Chapter -4

Terror, Trauma and Reconciliation

Introduction

The earlier chapters contextualized the chosen texts within their specific historical, political milieu. This chapter attempts a comparative study between the texts from the two spaces. Through a cross-cultural study of the Afghan and Sri Lankan texts as trauma narratives, the chapter examines how these texts uncover different traumatic experiences, overpowering, amnesiac and often inexplicable, thereby necessitating new Historiographic, testimonial and representational strategies. The chapter is divided into sections that look at different types and contexts of trauma, namely - physical and psychological wounding; the different socio-cultural context of trauma and sometimes the inherent problematic silencing and silences. However as Laurie Vickroy states “...frequency of trauma...” makes it a “...multicontextual social issue...” hence sometimes these varied spaces and sites of trauma intersect (“Representing Trauma”, 2). These intersections - of the physical, psychological and the socio-cultural are also interrogated in the chapter. The final section discusses narrative strategies the exilic writers adopt to focalize armed conflict and its ensuing, encompassing trauma.

Steven Totosy de Zepetnek in “A New Comparative Literature” states that Comparative Literature facilitates inter-disciplinary and cross-cultural study of Literature. The Chapter attempts through the discipline of trauma studies what Totosy observes Comparative Literature aims to do “to attempt a dialogue between cultures, languages and literatures” (13). Quoting Cathy Caruth, Victoria Burrows observes that in this age of violence trauma itself may “... provide the very link between cultures ...” (163). However Burrows also points out that in these discourses of trauma there is a strong privileging of “whiteness” (163). In locating the different locations of the conflict within this framework the chapter attempts a comprehensive conceptualization of trauma within their specific physical and psychological wounding. Whether it is the civil war context of Sri Lanka or the multipart phases of the Afghan debacle, Shobasakthi, Ondaatje, Hosseini and Rahimi from their different exilic positions recover narratives that remember painful pasts - distant or immediate. Varied as these writers are, not, only in their socio-political cultural identities, but in their exilic positions as well, testifying to a traumatic past of their own or of others,
through their writings, has been an urgent task for them. Witnessing, through representation they attempt to preserve personal and collective memories from assimilation, repression and falsification. Their works reflect a growing awareness of the consequence of devastation and subjugation on the individual and the collective psyche owing to war, displacement, torture, persecution and oppression.

Disparate and diverse traumatic experiences whether physical, psychological, sexual, ethnic or religious are accessed using different points of views and a range of narrative techniques. Within the context of their different armed conflicts, these trauma narratives are implicit critiques of the ways in which social, economic, political and ethnic structures can generate and continue trauma. As texts that narrativize armed conflict, they portray their dispossessed individuals’ personal and collective histories, their internalisation of the effects of living under subjugation and offer us, what Vickroy in “Representing Trauma” identifies as “alternatives to depersonalised and institutionalised histories”(4). Whether it is an asylum-seeking Dasan, or a tortured Nesakumaran or the intense guilt of Amir, or the nightmares of Dastaguir or the silenced, pain of Sailor, Sirissa, Nirami, Lakma, Hassan or Maria they are all lesions, that have an inherent political, historical and ethical dimension.

Traitor, Gorilla, Anil’s Ghost, The Kite Runner, A Thousand Splendid Suns and Earth and Ashes narrate what Cathy Caruth comments the “belatedness of the impact of the traumatic events” within the context of armed conflict, which cannot be assimilated as they occurred (qtd in Marder’s “Some ‘Enabling Questions”’, 2). As traumatized persons, the different characters attempt to survive the trauma by bearing witness to it both belatedly and in relation to others.

I

Physical and Psychological Wounding: The Trauma of Physical Torture and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

While Caruth, Shoshanna Felman and others have looked at “trauma” as more than physical wounding, Shobasakthi, Hosseini, Ondaatje and Rahimi particularly portray the trauma on the physical body of the ethnicised/ gendered – subalterned “other “, whether the ethnic Tamil or the Hazara or the subaltern woman, as the core that unleashes cyclical traumas in these texts. Elissa Marder states how the word “trauma” comes from the ancient Greek meaning “wound”, and adds that if trauma is a wound, it is a very peculiar kind of wound(1). The “wounded” body in these texts is foregrounded to narrate a seminal trajectory of armed conflict – the trauma of physical torture that many times take on deliberate sexual
overtones. David Sussman states that “… torture involves the intentional infliction of extreme physical pain or psychological distress on a person” for different reasons(3). Sussman lists the different reasons for which torture is used, “…inducing the betrayal of some cause or intimate, intimidating actual or potential opponents, or as an exercise of dominance or sadism simply for its own sake (3). In Shobasakthi, Ondaatje Hosseini and Rahimi’s novels different power structures employ torture to either “induce” victims like Rocky, Dasan (Gorilla) to “betray some cause”, or to “intimidate actual or potential opponents” as the torture of Gunasena (Anil’s Ghost) is meant to or it “is an exercise of dominance or sadism for its own sake” as Mariam and Laila’s (A Thousand Splendid Suns) tortuous marriages turn out to be. If in Traitor, torture is used for all of the above ends, in The Kite Runner it is crystallized in the sodomy of the subaltern.

Elaine Scarry in “The Body in Pain” notes the difference between war and torture and states that “in the former the enemy is without (occupies a separate space and obliterating one’s enemy is not self-destruction) and in the latter the enemy is within (where destruction would be self-destruction)” (61). She further adds the dimension of ethical and moral justifications that are possible to defend reasons for going to war whereas torture does not merit such reasoning and validation (139). Gorilla and Traitor with their extended mediation on the rhetoric of torture, try to show how within the police stations, army camps of Sri Lanka and finally in the incarcerations of Tamil militant groups, this theoretical distinction between torture and war collapses

In Anthony Dasan’s story, the act of witnessing the “wounds” on the tortured body of the ethnic Tamil turns against the traumatized body. For when witnessed by Sinhala forces-the army or the police, the physical trauma of torture becomes the reason to inflict further torture, as the marks act as what Jonathan H. Marks identifies in “The Logic and Language of Torture”, as “terrorscopic signifiers” (2). Together with his ethnic identity, they give a microscopic view to his political actors of his possible terrorist association thus implicating him further. At the Maradana Police Station, the Galkissa Army Camp and later at Pittakotta Police Station, Dasan is betrayed not only by masked figures but his body as well, now covered with unhealed wounds. The wounds scrutinized by his tormentors cause torture, then becoming the reason for further torture. At the Galkissa Camp, Dasan narrates the physical mutilations done to him: toes twisted with pliers, genitals scorched with melted polythene bags, skinned hands stuffed with crushed hot pepper. Scarry states that, “Torture consists of a primary physical act, the inflicting of pain and a primary verbal act, the interrogation” (28). Thus physical torture of Dasan for his torturers whether the Sinhala state, the IPKF or the
LTTE, is accompanied by his different interrogators desiring information about the other. Jonathan H. Marks comments in “The Logic and Language of Torture” on what fuels and justifies this “torture imperative”: in a world of powerful images the image that feeds torture is the “ticking bomb” (3). He says, “In the mind of the beholder it is in the heart of the city in which, one’s nearest and dearest live” (3). At the Maradana Police Station it is this compliance that the police demand: to give information regarding why he has come to Colombo. Amidst torture, Dasan is repeatedly asked if he has come to set off a bomb in Colombo. Under the Prevention of Terrorism Act that allowed anyone to be arrested and imprisoned indefinitely, Dasan remains in prison for two years and is arrested the moment he is released. At the Pittakotta Police station the body once again becomes the anomaly; the deviant wounds make him the butt of jokes and torment at the police station from morning to evening.

If Dasan is tortured by the army because of the imminent threat of the “ticking bomb”, Rocky is tormented by the Movement to reveal what he did with the third cylinder. In these chambers of torture, Rocky is beaten by a thug like Kasi who is wild with fury and savage to draw blood. Rocky is both the victim and target of torture. His physical and psychological torture encompasses two ends in what Kalyvas in, “The Paradox of Terrorism in Civil War” identifies as, “elimination and deterrence” (99). Rocky is targeted to eliminate a particular risk (in this case the hypothetical stealing of the cylinder to arm the EPRLF) and to deter others from engaging in similar behaviour, “primarily proactive” (Kalyvas, 99). Rocky’s torture is also retrospective in its intention to punish the stealing that has already taken place. The Movement’s putative logic is that Rocky is a threat not just in the present but in the future. Further Rocky would be an “actual example” to deter others (Kalyvas, 101). And in the power war between Movements actual examples are more edifying than hypothetical empty threats. The Movement’s repetitive beating leaves Rocky with an infected head and swollen legs, maiming him for life. This mutilation becomes a “walking example” inscribing on his body a set of political messages not just for Rocky but for other cadres who wish to emulate his example (101). The violence inflicted on Rocky and later Kurusu is selective not indiscriminate, as they are suspected of arming other Movement. As it is selective it is also personalised. Rocky is tormented by Kasi with the image of the “traitor”. For Rocky this is the ultimate erasure of identity. For even in this moment of pain and suffering Rocky pleads for Kurusu’s innocence. Rocky also comes to the conclusion that this deliberate violence is on account of Kasi’s scheming and cunning.
Amongst the many violations *Traitor*, raises and voices, the legitimacy of torture as in Kalyvas’ words, an “ethical means of combating terrorism” is challenged (121). The novel portrays this transgression against the body, as becoming an instrument that aids oppressive and armed structures (whether of the majoritarian state or the later militant Tamil groups) to perpetrate acts that violate human rights, dignities and identities. In a gesture that destabilises even the centrality of the authorial voice, the narrative arms the unarmed tortured, mutilated subject –Nesakumaran – in these sections with the power and privilege to narrativise his tale. A privilege the novel will subvert when Nesakumaran confesses that he was the torturer in his daughter’s bedroom. The “ticking bomb” and the missing cylinder that fuels the torture imperative in Gorilla (in the stories of Dasan and Rocky respectively) are missing as objects of fear invigorating the torture necessity in *Traitor*.

Before handing Nesakumaran over to the state authorities and the narrative over to Nesakumaran, Shobasakthi makes it explicit in his narrative that Nesakumaran is the most inept terrorist and is in no way a genuine threat. If in the text’s counter discourse these presuppositions are established before the state guardians take over Nesakumaran’s body, the state’s stentorian discourse constructs Nesakumaran with the collective signifier of “terrorist”, with its accumulation of attributes. To achieve this construct Inspector Jayakumar’s “standard operating procedure” begins with the denuding of Nesakumaran. As the translator observes his state ordained power allows him to “make visible what are for others furtive acts” (*Traitor* 220). This sexual violence first against Nesakumaran and later against other Tamils is an assertion of masculinity and its corresponding ability to exert power over others, particularly by means of the use of force. Julie Gerk Hernandez in “The Tortured Body, the Photograph and the U.S. War on Terror”, comments that the body with its cultural encoding such as clothing or ornamentation becomes a product of civilization (6). If denuding strips Nesakumaran of cultural meaning or value relegating his body to the realm of the inhuman, thus dehumanizing him, this sexual violence against male members of another ethnicity suggests not only the disempowerment of the individual victim but the disempowerment of the community itself. Thus Jayakumar, and later Sinhala authoritarian figures, as representatives of the state achieve two things, they make Nesakumaran in Hernandez’s words, “an unlawful combatant” in designating him as a “terrorist” and further reducing him to the quintessential “other”- distorted, uncivilized and animalistic(3). As an “unlawful combatant”, he is relegated to a non-status, therefore torture is permissible as a part of “legitimate police action, especially on the body of one who had contempt for laws of the state”. The othering enables the torturer’s discourse to emerge as the rational and coherent
one, with the erasure of the discourse of the tortured subject, with the prisoner’s ground becoming increasingly physical and the torturer’s increasingly verbal. As Scarry observes, “The tortured becomes a colossal body with no voice; and the torturer, a colossal voice…with no body” (29).

