to a stepfamily but also with the tainted desire of retrieving their genetic family” (Johnson and Deanna 16). Similar struggle is evident in David's distress:

No words can express the secret agony of my soul as I ... compared these henceforth everyday associates with those of my happier childhood ... and felt my hopes of growing up to be a learned and distinguished man, crushed in my bosom. The deep remembrance of the sense I had, of being utterly without hope now; of the shame I felt in my position ... cannot be written (Dickens 234).

Internalizing and Externalizing Problems

The affective and mental growth of stepchildren may suffer as they are likely to develop internalizing and externalizing problems unlike children of intact families (Barrett & Turner). Such personality problems are evidenced in another character, named Khellye Withers, in the novel *The Corrections* (Franzen). Withers also experiences a turbulent childhood as his “stepfather had burned him with an electric iron when he was little” (Franzen 307). Consequently, he too develops internalizing and externalizing problems

such as aggressive, revengeful and delinquent behaviors.

Besides, Withers gets associated with criminal gangs and intrudes into his former art-counselor's house to snatch her car and other provisions. When he is told that the car had been borrowed by one of her friends for a week, he inflicts the same torment by applying her "light n Easy iron to her bare skin and advanced the temperature ... and cuts her throat in a panic when her friend came by ... to return the car" (Franzen 307). This can be analyzed as avenging his repressed anger as a stepchild. Withers' acquired personality flaws cause trouble not only for others but also contribute to his own downfall. The complexities of stepfamily life eventually lead Withers to a catastrophic position, as the victim's mother wants him executed after he is sentenced to death for murdering his art therapist.

Academic and Socioeconomic implications

Multiple studies have also revealed that stepchildren are at a higher risk of academic achievement (Zill) and achieve comparatively low socioeconomic position, as they are more likely to be "unemployed, drop out of school ... become involved in substance abuse and delinquent activities, and associate with antisocial peers" (McLanahan & Sandefur qtd. in Johnson & Deanna 4). Such externalizing problems are connected to ambiguity in parental roles, particularly authoritarian parenting (Sanner et al. 891; Coleman et al.) which is an index of stepfamily relations. Similar references to Withers' taking drugs are made in the narrative as, for example, Sylvia, the 'victim's mother' knows about Withers' drug use and its ramifications in his life, and imagines "a society that stanching the flow of illegal drugs into urban neighborhoods (so that Withers could not have spent the stolen money on crack" (Franzen 306-307). Besides, knowing that Withers is jobless, Sylvia also imagines "a society that provided jobs at a decent wage for young men like him" (Franzen 306) so that Withers would not have resorted to coercion and torture to force his art therapist to disclose information about her car and her bank cards.

The idea that Withers' personality flaws may have been engendered by the turning point of family transition is also reinforced by the analysis that Sylvia's husband Ted, aware of Withers' circumstances and personality, suggests the right remedy for the adversity of stepfamilies. Ted opines that "it's not computers that are making everything virtual, it's mental health" (Franzen 309). Therefore, unlike Sylvia, Ted does not demand his execution. Rather, he emphasizes that everyone should try "just getting married and raising children like they used to" (Franzen 309), as compared to the modern increasing trends of stepfamily formation.

According to Barbara M. Newman & Philip R. Newman's (69) table of psychosocial processes, the developmental tasks in the infancy stage include communication, attachment and emotional development, whereas the psychosocial crisis is trust vs. mistrust which gets thwarted for Withers in his infancy as his genetic family is broken up and he consequently becomes unable to reconcile himself to his stepfather. Contrarily, in the case of Melissa, another character in the story, the developmental tasks of the stage remain stable with her biological parents whom she describes as her "best friends" (Franzen 310). She, therefore, grows into a stable personality that even her boyfriend envies: "how he loved the lilt in her voice, the bounce in her step, the serenity of her amour proper! She got to be her and he didn't (Franzen 310). Similarly, in line with Erik Erikson's 'maturation timetable' (Erikson), Withers is overtaken by guilt in his conflict between initiative vs. guilt, as Withers suffers maltreatment by his stepfather, which he later replicates as attitude of vengefulness, developing aggression as a major personality flaw.

Results

Results of the thorough discussion of the problems under study reveal that stepchildren

are at a disadvantage with regard to overall personality development in comparison to children of intact families.

Firstly, stepchildren are emotionally and psychologically affected as their relations become more distant, experiencing lesser degrees of communication and affection with their step parents. For example, Hamlet undergoes feelings of depression, aggression, anger, and relationship maladjustment after his mother's remarriage. Similarly, David deeply resents his mother's remarriage and feels abandonment, shame, anxiety and distance. This grieves and strains him to the extent of affecting his emotional and mental growth.

Another major problem that stepchildren may face is loyalty conflict, which becomes an evident challenge in adapting to stepfamily formation. Some stepchildren in their adolescence believe that liking their stepparents would be betraying their loyalty to their biological parents. Hence, Hamlet is frustrated by his mother's wedding to his uncle Claudius who, in his opinion, is a lustful man and no match for his righteous father. Therefore, he is not ready to accept him as his father. David also feels intrinsically bound to his father through blood and name. David's loyalty to his biological father also gets established as he gets upset by the intrusion of others between himself and his father as is metaphorically depicted when he visits his father's grave, "See ... how the grave beneath the tree is blotted out by intervening objects" (124).

In line with the turning points analysis, parental remarriage leads to less ideal childrearing or to uninvolved and abusive parenting. Resultantly, stepchildren are likely to develop internalizing and externalizing problems. Unlike intact families, adolescents in stepfamilies are also more likely to achieve comparatively low academic and socioeconomic outcomes, engage in delinquent and criminal behavior and alcohol and drug abuse. These personality flaws are evident in Khellye Withers' character who also experiences a turbulent childhood as his "stepfather had burned him with an electric iron when he was little" (Franzen 307). He develops similar personality flaws, as in his early adulthood stage, he replicates the same torture on his art therapist and murders her in panic, leading to his catastrophe, as the victim's mother wants him executed after he is sentenced to death.

Long term adjustment problems may impact stepchildren in their adult life as they may not be much contented with their living conditions. For example, Hamlet's love relationship with Ophelia is frustrated in his later adolescence as he develops a tainted opinion of women as 'frail' after his mother's hasty remarriage and starts treating Ophelia with disgust and cruelty. Similarly, David's longstanding melancholy deepens, in his adulthood, when he finally releases his repressed bitterness against his mother and attempts to impose the rigor and will power that were deficient in his mother into the persona of his wife Dora who perishes as a result.

Conclusion

Stepchildren experience several intrinsic challenges, like family transitions, parental detachment, and legal and social ambiguity with regard to step relationships, belongingness, and responsibilities. When stepchildren are compelled to adapt to these complexities, the likely responses and implications include emotional and psychological repercussions, relationship maladjustment and loyalty conflicts, anxiety and repression, internalizing and externalizing problems, and academic and socioeconomic consequences. The findings also reveal that stepchildren are at a disadvantage in terms of personality growth as it is evident in the characters of Hamlet, David Copperfield and Khellye Withers as stepchildren. For example, Hamlet suffers from depression, aggression, anger, relationship maladjustment and loyalty conflicts after his mother's remarriage. Similarly, David's family transition produces feelings of desertion, shame, anxiety and detachment,

contributing to his emotional instability. Moreover, in Withers's case, the turning points analysis reveals family transitions as leading to less ideal childrearing or to abusive and uninvolved parenting, thus hindering the child's affective and mental growth, and further causing the development of internalizing and externalizing problems in stepchildren. The other complexities that have been noted in stepchildren, include lower academic and socioeconomic outcomes, delinquent and criminal behaviors and alcohol and drug abuse.

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Notes on contributors

Muhammad Kashif Jan is an Associate Professor of English at Government Postgraduate College Mandian, Abbottabad, KP Higher Education Department, Pakistan. He holds a PhD in English and has established himself as a researcher in literary theory, linguistics, and psychosocial literary studies. His work advances interdisciplinary perspectives by integrating literary analysis and linguistics with psychology and discourse studies, particularly in areas such as personality development, culture, power, gender and racial identity, and ideology. He has contributed to academic scholarship through publications in recognized journals and continues to promote critical and research-oriented learning among undergraduate and postgraduate students.

Sardar Ahmad Farooq is an Assistant Professor of English at Government Postgraduate College Mandian, Abbottabad, KP Higher Education Department, Pakistan. He holds a PhD in English from the National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad. He has a strong academic background in English and American literature, with specialization in eco-criticism, psychoanalysis, postcolonial studies, and linguistics. Through his teaching and research supervision, he has contributed significantly to academic writing, communication skills, and English for Academic Purposes. His scholarly work, reflected in numerous research publications in national and international journals, focuses on environmental justice, identity, culture, and discourse. He is also actively engaged in research leadership and academic development initiatives.

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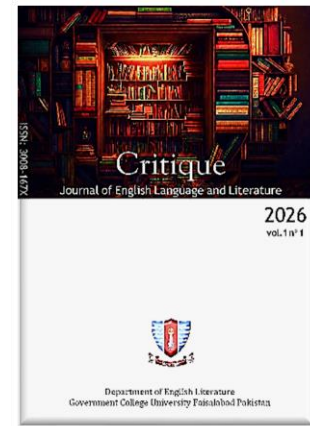
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Department of English Literature
Government College University Faisalabad, Pakistan

Postdigital Health Communication in Graphic Medicine: A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of World Health Organization Infographics about COVID-19

Sajjad Mahmood¹ 

¹ Institute of English Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan

ABSTRACT

In the postdigital age, organizational ways of communication have altogether changed. COVID-19 was a global problem which needed the dissemination of health information at the global level. World Health Organization (WHO) used infographics disseminated through digital media to communicate public health information during COVID-19 to audiences across the world. However, the effectiveness of the medium of infographics as health communication has not been measured. Using Kress and van Leeuwen's visual grammar within the framework of Graphic Medicine, the present study aims to analyse the effectiveness of the medium of WHO's COVID-19 infographics in the communication of public-health awareness. Kress and van Leeuwen's multimodal discourse analysis method ascertains communicative effectiveness by viewing how these infographics fulfil the requirements of graphic health communication. It has been found that WHO communicated public health information through multimodal discourse of infographics in an effective and efficient manner. WHO infographics employ representational human figures, varied skin colours, and accessible visual cues to promote inclusivity, while captions effectively anchor the polysemous nature of visual elements to guide viewers towards the intended interpretation. The study argues that infographics used by WHO enact an inclusive visual health communication that even the people with limited proficiency in English are able to understand key public health information. The study is significant because it shows how health professionals may effectively use visual communication to convey health messages to the public.

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Introduction

Digitalization has revolutionized the way we interact with one another. It has also changed the mode of information through which we are advised to take safety measures during public emergencies such as COVID-19. World Health Organization (WHO) employed digital media including their website, Twitter handle, Facebook page and television channels for the awareness of the public during the COVID-19 pandemic. Comics in the form of infographics have also been extensively used by WHO to advise the public as well as doctors on how they can protect themselves and others and break the spread of the pandemic. The pandemic knew no boundaries despite the presence of and talk about

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR Sajjad Mahmood  smahmoodsms@gmail.com

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borders, quarantines, and social distancing. It was a universal phenomenon. Blumczynski and Wilson remark that the etymology of the word pandemic has a tension in it: pan means all (humans) and this implies that the virus does not know any national borders and localities and demos means people or peoples whom pandemic “affects ... in all their cultural, ethnic, religious, linguistic and political diversity” (Blumczynski and Wilson 3) and it must be tackled globally and “centrally by the World Health Organization” (Blumczynski and Wilson 3). Hence, it was the duty of a global organization, such as WHO to issue guidelines and measures to be followed by people across the globe.

It was further noted that during the pandemic, not only verbal language but also visual forms were used in online health communication. The purpose was that such media may be understood across cultures, communities, ethnic and racial groups, and countries through the internet as a global digital medium. Infographics used by WHO are also a form of visual language encoded to disseminate its message to all across the globe. Graphic Medicine provides a useful lens to analyse visual infographics within the Medical Humanities.

In Medical Humanities, Graphic Medicine stands at the interface of comics and healthcare. Czerwiec et al. define graphic medicine as “the intersection of the medium of comics and the discourse of health care” (1). Written in the form of comics, the book asserts that comics are a form of potential energy (Czerwiec et al. 7). Once uploaded, they keep spreading on their own. They assert that Medical Humanities and disability studies draw on a range of visual narratives and comics; hence, the study analyses WHO visual infographics in promoting awareness of the public regarding protection and prevention during COVID-19.