The torturer whether Jayakumar of the Urathurai police station or Udugampolla of the Panagoda Cantonment Camp are larger than life figures and represent themselves as the rationalism of the modern prison complex. After breaking Nesakumaran physically and psychologically to fragments, Jayakumar scripts Nesakumaran’s discourse of betrayals. The picture of Nesakumaran pointing to Srikanthamalar’s chest which remains with us as the ultimate sign of betrayal is one drafted by Jayakumar. Nesakumaran’s confessions from which Jayakumar systematically assembles all the “secrets, names of places and peoples” (Traitor) leads to other betrayals, like Kalaichelvan’s. While Jayakumar’s torture of Nesakumaran is “selective”, Udugampolla’s tortures of his political prisoners like Ganeshalingam, a mere lowly clerk, or “David aiya” the Gandhian is “indiscriminate”. The death of Ganeshalingam with the two pencils sticking out of his ears, the denuding of David aiya are exercises of brutality and domination, underscoring what Sussman states of torture as something “barbaric and inhuman” (1). Thus the text disbands the discourse of judicious rationalism, which the torturer had compiled and constructed. Udugampolla’s interrogational torture of the two boys from Kondavil becomes in Sussman’s words “indictment torture” for he beats them till they agree to the bank heist that they did not commit, the dark burlesque of Shobaskthi never escapes us when two more arrive in the prisons confessing to the same crime. .

Jana Evans Braziel comments about the debodying – “the reduction of the human form by distortion” which torture achieves reduces the human form to such an extent “so that it appears as raw flesh or meat, less comprehensible than even the animal body” (qtd in Hernandez, 6). If the torturer within the Sri Lankan Penal system disrobes, the Tamil militant forces, towards the end of the novel, “debody” to the point of annihilation. When, finally, he is able to effect a court-ordered release and travels back to the Northern Tamil country, Nesakumaran and Pakkiri are caught by the Tamil militant Forces, perhaps the LTTE during the period of its internecine wars. The “cleansing” the LTTE carried out to emerge as the lone true contender for Eelam, a motif elaborated in Gorilla is exposed in Traitor in its torture chambers. The by-now seasoned Nesakumaran-in confessing and betraying divulges Pakkri’s Movement identity and thereby survives and precludes torture. Within the continuum of the novel’s discourse on torture, the protracted process of inflicting pain in a
context of helplessness and dependence so as to make the victim provide information, confession and so on is now perpetrated by Tamil militant groups on Pakkiri and other Tamils (suspected of belonging to other militant groups). The relationship between the torturer and the tortured” in Sussman’s words “is asymmetrical” (5). This asymmetrical relationship is now transferred to the tortured Pakkiri, Radha and Anandan—the latter two suspected of being secret police. If Pakkiri responds to his physical torture with “I don’t know”, unwilling to supply confessions or information that seems to be wanted from him, Radha and Anandan’s avenues of response are limited, narrowly defined by their tormentors in the empty soda bottle and the flies they had to catch to fill the bottle, while all the time their legs were bound together by the same chain. Pakkiri is discriminately targeted for personalized and organizational information, Radha and Anandan’s guilt seems completely irrelevant to their torture, for they are promised they would be released the day they fill the bottle and “So far, they had about six or seven” (Traitor, 177). In this final section of the novel the disproportion of power, knowledge and prerogative is absolute; as Sussman says “… the victim is in a position of complete vulnerability and exposure, the torturer one of perfect control and inscrutability” (4-5). Nesakumaran has no idea where they are, who might be making the ultimate decisions and how long they might be confined. An asymmetry and unawareness that culminates in the incomprehensible brutal massacre paralleling the Welikada massacre in the floor below the rooms where Nesakumaran and others are locked. Pakkiri who refuses to acknowledge this ultimate act of “debodying”, is himself incredibly beaten to death.

What is done within the torture chambers in Shobasakthi’s novels is transported to public spaces like the road in Anil’s Ghost. An episode which echoes throughout the text occurs towards the middle of Anil’s Ghost, the torture of Gunasena who has been nailed to the tarmac by his victimizers. For Anil whose involvement with the conflict has been entirely “post mortem”, she is forced beyond the forensic into the living pathology of the war. While Sam Knowles studies the subversion of the crucifix symbol in the episode, the strategy of the narration is significant (435). Initially Sarath and Anil misinterpret the scene as a drunk driver taking his time off the road. However Anil’s delayed decoding of the episode makes us and the characters realise that the man’s immobility is not voluntary but inflicted and as the two arrive to investigate Gunasena is unable to differentiate between his rescuers and tormentors. Torture in Shobasakthi’s novel is a suffered experience, suggested in the novel’s unequivocal, exact depiction of the physical anguish. In Ondaatje’s text what is seen is what has been done to Gunasena’s body, it is frozen in a moment in the text and looks before and
after at what could have been done to “sailor” and anticipates the state’s sacrifice of Sarath.

Though this gaze of the conflict is close as against the overall long distance gaze of the text, it falls within the larger strategy of the text which is to focus on the result of barbarity than on acts of barbarity itself. In yet another episode Sarath narrates what two men did to a third somewhere in the south. Once again who tortures whom is not the focus but the necessary intimacy of the blindfolded man on the cycle clinging on to his captors, which traumatizes Sarath.

Torture and the intentional infliction of extreme pain in A Thousand Splendid Suns becomes an exercise of power or aggression simply for its own sake. What happens within regulated prisons and army camps of Sri Lanka now transpires within the twin incarcerations of Rasheed’s home and a Taliban state. In this distinct social setting, victims of torture – women whether Mariam, Laila or later Aziza, like in the Sri Lankan texts– are once again completely at the mercy of the perpetrators of torture, whether Rasheed or the Taliban. This being at the torturer’s mercy involves in Sussman’s words the “lop-sided relation of dependence and vulnerability between the tormentor and the tormented” (3-4). Neither Mariam nor Laila can shield themselves from Rasheed’s blows, and neither can effectively retaliate or evade their tormentor. Like torture victims the two of them have no support system to put up any legal or moral resistance to their tormentors. Initially Mariam then eventually Laila perceive their tormentors, the Taliban state and within that Rasheed, the patriarch as someone who can do anything with their bodies, from beating to incarceration to starvation to being stoned to death as an adulterous woman.

In The Kite Runner the physical tortures of the other texts coagulate and come together in the trauma of the rape of Hassan, the oppressive structures that cause Mariam and Laila’s torture are now encoded on the body of the ethnic minority, the Hazara Hassan. John Beynon suggests how much violence is “undoubtedly the result of machismo a culture of male honour” (81). The rape of Hassan has its roots in this culture. Julie Gerk Hernandez comments how “homoerotic violence … represents a warring of masculinities and competing militarism where phallic power is wielded through the other’s corporeal exposure” (6). But Hassan’s body is ethnic and male at the same time; the rape of such a body is the symbolic appropriation of the masculinity of the whole ethnic group to “badal” (revenge) the lost “nang” (honour) of the majoritarian Assef. As Dubravka Zarkov says in the context of Yugoslavia “Sexual humiliation of a man from another ethnicity is thus a proof not only that he is a lesser man, but also that his ethnicity is a lesser ethnicity”( qtd in Hernandez, 6). The later sexual violation of Hassan’s child Sohrab by Assef, now as the Taliban chief is once
again to reduce the ‘other’s’ agency. By desecrating Sohrab’s body and reducing it into a performing automaton who dances for the Taliban, Assef further subordinates Sohrab’s ethnic and cultural identity, through a brutal assertion of masculine domination and cultural superiority.

These physical traumas lead to in many cases an undoing of the self owing to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, which Caruth describes as

A response, sometimes delayed to an overwhelming event which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviours stemming from the event. The event is not assimilated or experienced at the time but only belatedly with the repeated possession of it. (Qtd in Marder, 4)

Whether it is Amir’s “reliving” of Hassan’s rape or Nesakumaran “possessed” by images of physical trauma who “relives” it on Nirami’s body or the continual trauma in Anil’s Ghost since there are no bodies to affect closures, PTSD take on different facets.

As a Pashtun for Amir, Hassan’s rape leads to a collapse of an already fractured self. Gender roles define Hassan and Amir’s relationship from the very beginning, with Hassan playing many times the protective male who defends the rather powerless Amir, whose inability to stand up for himself is written off by Baba as effeminate. When Amir witnesses the rape and remains passive and disarmed, for fear of what Assef will do to him, in his self-estimate, he fails on many counts— as Baba’s son, as a Pashtun who has lost his “nang” and finally as a traitor who has betrayed his only friend. Through the narration of Rahim Khan, Amir hears of Hassan and his wife’s death shot in the hands of the Taliban. After this horrific recounting which Amir replays in his mind repeatedly, the recurrence of several dream/nightmare digressions acquires figurative significance. Faces as stated earlier are central to the text. In one such dream Amir superimposes his guilt onto the Taliban’s face and visualises Hassan being shot by him. A similar dream vision reads the monster in Hassan’s dream of the monster in the lake, before the kite flying competition, as Amir. Though the two dreams have been read by Grant Andrews and others as indicating personal trauma born from guilt, the dreams also suggest a racial guilt that identifies itself with the Pashtun Taliban.

Beynon differentiates between two types of masculine violence, “Expressive and Instrumental” (81). The former is an expression of blind rage, which is unpremeditated, the latter is violence used in a planned and calculated manner (81). Amir feels incomplete as he refused to act when the rape of his friend was a challenge to his honour. Not responding with threatened or actual violence, his “instrumental violence” surfaces when he designs to accuse Hassan of robbery. If Amir’s is Instrumental, Assef’s is “expressive”, (like Baba’s) and with
the Taliban, dominance over people and places is a display of terror—as power. In Amir’s traumatized dream the two types fuse and Amir sees the harming violence of his past actions in the face of the armed Taliban who shoots Hassan and his wife. The horror of his guilt also informs the way he perceives the hegemonic ethnic politics of the Pashtuns. It is this racial-ethnic guilt fused with the personal betrayal that makes Amir’s depiction of Assef, the Taliban chief, acquire nightmarish proportions. This representation as nonhuman is echoed when Amir first encounters Assef at a public execution during a closely controlled soccer game. The nonhuman is also hyper masculine an idea reasserted through the image of sport which links the hyper masculine figures of both Baba and Assef to power.

The systematic diminishing of Nesakumaran’s military masculinity, through physical torture by state authorised hegemonic masculine figures, reasserts itself in a different way. Unlike Amir who can restore his sense of self by rescuing Sohrab and thus restructure his narrative or Dastaguir who can leave tokens of honour for Murad to reconstruct his lost “nang-namus”, Nesakumaran’s traumatic memory remains disoriented, in conflict and is redirected inward rather than outward. Like the memories Lawrence Langer formulates in *Holocaust Testimonies*, Nesakumaran’s survivor testimony that “formulates different kinds of traumatic memories also illustrates how the remaining self is diminished” (qtd in Vickroy, 23). Nesakumaran recalls “humiliating” memories of physical torture, his helplessness before extremes of deprivation and violence. His “tainted” memories of his series of betrayals, remind him of his past actions at odds with his sense of morality and behaviour in more normative circumstances. Finally his “unheroic” memories are witnesses to his failure at different points when the political coincided with the personal whether at Welikada or Batticaloa. In Nesakumaran’s self-appraisal he has lost, as Vickroy states of trauma victims, “all essential elements of the self-moral orientation, dignity, choice and self-validation” (21).