The term ‘Medical Humanities’ like Yeats’ famous phrase “terrible beauty” (Yeats 180) is an oxymoron and poses difficulty for those who encounter it for the first time. It was George Sarton, a historian, who used term ‘Medical Humanities’ for the first time in 1948 (Errington). Medical Humanities rose in the UK and the US separately. In the US, Pennsylvania State College of Medicine opened the first Department of Humanities in a medical university in 1967. In the UK, there was a drive to reintroduce medical ethics into medical education through such forums as the London Medical Group. Anne Whitehead and Angela Wood note that “medical humanities ... names a series of intersections, exchanges and entanglements between the biomedical sciences, the arts and humanities, and the social sciences” (Whitehead and Wood 1). It was observed that medicine and humanities had a great potential for bridging the divide between science and technology and could solve the issues of the culture on the other (Engelhardt 238). Medical Humanities has enhanced the scope of humanities by repositioning them “to leave their isolation and speak again to the broad concerns of our cultures” (Engelhardt 239). COVID-19 was a common concern of all cultures for which much was contributed by the Medical Humanities scholarship.

However, Medical Humanities scholars may take advantage from the scholarship and findings of digital humanities in the postdigital era. It has been observed that “the postpandemic programmatic reflections include “a call for a systematic attention to digital environments” (Pietrzak-Franger 1). In fact, a little has been said about the use of a particular digital mechanism in the processes of knowledge production and dissemination in postdigital times. There is a need to augment and move beyond the communication carried through only narratives in the field of medicine and focus the alternative ways of conveying health information. In this connection, Digital Humanities may be mobilized for the assistance of Medical Humanities.

Literature Review

A large corpus of studies is available on the use of narratives and comics in the health and medicine related communications, especially, about COVID-19 pandemic. Langum and walker report that the Facebook posts shared by people showed that they were involved in reading *The Decameron* by Boccaccio and other pandemic novels during COVID-19 period (2). The reality is that under such surreal times, literature has something to do with the crisis. The researchers remark that the literature about bibliotherapy, and the use of literature to treat illness is increasing at a high rate. Furthermore, the pandemic drew attention to the nuances of language, and metaphors of war that have been developed to convey the sense of emergency and crisis. Words such as ‘war zone’ and ‘frontline soldiers’ were used for hospitals and doctors respectively. However, language was also involved in COVID-19 related communication through translation.

Another study focused on Translational Medical Humanities and its role in bridging the gap between medical academic scholars and general public (Ostherr 529). Kirsten Ostherr argues that by responding to the communication needs in the COVID-19 crisis, translation is already responding to the ever-increasing needs of the field. This study has also broadened the definition of translation. Hence, he remarks that “the concept of ‘translational humanities’ should be understood as a method for improving health, both by expanding the definition of ‘health’, and by balancing the technological and biomedical responses to the crisis” (Ostherr 530). Furthermore, the projects of Translational Medical Humanities can cross the narrative gap by combining artistic shapes of data visualization with historical or personal stories that provide background specificity and affective or aesthetic signs. However, verbal mode was not the only mode of COVID-19 related communication, visual language, especially, comics were also used at a large scale to convey the health information.

Another prominent researcher, Sarah McNicol, focuses on the role of comic books in the health communication and comments that the comics do something more than transmitting health information. They help the readers empathize with the mental and social conditions of patients (McNicol 50). The researcher argues that not only the results of testing but also the reactions of friends and family may be represented through comics. Further, she argues that erroneous beliefs may also be eradicated through the interplay of characters, where one character puts forth such belief and others contradict it. The visual component and the element of humour make the facts memorable in comics. A question arises: can medical narratives be put in comic book form?

Using the principles of narrative medicine, Williams sought answer to the question whether comics and graphic fiction may be utilized as a resource for patients, caregivers and health professionals (Williams). Various comic narratives are analysed taking them as examples of Graphic Medicine. He further argues that graphic narratives pose some complicated issues of the nature of fictiveness and truth in them (Williams 26). The writer develops the persona different from his own personality so that his peer cannot find exact equals in the narrative. Self-reflexivity is also used in graphic narratives in which the creation of comics within comics is shown. These autobiographies and the problems related to them enlighten the healthcare professionals and “may lead to a more considerate and enlightened attitude when dealing with the patient’s history” (Williams 26) which is considered a poor and contradictory history on the part of the patient. It has also been found that the medium of comics is appropriate for the depiction of subjective experiences of the suffering and illness and it can enhance the education of healthcare professionals as well as the public.

Comics and the medium of graphics may also increase the empathy in doctor-

patient relation. John Rosswell Cummings analyses Graphic Medicine in the forms of medical narratives and comics and uses the semiotic model of Kress and van Leeuwen to discover to what extent they create empathy in the doctor-patient relationship (Cummings). He observes that the detached concern is a big flaw of medical profession and there is a need for the cultivation of the empathetic approach. By analysing the key themes in four different comics, the researcher finds that empathy has been emphasized in all these comics. The vitality of human experience and the significance of bearing witness have also been recognized (Cummings). Furthermore, the detached concern of the medical professionals has been criticised.

Comics were used in online learning during COVID-19 pandemic. Very Hendra Saputra and Donaya Pasha carried out a research project on development and use of comics in online learning during this period. They found that comics not only provide stimulus to teachers but also are a means of learning for students in the classroom as well as at home (Saputra and Pasha). In comparison, children find it difficult to learn from apps and their parents are unable to help them in this regard. Moreover, comics developed in the JPG and PDF formats may be efficiently used in online and offline modes.

This use of comics for learning was studied through various other angles. Insar Damopolii et al. studied the impact of the use of comics in learning on the cognitive learning outcomes of students. The students were given comic assisted and non-comic assisted data to learn, and they showed greater learning outcomes with comic assisted input. They therefore recommended “that d-comics can be an alternative source of learning for students during the COVID-19 pandemic” (Damopolii et al. 43). Hence, improved results may be achieved by using comics in online learning.

Furthermore, the research explored the connection between public health and visual arts, particularly graphic novels in connection with COVID-19. Catherine Ma et al. conducted an online survey to collect data from the children in New Zealand about what is their favourite place in the neighbourhood (Ma et al.). Based on it, they developed recommendations to write a graphic novel and afterwards produced it. They aimed to “explore what aspects of children’s neighbourhood environment supported their wellbeing” in the COVID-19 lockdown period (Ma et al. 7). The output of the project was a graphic novel and its audio version which were made freely available online, and the article reported both the findings and the product of this endeavour. The study made the perspectives of participants accessible to others through various media.

Likewise, Hamaguchi et al. studied the dissemination of validated information through infographics in the fast-evolving ecology of false news during COVID-19. Their focus was on how fast the validated infographics and other tools of visual communication transmit information on correct public health measures during COVID-19 lockdown. They created and transmitted this information through social media in twenty languages for global audiences. They found that visual language such as infographics may be a valuable currency in the economy of public health communication (Hamaguchi et al. 485). Further, it has the potential to fill the gaps in public health education and make the citizens more responsible in sharing information about COVID-19 (Ma and Langridge).

Visual language and comics were used to communicate social skills and coping strategies in COVID-19 period. Muhammad Rais et al. studied the effect of digital comics, especially, self-regulation and self-awareness comics on the social skills of students of elementary level. For them, self-awareness means “the positive response to being aware of obeying the covid-19 prevention protocol” (Rais et al. 181), for example, being conscious of wearing masks, frequently washing hands and using personal utensils. On the other hand, self-regulation, in the context of COVID-19, “is related to students’ awareness to

obey the rules to wear a mask, wash their hands, and other healthy acts to stop the spread of the virus, especially at school” (Rais et al. 181). Using quantitative methods, they found that both self-awareness digital comics and self-regulation digital comics increase the life and social skills of students regarding COVID-19.

Another study conveys that comics were used effectively for public awareness during COVID-19 pandemic. Ciléin, Kearns and Nethmi Kearns remark that for a mass scale shift of behaviour during the COVID-19 crisis, there was a great need for the large-scale awareness of the public. Governments and other health bodies including media companies found an effective medium of communication in the form of comics. They argue that due to their dual coding, comics increase the comprehension and memory of the readers due to visual and verbal elements. Furthermore, comics also have a symbolic element along with direct realistic reflection that they perform. The use of comics in symbolic sense “allows abstract concepts to be made tangible, such as by showing how coughs spread clouds of infective material that are invisible in life, and by representing the presence of infection” (Kearns and Kearns 2).

Another way of concrete representation is metaphor which makes the ideas clear and memorable such as ‘isolation bubble’ and ‘tsunami of COVID’ clearly convey the ideas of social isolation and arrival of a catastrophe. The researchers argue that scientific concepts may be communicated in an engaging and memorable manner using comics which combine the powers of text, visuals and narrative. In the same manner, Sweetha Saji et al. remark that comics respond to and document the ways we deal with pandemics and crises (Saji et al. 136). They focus on the COVID-19 comics in the form of cartoons used on the Graphic Medicine website and analyse by using theories of Medical Humanities. Comics make a collective response to the pandemic by constructing metonyms, metaphors and symbols. They contend that “anthropomorphic metaphors used in the COVID-19 comics capture the existential experiences of the self and the bestial nature of the virus; the superhero metaphors endorse health-care professionals who are engaged in minimizing the spread and impact of the virus” (Saji et al. 152). Furthermore, the graphic story of COVID-19 is replete with the metaphors of conflict and war; however, they convey the sense of shared understanding and common target.

Overall, it may be observed that no study explored the WHO infographics as a tool of Graphic Medicine to communicate public health messages fully. Therefore, this study aims to analyse WHO infographics using the theory of Graphic Medicine and the method of visual grammar as given by Kress and van Leeuwen.

Research Methodology

Medical Humanities as a field of study lays stress on the value and role of traditional humanities and social sciences in responding to the broad range of problems and questions concerning human health and illness (Gilman xi). It has much to do with the education and training of health professionals in public health, medicine, dentistry and nursing. Thomas R. Cole et al. define Medical Humanities as “*an inter and multidisciplinary field that explores contexts, experiences, and critical and conceptual issues in medicine and health care, while supporting professional identity formation*” (Cole et al. 7 italics in original). Other disciplines that help medicine and healthcare are traditional humanities and social sciences. Due to such fields as Medical Humanities and Bioethics, there has been a great shift from medical reductionism to medical holism. The patient is not seen as an illness or disease only but as a whole person who has all facets of his personality active. Medical Humanities bridge the gap between sciences and human experiences and add the social and psychological dimension to medicine and healthcare.

Moreover, it may be observed that arts have also been wedded to sciences through Medical Humanities. Literature, music and visual arts make health and medicine their subject matter and provide means of clear comprehension to the health sciences. Health Humanities is a later term that accepts interdisciplinarity in a more democratic way and focuses on the contributions of those who are marginalized in Medical Humanities such as allied health professionals, patients, nurses and caretakers. Hence, mental healthcare has been connected to the humanities in an additive and integrative manner (Crawford et al. 5). Mental healthcare basically provided the site of inclusivity of the marginalized because many methods of treatment here are not medicinal.

Graphic Medicine is the sub-domain of Medical Humanities. Graphic Medicine is the meeting point of comics and healthcare. The framework of Graphic Medicine has been laid down in *Graphic Medicine Manifesto* (Czerwiec et al.). It is an interdisciplinary area of study and an approach to healthcare education in which principles of narrative medicine are combined with an exploration of the visual medium of comics. The authors assert that “[c]omics give voice to those who are often not heard” (Czerwiec et al. 2). It gives more inclusive perspective to healthcare, medicine, caregiving, illness and disability.

Graphic Medicine gives equality to multiple subjects and differing points of view and experiences. It explores the myriad ways in which health and disease may be represented using graphic form. In medical classrooms, stress is laid on the use of comics to communicate ideas. Graphic Medicine is a collaborative effort in which healthcare teachers, professionals, professors of literature, cartoonists and many others take part. Their work is concerned with text as well as space. It is all about creativity and the use value of comics in communication.

Comics are like potential energy which does not need any external force to move them. Different people having different interests join together to talk about comics in new ways. They assert that in Medical Humanities “there is a wonderful array of comics to choose from that address illness, disability, and caregiving” (Czerwiec et al. 8). It has also been found that in healthcare, many ethical issues are caused by poor communication.