As Vickroy further points out as a victim of trauma the most difficult aspect of Nesakumaran’s situation is the feeling that he is powerless to affect his situation. As a defense mechanism against a loss of agency, Nesakumaran the victim turns victimizer by becoming his daughter’s rapist. Nesakumaran “reexternalizes” his trauma on to the powerless body of his daughter to restore his sense of power. Nesakumaran passes through the new ethical zone that Primo Levi identified at Auschwitz as the “Grey Zone” where the victim becomes the perpetrator. In this Zone, as the paedophile rapist father, Nesakumaran appropriates the torturer’s narrative. In the process, Nesakumaran’s reproduces the supremacist discourse of the torturer, privileging the torturer’s narrative and silencing the victim’s. Nesakumaran thus silences his daughter’s trauma by stating that he saw only “purest
love” in Nirami’s eyes (185). If Assef sodomizes Hassan to undermine the latter’s ethnic masculinity, Nesakumaran rapes his daughter to recover power dynamics that assert his masculinity.

Towards the centre of the narrative of Anil’s Ghost we along with Anil come across the word “amgydala”, which the teaching professor explains as “… a location. It’s the darkest part of the brain… a place to house fearful memories” (Anil’s Ghost, 134). Victoria Burrows comments how the word “adumbrates the underlying themes” of Ondaatje’s novel for it is these memories of pasts that Anil goes to investigate (162). While Anil might take a “long distance gaze” at the conflict, at different points in the novel she has to watch, relive and empathetically participate in the deeply private moments of another’s trauma (Burrows, 176). One of the profound traumas of the book is the trauma that accompanies unlocatable death. Unlike the novels discussed so far that make explicit the visible, in Anil’s Ghost’s trauma like the text’s other dimensions occurs against the backdrop “of missing bodies and unidentified tormentors” (Burrows, 170). Dora Wuyts states that the unnamed Guatemalan woman who has no body to bury, who has no way of knowing whether the dead are her brother and husband, is a representation of the muted trauma the text narrativizes. She represents the many thousands in the text who are unable to speak their pain and carry the physicality of traumatic grief in and on their own body (20). Burrows points out how to overcome the trauma of a near one’s death, there has to be a body to mourn (170). In Anil’s Ghost the profusion of deaths and atrocious violence are made infinitely harder to bear because of the gaping void left by the disappearance of the loved ones. Like the Guatemalan prologue, the novel continues to catalogue the continuing trauma connected to inexplicable deaths, deaths that have no stories attached to them and instead are encrypted in the interminable silence of not knowing how, when or why these deaths occurred or even if they have occurred at all. This generalised traumatic pain caused by disappearances that takes away the possibility of mourning and hence closure is particularized in the story of Ananda, the artificer. After his wife Sirissa’s traumatic disappearance Ananda deserts his inherited and revered position as a craftsman who paints the eye on the holy figure of the Buddha. Like Dastaguir Ananda is unable to find and hence reassemble this missing fragment of his life. As a method of obliterating what he cannot forget he turns to drunkenness. Later while employed by Sarath and Anil to recreate Sailor’s face Ananda goaded by his yearning for his wife Sirissa, in a moment of absolute grief attempts suicide.

However unlike Dastaguir and Nesakumaran, Ananda is able to narrativise his inner traumatic memory onto the reconstructed face of Sailor. Instead of projecting his inner pain
in this externalization like Nesakumaran does to Nirami or the profoundly articulate fragmented tokens that Dastaguir leaves behind for his son, the reconstructed face of Sailor that Ananda presents is full of peacefulness and tranquillity. Sailor’s face shows the calm Ananda had known in his wife, a peacefulness that he wanted for any victim. Ananda’s ability to achieve finality on Sirissa’s death by transferring her memory on to Sailor and through the physical sculpting of her face creates in Anil an “empathetic unsettling” that Capra states trauma narratives create (qtd in Burrows 175). From being a detached bystander Anil “becomes a participant witness as she breaks down into weeping for not only particular losses like Ananda’s but also the mad logic of trauma in the context of armed conflict, in which contemporary Sri Lankans are forced to live” (Burrows170). Like the cultural healing the novel projects in the netramangal at the end of the novel through Ananda, Ananda attempts to heal Anil’s pain. As he tries to crease away the pain around Anil’s eyes and resculpt the face of serenity, Burrows comments that “despite the gap of spoken language, Ananda communicates through the physical language of touch that eases psychic and physical pain” (Burrows 175).

But the text does not close with this therapeutic visualization instead presents us with the “hundred small traumas” (Anil’s Ghost287) Gamini studies on his brother, Sarath’s dead body, another victim like Sailor. The personal story of the brothers Gamini and Sarath, their alienation, differences, Gamini’s love for his sister-in-law, his personal trauma of his failed marriage and Sarath’s wife’s suicide are embedded in the larger narrative of the armed conflict of the novel and personal traumas are overridden by the trauma of war. In a novel seeped in conflict history, the absence of militant masculine figures is noteworthy. It is also significant that all the principal male characters and the novel’s titular woman character that abandons her feminine Sinhala name Anile for the more masculine and culture neutral Anil focus on healing and reconciliation in the face of trauma. Gamini, the younger brother of Sarath, marginalised as the younger and weaker of the two brothers, is a doctor constantly immersed in the corporal horror and obliteration of the war, yet tries to mend and cure as much as he can. Gamini is the scientific, therapeutic or corrective witness to the physical trauma unleashed by the conflict, around him. Like Hana the Canadian nurse of Almasy in Ondaatje’s The English Patient, being constantly exposed to physical wounding and scarring, Gamini is unable to step out of the psychic anesthetizing that has taken over his professional occupation. Gamini’s “clinical witnessing”, of trauma, unlike Anil’s, “serves curing”. It is not in Wuyts’ words an “invasion for the sake of unearthing”( 21). However this witnessing is a detached one extensively explored in the sections of the novel that discuss his medical
examination. From the description of his weekly routine, Gamini’s position to physical trauma is evident. By photographing the wounds, a facsimile of the victim is produced rather than the actual victim. Further he instructs the interns to cover the faces of the victims, which allows him to consider the pictures with even greater emotional distance.

But there is an instance where Gamini’s routine emotional distance is broken and the trauma of the wounded unsettles the observer. When Gamini stares down on Sarath’s body, killed we assume by Governmental forces, Gamini tries to read buried traumas of the past and the trauma of the present to reconstruct Sarath to understand him, like he has never understood him in life. By tending to Sarath’s bodily wounds, Gamini feels he can reinstate lost ties, secure their bond for the future and to heal his own wounds mentally. Though this posthumous reconnection is of no avail the healing gesture is perhaps the only thing Gamini can do in his grief. Though he could not take care of his brother in life, he takes care of him in death. And in thus reconstructing their past and what might have been, Gamini is able to heal his mental trauma.

Towards the end of the novel bodies and bodily trauma get absorbed in the ghost of the whispering voice of Sarath that speaks uncannily through the dead body of Sailor to Anil. Burrows reads this episode as a Postcolonial version of Caruth’s reading of Tancred’s traumatic encounter with Clorinda and like Clorinda’s voice Sarath’s calls out to Anil (176). One can also read this voice as “Anil’s ghost”. With all her evidence and scientific proof destroyed; Sarath’s voice will be the only witness to the trauma of the war. This voice of the dead speaking from the hollow insides of another who had also died a death of trauma becomes the voice representing the submerged and silenced Ruwan Kumaras and Sirissas of the Sri Lankan Civil War. As Anil leaves—“hits the circuit” the long distance gaze of the exile is thwarted and she listens and listens once again now to this “ghost”. Embedded and housed in her own amygdale, she cannot exorcise this ghost of the trauma of war that is now hers to remember.

If Anil’s Ghost records the trauma of having bodies without names and identity, the last section of Gorilla, encapsulates the Post Traumatic Disorder of Rocky-Anthony Dasan who like Sailor has completely lost his identity for he does not even know what his real name is. The systematic torture in war torn Sri Lanka and the multiple anxieties of the asylum denied asylum-seeker has led to a complete shattering of self representation on his maimed physical body. We now realise that the detailed, step by step account of Dasan is a fabrication and the question arises then whose story is it? And is Dasan’s story Rocky’s too? When the French authorities come for Rocky in the end and he is strapped to a lie detector, while his
body states he is lying about his identity, the wounded psyche can no longer identify who he is—Dasan/ Rocky/ Gorilla. But in blurring the lines, Shobasakthi makes Rocky’s trauma represent the many nameless Eelam Tamils hunted and killed in droves. Thus traumatized loss of self at the end of Gorilla represents the complex cultural trauma of the Eelam Tamils.

II

Socio-cultural Contexts of Trauma:

Irene Visser suggests that trauma literature should in the postcolonial context, “respond more adequately to postcolonial ways of understanding history, memory and trauma” (abstract, “Trauma theory and Postcolonial Literary Studies”). This section explores different possible directions trauma’s conceptual framework can be expanded into.

Susan Brison in “Trauma Narratives and the Remaking of Self” comments that “the memory of human inflicted trauma is a cultural memory and traumatic events are experienced in a cultural context” (41-42). In this recovering of trauma narratives in the context of war, these novels recover the wounded history of different subaltern groups, which sometimes resists the supremacist politics of the hegemony, while at other times is silenced and suppressed. Further this cultural trauma of marginal groups coincides and overlaps with their gendered locations. Hence masculine codes of honour, female and male sexualities coincide with cultural norms and ethnicities.

Victoria Heftler’s phrase “Subaltern cosmopolitanism” facilitates a cross socio-cultural reading of the different subaltern spaces in the chosen texts and the dominant structures that cause them traumas of exploitation, marginalization and domination. Heftler rejects the place of subaltern histories as “narrowly national and fragmented” and offers instead the above phrase, whereby the most crucial boundary for critique is that between the dominator and the dominated, and oppressor and oppressed (69). Thus the “subaltern cosmopolitan” is one who is on the receiving end of violence and harm not restricted to any one country but “belonging to all parts of the world” (70). However, while the phrase allows a cross-cultural study of the different subaltern spaces, particularities of the subaltern location will also be explored.

In The Kite Runner, Earth and Ashes and the Sri Lankan novels, characters whether of hegemonic groups or the subaltern respond in different ways to the trauma of the loss of a socio-cultural identity. While some feel obligated to respond with threatened or actual
violence others are mute victims against structures too large to protest. Masculine codes of
honour in the novels interweave codes of conduct drawn from the cultural and
anthropological contexts of Afghanistan and Sri Lanka. If Rocky’s masculinity is traumatised
by his “chandy” father, Amir’s is threatened by his hyper masculine Pashtun Baba and later
undone by the hegemonic male Assef. The psychological trauma of Dastaguir is the direct
consequence of being reduced to a mere object and spectator by his tormentors. It is to
reassert this masculine subjectivity rendered useless and viewed as worthless Rocky resorts to
violence, Amir to betrayal, Dastaguir to revenge and in an earlier discussed context,
Nesakumaran to rape. As a counter to these discourses that depict contesting masculine
subjects, as suggested earlier, Ondaatje offers us masculinities that resort
to cure, care and
reconciliation even in the face of direst dangers and unforgettable trauma.

The research suggests that Gorilla overtly and Traitor more subtly borrow from Sri
Lankan anthropology the prototype of the “chandy” and the dichotomy of “lajja-bhaya” and
“bayanathikama” to depict militant masculine figures. Jeganathan in his, “A Space for
Violence: Anthropology, Politics and the Location of Sinhala Practice of Masculinity”
describes the “chandy”- a prototype from Sri Lankan alternate history as “a negative, anti-
respectable, brash, shameless figure, though a practitioner of masculinity”( 38). The text
signifies Gorilla as a “chandy” not merely through his physical appearance, his actions but by
classifying him several times as thug and contextualising him with other chandy/gorillas, like
Sudhu Mahathaya. Apart from being called a thug at many points in the text, Gorilla’s way of
wearing his “lungi” or “veshti” is also, we are told thug style. i.e. “his sarong tucked up high
above his thigh” (Jeganatha, 39). Through a repetitive categorising of chandys as “Gorillas”
or vice versa, the word “gorilla” becomes a surrogate- short hand to label thug like behaviour,
in the text.

The Kite Runner and Earth and Ashes locates its contesting masculinities in
Pashtunwali, which Bernt Glatzer calls an “idea of a charter of ethnic pride and self-
understanding… values and norms by which the Pashtuns believe to positively differ from all
the non-Pashtuns” (39). While tribal identities are explicitly characterized in The Kite
Runner, they are deliberately left vague and nondescript in Earth and Ashes. But both the
novels locate the current nature of the conflict and its traumatic fall out, in these twisted
interpretations of masculine honour and ethnic codes of conduct. If The Kite Runner overtly
represents this through challenging and thwarted masculinities in the figures of Assef, Amir, Hassan and Baba, Earth and Ashes covertly suggests this through dreams and symbols

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leaving the discussion with uncertain conclusions to comment on the ongoing nature of the conflict.

*Gorilla* is critical about its titular protagonist’s hegemonic masculinity. Gorilla’s real name is Jungle Wild Jesurasan, the adjective is not only to differentiate him from other Jesurasan, but it indicates his savage, untamed nature and anticipates his later title Gorilla. Jeganatha states how the thugs come in all shapes committing any number of varied crimes—they loot, beat, maim, kill or burn creating chaos and disorder (40). In the novel when we are first introduced to Jesurasan, it is when he is looting the people of Paasaiyoor, Gurunagar and Saanthai of their overnight catch of shrimps. In an incident meant to create in Jesurasan “lajja bhaya” (Jeganatha, 42), he is paraded in by the inspector who arrests him, in his underwear with a board around his neck which names him “Gorilla”. Far from creating “lajja bhaya” the punishment turns around on its head augmenting Jesurasan’s “bhaya-nethi”. Interestingly it is not so much legitimate authority figures that can create “bhaya” of any sorts but what mainstream Sinhala legitimate society categorizes as guerillas, Tiger and hence “terrorist”, like the Movement who are able to tame the wild Gorilla.

As John Beynon states about hegemonic masculinities, Baba’s is established through power and achievement, by being a man “in particular places at specific times” (57). Unlike the hyper masculine thug Gorilla, Baba is a somewhat fantastic hyperbolic he-man figure. Baba is established so in the text through the lore that he had once fought a bear; of being a “towering Pashtun specimen”; the title by which he is known “toophan Agha or Mr. Hurricane” (*The Kite Runner* 33). However the hyperbolic description can be better explained if one takes into account that the depiction is in retrospect, much after his father has died of cancer in America, therefore superimposed by his loss and by qualities Amir himself lacked. Further this picture of Baba which seems to teeter on idealism is monochromatically visualized by a child longing for attention from this rather disregarding parent. Baba then is almost a mythic creation cast in a super-man module, rendering other masculine styles, especially Amir’s inferior and inadequate, what Beynon terms “the subordinate variant” (58). The possible violence such masculinities might unleash is initially at least overlooked by the novel.

The episode where the Movement gives Gorilla a nice thrashing and successfully and sufficiently frightens him to force him to leave for Colombo is important. It reflects one of the binaries the novel creates, in the initial part of the novel, to debunk it later. This is the binary between legitimate vs. illegitimate violence. The fact that the fisher folk complain to the Movement reveals the sway the Movement had in that area and how the Tamils saw them
as some sort of law dispensers. Thus the armed conflict of the guerillas is seen as legitimate, fought by military male figures, while the armed conflict of Gorillas is seen as illegitimate waged by “chandy”. It is through this authorized and constructed legitimacy of the Movement that Rocky hopes to fight his unlawful thug father and regain his sense of self. The savage, wild, dark, uncivilized, unlawful Gorilla is the text’s “other” to the civilizing, law dispensing self—the guerilla. It is to reject the traumatic Gorilla identity and mimic the guerilla identity that Rocky joins the movement. However as the novel progresses, Shobasakthi point-counterpoints the blurring of this binary, even while “contrapuntally” examining the guerilla-gorilla, savage-civilized, legitimacy–illegitimacy polarizations.

Though Amir like Rocky is anxious about his subordinated masculinity leading to Amir being internally displaced within his home by his father, Amir does not attempt to recuperate by resorting to arms. More like his poetic mother, Amir shows no interest in spaces through which masculinity can be both attained and displayed like soccer and Burdazhi. Amir is unable to feign interest even as a spectator, in these sports that assert strength, muscularity and physical prowess. Baba’s business and other achievements display his power and his potency to resist his most stringent critics with his feats of success, but in this self-made script, Amir is the failure story. To offset this alienation Amir resorts to an identity converse to his father’s— that of the poet, writer, story-teller, an identity undermined as effeminate by Baba. Hardly the androgynous parent, Baba fails in, replacing the absent mother and in fulfilling his son’s simple demands of love, attention and time. In this imbalanced relationship of demands and counter demands, the misfortune is that both are aware of the other’s inability to supply and meet stipulations.

In Gorilla in Rocky Raj’s account the clash is not so much between the Sinhalese and the Tigers, but the power struggle within the movement. However through the figure of Gorilla, the quintessential chandy, the novel subtly introduces Sinhala violence—crystallised in the identity of savage and unlawful Gorillas and juxtaposed against taming and civilising guerrillas. Within the context of 1983 violence, Jeganatha quotes mainstream historians as stating how the violence erupted as a consequence of the trauma of “lajja-bhaya” of the Sinhalese, the fear of being shamed by the minority (42). However it is the bhaya-nethi of the thug that is stressed, in the novel and the “lajja-bhaya” of the son that drives him to become a guerrilla. The mindless chaos that Gorilla unleashes becomes metonymical shorthand to refer to the savagery that the Sinhala state let loose on the Tamils.

Collective murder, especially the trauma of July 1983, in this vein has been constructed by Sri Lankan anthropology within this discourse of loss of control and a
breakdown of every day restraint. Several anthropologists and historians have read the violence of July 1983 as a triggering of the trauma of “lajja-bhaya” of the Sinhalese by the killing of the Sinhala soldiers by the LTTE and thus silence the discourse of calculated violence Sinhala forces let loose. By using the “chandy” prototype of masculinity from Sri Lankan subaltern history, a prototype that is erased or overwritten by mainstream history, the text insinuates mainstream Sinhala history of calculated violence on the Tamil self and the ethnic Tamil’s ensuing traumatic loss of self. Traitor locates the larger ethnic violence of 1983 and in particular the Welikada Massacre of the 54 Tamil prisoners in the “anti-normative moment of Sinhala life, an important Sinhala practice of masculinity and the violence it produced” (Jeganatha, 44). While portraying the massacres, the narrative depicts the bhaya-nethi of the historical jailors like Rogers, Samitharatne and other prison officers. Cool and calculated, they lead and allow the “mad unrestrained” Sinhala prisoners to commit exhilarating in the bloodbath like chandys.

If masculinities produce “wounds” on the subaltern collective in Gorilla and Traitor, in The Kite Runner, the hegemonic male targets the subaltern as a representative of a collective. When Hassan, armed with his deadly sling and stone, ironically a primitive armoury used by the savage other, challenges the doubly dominant social identity of Assef—being hyper masculine and the hegemonic Pashtun, Assef’s power and dominance are thwarted. Assef’s rape of Hassan is an attempt to suppress this challenge and avenge this loss in the hands of a Hazara servant. Assef like the Taliban manipulate this ideology of war and violence that endorses the martial and heroic behaviour of the men, which is named tura (literally meaning sword). The use of the Tura is advocated when “nang”—a complex word that connotates honour, shame, dignity, courage and bravery is lost, a loss which should be legitimately avenged, what Pashtunwali calls “badal”. In the sodomy of Hassan the phallic “tura”, Assef uses is legitimized within the rapist’s discourse as denoting “badal” for his loss of “nang”.

In the initial parts of Gorilla, it is the chandys who wield arms and create conflict, often unlawful revealing their “lajja-nethi/bhaya-nethi”. Gorilla, who is unable to fight the movement, combats with those who are remotely connected with it. In the loud and boisterous episode, in the clerk’s front yard, which occurs towards the beginning of the novel, Shobasakthi not only depicts Gorilla’s coarse, brash and vulgar behaviour thus further delineating him as a thug but the scene hinges on this reversal and the gorilla-guerrilla pun preparing us for a later blurring.
Reversing the expectation of the reader, Gorilla goes unarmed, since he is sufficiently armed with his thug prowess. Standing thug style, the way Jeganatha describes without a shirt and his sarong rolled up, he acts the savage, pulling out fences, mouths obscenities at the clerk, drawing enough attention from the neighbourhood. It is the clerk and his son who are the armed guerrillas with their surprise attack with a machete and a wooden plank. These episodes entrench the polarisations the novel deliberately creates, between the chaotic illegitimate gorilla- and the orderly legitimate guerrillas.

However, in *The Kite Runner*, hyperbolized masculinity not only defines the terrorist, it also defines patriotism and power as demonstrated through Baba, who stands up for the unknown Afghan woman’s “nang”, when the Russian soldier dishonours her by demanding her as fare to let them cross to Pakistan. Baba is thus the protector of the innocent, from the terrorising Russian or the terrorist-bully Assef (as a child Amir counts on such a protection). These masculine images need to be appropriated by Amir before he can defeat Assef and protect Sohrab. In the climactic fight between Assef and Amir, Amir is the unarmed exile fighting the armed Taliban. But if Amir sees his bruised and beaten physically traumatised body as suffering and repentance for his childhood betrayal, Sohrab’s rescue of Amir with his sling and brass ball is a palimpsest of Hassan’s rescue and Sohrab’s unconscious “badal”, in proxy, for his father’s loss of “nang”.

If thwarted, traumatized masculinities lead to one kind of recovery, memories of traumatic events as Susan Brison notes can be themselves traumatic and uncontrollable, intrusive and frequently somatic” (40). In *Earth and Ashes*, Dastaguir’s memory of his disintegrated manhood when the Russians burn his village down, leads to his Post traumatic Stress Disorder. His trauma is complexly intertwined within his culture codes of masculinity that he feels he has lost within this “traumatic event ...in which a person feels utterly helpless”. The suggested dishonouring (in the nude figure of his daughter-in-law) renders, Dastaguir, “benanga” ("shameless", "undignified"), which Glatzer, states is “the worst possible insult in Pashtu and a deadly threat to the social position of the insulted” (87). Killing the insulter is an accepted way of regaining one’s nang and social status. A decisive part of nang is sharm / shame, which, according to Glatzer “encompasses shame in the sense of noble modesty as well as its contrary: shamelessness” (88). This binary- “sharm nälare-sharm”, that has mainly to do with the behaviour of the women of the group whose honour is at stake and refers to male control and protection over the female half of the society, compositely function in disintegrating Dastaguir’s identity. Dastaguir, who was unable to protect his daughter-in-law’s sharm, has become “sharm nälare”. The centrality of women to
Dastaguir’s loss of honour can be seen well if the relationship between namus and the complex of nang can be seen. Glatzer adds that namus also means the female part of the family, the “inner sacred” sphere of the clan, tribe and of the Afghan society; in the widest sense it is the Afghan home-land to be protected from marauding outsiders (89). Zaynab’s namus which means privacy and the protection of its sanctity is publicly lost when the “hammam” - the bath house a secluded place that protects her modesty and respectability- comes down under the Russian bombs. As Dastaguir, who was returning from the mill watches this doubly traumatic thwarting of his honour, he like Amir has failed in protecting his nang-namus.