The authors also observe that the comic artists play with the medium of communication and the medium of comics plays with our perceptions creating an enthralling and fluid experience (McCloud; Czerwiec et al.). Whatever the subject matter, we do have enjoyment while reading comics. Furthermore, Al-Jawad and Czerwiec remark that comics are necessarily and quite obviously “constructed narratives” (82). Text, visual, speech, and elements of narration can all be consciously created and studied. Comics do have visual elements to be analysed, too. They contend that “gutters, symbols, colour, thoughts, and sound effects are all part of the visual language that is unique to comics” (Al-Jawad and Czerwiec 82). Hence, we may infer from this discussion that comics are a multimodal discourse to be analysed using multimodal discourse analysis techniques. However, comics are fundamentally a visual medium of representation.

Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen have introduced the multimodal method to study the form of data that uses text, image and colour. Kress argues that multimodality is the normal condition of human communication. We use images to show what will take much time in reading process. Text is used to name what cannot be shown by images and colour is used to highlight which aspects we need to focus. He further remarks that we use one of the many ways of doing discourse analysis which is based on social semiotics (Kress and Van Leeuwen).

Kress and van Leeuwen’s model is the social semiotic theory of multimodality. We

can notice semiotic effects everywhere from media to the communication of messages, especially “at the level of semiotic production in the shift from the older technologies of print to digital, and electronic means” (Kress 6). Their focus is not on the iconographical effects of separate elements of images as lexical items, rather on the cumulative effect in combined form as meaningful wholes. Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen remark that their grammar of visual design is a general-purpose tool having “principles that can apply to an oil painting as well as a magazine layout, to a comic strip as much as to a scientific diagram” (Kress 4).

Kress and Leeuwen derive their model from Michael Halliday’s metafunctions of language. They believe that the theory of systemic functional linguistics may be adapted for visual analysis (Kress and van Leeuwen 16). Ideational, interpersonal and textual functions correspond with the patterns of representation, interaction and composition respectively. The patterns of representation refer to the people, places and things represented in the image. The patterns of interaction refer to the resources which create a link among the viewer of the image, maker of the image and those represented in it. The patterns of composition are related to the ways through which two above-mentioned patterns integrate into a meaningful whole.

Representation is realized through relating the participants in narrative or conceptual forms. Participants may be of two kinds: interactive participants those who interact with the visual as viewers or producers and represented participants those who are depicted in the image (Kress and van Leeuwen 113). There are two kinds of representation: narrative and conceptual. Narrative representation uses action verbs in the form of directed actions that are called vectors. A vector may be conceived as an oblique line made by arms and objects, which makes a connection between participants. Visual grammar uses these vectors to convey the sense of semantic roles.

In actional processes, if the vector starts from the participant, he is the actor. If it leads to the participant, he is the goal. If there is only one participant in the image, it is non-transactional. If there are more than one participant in it, it is transactional. On the other hand, in reactional processes, participants give reaction through gaze to some object. The reactor is a human or anthropomorphic entity. The receiving participant of the gaze is called phenomenon. Reactional processes also have transactional as well as non-transactional sub-processes.

Secondly, conceptual representation refers to the constructs that represent participants in “more generalized and more or less stable and timeless essence, in terms of class, or structure or meaning” (Kress and van Leeuwen 76). Such representation is composed of classificational, analytical and symbolic processes. In classificational processes, subordinates are related to one or more overt or covert superordinates. Analytical processes join the participants in a part-whole bond. Two types of participants are involved in it: the Carriers, which represent the whole and Possessive Attributes, which are the parts. Symbolic processes refer to the meaning or nature of participants.

Interaction is the social relation developed between interactive participants and represented participants. An image builds relationship between the producer of images and the audience. Interaction comprises three basic categories: contact or gaze, social distance and attitude. Gaze has two types: offer gaze and demand gaze. Offer is made when represented participants look at one another or look outside the image or frame. When the participant looks outwards at the viewer, he creates demand. Social distance refers to the size of frame which represents closeness of viewers to the participants. Attitude or point

of view towards the participants is shown through some visual resources which may be objective or subjective. Horizontal and vertical angles also perform their function in this regard.

Composition is related to how images are composed and how they communicate the ideas. Composition refers to the way interactive and representational resources “are integrated into a meaningful whole” (Kress and van Leeuwen 179). Three principles are associated with composition, which are information value, framing and salience. Information value is related to the positioning of elements in specific image zones which have meaningful information. Left to right means given information to new information. Secondly, top means ideal and bottom means real structures. Thirdly, centre mediates overall structure and margin is just ancillary.

On the other hand, salience considers hierarchies of significance among the elements represented on the page, determining immediate attention to some elements instead of others. Salience may be recognized by such factors as relative size, foregrounding, tonal contrast and sharpness of focus. Framing refers to the dividing lines and shapes which connect or separate the elements of the image. It represents which elements belong to one another and which ones do not. The elements belonging to each other make one unit.

It would be significant to observe how text is related to images in infographics. In this regard, Bateman has given four ways of text-image relations in connection with comics (Bateman 107). These may be ‘inherent’ where the text is the part and parcel of the image representation. They are ‘emergent’ if they use thought bubbles and speech balloons. They are ‘adjoined’ if image and text are connected indirectly through spatial proximity and captions. They are ‘independent’ when image and text are totally separate and relations can be “only signalled by in-text references of the form” (Bateman 107).

Captions are not merely aesthetic appendages rather they aptly and concisely describe an infographic. In this regard, Barthes’ idea of ‘anchorage’ is very relevant. He is of the view that images are polysemous and represent a range of signifiers floating freely under the surface (Barthes 39). Due to this, problem of meaning arises. Text performs the denotative description of the image and is called anchorage by Barthes because it binds the meaning. It creates the correct level of perception. Captions exactly do that.

Visual data related to COVID-19 has been collected from WHO website (World Health Organization), the pages providing advice to the public and it has been analysed through Kress and van Leeuwen’s visual grammar and other related ideas of visual analysis in the framework of Graphic Medicine.

Analysis and Discussion

To cope with stress and maintain mental and physical well-being, WHO advised the public to remain engaged in sports and games. The language of sportsmanship is used to encourage people in times of distress. The WHO infographic represents a multimodal discourse comprising text and images (see Figure 1).

Figure 1*

Sportsmanship in the Fight against COVID-19

*From *Be a Champion in the Fight against COVID-19*, by World Health Organization, CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.



In Figure 1, the infographic represents five human participants; and two objects, that is, a TV and a sofa to sit in. The background of the visual is blurred, however, the objects and the comfortable environment suggest that it is a home, and the family is observing social isolation. The interactive participants are the World Health Organization (WHO), as an international public health organisation and the public at large. Their narrative action has been represented through the vectors of their raised arms, suggesting their sense of enjoyment achieved by watching games on TV. The accompanied text urges the worldwide audience of the infographic to watch games on TV to become a champion against COVID-19. Therefore, the anchorage of the text suggests that the represented participants are using a strategy to fight against COVID-19. The participants are also giving reaction to the phenomenon of games shown through TV.

As far as conceptual representation is concerned, the represented participants are of various skin colours and ages. The two on the left hand of the viewer are white, other two who are sitting are black and the girl standing behind them is brown. Symbolically, these stereotypes refer to specific types of human beings and finally to the whole humanity. It is quite in keeping with the requirements of Graphic Medicine which aims equality and inclusivity. One of the girls, who is standing behind the sofa, uses her gaze to see towards viewers to demand the action represented in figure 1.

The interaction between the represented people and the viewers is a long shot which represents the public nature of relations between the interactive participants and the people in the image. Therefore, the message is for all regardless of colour, age, region or ethnicity. As far as the attitude of the participants is concerned, they are showing their detachment through the oblique angle of their representation on the horizontal scale. It is, perhaps, due to the official nature of the message in which there is no direct involvement of participants. Vertical level of interaction shows equality between the represented persons and the public at large. Figure 1 also represents language-centred way of human thinking in which text precedes all the other modes of communication. Text is on the left and image is on the right suggesting that it is something new or added to existing text. The text size and contrast of colour highlight the main message of becoming a champion against COVID-19 (Figure 1). Colours of participants' shirts also create salience and grab the focus of audience.

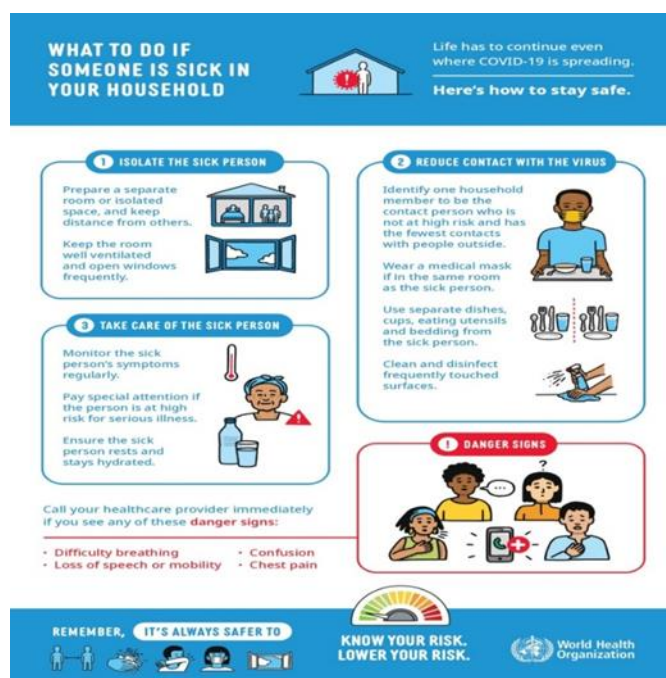


Figure 2*

How to take care of COVID patients in your Household

*From *What to do if someone is Sick in your Household*, by World Health Organization, CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

WHO focused on all the aspects and issues related to COVID-19 and relayed guidance about them through their online channels such as website, Facebook page, Twitter handle and purpose-built WhatsApp Channel. It may be observed in the light of Graphic Medicine that infographics shape human perception to communicate their message. The infographic given in Figure 2 is the representative of human participants, medicines, kitchen accessories and home fixtures. Discourse of all the three verbal, visual and diagrammatical kinds has been used in the infographic. Frames are used to segregate various sets of instructions from one another using different colours such as blue and white, and lined quadrangles (Figure 2). Emergency sign has been used thrice in the infographic representing the sensitive and dangerous nature of the issue of one member of family contracting COVID-19.

The human participants used in the first frame (see Figure 2) are of symbolic nature and they symbolize how one imagined patient is socially isolated in a separate room from other members of the family. The accompanying text also gives instructions for isolating the sick one. In Bateman's terms, the text-image relation in this infographic is inherent because both convey the same message. In the second frame, a young man is carrying a tray using his arms as vectors in which he has set food supposedly for the patient. The text on the left side performs the function of anchorage and clarifies that the most resistant member has been appointed as the caretaker of the patient.

The boy in second frame exercises gaze on the viewers demanding from them to follow these steps and roles (Figure 2). The top information is substantive and ideal in the form of general heading and subheading while the bottom information is real and procedural. The steps have been given in the sequential array from left to right. A horizontal line and red frame give information about 'danger signs'. Semiotically, red is colour of danger and emergency. The human participants are once again representative of the whole humanity, reflecting the WHO's role to deal with the global audience. It is noticeable that an empty speech bubble signifies the loss of speech as a symptom of COVID-19. Hence, WHO infographics successfully spread public awareness by using multimodal discourse which can be understood by even those who cannot understand the language properly.

Moreover, WHO issued guidelines about the spread and prevention of COVID-19 via their infographics. They conveyed the message of social distancing, handwashing, and the use of sanitizers and masks to the public through infographics (see Figure 3). So far as composition is concerned, the information has been arranged in the left to right fashion where the left side lists the causes of spread of COVID-19 and right side suggests ways to protect oneself and others. Circular shapes of white colour against the blue background achieve salience and at times do the task of segregation and separation as frames. Diagrammatical resources of arrows have been used as logical vectors to represent the causes of the spread of COVID-19 and towards the arrowhead are the ways of protection. These arrows (see Figure 3) also give logical symmetry to the whole infographic as the information given below is also arranged on the same pattern.

In the Figure 3, the representation includes close shot of girls and distanced features blurring shot of boys and close shots of hands being washed. On the left side, the girls are present in a shared social space, and the narrative action is that the girl on the left is sneezing, and other is the target of the droplets of her sneezing as shown by two drops on her face. Hence, it is only through infographics that the invisible has been made visible. The right-side interaction between these represented girls shows two things: the girls, hence the viewers as well, should maintain a distance of one metre and use facemasks. The separate frames shown by white colour also represent social distancing.

Figure 3*: *Safety Measures for COVID-19*

*From *How to Protect yourself from COVID-19*, by World Health Organization, CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

The second line also gives the guidelines of observing a social distance in social settings. However, the social distance in the second line shows the long-distance frame, hence, the public space. The message concludes that one should maintain social distancing in public spaces. In the same way, handshakes also spread pandemic and two way precautionary measures should be used to protect oneself and others. It also advises the public not to touch their faces with hands and to keep washing their hands with soap (Figure 3). The things which are used by multiple people should be sanitized for protection.

Besides, WHO dealt not only with physical aspects of the disease but also with the social and mental aspects. During COVID-19, people were socially isolated, even quarantined in their homes. There were no special physical or mental activities available for elders and children. News of death and spread of coronavirus were making people depressed. Kids were not allowed to go out into parks or playgrounds. Therefore, the WHO disseminated infographic about parenting advice during COVID-19 as shown in Figure 4.

**Figure 4***

Parenting Advice regarding 'we' Time in COVID-19

*From *COVID-19 Parenting: One-on-one Time*, by World Health Organization, CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

In Figure 4, the represented participants are symbolic persons resembling the character of Humpty Dumpty. There is an advantage of the use of such participants. Firstly, they provide the greater space for imagination, and anyone can identify with these images. Secondly, popular characters of this kind grab the attention of maximum viewers. They make the gravitational pull of the comic/infographic. The accompanied text clearly says that time should be allocated for each child. It not only makes the verbal resource of the infographic but also adds to the meaning of the visual resources. Narrative action as represented by the left side activity is reading. Books may be a good pastime during pandemics such as COVID-19. Right sided participants are involved in playing with blocks (see Figure 4). In their conceptual representation, parents and children have been differentiated on the basis of the size and shape of the participants. They are also gazing at the viewer and smiling, thereby demanding action on the part of parents who are the interactive participants of the infographic.

Moreover, in Figure 4, the angle of representation is frontal which means that represented participants want the immersion and involvement of viewers into the situation. Thus, inclusivity is the main motive of Graphic Medicine. It is the visual way of stressing the multimodal message. Information value has been set in the ideal-real mode in which the top caption and the text convey the message in an abstract manner, and the bottom gives concrete information in the form of images. Multimodality is the process of semiotic multiplication in which verbal and visual modes exponentially increase the semantic load of the message and the message becomes more effective.

Salience achieves alternative ways of reading over and above the method of traditional reading. Salience is an effective tool in the online communication of public health messages. In the verbal part, the phrase ‘with each child’ has been put in a different colour and a bigger font (see Figure 4). It is the foregrounded item gets the viewers’ attention to the children. Secondly, colour contrast of the represented participants is also attention-grabbing.

Masks were a spectacular reality of the COVID-19 period. Everybody was required to wear masks wherever they were. WHO issued clear instructions in the form of do’s and don’ts in side-by-side infographics on their website. Therefore, I have also set these infographics one after the other for maximum effect as shown in Figure 5 and Figure 6. Such juxtaposition of visual elements has its own impact and effectiveness.



Figure 5*

Do's of Wearing Medical Masks

*From *Medical Masks-Do's*, by World Health Organization, CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

Figure 6*: *Don'ts of Wearing Medical Masks*

*From *Medical Masks-Don'ts*, by World Health Organization, CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

The represented participants in these infographics are the actors ‘frozen’ in performing some action or the objects such as masks (Figure 5 and Figure 6). It may again be noted that in both infographics skin colours of participants are symbolic of the whole humanity. Discursively, the message is intended for everybody, ranging from the American film star to the Pakistani farmer, from the Chinese manufacturer to the Somali student. Furthermore, the instructions are also for those engaged in public healthcare profession along with general public. The infographic dealing with do’s (see Figure 5) fulfils the criteria of the definition of comics as a sequential art. The compositional arrangement of visual resources along with their captions is in the form of logical steps to be followed from left to right arrangement. It is the order of the English language in which we read an English sentence.

The setting of white frames of don’ts in Figure 6 is also in the form of rows that may be read from left to right but there is no sense of sequence on the logical level. They may be read in any other fashion as well. The instructions written in the imperative mood make anchorage in the Barthesian terms for the image which fixes the meaning at a specific level. Otherwise, a mask hanging in the air may have infinite meanings. Have a look on the second frame of Figure 5, it is the instruction “[i]nspect the mask for tears and holes” (Figure 5) which makes the things clear. Participants in each frame are involved in one action or the other using the vectors of their hands or arms. Although a salient “Don’ts”

has been written in Figure 6, the diagrammatical representation of don'ts using X's (cross signs) superimposed on each frame makes the message more effective and clearer.

The apocalypse was there but life had to continue in the times of COVID-19. WHO developed the infographic about precautions for grocery shopping. The represented participants are buyers, busy in the act of buying groceries and the represented objects are related to the field of public healthcare as it is applicable to the conditions of COVID-19. The composition of the infographic comprises frames associated with particular steps and occasions such as “reduce your risk” and “when inside stores” (Figure 7). Further, the gutter between two frames has been used creatively to insert text associated with the upper or the lower frame.

Figure 7*: *Grocery shopping in COVID-19*



*From *Shopping for Groceries: COVID-19*, by World Health Organization, CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

The narrative function of shopping has been represented by human actors whose arms and hands are vectors, representing those holding products of daily use. One frame has only objects in it, such as a list of local instructions, masks and sanitizers. These are the things to be taken care of ‘before one goes out’ (Figure 7). Conceptual representation shows participants as a group of carriers who possess products of daily use in their hands. One of their possessive attributes is the presence of masks on their faces which asks the viewers to use masks when going to the market. A covert superordinate of the instruction of using face masks joins together the subordinate frames in one whole.

The nature of interaction between the viewers and the represented participants is that of an offer, because the represented participants do not look directly at the imagined viewers (Figure 7). By their example, they are offering the visual model for others to follow

in a simple manner. The social distance represents a long shot which means that the buyers are in a public space that is a market. The horizontal angle of representation is oblique which means that there is an air of detachment about the buyers vis-à-vis viewers of the infographic. Such detachment is quite a characteristic of shopping for groceries. It may also be observed that centre-margin arrangement of multimodal information has been effectively used. Main message has been allotted the central space, and subsidiary information has been given in the marginal space, for example, in figure 7 things to remember have been represented in the footer of the infographic.

The results of this study partially contradict those of a recent study (Zia) which studied COVID-19 infographics in the Pakistani context using information design rubric developed by Kibar and Akkoyunlu. The rubric had criteria of title, elements, font, colour and layout with evaluative scores from 0 to 4. Zia found that the weak visualisation and elements received the lowest scores, affecting the understandability and unity of infographics (Zia 289), whereas my study highlights the performative nature of elements and proficiency of visualisations. Both studies concur on the effectiveness of captions and colours. Secondly, the results are in line with another study conducted by Mohamadpour et al. using Kress and van Leeuwen's discourse analysis model in the context of Iran which finds that the staring look in the COVID-19 related billboards and infographics creates a very strong connection with audience but very few infographics are designed on this principle. Similarly, head-on shot images represent a high degree of inclusion but only a small percentage of infographics has this technique used in them (Mohamadpour et al.). This study agrees with their conclusion that visual factors in COVID-19 infographics are very effective in drawing the audience to encourage them to apply health messages. One cause of the better effectiveness of WHO infographics may be due to the global scope of the organization and long experience of dealing with health communication in various perspectives. WHO infographics have achieved a high degree of effectiveness and efficiency in terms of equality, empathy and inclusion.

Conclusion

It may be concluded that WHO performed its duty to inform the public about precautions to be taken during COVID-19 pandemic in an effective and efficient manner. As a part of their public advice role, they used WHO infographics to disseminate public advice through multimodal discourse of infographics. Using culturally diverse figures, such as diverse skin colour or symbolic figures, WHO infographics address the whole human race. Such equality and inclusivity are the hallmarks of Graphic Medicine. The human participants represented in the infographics demand action from the viewers in a proactive manner. The artistic design of infographics affects the perceptions of viewers to move them into action.

Similarly, it has been noted that the visual resources of the infographics directly involve viewers into the represented situation. Frames and sequential array have been judiciously used in infographics to segregate the steps or parts of the whole. The public healthcare messages regarding the use of masks and sanitizers, social distancing, social isolation, and time management have been effectively conveyed through WHO infographics. Furthermore, captions have efficiently kept the polysemous nature of visual elements at a specific intended level of interpretation. Even those who cannot understand English are able to understand the visual part of the infographic. Overall, WHO infographics have successfully conveyed the public healthcare information in a time of global crisis, in keeping with the tenets of Graphic Medicine.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributors

Sajjad Mahmood is pursuing his PhD at the Institute of English Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan. He also teaches in the Punjab Higher Education Department.

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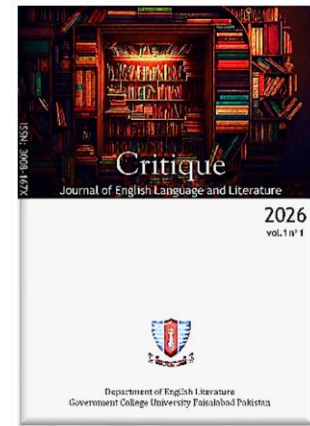
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Mehreen Naz and Nimra Saeed

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Department of English Literature
Government College University Faisalabad, Pakistan

Manipulation and Misuse of Power in Gurnah's *Afterlives*: A Subaltern Study

Mehreen Naz¹  and Nimra Saeed²

¹ Department of English, Times Institute, Multan, Pakistan

² Department of English, The Women University, Multan, Pakistan

ABSTRACT

This research aims to interpret the novel *Afterlives* through Spivak's postcolonial theory of the Subaltern. The novel explores the challenges faced by native Africans under German and British colonialism. The novel also represents the native Africans' suffering not only through European domination but also through coercion mediated by colonial and local power structures. Spivak's theory of subalternity provides a distinctive perspective to highlight the trauma of those whose voices are silenced by colonial power. This theory further provides a lens to examine how the subaltern characters are politically, socially, and epistemically marginalized. Using qualitative textual analysis, the study examines how the characters experience otherness and marginalization as portrayed in the novel and how the characters rebuild their lives after colonial impact in the form of displacement and loss. The results show that Gurnah's *Afterlives* highlights the African suffering and survival under subaltern conditions while also exposing the complex relationship between Germans and Africans.

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Introduction

Colonialism has had a lasting impact on the world. It shattered the development of societies and cultures. Abdulrazak Gurnah is a Tanzanian, postcolonial, and Nobel Prize-winning novelist. Postcolonial narratives seem to be Gurnah's foremost subjects of study. Salman Rushdie and V.S. Naipaul are only two of the many postcolonial writers on whom he published several pieces of writing. Themes like colonization, marginalization, identity, dislocation, banishment, nostalgia, and misery are present in his novels. He admitted that he had no intention of writing about the conflict or the atrocities of war on people's lives. He wanted to make it clear to the audience that acknowledging the historical background of war and colonialism is necessary to highlight how people respond to difficult situations in society both during and after war. Through his novels, he illustrates colonialism and its aftermath, particularly focusing on the loss of identity, social issues, and the lives of refugees in East Africa (Prono).

The novel *Afterlives* by Gurnah came out in 2020, following his novel *Gravel Heart* in 2017. As depicted in the novel, the colonizers and the colonized have quite a complex

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR Mehreen Naz  nh577829@gmail.com

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interaction. It is a thought-provoking novel. The Financial Times describes it as a book of subtle beauty and tragic depth. The novel takes place in an unnamed place near Tanzania. It portrays a time when a significant portion of East Africa was affected by German colonial rule. The novel focuses on the characters' struggles during and after the First and Second World Wars, representing experiences of loss, genocide, savage reprisal, and uncertain fate. Gurnah highlights the violence, despair, destruction, and oppression through his characters during war, including Khalifa, the trader's clerk of Gujrati-African descent, and his wife Asha. The other characters are Hamza, who willingly joined the German colonial army, Ilyas and his sister Afiya. These characters lived in an unnamed location on the Swahili coast in what is now Tanzania from the time of German colonial control to the decades after independence. On the coast of East Africa, a young boy named Ilyas is taken by German colonial soldiers in front of his parents. Hamza also returns from the war with many physical and psychological wounds. It is due to this depiction of colonial rule and war time atrocities that Gurnah's novel was longlisted for the Orwell Prize for Political Writing in April 2021 (Jeraj).