While in The Kite Runner we only see the aggressive meaning of nang in the readiness to fight symbolized by tura, the sword, in Earth and Ashes we see the other side as well, “reason and social responsibility (aql)”, which Glatzer explains “is deliberate and prudent behaviour intended to benefit one’s family and one’s wider social environment up to the entire ethnic group”. Glatzer adds that “it reaches from material support to participation in councils, to jurisdiction and mediation in conflicts” (91). These two sides of nang connected as they are with different ages in life should ideally be represented by Dastaguir and Murad. Since typically, the personality of a young man, is supposed to be dominated by tura, Murad is hot headed and ready to draw the sword at slightest provocation. Aggressiveness is his first reaction, reasoning comes second. The virtue of tura does not need to be tempered by the young men like Murad’s own aql, it is supposed to be checked by the aql of the elders, the “white beards” (spin gíri) like Dastaguir. Consequently boys are educated to obey the elders. However in the novella this binary is lost for Dastaguir in the trauma and “sharm nálare” of the conflict has lost his aql. Desiring “badal” which he cannot execute owing perhaps to his age and weakness, he feels emasculated and powerless like the dream wherein he sees himself as emasculated. It is this desire for “badal” that even Dastaguir cannot articulate, which images in the novella as smouldering smoke, fire and ashes, whenever Dastaguir mirages Murad’s face along with the destroyed ash and dust covered landscape. Further Dastaguir feels he has failed because in the absence of Murad, he as the patriarch is responsible for his daughter-in-law’s “nang” and the “namus” of his home. Dastaguir ex-patriated by the war goes to meet the son to narrate this complex loss.

Dastaguir cannot suppress the dream narrative nor can he speak and share his story of dishonor with anyone. In this profoundly tragic experience he cannot divide the experience with his fellow sufferer, Yassin, for the latter cannot hear. A text that thrives on inconclusive meaning, it problematises the notion of who is the subaltern. For instance in Yassin’s view
Dastaguir has become the subaltern, for the Russians have rendered him voiceless. Yassin believes that one cannot be alive and be able to talk, since all those who could talk have been killed by the Russians. Silenced thus Dastaguir holds imaginary moments of encountering his son and the impossibility of answering Murad’s question “Why are you here father?” (*Earth and Ashes* 54).

The traumatic memory of the subaltern is central to Amir’s sense of self. It is to recover his traumatic self Amir chooses the narration of the subaltern’s story. By bearing witness to Hassan’s story of sacrifice and surrender, Amir tries to witness his own wounded memory. Hassan’s story recovered from the edge does not however uncover alternative points of view. Amir’s narrative deliberately retains the gaze of the majoritarian Pashtuns thereby self-reflexively disparaging the Pashtun politics of othering other races. Amir’s narration has the twin agenda of portrayal of the victimized subaltern with a simultaneous debunking of his community’s Pashtun supremacist politics, through a reproachful enactment of these politics. This victim/Hazara-victimizer/Pashtun binary is ensconced powerfully in the novel to explicate the motivation behind Hassan’s rape by the supremacist Assef and later the slaughter of the Hazaras by the Taliban in Mazar-e-Sharaf.

Many critics have seen the novel as bonding between friends, story of brotherhood and so on. But Hassan is never allowed to enter this egalitarian space by Amir. Their relationship is that between the exploiters and the exploited, the master and the slave who are notably armed the former with sophisticated things like education, class concessions and so on, but the latter with simple weaponry like a sling shot. While the benefits of both are significant, the gains of either always privilege the Pashtun master.

Critics have also noted that the novel is finally about putting a human face to Afghanistan. It is interesting to note that for all the personal details Amir offers, we never get a complete view of his face, but other’s faces and facial expressions become a mirror to reflect an imaginary face of Amir. One of the first faces we encounter, a face that remains deeply etched in our minds till Amir rescues its carbon copy, is Hassan’s. The construct of Hassan with the repetitive reference to his flat nose, narrow eyes, “Chinese doll face” (*The Kite Runner* 3) marks him as the racial ethnic other, – the extraneous, opposite and inferior to the “self” in this case the Pashtun. The Pashtuns derogatorily saw the Hazaras as descendants of the Mongols and themselves as a superior Aryan race. On the one hand Amir’s description resonates with typecasting politics of the self, which sees itself as the standard and judges those who do not meet the norm as lesser and substandard. However the description also emphasizes that there is much that is impalpable and imperceptible about Hassan that escapes
the stereotyping self. This is true to the description of Ali as well; whose face could never reveal his true expressions, only his slanted brown eyes, like Hassan’s which alternately turns blue, green or grey, brims or clouds with joy or sorrow.

Other commonalities emerge between the projected father and son, the former with his “atrophied twisted right leg” and his “congenital paralysis of his lower facial muscles” and the latter with his “hare- lip” (The Kite Runner 8). The Hazaras’ otherness is thus writ large through these physical distortions and misshapenness that accentuate how their life is malformed because of their race. These external defects are a silent testimony to the social stigma the Hazara bears on account of his ethnicity which is visibly apparent through physical markers like eyes, nose etc.

Several critics, like Andrews, have commented on the position of Ali and Hassan within the “secular liberal ideology” of Amir’s household, set as a contrast against the deriding, outside world, that constructs both Ali and Hassan as the quintessential outcasts (20). The former, as the cannibalistic town bogey man, feared by the younger children and scoffed at by the older as the “flat-nosed Babalu”, the latter, as the son of the harlot, Sanaubar (The Kite Runner 8- 9). Within Amir and Baba’s household however they are treated no doubt with compassion and liberalism like Baba’s humane treatment of Ali and Hassan or Hassan accompanying Amir in most of the father-son outings, Baba throwing his hand around Ali and laughing in camaraderie or Amir calling the two friends the Sultans of Kabul or Baba’s weeping pleas begging Ali to stay when the latter and his son leave after being blamed for the robbery. However this said bleeding heart liberalism towards the Hazara duo side steps the issue of the ultimate question of equality between the Pashtun and the Hazara. Notice nowhere Amir or Baba use the word brother (Amir of course achieves it to some extent in his redemptive journey) however qualified, the farthest they would go was kinship. Instead in classic literalisation the other is domesticated through generations beginning with Baba’s father to Baba and Amir, to serve as domestic servants. Consigned to a humble shack, Hassan is not privileged with education and is indoctrinated into menial labour in Baba’s household. A position he uncomplainingly even happily accepts not just as a child but later when he returns with Rahim to tend the empty house, so conditioned is Hassan’s sense of subordination and inferiority that he chooses to stay in his old home than occupy “Amir Agha’s house” . Fine specimens of human beings these Hazaras are, these benevolent Pashtuns seem to suggest, so long as they remain in these relegated places. Amir is guiltily conscious of these double –standards, of both Baba and himself as he states that for all the company he and Hassan shared neither he nor Baba thought of Hassan and Ali as their
“friends” (22-24). As for Baba, internally focalised as he is within Amir’s narrative, we only hear about his remorse through Rahim. Nevertheless his benign treatment of Ali and Hassan takes on a whole new drift when we hear Hassan is Amir’s half brother. Of course how Sanaubari the subaltern woman who suffered this exploitation seems to be outside the sympathy dynamics of even this text’s consideration for the marginal.

It is perhaps this guilt-tinted heart that leads to oversimplification of the Hazaras in Amir’s representation with its objective to evoke sympathy for the other and disgust at the rapacious majoritarian politics signified in the novel’s archetypal villain- Assef, who metonymically stands for the bigoted Taliban. To this end the two Hazaras are exemplars of goodness, purity and simplicity. Always forfeiting, Hassan and later Sohrab are reduced to symbolic animal figures; chief amongst them is the sacrificial lamb, ready to surrender to tormenting assailants to save the master and his property, even if it is something as petty as a blue kite. Hassan, Amir contends, is “incapable of hurting anyone”; he means everything he says and assumes everyone else does too (11-58).

If *The Kite Runner* attempts a sympathetic portrayal of the subaltern, in *Traitor*, Shobasakthi challenges the sympathy rhetoric of minority Tamils that has constructed itself as the innocent victimized by a Sinhala Buddhist State. Rajan Hoole observes that sharing their oppressor’s fundamentalist ideas, Sri Lankan Tamils have undermined separate identities of Tamils, denying their plurality (qtd in Bartholomeusz, 9). He comments that both Tamil and Sinhala nationalism essentialise Tamils and tend to lump Tamils into one group (10). Before castigating the mainstream Sinhalese state, Shobasakthi challenges these homogenizing tendencies of Tamil ethnic chauvinism by exposing the fissures and oppressive caste hierarchy amongst the Tamil’s in Palmyra. The translator in her Afterword notes how caste massacres of Dalit Tamils by upper caste Tamils, especially the massacres in Sanganai and Nichamam in 1968 of protesting Dalits by caste-Tamils is a denied history. She comments how Tamil historiography and even alternative accounts of the Eelam struggle do not record labour struggles and anticaste movements of that time period (“Afterword”, *Traitor*, 219). Shobasakthi represents this marginalised history through the Vellalar-pallar armed conflict, with the majoritarian Vellalars conflating the Eelam struggle with their caste politics, to effectively maintain the caste hierarchy.

Tessa Bartholomeusz and Chandra De Silva comment that Sinhala Buddhist fundamentalism varied in the construct of the “other”. Some minor religious and ethnic communities were “near others”, some were “far others” (28). The “near other” prescription that defines how the Sinhala-Buddhist state regarded the otherness of the Hindu Jaffna Tamil
operates in Palmyra in other ways. Here the Vellalar’s are the majority all the other oppressed castes are regarded in varying degrees of otherness. This caste hierarchy is indicated in a very early section that lists the caste statistics of Palmyra recording the preponderance of the Vellalars in the figure 35,634. The guardian of this caste hierarchy in Palmyra is Earnest, who sustains the system successfully by disallowing the Dalit children to attend his segregated school. In this light Nesakumaran’s burning down Lumbini Vidyalaya, the school for Dalit children, run by Sinhala Buddhist monk acquires new dimensions. Though the overt agenda of the confrontational Nesakumaran seems to be an anti-Sinhalese crusade, his actions also reveal an entrenched upper caste superciliousness that chooses to burn down the Dalit school, which was a direct challenge to the upper caste’s power hierarchy. This collision of different armed conflicts we see once again at the St. Anthony’s Feast on March 25th 1983. As part of the celebrations, in a ritual named “Carrying the Cage”, the St. Anthony’s statue is carried around the streets, a privilege the Vellalars had appropriated, while the other castes had to “simply follow the procession saying ‘amen’. However on March 25th the oppressed Pallars led by an outsider and his comrades, the Dalit writer and activist K. Daniel, decide to arm themselves by touching and carrying the cage. All the Vellalars attempts to disarm the Pallars, through threats, unemployment and negotiating the construction of a Pallar St. Anthony Church, is of no avail. On the day of the festival the Vellalars arm themselves with sticks and knives, and armed police fortification against the slogan shouting Pallars, who block the way with their sit-ins. Nesakumaran’s belligerent claims the previous evening to Srikanthamalar, supporting the Pallar’s cause sounds particularly hollow in view of the burning down of Lumbini school. Nevertheless Nesakumaran and three protesters have planned to grab the cage at an opportune moment and carry it off. When the moment does arrive however, Nesakumaran with his fixation for arms to empower himself grabs not the cage but Inspector Jayakumar’s “gleaming gun”. Stoned down and caught by the police, Nesakumaran surrenders at the very threat of sexual torture. Nesakumaran has once again botched up. With this act of betrayal begins Nesakumaran’s journey through the labyrinths of interrogation chambers, army camps and regional prisons in an increasingly bleak Sri Lankan penal system.