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's 1988 Publication "Can the Subaltern Speak?" formed the basis of postcolonial theory, particularly for examining subaltern silence and marginalization. The term subaltern was used for those people who are marginalized from society and have no opinion in it. Spivak stated that the subalterns are the most disadvantaged and impoverished people in society, and they lack an impactful voice within complex power structures. She also problematizes that within Western discourse, the West is positioned as the subject of power and the East is constructed as the object of representation (Spivak). Within this textual and theoretical context, the present research aims to elucidate the representation of characters as subaltern in Gurnah's *Afterlives* and analyze the survival of Gurnah's characters after the destructive effects of colonial life. So, this study poses questions, how are the subaltern characters portrayed by Gurnah in the novel *Afterlives*? and how do Gurnah's characters, being subaltern, survive in the harshness of colonial life?

Literature Review

Afterlives by Abdulrazak Gurnah explores themes, such as identity loss, colonization, and relocation. The literature review examines the opinions of different scholars regarding Gurnah's characters and how they relate to a broader discussion of colonialism.

A study titled "Love after Atrocity: A Nobel Laureate's New Novel Crystallizes the Pain of Colonialism" was conducted by Bethanne Patrick. This study examined the novel *Afterlives* through the lens of colonialism. The three protagonists in the novel Khalifa, Afiya, and Ilyas live through years of colonial violence. They each experience various kinds of deprivation, salvation, and injustice in the aftermath of colonial brutality. The novel closely follows some of the German occupiers. Ilyas, meanwhile, is off to war, conscripted into the Schutztruppe to fight against the British in the First World War. This study shows that colonized people faced different forms of oppression (Patrick).

Rom Charles conducted another study titled Never read Nobel Prize winner Abdulrazak Gurnah? Start with *Afterlives*. There are two primary subjects in the novel. It begins with an account of European colonialism and continues with a general look at village life. The erratic pattern remains the rule for Gurnah's characters, especially a young man named Ilyas, who becomes Khalifa's best friend. Ilyas was kidnapped as a child by an African mercenary and eventually sent to a German mission school. Another young man named Hamza provides a fascinating account of what it was like for East Africans serving their European occupiers. Long before Hamza's life is woven into the main storyline, we see him struggling to navigate the impossible currents of German desire and disgust

Another research by Imbolo Mbue was carried out on the novel *Afterlives* from the Perspectives of Colonialism and Postcolonialism (Mbue).” The German Empire is presented as a living, breathing organism with a desire to grow and reproduce, and, if threatened, to fight for its survival at all costs. Gurnah depicts the white man’s racism plainly: “I was born into a military tradition and this is my duty,” (Gurnah 30), a German officer says to Hamza. “That’s why I am here — to take possession of what rightfully belongs to us. We are dealing with backward and savage people and the only way to rule them is to strike terror into them” (56). To do their bidding, the Germans dispatch a group of African recruits called the Askari to torture villagers and slaughter local chiefs who offer resistance (Mbue).

The scholar Janice Ottersberg reviewed the novel *Afterlives* in 2022. He states that the novel provides a view of the culture and world of early 20th-century Eastern Africa. At the end of the 19th century, Germany established its foothold in East Africa through its colony, the Deutsch-Ostafrika. This unrest continued through the First World War until the Germans were defeated. Life during this time is told through the lives of four main characters: Khalifa, Hamza, Ilyas, and Afiya. In Mombasa, Khalifa, who is of Indian-African descent works as a clerk to an opportunistic moneylender and merchant of shady character. Hamza joins the Schutztruppe where he and the troop are subjected to abuse and humiliation by their German officers, then he becomes an Oberleutnant servant. As a youth, Ilyas runs away from home and is kidnapped by the Schutztruppe to serve as a carrier; he is later taken in by a coffee farmer and educated. Afiya, Ilyas’s sister, is living under cruel conditions when Ilyas rescues her after returning home; but when he rejoins the Askari, Afiya is taken in by Khalifa (Ottersberg).

In 2021, Samir Jeraj conducted a study titled “Abdulrazak Gurnah on Afterlives and Colonial Hypocrisy”. This study was conducted from the perspective of postcolonialism, illustrating how German imperial power and British colonialization disrupted Tanzania. The novel's characters are tremendously affected by these turbulent events. The novel's title shows colonialism's aftermath on the characters' lives. The characters' connection to one another supports the notion that the novel *Afterlives* focuses on society. Disruptions in families’ social ties are compensated by an unpredicted act of mercy. Khalifa, for example, was born to an Asian father and an African mother, allowing him to move freely between the two cultures. The interaction between these two societies, Tanganyika and Zanzibar, is not uncommon. However, he adds that German colonial officials expressed limited concern for expanding education and improving living conditions (Jeraj).

Times of India reviewed the novel as the story of Ilyas and Hamza amid an African colonial struggle in which the Germans, British, Belgians, and French were fighting for dominance. Young Ilyas was taken from his parents by German soldiers. In contrast, Hamza was purchased and then raised under the supervision of a commander who claimed ownership over him. After the war, Hamza returns home where Ilyas had stayed earlier and turns to Ilyas' sister, Afiya, in search of affection. This review highlights the suffering of African people, how they were kidnapped or purchased, and later how they fought against European colonial powers to achieve freedom. (The Times of India).

Theoretical Framework

Postcolonial theory is a response to colonial notions and a counter to how the colonized people are portrayed by the colonizers. The proponents of postcolonial theory are Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, Homi K. Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak. The concept of postcolonialism is traced to Edward Said's work, *Orientalism*. According to Edward Said, the effects of

colonialism are still felt, which include conflict, violence, bureaucratic domination, civil wars, and death. Languages and civilizations have been enforced by Western colonial power, whereas the cultures of the Orientals are neglected or distorted. He added that another defining feature of colonialism is the concept of ‘Othering’ (Ashcroft 85).

The Wretched of the Earth (1963) and *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967) are two of Frantz Fanon's most significant works on colonialism. These two pieces provide insights into how colonization affected a nation's indigenous population. He looked at the psychological impact that colonialism had on both the colonizers and the colonized (Ashcroft 91).

However, the present study has been conducted using a qualitative approach because the data is in non-numerical form and analyzed through textual analysis of the novel *Afterlives* by using Spivak's theory of the Subaltern. The study focused on the interpretation and analysis of the selected novel. Since the data gathered used a qualitative research methodology, the novel has been used as primary source. Moreover, the researchers used a close reading technique to get a deeper understanding of the text. The research gap was made clear through a critical review of existing scholarship.

Subaltern Theory by Gayatri Spivak

The present study has taken postcolonial concepts from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's “Can the Subaltern Speak?” for textual analysis. It explores the impact of colonialism and colonial power on the colonized. The word subaltern describes those who are disengaged from society and do not have the power to speak. The colonial or the subject, according to her, is a perception of the political issue, whereas the idea of other or object is another concept given by colonizers. They are referred to as ‘others’ by European colonizers. She stated that the most marginalized and poor members of society, known as subaltern, have no voice. She further states that the identities of subaltern people are quite different because they are unable to express themselves. The voices of colonized people are silenced by powerful colonial forces. According to her, subalterns lack social standing and therefore are not acknowledged by society. She explored the idea that the East is positioned as the object and the West is presented as the subject (Willette). The subject speaks and is heard, whereas the object is not allowed to speak. The subalterns are the inferior people, and therefore their voices are seized by the colonizers. Spivak's work includes aspects of postcolonialism such as epistemic violence, oppression, and marginalization. As a result, the term subaltern explores societal problems how the people are displaced, oppressed, or marginalized (Spivak).

Analysis and Discussion

The novel *Afterlives* has been set on the coast of East Africa. It was the time when the largest part of Africa was under German colonialism. In the novel, Ilyas, Afiya, and Hamza are affected by colonialism and used by German troops. These three characters are the true representation of subaltern under German and British colonialism. Ilyas, who is the defender of the Germans, is kidnapped by German troops. Later, he serves the Germans. His separation from his parents and sister highlights the effect of war on how people get separated and marginalized from society. While serving the Germans, he later changed his name from Ilyas to Elias Essen and died on the Sachsenhausen mission in 1942. Being a subaltern, he is not able to raise his voice in front of Germans. Afiya, Ilyas's sister, also suffered and lived under the control of those who beat her. After 10 years, she met his brother. Ilyas's identity is split up under colonialism. The village people did not recognize him. But soon, Ilyas left her sister and gave her responsibility to his friend Khalifa, who looked after her. Her separation from his brother demonstrates the lives of subaltern. The character of Hamza also suffered a lot. He was sold by his parents, and then the merchant's

cruel behavior forced him to run away. In addition, Gurnah's *Afterlives* demonstrates that the people of East Africa have hope and try to rebuild their destroyed lives.

The Portrayal of Subaltern in Afterlives

The subaltern are those who are excluded from dominant social and political structures and are denied the power to speak under colonial rule. The state of being subaltern in society is an aspect of postcolonialism that how subalterns are displaced from their homeland and then forced to change their way of living. Abdulrazak Gurnah through his characters shows subaltern conditions: Ilyas was kidnapped by the German colonial power and after a long time, he came back to his town. The officer assistant, Habib, helped him to get a job with a teacher named Maalim Abdalla. They usually walked and met at a specific place called the Baraza. It is a meeting place in East Africa and their walk came to an end at Khalifa's home who was a Gujarati trader's clerk. This setting shows how colonized people live under colonial conditions.

Did they make you pray like a Christian? Khalifa asked. You won't tell anyone if I tell you, will you? he asked. They made you sin, Khalifa then said (27).

Khalifa and Ilyas both are good friends. Ilyas tells everything about himself to Khalifa, and how he is kidnapped by Germans. The subaltern aspect can be seen here in the way marginalised people are forced to change their religion. The character of Ilyas offers prayers like a Christian. This shows how German colonizers use their power to subjugate and control these characters. Ilyas says to Khalifa that God knows better what is hidden in my heart. He even defends Germans, saying that he works for them and it enabled him to attend school. Here, Ilyas speaks in favour of the Germans and says that they have been very kind to him. Africans were suffering for many years under European colonization and countries such as Germany had become successful in manipulating the lives of many people, making them believe that they wanted to help them and enlighten their minds as well (Fatma). The character of Ilyas believes that the Germans are kind to him and want to make him civilized. It is because he was first abducted by the Germans, then kept in confinement, and after that he was sent to a German school. For subaltern characters like him, there is no way to escape.

Was there still fighting up there? Khalifa asked. No, I don't know. Ilyas said. It was very peaceful. There were new farms, schools, and towns (28).

Ilyas continues his conversation with Khalifa about Germans. Khalifa is curious whether the war is going to end or not and asks Ilyas. But here in above lines, the subaltern aspect is indicated as speaking in favour of Germans. Fatma stated that white and the West are depicted as perfect human beings, with great brains and the ones who bring light to African countries (Fatma). This colonial influence is shown through Ilyas's character when he says that common people get the chance to attend school and then work on farms owned by German. He further justifies German rule while also mentioning that only some bad people spread brutality; otherwise, they are generous people, whose generosity can be seen in providing him with employment. However, colonial education worked as a tool of imperial control, shaping colonized people according to the needs of colonizer. As Spivak argues that colonial education system created a dichotomy between European knowledge and indigenous knowledge. Moreover, foreign schools strengthened German language and privileged their education system while marginalizing local African knowledge (Spivak).

I don't know what happened to the old people. I've never been back to the village where we used to live, Ilyas said. Ten years, Ilyas said. Remembering his neglect of his parents and how badly

it made him feel afterward, Khalifa said (28).

Ilyas's separation from his parents is an aspect of subaltern how he was displaced from his hometown. In Ilyas's case, the subaltern is one who is excluded from society. This is an effect of colonial domination that the colonized people are not allowed to go back to their homes (Bhagwat). Spivak stated that "my Indian situation may be interpreted as a depressing quest for the lost origins that make up my identity. But I am completely aware that the rooms of inspiration are not easily accessible" (Spivak 6). Khalifa asked Ilyas why he does not want to go home and how many years have been passed since he was far away from his home. Ilyas responded that he is close to his home but the aftermaths of colonialism left him devastated and he does not want to recall and rethink it. Abdulrazak Gurnah told in an interview with Shane Creevey that we remain in our thoughts and our actual world, even when the past is over, it remains in the present and in an imaginary world that continues. I suppose that it never dies because the past is present (Creevey). Khalifa insists that Ilyas should go because he feels, Ilyas will regret his decision with time. This shows that the past is still present in these characters' thoughts and imaginations.