The class, caste and regional conflict nexus with the larger ethnic conflict can be seen in the story of Rajendran, the child-servant from the plantation whom Earnest employs for his house work. In Rajendran’s pitiable tale of exploitation, starvation, torture and poverty, Shobasakthi registers the complex and many-sided issues of human predicaments. In this microcosmic vignette we see the cruelty, deception and derision Earnest’s family mete out to
the “plantation boy” leading to his joining the Movement. His subsequent tragic death as a child-soldier, when he consumes the cyanide capsule for fear of being reprimanded by senior cadres, is exploited later by Earnest. In a paradoxical and poignant distortion, Earnest claims Rajendran as his son, who has died as “Maveeran”, to retrieve Nesakumaran from the clutches of the LTTE.

III

Trauma and Silence

While the Sri Lankan texts voice the trauma of some of the subaltern groups, the plural ethnic Tamils in Gorilla and Traitor and the Hazara minorities in The Kite Runner Shobasakthi, Ondaatje, Hosseini and Rahimi also leave gaps and silences in narrating the trauma of some other subaltern subjects. Several traumatized subaltern subjects are silenced sometimes as a textual strategy to paradoxically represent the unrepresentable, or are completely left out as subjects and become objects that silently encode another’s trauma.

Anil’s Ghost, Earth and Ashes and The Kite Runner, for instance employ different thematic and narrative techniques to represent the unspeakable trauma of Lakma, Sirissa, Yassin and Sohrab. Even as Anil’s Ghost and Earth and Ashes make the invisible more ominous than the visible, Yassin’s deafness, Lakma’s silence and Sirissa’s story in a vignette narrate a trauma that can be apprehended only by its horrific silence. While Lakma suffers from permanent aphasia-her linguistic logic broken and silenced by witnessing her parents’ violent deaths when she was twelve, Dastaguir’s grandson Yassin loses his hearing when the Russians bomb his village. If Lakma can’t speak her trauma, in his posttraumatic state Yassin believes the world has been silenced after the Russians attacked his village and took away everyone’s voices. If Lakma and Yassin are physically unable to speak or hear, Sohrab chooses silence after his traumatic childhood in war torn Afghanistan.

As Vickroy states in “Representing Trauma”, “traumatised children”, like Yassin, Sohrab and Lakma “exemplify the disempowerment and disavowal of communities and even entire cultures” (12). Earth and Ashes, The Kite Runner and A Thousand Splendid Suns show how children are particularly vulnerable to abuse. Sohrab, Yassin and Aziza's development, life coping skills and their future relationships are affected in varying degrees by the trauma of the conflict. Aziza’s stuttering, Sohrab’s silence and “hyperpassivity” and Yassin’s misperceptions all narrate in Vickroy’s words “their traumatized helplessness and their thought / behavioural/ physical dysfunctions” (12).
If the above mentioned novels narrate these traumas through speech and hearing disorders, Nirami’s trauma in *Traitor* and Sanaubari’s story in *The Kite Runner* are silenced by the masculine discourses of Nesakumaran and Amir. In *Traitor*, while the state witnesses this trauma and punishes the traumatizer father, like girls and women most damaged by incest and rape Nirami is prevented by the narrative to voice her anger or pain. Though Premini rejects and refuses to shelter her sexually abusive husband, Nirami’s testimony as a female sexual abuse survivor is missing in this novel of oral testimonies. If Nirami is the ultimate embodiment of the silenced, Sanaubari is constructed as the “other woman”- seductive, voluptuous and the object of male sexual fantasy. In *The Kite Runner*, if she exits the narrative as the “other woman” she returns as the mother figure, now bearing the penalty of her looks on her maimed disfigured face. While we can identify Nesakumaran as the hideous paedophile rapist, how does one identify Baba? By disallowing Sanaubari speech, the novel silences Baba’s treachery to not just Sanaubari and Ali, but to the memory of his dead wife as well.

In *Anil’s Ghost*, the story of Sirissa, the subaltern woman and her mysterious disappearance is narrated to us in an italicised vignette. Though Sirissa does not speak we witness with her, her traumatic ending, as the scene drags us along with Sirissa. As Dora Wuyts points out the event appears at the very moment or in the act of reading (25). By employing what Wuyts identifies as, “simultaneous narration”, a common device in trauma literature, the past is experienced as the present (25). Before we witness with Sirissa the heads of the young men on the stakes on the bridge and the dead in the school, we have a three page sketch of Sirissa’s everyday life, her work in the school; her love for her husband Ananda. This enables in Wuyts’ words an “empathetic witnessing” and connection with Sirissa when she meets her end (, 25). As the only other witness to Sirissa’s tragedy, the reader possesses a knowledge no one else does in the novel. So when we meet the suffering Ananda the reader is frustratingly trapped and silenced for while we are bound to “witness” Ananda’s trauma we cannot contribute to the process of revelation.

*Traitor* on the other hand will not allow us to witness or hear the entire story of Srikanthamalar, the Kadayar woman. The kind of closure *Traitor* effects on the story of the subaltern male Rajendran is denied for Srikanthamalar. While the reader knows the singular closed story of Sirissa, Srikanthamalar’s story acquires multiple narrations with different closures. Like Ananda’s ignorance about Sirissa, we never know what her traumatic history was within the Sri Lankan prisons. Though the third person narrator speaks about her life in
exile in London, a bawdy coarse prison song that Nesakumaran hears narrates Srikanthamalar’s sexual torture within the prison. Though the song like the torture it describes makes public what should remain private, the gruesome tale only draws an “Mmm” from Nesakumaran who has already denied Srikanthamalar’s story as a part of his story.

However the text does narrativise the systematic persecution of this doubly marginal figure, by casteist Vellalar males -whether the inspector Jayakumar or Earnest Master. Jayakumar identifies himself as a Vellalar to Nesakumaran; his subsequent treatment of Srikanthamalar in the police station is wrought with caste politics. His anger when she calls him “brother” a common terminology in Tamil and his violent rejection of her claimed kinship, allows him to do as he wishes with her body. If Nesakumaran ineffectively conflates conflicts, Earnest does it effectively, in his oppressive marginalising and erasure of the subaltern woman, Srikanthamalar. Later when he returns to Palmyra after pathetically pleading with every police officer for four days for his son’s release, he orders the burning down of the house of “the Kadayar woman” Srikanthamalar, who has been named Nesakumaran’s associate for he claims she has “lured my son with some black magic” (Traitor, 54). Like his exploitative treatment of the plantation Tamil Rajendran, Earnest wipes out the only Kadayars in Palmyra.

In the narrative spaces of Gorilla and Earth and Ashes with its singular focus on the masculine war discourse, women are reduced to functional automatons and cultural signifiers, a devout Genoa, an obedient Princie or the mad and immoral Jeyaseeli in the former or the “nang-namus” representing daughter-in-law and wife in the latter. If for Gorilla and Rocky the woman is an insignificant object to be disposed of as they pleased, the women in Dastaguir’s life are significant objects that encode a culture and honour he ought to have protected. In the clash between masculinities in Gorilla women are dispensable entities, on the other hand in Earth and Ashes women are indispensible in defining what is “ours” and “theirs”.

In these texts women’s trauma is a result of being the pretext for war, booty, rewards for allies, objects to be protected or attacked. Within the context of armed conflict, these texts show war as man’s affairs and woman as a passive victim protagonist sometimes narrating her silences, sometimes silencing her trauma narrative. As fragmented subjects, whether a Nirami or a Sirissa, they and their traumas are pushed to the periphery. Like the Earth and Ashes and The Kite Runner demonstrate, dominant cultural narratives cannot absorb these stories where women and ethnic minorities are brutalised and cultural masculinities are thwarted.
Miranda Allison comments on the roles of female LTTE soldiers and the “masculine military codes” they had to adopt during the Sri Lankan Civil wars (50). Memoirs like Niromi de Souza’s *Tamil Tigress*, writings by Rajani Thiranagama or ethnographic studies like *The Broken Palmyra* comment on the impact of the war on the woman. While we can surmise that perhaps Shobasakthi’s alternate discourse does not narrativize this subaltern experience in Gorilla and the subjectivity of his experience and the autobiographical overtones silence these spaces, in a telephonic interview the researcher had with the translator Anushiya Sivaraman, the translator argues otherwise. Noting with discontent, she states that the translated English book has been deliberately edited by publishers with large sections of the original deleted (in a telephonic interview with the researcher on December 18th, 2014). However in his short story collection *The MGR Murder Trials*, stories like “Gundu Diana”, “God and Kanchana” and “Tamil” the woman and the woman’s body as sites of war, protest and exploitation acquire tremendous significance.

While the woman as a site of war has by and large been silenced within the chosen texts in the Sri Lankan space, in the Afghan space making the woman speak and resist her traumatic silence has become very central. Hosseini and Rahimi in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *The Patience Stone* release their women from centuries of silence. These women create a new narrative, a narrative of resistance by doing what trauma survivors do, i.e in Vickroy’s words-by “remastering trauma, recovering their selves and resisting erasures” (14).

*A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *The Patience Stone* articulate the woman’s response to the statement “War is man’s affairs”. In these two texts war telling is no longer a male prerogative. Far from being muted traumatic subjects these women, as discussed in the earlier chapter; remake their selves by arming themselves against the background of armed conflict. Rather than being disrupted individuals severed and shattered they reconstruct by waging wars against structures that impose and restrict. In a radical move in *The Patience Stone*, the man is the traumatized silenced object and the woman reconstructs herself before her muted oppressor. Like “Dopdi” in Mahaswetha Devi’s story, the woman uses what is usually a site of trauma as a site of resistance- her body and her blood. On the other hand in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* shared silence of the two women provides space for the creation of a new narrative – healing, resurrection and renewal. Though subjected to oppression and alienation Mariam and Laila never lose their sense of selves and their natural compassion.

In the more recent Hosseini novel *And the Mountains Echoed* the silenced trauma of Abdullah and the unspoken trauma of Nila Wahdati are outside the context of armed conflict leading the former to Alzheimer and the latter to suicide. The trauma of the maimed Roshi
like his wounded women in his other novels is narrativised in the novel. In fact as a definitive sign of power and voice Roshi narrativises her trauma through what Hernz calls “scriptotherapy” (qtd in Vickroy, 12). So healed and recovered is Roshi’s sense of self that she leaves out her crucial betrayer Idris from her narrative.

IV

Narrating Wounds, Resisting Wounding

As texts that represent the trauma of post Cold War and postcolonial armed conflicts, with the wound of the conflict so physical and immediate, these raw wounds cannot be narrated in an objective mode. Therefore Shobasakthi, Ondaatje, Hosseini and Rahimi adopt new ways of representation or problematise normative ways of representation. Through the use of varied types of narrative, points of view and genre, they not only register the shock and unassimilatable nature of the subject matter but show their interrelation to three contexts postmodernism, postcolonialism and post war legacy or consciousness. The varied memory sites from which these texts recover their perception of the conflicts were elaborated in earlier chapters. This section will discuss how some of these texts attempt what Anne Whitehead states in her book *Trauma Fiction* achieves- i.e “bring conventional narrative techniques to their limits” while some test these limits (81). As texts that recover alternate histories that challenge mainstream structures, and through their concern with recovered memory, these texts make possible the acknowledgement of the denied, the repressed and the forgotten. Whitehead points out that “Trauma fiction arises out of and is inextricable from three interrelated backgrounds/ contexts- postmodernism, postcolonialism and post war legacy or consciousness” (81).

This last section of this chapter would discuss narrative, which, Luc Herman and Bart Vervaeck summarising, Gerard Genette and others define, in the chapter “ Ideology”, as the way in which events and characters are represented, communicated by one, two or several narrators to one or more narratees (217). In the ensuing study of narrative strategies in the primary texts, spatio-temporal organization, point of view of the narration and genre would be analysed to understand the choices these texts make in these three dimensions to narrate armed conflict and its consequent or corresponding trauma.

Gerard Genette, states Manfred Jahn, in the chapter “Focalization”, differentiates between who sees; aiming at identifying a reflector and who speaks that is the utterer of the
narrative discourse (97). Genette prises apart voice and mood-narration, and focalization with the latter becoming an independent module of narratology. Genette also stipulates that the overreaching criterion of focalisation is not only who sees but the gradable feature of “restriction of narrative information” (96). The Afghan and the Sri Lankan texts use different focalisers and exploit the limited narrative information the focalizers convey to undercut it strategically with what they do not see. Many texts like *The Kite Runner, Traitor, and Gorilla* use internal focalisation and restrict the narrative information to the data available to their perception, cognition and thought, in different ways.

*The Kite Runner* uses the fixed focalisation of Amir. In such focalisations Jahn points out “the story is seen exclusively from the point of view of this single focal character” (98). This restricted seeing is further restrained by making Amir, what Jahn calls a “homodiegetic narrator, who is also a character in the story world diegesis” (42). However the text exploits the gap between what Amir the focalizer sees and Amir the homodiegetic narrator narrates to ironically suggest Amir’s unreconciled trauma, his illusions and escapism. This is particularly exploited in the physical trauma of Hassan’s rape, (which Hosseini comments is an allegory for the internecine wars) and the consequent psychological trauma of Amir. In refusing to focalise on the rape, Amir deludes himself that he has not witnessed the rape. However the homodiegetic narrator narrates an earlier incident of a lamb being sacrificed. By simultaneously offering the two frames of the narrator and the focalizer, the novel makes evident the repressed ethnic supremacist ideology of Amir, which thereby constructs Hassan’s silent victimisation as “sacrifice”. Though the perceiving Amir deludes himself that he is not guilty and thus escapes facing his cowardice, the narrating Amir draws our attention repeatedly to this delusional escapism. Further in these early chapters that recount a nostalgic childhood in a relatively conflict-free Afghanistan, the child’s perception is retained though it is the adult who speaks. This kind of narration which Herman and Vervaeck define as “dissonant self-narration” a type of narration that occurs when the “narrating I “disagrees with the “experiencing I” is used in the novel (217-218). Through this narration the text comments on the naivety and petulance of such perceptions, that failed to see the underlying ethnic politics, while the adult narrator draws our attention to these tensions that later led to full-fledged civil wars and the Taliban.

The rather unpretentious narrative of *The Kite Runner* by Hosseini, the exile writer only conscientiously affected by the conflict is lost when one reaches the treacherous narrative of *Traitor*. Jahn defines this focalisation as “variable focalizations” where-in
narrated by several “reflector-characters the focalisation vacillates between a constraining, confining focalizer” (98). Thus we have Nesakumaran’s focalisation, a releasing yet disparaging third person voice and several myriad narrations that in the words of Jahn “capitalize on the anxiety between who sees and who speaks” (98). This tension is further made possible as the narrating voice switches and swings between the homodiegetic and the heterodiegetic mode. Written after Gorilla, which blurs this further, the lines between the different focalisers and the narrators become fuzzy like other shadowy lines in this text. Though Nesakumaran’s portraiture is certainly not autobiographical, the story based on oral testimonies of survivors also reminds us of Shobasakthi’s subjective experience of the conflict.

While it is the homodiegetic narrator Nesakumaran who begins the narration with the promise to write the story of his beloved daughter Nirami, naming through the course of the narration her as yet unknown rapist, it is a heterodiegetic third person voice that picks up the narration immediately. This voice narrates from a location which Jahn has identified as, “standing outside the story world” (42). Here outside the world of Palmyra and the ideology of Nesakumaran. This rather laconic narrator gains our confidence and assurance by his objectivity and outsiderliness. However this narrator is not only according to Jahn a “…functional agent who verbalises the story’s nonverbal matter…, manages the exposition…”, thus establishing communication with the addressee (96). But the reader is more a witness to the narration than a mute “communicative addressee” (96). For the story we hear is determined by the focalizer’s detailed perception which filters our sympathy and prejudices. With the victim-victimiser paradigm constantly shifting in the “Grey Zones” of the text, this “filtering” of the reader’s mind to “alienate” us from the action is achieved by the third person narrative voice. Unlike A Thousand Splendid Suns that uses a heterodiegetic narrator, but focalizes on the armed conflict using free indirect discourse, Shobasakthi renounces this option while narrating Nesakumaran’s story. That this is a deliberate strategy is made evident when we hear other stories in the novel like Rajendran or Kanagaratnam Shanmuganathan’s who unlike some others in the novel are hapless victims to systems that exploit even their deaths. Through Nesakumaran’s, “dissonant psycho-narration” Shobasakthi is critical of Nesakumaran and his infantile ideologies. By the time the heterodiegetic narrator begins the narrative, Nesakumaran’s story as a guerrilla-terrorist has almost neared its completion. By declining the handing over of the narrative this early on to his
homodiegetic Nesakumaran Shobaskthi makes us see much more than Nesakumaran, perceive his foolishness and anticipate his assured denouement.

Unlike the impersonal and reliable third person account, Nesakumaran’s is intensely personal and unreliable. By making this homodiegetic narrator a paedophile rapist of his daughter, who also seems to be mentally unstable, Nesakumaran’s reliability as a narrator is challenged. However he is also an extremely self-conscious narrator who is acutely conscious of the goriness of his tale on the one hand and believes his is the most legitimate version of many alternate histories he narrates (Traitor, 99). Before narrating the massacre at Welikada, he warns the reader about the grimness of his tale yet like the Ancient Mariner forces us to listen (Traitor108). Unlike Hosseini in The Kite RunnerShobaskthi does not create a gap between the focalizer and the narrator, but the man who suffers narrates his story as how he saw it then beginning with the extreme close-up of his tortured body. Manfred Jahn differentiates between “offline and online perception” The former referring to “imaginary sense perceptions and the latter real-life perception”(99). Nesakumaran’s “offline perception” coincides with his “on-line perception”. The perception channel Nesakumaran particularly uses is the pain of the body, which William Nelles calls “tactivilization (qtd in Jahn 99). If the gap between what he sees and what he narrates reflects Amir’s trauma in one way, by bridging the gap between Nesakumaran’s offline and online perceptions Traitor mingles Nesakumaran’s physical and psychological traumas. Recounting his story through the physical in terms of the trauma of the body during the civil war, the recollection captures Nesakumaran’s PTSD, through another trauma on the body- the rape of Nirami.

If Traitor switches between a reliable, impersonal third person narrative and an unreliable subjective first person narration, Gorilla collapses this binary, further being an Auto fiction it further blends in its multiple discourse autobiographical overtones. While the first two parts make it distinct who the perceivers and speakers are, in the third part such distinctions cave in. In his petition to the French authorities, the homodiegetic Antony Dasan’s story is internally focalised like Amir’s story. However Rocky’s story though narrated by a heterodiegetic third person voice uses Rocky as the reflector of the story, a privilege denied to the unreliable Nesakumaran, thus revealing Rocky’s journey from idealism to ideology to disillusionment. Rocky’s story is in many ways also Shobasakthi’s story as a child soldier, this also explains the use of Rocky as the reflector. In the third section, the variable focalisations become multiple focalisations, for we now see the story through the perceptions of Dasan and Rocky. However when the French authorities’ torture
breaks them down, we realise that these dual voices are in fact one and the erstwhile homo and heterodiegetic narrations were narrated by the same voice. In disintegrating earlier distinctions, Shobaskthi narrates the story of a collective.

Unlike the above mentioned novels Anil’s Ghost, A Thousand Splendid Suns, Earth and Ashes and The Patience Stone do not use internal focalization but use variable and multiple focalizations, though they all implement heterodiegetic narrators. These texts use multiple perspectives in their dialogic narration of the conflict. Anil’s Ghost for instance, unveils the incompleteness of any one version of the Sri Lankan civil war. By perceiving the conflict and its ensuing trauma through different characters-Anil, Sarath, Gamini, Ananda, Palipana, Sirissa, Lakma and finally through the painted eye of Buddha, the novel affirms the indeterminacy of meaning. Earth and Ashes and The Patience Stone though not polyphonic like Anil’s Ghost through a rift between who sees and who speak recover dialogic voices and thus show the indeterminacy of meaning. Fewer complexes than these three in its point of view, A Thousand Splendid Suns alternates in its focalization, moving between Laila and Mariam but like The Kite Runner achieves a monologic closure.

Though the narrator is heterodiegetic in these novels, the texts’ focalizers are all central characters. If Traitor and Gorilla recover marginalized and suppressed voices through their homodiegetic guerrilla narrators, in A Thousand Splendid Suns, and The Patience Stone by making subaltern figures the focalizers, the conflict is perceived through victims who are mute spectators of the conflict. In The Patience Stone, though the focalizer seems to be the comatose man, he is silenced and it is the woman who speaks what she perceives. The text shows us what Jahn labels as “apperception” i.e. such perceptions explain “why identical things are seen differently” (101). It is this apperception of the woman – her psychological and ideological facet that complements her perceptual facet that the heterodiegetic narrator narrates. The narration of The Patience Stonetherefore combines the third person voice and the “speakerly text” of the woman. Gates defines a speakerly text as one “whose rhetorical strategy is designed to represent an oral literary tradition … designed to produce the illusion of oral narration” (171). In devaluing all other elements and in privileging the woman’s “speakerly text”, Rahimi deliberately consigns all dominant spaces and structures to the margins.