Ilyas didn't know how to pray and did not know the words. There was a mosque in the nearby mountain town but no one at the farm or the school told him he should go there. By then he was a grown man working at the Sisal estate (31).

The lives of the characters are disturbed under colonial control. Ilyas, who was once colonized and is now back in the town, goes in search of his parents. It is the time for Maghrib prayer, and Karim invited him to start the prayer. However, Ilyas under German colonialism, has forgotten his religion. Karim said to Ilyas that he should lead the prayer. Ilyas feels hesitant because he was working on a Sisal estate. Sisal cultivation was introduced by German East Africa in the last decades of the 19th century. Abdulrazak Gurnah highlights the problems of Africans being subaltern in the service of German colonizers through the character of Ilyas. But the person who is working for Germans cannot go to the mosque or live according to his religion. Religion seems to play a fundamental role in explaining White colonization in third-world nations (Fatma).

Ilyas thought about this for a moment then he said, left her for other people. What does this mean? The man spoke now; his voice was very weak. Your sister is given away. Is my sister here in the village? he asked at last (33).

Ilyas came to know that his parents had left a girl. He is shocked that the baby is 15 or 16 months old. She is alone now. The man continues to tell him all the situations that his parents faced after him. This shows the life of subaltern—how their families are disturbed and Ilyas's poor parents have no voice. They are identified as subaltern (Guleria). Ilyas's parents suffered a lot after his kidnapping. His mother was ill, and his father too was ill with diabetes. Ilyas is asking them if her sister is still alive and where she has been. The man then told him in a sad tone that her sister has been living near the village. Abdulrazak Gurnah, through his character Ilyas, portrays the life and experiences of a subaltern and gives us a true picture of Zanzibar. These lines demonstrated that the lives of marginalized people affect their family structure. In the novel, Ilyas's parents, sister, and he himself suffered a lot of problems.

One day she was in the yard helping her aunt with the washing when they heard someone calling out from the front door. When I was hungry, I begged for food or stole some fruit. I arrived in a big town on the coast and saw soldiers (44).

After a long time, Afiya was reunited with her brother Ilyas. Ilyas shared his experiences

with her that how he had left home and what had forced him to leave home. Gurnah shaped the life of Ilyas in a way that first he left his home, then he was kidnapped and reached the place where German troops marched. Ilyas recounted seeing troops strolling down the sidewalks. He went with them. A group of Askari waited on the platform for the train. A Shangaan Askari forced him onto the train and refused to allow him to get out. The Askari instructed him that Ilyas had become a gun soldier. Ilyas assured that he was an Indian guy whom the Askari had kidnapped from his house. This is how Ilyas's journey started under German troops and how he became an Askari and an agent of colonial power. Another study referenced Spivak's thoughts on subaltern and stated that she strives to unsettle the roots of the conventional self. The concept of the Self is another paradox she confronts with after depicting the experiences and sufferings of marginalized and disadvantaged individuals in developing countries. The self represents power and the West, whereas the Other represents the powerless and the East (Bhagwat and Arekar). In the novel, others are forced to live under German colonialism. When Ilyas sees the troops that are marching, the Maji conflict was taking place at that time. The Maji Revolt had been an aggressive war within German East Africa by Islamic and animist Africans fighting German colonial rule. The Germans were victorious. From 1905 to 1907, the conflict took place for three years. Maji's protest was nearing its end after its violent suppression, and was crushed at a high cost to African lives and livelihoods. The uprising began near Lindi and then swept throughout the country and villages in the West and South. When the German authorities recognized, military weapons were not enough to suppress the revolt, and it started starving the citizens. The Schutztruppe considered every person a soldier in the affected areas. They destroyed towns and burned houses, destroyed crops, and discontinued food supplies.

They don't stand a chance, the British, Ilyas said. The Germans are gifted and clever people. They are much kinder than the British. I don't know about kindness, said one of the café experts.

There is no one as stern as a German (49).

Khalifa takes Ilyas on the Baraza, it is a meeting place in East Africa where many people gossip about several things. First of all, Khalifa gives a brief introduction of Ilyas to others that he attended German school and worked for a farm owned by Germans. They are all talking about the horrors of war, different from the previous minor conflicts between Waswahili and Arabs. They were bad enough, yet this one is monstrous. They have hill-sized fighter planes with warships that could navigate undersea. The novel exposes British and German brutality and colonial power and how they oppressed Africans through various means. Ilyas speaks in favour of the Germans, claiming that they are God's gift to them and that they are far better people than the British. All the other people in the café oppose Ilyas because they are all aware of the brutality of the Germans. Mangungu tells Ilyas that Germans are unkind and that they are stricter and crueler than Arabs. The Germans have altered Ilyas' thinking as he says that he has only received compassion from them. Contradicting Ilyas, another person says that just because one person is polite does not entail that all Germans possess the same quality. Over those years, Germans spread violence and murdered thousands of Africans, leaving a vein of blood and skeletons all across the country. Many dead bodies were hanging on both sides of the roads as a result of German colonization.

They were fighting an enemy who was just as savage in retaliation, Ilyas said, undaunted. They had to be harsh in retaliation because that's the only way savage people can be made to understand order and obedience (49).

Ilyas argues with Mahmudu, Mahfudh, and Mangungu about Germans and British. This is how their colonial control shapes people's perception in such a way that the natives think that Germans are civilized and sincere to them. Ilyas, who worked under the Germans, has the opinion that they are not harsh, and they take revenge only from those people who treat them brutally. The Germans, according to him, have been kind ever since they arrived. In the same dimension, another study quotes Spivak, stating that she has a clear grasp of the extent to which oppressed and marginalized people's experiences are being adversely affected by the dominant economic, social, political, and academic tactics (Bhagwat and Arekar) to shape the minds of the Africans. Mahfudh said that German Askari is equally violent and merciless because they have acquired these traits from their commanders. These people are making every effort to persuade Ilyas that Germans are brutal rather than civilized human beings.

Despite such encounters, it was still a great surprise to Khalifa when Ilyas announced that he planned to volunteer for the schutztruppe. What was this to do with you? his friend asked. This is between two violent and vicious invaders, one among us and the other to the north (50).

Ilyas's decision to join the German army puts everyone in shock. Ilyas is Khalifa's friend; he is concerned about him and wants that he never joins the army. Khalifa is aware of German brutality because Africa is soaked in blood. Opposing his friends, Ilyas announced his decision to join the Schutztruppe. These lines show that the minds of subaltern subjects are shaped by German colonial power. Spivak's views how subaltern people are made other and how their sense of self is erased (Spivak) support the shaping of Ilyas's consciousness. Both the Self and the Other represent the Germans as superior and Africans as inferior respectively. In the novel *Afterlives*, the concept of Self and Other is used to define the relationship between the Germans and Africans as well as the relationship between German troops and Ilyas. Khalifa told Ilyas that enlisting with the group of German soldiers is one of the worst decisions because the mercenaries are notorious for their violence and inhumanity. He explained how the rulers cleverly manipulated the natives to fight against their countrymen to suppress the revolt. They are engaged in a conflict unrelated to the natives. He warned Ilyas that he could be badly wounded, but Ilyas thought that everything would be great after joining the army. Everyone at the café is discussing how cruel the Germans are, how they oppress people, and how many people have been slaughtered. Yet Ilyas does not rethink. Khalifa continued by arguing that his sister Afiya should be his only priority.

She did not know how he could send her back there, after all, he had taught her to see the cruelty of her life with them. Ilyas knew that he was posted to Dar es Salam for training. Khalifa said to Afiya that this fight is nothing to do with him (51).

After a long time, Ilyas and her sister rejoin. But this process of colonization again separates the two. Ilyas, whose mind is changed now just wants to join the army. Abdulrazak Gurnah reveals the lives of the protagonists by describing the surroundings in which they live. His characters attain their identity from certain regions. This is how Gurnah portrays the lives and experiences of Ilyas and Afiya and their life-changing experiences as subaltern. Ilyas says goodbye to his friend Khalifa, reinforcing the concept of subaltern as people without agency and any central societal position. Ilyas does this because his German school and work on a farm in German's custody shaped his thinking to join the army. He was informed that he would be assigned to boot camp in Dar es Salaam. Dar es Salam is a city in Tanzania. Afiya was told by Khalifa that he was not involved in the conflict. But he was

killing alongside Askari, whose hands were already soaked in blood. Khalifa expressed concern that Ilyas does not care about his sister. These lines show that subaltern characters are forced to be marginalized and separated from their families and hometowns because they have no voice or agency.

The recruits were on the march with varying degrees of consent, some were volunteers, and others were volunteered by their elders who themselves were under duress. Others were silent and anxious. Hamza was in the latter category, silently wretched about what he had done (55).

It is the first day of Hamza under German officers after they kidnapped him. All this happened in the Boma camp. They told Hamza that he was a stupid person. As Hamza's condition was not good, they told him that in the army his body is made tougher and stronger. This shows the cruel treatment in these camps to turn colonized human beings into violent objects so that they use them later as they want (Arbia and Mihoubi). Through the character of Hamza, Abdulrazak Gurnah highlights the experiences of people who lived in postcolonial Zanzibar and were then sold to German soldiers. Some soldiers are recruited and are forced to join the army, while others join voluntarily. The Schutztruppe was strong and also prepared to get involved in the war against other men. Several of them interacted casually, parading with enthusiasm, while others were aware of all of this effort, so, they anticipated their initiation into the language of contempt, grinning at the statements of their escort. But Hamza is the only one who is anxious and watching all this with unsaid words. He cannot speak as a subaltern under colonial subjugation, so he regrets his decision to join the German army. The incident gave him the strength to go along with others even though he met nobody else. When the sun rose, they walked to the boot camp to begin their journey. One of them sings a song in the Kinyamwezi language. Hamza was aware of this. The song revealed the oppression under German colonization. All of the troops sang that they were prepared. These are the troops of Mdachi – German army.

The sun clamped down on his neck and shoulders, and the sweat poured off his face and streamed down his back, Hamza's anxiety returned. Everyone knew about the Askari army, the Schutztruppe, and their ferocity against the people and about the stone-hearted German officers (57).

The soldiers are marching and are obsessed with the lyrics that they are singing. There is the first day of Hamza among the German troops and their march. The weather is getting hot, and he gets tired of all of this because he is not used to German ferocity. Hamza's worries increased, so he went back and surrounded himself with fear. The idea of subaltern is connected to the weak. Categorization and oppression are prevalent throughout all societies, and subaltern's problems are an indispensable part of societal life (Spivak). The above lines also represent that Hamza thinks of himself as weak and in a miserable situation. When he left what seemed unbearable, he impulsively offered his services. He became aware of the company he was selected to deal with. All were familiar with a Schutztruppe, an Askari troop, and their cruelty towards the inhabitants. Gurnah, through the character of Hamza, depicts the journey of a soldier who is forced to join the German troops. His fear regarding the acts he had committed flared so violently that he experienced life-threatening consequences.

They walked all day, most of them barefoot, some wearing leather sandals. The Germans built this road, their escort said. Hamza's legs and back ached so much that he walked by rote and instinct, without any choice but to keep moving (57).

Gurnah's account in these lines portrays the struggle of Hamza under German troops. This shows that subalterns' lives are not easy; they are forced what Spivak argues to stay silent and accept all the situations under colonial power (Spivak). Hamza is a soldier, but he is of a lower rank, representing a subaltern. Several troops are there; half of them are shoeless, and others have been wearing leather boots. The Germans, according to their escort, constructed this route through the forest deliberately to ease the men's suffering. The soldiers sprang to life when the escort informed them that they were getting close, like animals approaching their enclosures, on the last stretch of the march, which he did not recall. Willette also states that Spivak's essay situates the subaltern within a position that is unclear and fractured (Willette). Hamza's life is also split between the East and the West because he deals with anxiety daily. He is lonely and unclear about his life and role to play in German troops.

Survival of the Subaltern

Afiya was thirteen years old when the British took control of the coast. It was now more than two years since Ilyas left for Dar es Salaam. They heard nothing from him (107).

Ilyas's sister, Afiya's displacement shows what we deduce from Spivak's theory, how subaltern have no luxuries to survive. However, Afiya still has hope that his brother will come. The British forces returned to Tanga on July 3, 1916. Khalifa and his friends discussed the brutality of the war that surrounded them. Afiya asked Khalifa about Dar es Salaam. Khalifa told her that war was going on between Germany, South Africa, and the British. But the most prevalent fight is with Africans. Several Askari, Schutztruppe, and African soldiers are killed. Khalifa gets news about Ilyas from Habib. He was a fellow clerk of Ilyas in the Sisal estate. But now he had no more news regarding Ilyas. He tells Khalifa that Ilyas was posted as a signalman. No one is left there because the British forces, after landing, took the manager of Germans as a prisoner. Ilyas was posted to Lindi district.

Khalifa gets suspicious and thinks that Ilyas is no more alive, or maybe something bad has happened to him. Khalifa is informed that Belgian soldiers have seized Tabora. It was an extremely brutal war. Through the character of Afiya, Gurnah demonstrates the lives of subaltern and their survival under duress as they are displaced from their homes and separated from their loved ones. Spivak also claims that the subaltern person seems to be unpredictable and diversified. In the present context, subalternity is marked by displacement and fragmentation. Another study validates our point by mentioning that subaltern do not always raise their voices, but the effects of colonization put them in a situation that they will use to survive in every situation (Khatoon). At Khalifa's home, Afiya lives quietly with the hope that her brother will come back soon. She got support from Bi Asha in reading the Qur'an and other religious stories related to God's prophets. She was delighted at Afiya not only when she accompanied her during worship but also when she recited the Quran with her. After getting separated from her parents and brother, it is the first Eid of Afiya, which she celebrates with Khalifa's family. After Ilyas, he is the only person who looks after Ilyas's sister like a daughter.

Sooner or later, he was bound to recognize something. When he stumbled on the post office building, he sat down with relief and waited for his fear to diminish (142).

Hamza comes back to his native town, entirely shaken by the horrific events of the war. It is something he brings to mind about the past when his home was near the roadway, which he sees with a gloomy face how it collapsed into the tiny passage. In his case, he as a subaltern is first displaced from society, and then colonialism shattered his mind, identity, and place. Later, he fully separates himself by having concerns that his sleep deprivation

would disturb other people. The treatment of German troops during war left him suffering from trauma as well as insomnia. Abdulrazak Gurnah, through the character of Hamza, clarifies the elements of resistance and survival of subaltern during and after the war. In the novel, Hamza depicts the horrible experiences of colonial rule and its aftermaths that he suffered as a soldier in German forces. Later, he comes back to his town and rebuilds his life through work and hope. The capacity to make a decision or take an initiative is referred to as agency. It clarifies, whether people may behave independently or whether their actions are influenced by the very process of their identity formation under colonial subjugation. As it is argued that people will have the capacity to recreate their right world and the effort to rediscover themselves (Ashcroft 2007). Similarly, Hamza, in search of a job, went to a building he had seen. Hamza's struggles to overcome the sorrow the war has caused, seek work, and restore his life contain elements of resistance and agency.

Conclusion

This research concludes that in the *Afterlives*, the idea of subaltern has been demonstrated through the atrocities committed by German colonial power in East Africa. Subalterns are people who are displaced, and not allowed to speak under colonial rule. The findings of this study demonstrate the muteness of subaltern people and the struggle of these oppressed people during and after the war in Africa. The findings highlight that Africans being subaltern suffered a lot, but with the passage of time, they learnt how to rebuild their shattered lives. Gurnah's characters rebuild their lives with affection, kindness, and a whole sense of connection with society. The characters of Ilyas, Afiya, and Hamza have shown how they survive the horrors of war and restore their relationships with affection and kindness. Abdulrazak Gurnah thus suggests that good fortune does not always remain the same; but it changes. It has been demonstrated through the study that African people first suffered war and then came to know how to live life quietly. Moreover, future research may be conducted by selecting other works of this kind for comparative analysis or may examine the present novel under different theoretical perspectives.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributors

Mehreen Naz is affiliated with Times Institute, Multan, Pakistan. She is actively engaged in academic research with a shared focus on linguistics, particularly within the framework of subaltern studies. Her works explore language as a tool for representation, identity formation and power dynamics among marginalized communities.

Nimra Saeed is associated with The Women University, Multan, Pakistan. Her research interest lies in linguistics, with a specialization in subaltern studies. She engages with critical theories to examine how linguistics structures and narratives combine to the visibility and empowerment of subaltern populations, particularly in socio-cultural settings.

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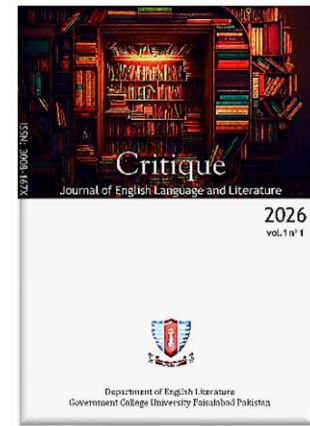
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Mushahid Hussain

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Department of English Literature
Government College University Faisalabad, Pakistan

Trauma, Identity, and Resilience in Doug Boyd's *Rolling Thunder*

Mushahid Hussain¹ 

¹ Department of English Literature, Government College University Faisalabad, Pakistan

ABSTRACT

This paper examines Doug Boyd's biographical account *Rolling Thunder* through the analytical framework of trauma theory. Set during the 1960s, a period marked by Native American activism, the book illustrates how Native American communities endured multiple traumatic experiences ranging from racial violence and poverty to cultural dispossession and the disruption of family structures. The research argues that traumatic experiences transform the protagonist, marking their effects on his self-identity, beliefs, and social connections. Through trauma theories developed by Bessel van der Kolk and Judith Herman, this study demonstrates how the protagonist bears both the individual traumatic events and a legacy of trauma inherited through his family history and tribal community. Drawing on van der Kolk's concept of traumatic memory, the study explores *Rolling Thunder*'s recurrent nightmares alongside Herman's idea of complex trauma as manifestations of racial prejudice and societal poverty. A qualitative reading of this book demonstrates that the main character uses avoidance, dissociation, and resilience strategies to manage his traumatic responses. This study offers vital insights into effects of trauma on individuals and groups, thereby re-establishing the essential value of trauma-focused care.

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Introduction

This research examines intersections of trauma, identity constructs, and narratives of resilience through an analysis of Doug Boyd's *Rolling Thunder*. The story depicts a Native American medicine man surviving multiple traumatic stressors, such as violent racism, economic hardship, and fractured family ties. This study is delimited to analyzing and examining the symbolic representations of Native American resistance against historical trauma in the selected book. This research utilizes insights from Bessel van der Kolk and Judith Herman to explore how the traumatic experiences shape the main character both internally regarding his perception of life and externally regarding his relationships. Moreover, this analysis of trauma, identity, and resilience in Doug Boyd's *Rolling Thunder* under the framework of trauma theory also brings in dialogue the historical trauma and Indigenous healing practices. This theoretical framework is significant because Bessel van der Kolk and Judith Herman explore trauma across individual and collective levels. This

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR Mushahid Hussain  hayatmushahidhussain@gmail.com

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research confirms that when communities create healing programs based on storytelling, their interventions prove effective within Indigenous populations (Kirmayer et al.). Through storytelling people preserve their cultural identity and find recovery by sharing their stories through a supportive community structure. The studies reveal that culturally responsive healing procedures are crucial to working through trauma among Native peoples (Kirmayer et al.; Smith). Panofsky et al. report that behavioral interventions based on traditional cultural practices show immense potential to enhance mental health results for Indigenous communities (Panofsky et al.). These healing methods integrate traditional practices with community involvement which respects Indigenous cultural traditions.

Through his book *Rolling Thunder*, Boyd demonstrates why cultural approaches matter to rebuild resilience within his characters who confront distressing histories. Scientific findings show a direct relationship between historical trauma and substance abuse among the Indigenous population. Consistent research data presented by the National Institutes of Health indicates that 86.4% of investigations infer a strong association between historical trauma and substance use disorders within Indigenous populations (Smith). Participants from studies link their substance abuse to cultural dislocation and damaged identity, thus showing the necessity of cultural healing approaches to address their challenges. The connection becomes central throughout *Rolling Thunder* when the main character faces identity struggles shaped by ancestral trauma and its impact on his community.

Research shows cultural intervention approaches must be used to support Indigenous communities who are dealing with historical trauma because their needs demand particular attention. For example, Panofsky et al. in their systematic review analyzed numerous research studies employing cultural trauma intervention methods which led to better results for participants. Traditional healing practices, together with community involvement form integral component of interventions designed to help Indigenous peoples develop resilience. His research defines resilience as a flexible wellness process that helps people and groups transform through challenging situations (Panofsky et al.).

Existing literature also indicates that Indigenous peoples' resilience arises mainly from their cultural practices combined with strong community connection and their attachment to ancestral lands. Resilient strategies comprise three essential steps including the development of cultural ties and native language recovery as well as continued involvement among community members (Usher et al.). Traditional protective elements act as buffers that reduce the impact of transgenerational grief that Indigenous communities endure.

Literature Review

This review examines Doug Boyd's *Rolling Thunder* as a multifaceted resource book which draws from historical trauma scholarship, intergenerational analysis, cultural healing techniques and spiritual elements. An examination of the main character's progression through different analytical perspectives demonstrates why trauma studies must account for an individual as well as shared traumatic experiences. Management of historical trauma as experienced by Indigenous populations requires the implementation of community-based approaches together with traditional healing traditions. This research foundation enables us to study psychological trauma and resilience issues affecting Native American communities, specifically in Boyd's narrative alongside other academic studies on Indigenous mental wellness.

Cohen, K. describes Native American medicine as a holistic system of healing that is rooted in traditional cultural practices such as ritual, worshiping, and herbalism (Cohen).

The aim of Native American healing tradition is to find harmony and meaning. This method of healing has been practiced on this continent for possibly more than 60000 years and this healing tradition was also shaped by the interaction of migrant people. Murtaza, et al. explore the deep connection of Native American identity and trauma with environmental degradation and destruction by colonizers. The researchers highlight how Sherman Alexie's writing portrays the cultural and ecological trauma of Native American and how Euro-American's subjugation of environment disrupted the harmony between Native Americans and nature. The destruction of environment and forced dislocation of Native Americans was an attempt to erase their civilization (Murtaza, et al.).

Bezar, et al. analyzed N. Scott Momaday's screenplay *The Moon in Two Windows* for the purpose of centralizing Native American voices and exploring their resistance against Euro-American cultural dominance. The study highlights that Native Americans resist cultural hegemony imposed by colonizers through imaginative revival of their culture. The research analysis introduces elements from resilience theory that reveals how people handle and overcome trauma experiences (Bezar et al.).

Various studies demonstrate that strong connection exists between resilience development, cultural heritage, communal backing, and spiritual experiences. The manifestation of cultural identity together with spiritual practices acts as protective element against traumatic experiences (Chandler and Lalonde). Similarly, Per Gone et al. illustrate how the main character shows resilience via cultural reconnection after trauma experiences that becomes dialogic to scholarly arguments of how Indigenous resilience needs native interventions (Gone et al.). Through his protagonist's *Rolling Thunder*, Boyd demonstrates how spiritual teachings provide both enlightenment and empowerment through their connection to nature and interrelated spiritual systems which serve as trauma healing resources.

This analysis assembles the notion of 'traumatic memory' developed by van der Kolk, so readers can understand the protagonist's persistent traumatic flashbacks. Furthermore, Judith Herman contributes insights about 'complex trauma' which allows us to study how racial violence combines with socio-economic difficulty to affect the protagonist. A qualitative study of Boyd's writing shows the protagonist employing dissociative and avoidance responses, yet also reveals resilience which emerge from his traumatic experiences. The story of *Rolling Thunder* investigates Indigenous trauma and resilience in conjunction with personal and social experiences of racial tension and poverty while also dealing with loss. Through a trauma theory examination, the study identifies how the protagonist's individual encounters intersect with the historical background that shapes his sense of self and worldview.

According to Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, historical trauma describes the psychological and emotional damages which colonization and systemic oppression caused to Indigenous communities. This conceptual basis shows how stress affects both single individuals and the entire structure of their community. Brave Heart indicates that historical trauma produces enduring effects that span across several generations, influencing both family health and community bonds (Brave Heart). The notion of intergenerational trauma from one generation to the next provides the bases for grasping how trauma influences Indigenous communities.

According to Duran, historical oppression creates enduring psychological wounds named 'soul wounds' (Duran 38), which ultimately produce different types of mental distress. In Boyd's *Rolling Thunder* the protagonist illustrates how he copes with his individual identity set against the painful history of his community. According to van der Kolk, traumatic memory manifests through both flashbacks and nightmares in the main

character ([van der Kolk](#)). Traumatic fragmented memories damage the protagonist's sense of identity while revealing how trauma distorts identity.

Boyd accurately represents how trauma changes a person through disrupting their sense of self while altering relationships within the broader storytelling framework. The use of historical trauma theory, intergenerational trauma perspectives, and culturally specific healing practices contribute depth to trauma analysis in *Rolling Thunder*. The analysis frames protagonist experiences in a broader context to highlight how personal trauma needs an examination of social patterns. The focus is on appropriate ritual healing practice that respects Native American identities and fosters resilience. According to Boyd's narrative, community participation emerges as a vital healing element that has been shown by *Rolling Thunder*'s interactions with other people and communities. Research has revealed that healing practices of Indigenous communities which unify traditional approaches represent fundamental ways to build resilience within their populations ([Gone et al.](#)). *Rolling Thunder* endures trauma by applying customary healing rituals within shared community experiences. From Boyd's *Rolling Thunder* readers learn how individual experiences intertwine with those of Indigenous communities. Boyd reveals through his story the healing process of his protagonist so we can see that transformation emerges through his cultural identity while receiving support from his community network. Through his work Boyd also demonstrates the essential relationship between language and healing where words act as instruments for pain communication and healing promotion. Studies today prove the importance of using culturally suitable language because it helps Indigenous populations achieve better therapeutic results ([Gone et al.](#)).

Fast and Collin-Vézina show in their research that governmental policies for assimilation caused substantial psychological harm in indigenous populations. According to their research, cultural identity along with spirituality and self-governance selectively shape individuals' traumatic experiences, while achieving improved mental health results for Indigenous populations ([Fast and Collin-Vézina](#)). Boyd also elucidates that traditional Indigenous healing methods play a key role in dealing with trauma inside native populations. The patient examples from healing ceremonies illustrate how spoken words become channels of spiritual energy through which cultural healing traditions strengthen resilience.

In line with other recovery themes, the author emphasizes how language can energize cultural narratives which foster survival after trauma. *Rolling Thunder* is positioned in a broader framework in this review which combines trauma research, resilience theory, and culturally relevant healing approaches. There is need to adapt Interventions to Indigenous-specific requirements to address their unique population needs; at the same time, they should value community kinship, cultural heritage, and native traditions for helping Native individuals' recovery from historical trauma.

Research Methodology

Bessel van der Kolk remains the leading authority studying trauma by exploring how trauma affects human bodies and brains. He writes: traumatized people chronically feel unsafe inside their bodies: "The past is alive in the form of gnawing inner discomfort" ([van der Kolk 97](#)). According to van der Kolk, trauma results in a fundamental reorganization of the way mind and brain manage perceptions (21). Based on "Traumatic Memory", van der Kolk demonstrates that traumatic experiences produce broken memories that are manifested through nightmares and flashbacks. Emotional well-being together with identity depend heavily on how individuals narrate their traumatic memories. Through the "Traumatic Memory model" one can study how the protagonist's racial

violence encounters and personal tragedies create his interaction patterns and world perception that lead him to understand patterns of life. Indigenous peoples struggle with psychological distress that can be clearly explained through historical trauma theory.

Historical trauma presents itself as generations-long accumulated emotional and psychological harm resulting from persistent oppression, colonial violence and systemic assaults as explained by Brave Heart with its further critical development in Bombay's study (Brave Heart; Bombay et al.). Historical trauma produces a collective impact which affects entire communities by uniting them in experiences of pain and devastation (Bombay et al.). Through the character of Rolling Thunder, we can observe intergenerational trauma that demonstrates how ancestral damage shapes both personal identity and cultural perspective. Traditional Native communities bear intergenerational emotional and psychological suffering from colonial invasion, cultural uprooting and institutional suppressive actions. The present work informs how historical trauma is the continual inherited reaction to severe events that creates multiple psychological and social difficulties in Indigenous communities. The analytical framework explains how the protagonist functions in *Rolling Thunder* because history has shaped his personal development through accrued trauma affecting his worldview. In her account of complex trauma, Judith Herman studies how sustained interpersonal trauma generates this pathology in victims. Through his work Herman demonstrates that traumatic experiences exist beyond personal boundaries when they shape entire communities. She asserts: "The ordinary response to atrocities is to banish them from consciousness and thus trauma does not simply leave a narrative memory but often destroys the organizing structure of the self" (Herman 56).

Understanding this viewpoint becomes vital while studying the character of Rolling Thunder, because his individual traumatic experiences reflect the general colonial treatment of Native American communities throughout history. New scientific evidence also demonstrates that cultural continuity creates workable health results (Chandler and Lalonde). According to Boyd's narrative, a return to cultural roots is necessary for the main character's process of healing after traumatic experiences. Indigenous populations affected by historical trauma need culturally appropriate interventions and services that are responsive to diverse community needs. Moreover, meaningful outcomes in mental health therapy require integrating Indigenous cultural knowledge systems. This approach demonstrates why traditional community-based practices and cultural involvement serve as essential foundations for developing resilience. Numerous Indigenous individuals demonstrate strong resilience through cultural ties along with community backing despite enduring historical trauma on a widespread scale (Bombay et al.). Boyd portrays this resilience by demonstrating how the main character links to his origins and society for cultural preservation and to resist the impact of trauma.

Analysis and Discussion

Boyd demonstrates the resilience by showing how the main character links to his origins and society and cultural preservation that helps him resist impacts of trauma. In Boyd's story, traditional Indigenous healing methods play a key role in dealing with trauma inside native populations. The patient examples from healing ceremonies highlights how "spoken words become channels of spiritual energy through which cultural healing traditions strengthen resilience" (Boyd 142). The actual traumatic event leaves trauma behind in the memory that continues to impact thoughts and physical wellbeing. According to van der Kolk's research, traumatic experiences emerge as disconnected sensory events

instead of structured mental impressions as the main character experiences them in his terrifying dreams (van der Kolk). The analysis of complex trauma by Judith Herman extends this analysis by informing about the protagonist's accumulative distress (Herman). Over a long period of time the character endures multiple traumatic situations that connect with one another. Multiple racial assaults combined with his experience of poverty and family turmoil generate an enduring psychological strain for him. The researcher asserts that continuous trauma exposure produces both personality fragmentation and dissociative states. In *Rolling Thunder*, the protagonist frequently detaches from his emotions, using avoidance as a coping strategy: “When things got tough, I would escape inside my own mind so completely I lost the sense of feeling anything else in the world and imagined being a different person entirely” (Boyd 187).

Trauma separates people from their selves because serious experiences shatter the foundations of their identity structure. The protagonist struggles to detach himself from the past trauma, which hinders his ability to work. His delay in confronting unpleasant memories will make his healing journey very challenging. Along with enduring serious traumatic experiences, the protagonist exhibits strong mental traits of recovering. It can be said that true resilience extends beyond symptom free recovery from trauma to include important adaptive qualities that help individuals regain their sense of control over their life events. Through his confrontation of violence and his hold on future hope, the protagonist displays the true strength of his resilience. Boyd's character is enabled to learn essential elements for healing trauma that include building relationships and forming solidarity with others.

Boyd presents resilience as an active process, one that involves engaging with trauma rather than avoiding it: “Running no longer provided me with shelter so I decided to stand up against what I faced. I tolerated the emotional crisis combined with overwhelming fear while facing all my repressed internal pain from the past years” (Boyd 233). Herman explains that healing from complex trauma requires people to find control over their life narrative as part of the healing process. Through their developmental progression, the protagonist follows essential trauma-informed care processes which include facing painful memories while learning how to trust and establish new relationships. Throughout Boyd's narrative, trauma functions as a dominating transformative force which creates an individual's personal identity. *Rolling Thunder*, a medicine man, prohibits to “trust the water that flows down the white man” (Boyd 148). He sees nature as healer and helper. The protagonist's troubles reveal systematic historical trauma which affects his whole community. Traumatic memory furthermore helps demonstrate why the main character's current state remains shaped by his past experiences. It is observed that unresolved trauma creates persistent nightmares alongside flashbacks that disrupt vision, ultimately deforming a person's identity (van der Kolk).

Herman's theory about complex trauma further demonstrates how lengthy suffering from traumatic events leads to change personal identity patterns together with strained personal relationships (Herman). Governmental policies for assimilation caused substantial psychological harm in indigenous populations. According to a research, cultural identity along with spirituality and self-governance selectively shape individuals' traumatic experiences, while achieving improved mental health results for Indigenous populations (Fast and Collin-Vézina). Boyd also elucidates that traditional Indigenous healing methods play a key role in dealing with trauma inside native populations. The patient examples from healing ceremonies illustrate how spoken words become channels of spiritual energy through which cultural healing traditions strengthen resilience.

For understanding recurring nightmares and flashbacks in the protagonist, van der

Kolk established his concept of traumatic memory. Unresolved trauma shows itself through symptoms that disrupt a person's awareness of both themselves and the world. Judith Herman provides additional details regarding complex trauma and its impacts on people exposed to multiple traumatic encounters. Personal hardships endured by the protagonist demonstrate both personal and communal historical trauma throughout his community while revealing deep connections between self and communal identity. Boyd claims that Indigenous healing traditions shape essential methods through which Native communities can manage their traumatic experiences. As taught by Rolling Thunder, healing requires individuals to become whole again while finding their way back to ancestral heritage and strengthening bonds within their community. Duran and Duran found, Native healing methods work best to heal historical trauma through the integrated spiritual and Native cultural frameworks (Duran and Duran).

Through his narrative, Boyd offers an opportunity for studying Native American knowledge structures and traditional practices of healing. The spiritual teachings transmitted through *Rolling Thunder* demonstrate a holistic perspective which instantly emphasizes coherence with nature and respect for all living species. The Indigenous worldview confronts Western concepts of land propriety while proposing management systems based on stewardship together with reciprocity (Deloria). Judith Herman's exploration of Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (CPTSD) offers a deeper understanding of PTSD, especially within Indigenous communities. According to Herman, CPTSD occurs through persistent traumatic encounters when victims remain confined in terrifying situations for long periods. The protagonist's life struggles in *Rolling Thunder* depict a universal state of captivity which extends from his individual circumstances into the social oppression that Native Americans experience as a group. The extensive study of historical trauma among Indigenous communities reveals that it brings deep psychological consequences. As *Brave Heart* mentions, historical trauma signifies the multiple emotional and psychological injuries that occur because of systemic oppression, colonization and persecution. Such traumatic experiences transmit through generations to impact descendants of Indigenous communities who survived injustice (Bombay et al.). Throughout *Rolling Thunder*, Boyd illustrates both mental turmoil and identity crisis, which represent enduring historical trauma among Native American communities.

Conclusion

Doug Boyd's *Rolling Thunder* has provided a deeper insight into how trauma affects both identity and resilience, specifically within marginalized communities. The analysis has proved that trauma produces substantial individual and communal impacts that transform the protagonist's entire perspective of self and social relationships. The main character's coping methods consisting of avoidance techniques, dissociation, and resilience help us recognize sophisticated strategies for facing traumatic experiences. These coping mechanisms function as temporary solutions, yet indicate how the protagonist fights for mastery and significant purpose despite living within an environment of structural discrimination and deep personal loss. This qualitative research expands knowledge about how trauma affects personal identity while focusing on communities that have suffered from continuous oppression in history. The work has provided both a meaningful literary analysis and practical insights for trauma-informed therapeutic interventions, which also establishes a substantial significance for trauma theory. Boyd's literary insights contribute actionable perspectives to support existing trauma-informed healthcare and educational practices that help build understanding the aftermath of trauma across socially adopted systems. The work further suggests new mechanisms and procedures, and calls for the

development that prioritize both compassion and trauma-sensitive approaches to better recognize diverse human capacities to adapt to tough situations for survival and recovery.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributors

Mushaid Hussain is an MPhil scholar in the Department of English Literature at Government College University Faisalabad, Pakistan. His research focuses on Pakistani literature with special attention to folktales and mythic traditions of the Baltistan region. He investigates how oral narratives, myths, and cultural memory shape literary identity in South Asian and Himalayan backgrounds. His academic interests include postcolonial folklore, comparative literature, and the intersection of myth and modernity. He aims to document marginalized literary voices and examine how regional stories engage with national and transnational discourses.

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