The third person narrative in A Thousand Splendid Suns uses free indirect discourse whereby the text picks up the tenor of narrated monologues, initially Mariam’s voice and
mid-way Laila’s to narrate and perceive the conflict. In representing the speech of the female characters, without using the First Person narration, the narration offers us dual frames that privileges the woman’s perception blurring an authorial voice but simultaneously creates a corresponding outside frame which is more or less in Toolan’s words “unspeakable”, “as there is no real speaker”(240). While what Michael Toolan calls “psycho-narration” makes us feel, perceive, think through Mariam and Lailaconcurrently, the outside invisible frame enables us to identify structures that trap them and us in their bodies making us experience the stifling oppressions they undergo. This dual voice not only projects the helplessness of these women in opposition to structures too immense, against which they wage their private wars, but suggests the need for these colossal structures to change. In denying itself voice, the text relegates the authorial voice to the margin and relocates the woman to the centre as the subject of the text

If the afore mentioned texts perceive through their characters, Earth and Ashes and Anil’s Ghost perceive with their characters. Towards this Earth and Ashes uses a second person narrative where the heterodiegetic narrator narrates what he sees with Dastaguir. Thus though an external focalizer he can also internally focalise with Dastaguir hence can visualise his dreams, trauma and fears. The third person narrator though objective, also within this frame work becomes Dastaguir’s empathetic witness of the trauma of the war. Like Nesakumaran Dastaguir’s “online perception” coincides with his “off line” . His can be qualified using Nelles terms like “gustavitization” and “olfactivization” (qtd in Jahn 99).For everywhereDastaguir can smell the charring fire and taste the ash in his mouth .In Anil’s Ghost the perceptions of Palipana and Ananda- the archaeologist and the artist -are used to offer metafictional comments on the conflict while Anil’s exilic point of view is contrasted with the resident Sarath and Gamini. Through these plural discourses, the novel undermines the monoglossia of meaning and suggests and demonstrates meaning as heteroglossic. In And the Mountains Echoed we have a summation of these points-of-view ranging between multiple focalisers like Pari,Abdollah, Adel and Markos to the inner focalization of Sulaiman Mr. Wahdati’s chauffeur –caretaker. Sometimes it uses the gap between the focalizer and the narrator like it does in Babajan’s story, other times it variably narrates the same episode from different points-of view filling narrative gaps and plot.

Teresa Bridgeman points out that to read a narrative is to engage with an alternative world that has its own spatial and temporal structures (52). Time and space therefore in these texts are part of the fabric of the narrative affecting our understanding of the text. As exilic
texts they are all spatially dislocated from the writer’s location as the exilic writer in these texts is attempting to portray particular time frames in the past in the space of his homeland. With the exception of some sections of *Anil’s Ghost*, *The Kite Runner* and to some extent *Gorilla* all the texts are located in Sri Lanka or Afghanistan.

If the space suggests the writers’ need to narrativize their war torn homelands, time frames in the novels narrate the memory sites of these novels. With the exception of *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, all the texts, including *And the Mountains Echoed* are what Neumann terms in his essay “The Literary Representation of Memory” - “Fictions of Memory” (339). They are all texts that represent the processes of remembering. All the novels hinge on the pattern of analepsis or retrospection. Characters at different points recollect events that took place in the past and narrate it in the present. Thus these texts operate like other fictions of memory, which according to Neumann function with “co-present time perspectives” that is “the multi-temporal levels of past and present” intermingle in manifold and complex ways (339). The central challenge the “retrospecting” character faces is the meaningful connection of the past to the present situation in which the memory is retrieved. Accordingly these fictions of memory vary greatly with the ordering of the analepsis.

In texts like *The Kite Runner* and the first and second parts of *Gorilla* the analepses are arranged chronologically, thus they seem to bridge a gap between a specific past event and the narrator/ author’s own “memory-created starting point” (Neumann, 338). However though such a completing analepsis in *The Kite Runner* portrays the psychological development of Amir, in the third part of *Gorilla* such possible totalizing closures are impossible. In the other novels this chronological order is dissolved at the expense of subjective experience of time. In *Traitor*, *The Patience Stone*, *Anil’s Ghost* and *Earth and Ashes* strict sequence of event is undercut by the oscillation between different time levels. While in *Traitor* and *Earth and Ashes* such “anachronies are semanticised” to not only show the haphazard workings of traumatic memories but the temporal tension also suggests in Neumann’s words “tension between the remembering I and the narrating I” (338). Hence in *Gorilla* and *The Patience Stone* the characters- Rocky and the unnamed woman- are unable to adjust their oppressive memories to their current identity seeking, in a meaningful manner. While Rocky’s stability is called into question, the woman rejects this past and asserts her strong present identity. Thus varied missing connections to traumatic pasts, according to Neumann, “indicate cognitive and emotional ambiguities, which point to a biological break” in these characters (338).
Written in the post Cold War, postcolonial contexts these texts use primarily two genres of fiction to recover traumatic stories of the war that challenge the hegemony’s discourse by testifying to silenced sufferings. Predominantly survivor or literary testimonies, some are also Postmodern Historiographic Metafiction that challenge absolute, univocal meaning as truth.

Linda Hutcheon in *Historiographic Metafiction* states that Historiographic Metafiction works to situate itself within historical discourse without surrendering its autonomy as fiction and its metafictional reflexivity renders their claim to historical veracity somewhat problematic(5). *Anil’s Ghost* and *Traitor* metafictionally assert that both literature and history are human constructs, human illusions but necessary nevertheless. The texts self-consciously problematise the making of history through their polyphonic narrative. Through the use of pastiche, a shifting mix of authorial, multiply focalised narrations and first person narration the texts enact the “error of meaning as totalised singularity” (Hutcheon, 4-5). The title of both the texts functions as a token of totalised meaning which is under threat from concealed gaps and exclusions. It is Sarath who dies to let Anil live, yet it is Anil’s ghost that exits the text in the end. The treacherous Nesakumaran who promises to tell us Nirami’s story never does so but instead narrates the tortuous history of Sri Lankan civil war. Elisions and gaps prevail in both the texts that narrative voices do not wish to fill.

*Anil’s Ghost* and *Traitor* combine different registers and the pastiche texts that merge, undermine the possibility of a central authorial point of view or speaking voice. The texts combine texts from other genres and intertextually refer to other texts. *Anil’s Ghost* for instance combines the mythically allusive miner’s folk song as the epigraph to the novel, Irish song-writer Van Morrison’s “Slim Slow Rider” that reminds Anil of her marriage and captures her in-between location, the precision of “factual” and technical registers like the extract from *The National Atlas of Sri Lanka*, a partial list of *The Amnesty International* (Anil’s Ghost 34-36). The pastiche in *Traitor* interweaves not only literary and religious texts like Exodus and the French version of the Genesis texts but media texts like Tamil newspapers or the pornographic video Nesakumaran watches in the French prison and quotations in other languages. Further Shobasakthi narrates the conflict in different genres through bawdy prison songs to the poem he writes to his people which also becomes the epigraph to the text or through the mimicking of genres like caste and genealogy lists. Sometimes he also adopts other registers like the radio news that narrates the escalating civil war and the killing on all sides, narrowing life and death into news. (*Traitor*, 146-147)
Violence and counter-violence are narrated by a detached voice like a news station, parodying the alleged objectivity of official documents.

The epigraphs to the two novels capture this intertextuality and also suggest the novels’ subversive agenda. The miner’s folk song in *Anil’s Ghost* describes as Marlene Goldman observes, “an actual piece of machinery and simultaneously alludes to a symbol of Buddhism ‘the life wheel’” (3). This anticipates the role of the Sinhala state as well as Ananda and Sailor’s trauma of the conflict, both miners who suffer in the Civil War. The quotation from Exodus 14:11 which is one of the epigraphs of *Traitor*, intertextually alludes to the persecution of the Tamils in the hands of the Sri Lankan state and their subsequent exile, by citing the exiled Israelites persecuted by the Pharaoh as a parallel to the genocide of the Tamils. By making us interpret these plural meanings, the novels make the reader decentre the author, for meaning is produced by the complex network of texts involved in the reading process.

In *Anil’s Ghost*, a web of intertextuality is spun by the co-presence of literary works including Victor Hugo’s *Les Miserables*, Alexander Dumas’ *The Man in the Iron Mask*, Anne Carson’s *Plainwater*, and *Great Books* by David Denby. These texts crowd into the intertextual tunnel of the novel coming out as dialogue in page 39, “reason for war is war”, trauma site in page 131 in the word “amgydala”. If *Anil’s Ghost* chooses intertextuality to decentralise its position, rendering itself incomplete without other texts, *Traitor’s* intertextuality is to undermine singular histories by showing plural records of the same event with Nesakumara asserting his as the most authentic. The text through this parodies history and history making and through its unreliable narrator foregrounds failures of recorded history. Nesakumaran debunks news articles on the Welikada massacres by his fellow survivors as untrue and goes through details elaborately to point out gaps and elisions in other people’s stories (*Traitor*, 99-100).

Sailor’s skeleton, in *Anil’s Ghost* that is buried in an ancient archaeological site of the government, metafictionally represents historical/official/bureaucratic burial of the subaltern’s history by state authorities from the public eye. But unlike historical documents that are unmindful of gaps and conceal them, Ondaatje through his central characters metafictionally demonstrates how history in the novel is recovered and reconstructed by people of science and art, through the reconstruction of Sailor’s head and recovering Sailor’s identity. Unlike historical documents that record the many dead as missing, like the Amnesty
report demonstrates, the novel retrieves the dead. Like Postmodern Historiographic Metafiction which, Linda Hutcheon points out uncovers the stories of peripheral figures, Anil’s Ghost retrieves the story of Sailor and through him the other unknowns. If the reconstruction of Sailor problematises the making of history, the reconstruction of the Buddha statue and Netramangal festival metafictionally unveils the artefact-ual identity of the literary texts. Like Ananda’s collage, Ondaatje’s novel is a collage of plural stories that has been consciously and carefully brought together against the context of the Sri Lankan War. Dora Wuyts states how the layers of clothing that Ananda wears, like the ceremonial brocade costume over Sarath’s shirt become a “visual layer of grief and memory” (30). The layers can also signify the strata of truth that the text opens for us and reveals them like the opening of the eye.

Through Traitor and Gorilla, Shobasakthi displays his mistrust of all metanarratives and their totalising nature. This attitude which Patchay terms “incredulity towards metanarratives” gives way to the “petits recits” (20). In the texts, the “petits recits” of Rocky-Dasan and Nesakumaran. Like Sailor’s body Dasan’s story has no identity and Nesakumaran’s narrative has gaps and ellipsis and these claimed testimonies parody historical narratives showing how “the past is always an ideologically and discursively constructed” (Patchay 21). If Anil’s Ghost demonstrates recovery of silences, Traitor and Gorilla flaunt gaps through fabricated testimonies. Traitor, though grounded in the “verifiable reality” of the war, it is concerned with its status as fiction and narrative. The recurring Tamil title “Mmmm” at the end of each chapter probably spoken by an implied listener, metafictionally reveals the narrative’s self-consciousness and its “made narrature”. Writing about French Autofictions, Elizabeth H. Jones states how as postmodernist texts they undermine strict genres (90). Shobasakthi’s Gorilla by adopting the genre of Autofiction, retains a clear desire to draw upon his life experiences as inspiration for literature yet rejects allegiance with established and much theorized genre like autobiography. Prone to slippages and subversions through its experimental “life-writing” it parodies any kind of truth–telling narratives (Jones, 92). In it’s what Jones calls “genre-twisting characteristic typical of the postmodern”, Gorilla subverts its own “life-narration” as there are no significations that tell us whose stories these are—Rocky/Dasan/Shobasakthi’s (92).

Thus as Historiographic Metafiction, Anil’s Ghost, Traitor and Gorilla, “remind us that there is no writable truth about history and experience, only a series of versions. It always comes to us stencillized”. The nature of the Sri Lankan war, in which as Sarath
says, “Every side was killing and hiding the evidence….Murders committed by all sides (Anil’s Ghost, 13-14) where as Palipana says truth lies in perception, necessitates narrating the trauma through a postmodern genre. Anne Whitehead draws one’s attention to this interrelation and points out “Postmodern fiction’s innovative forms and techniques, critique the notion of history as Grand Narrative … call attention to the complexity of memory” (82).

Testimonial literature is the closest one can get; to define the genre the Afghan novels adopt to record fictionally the trauma of the innocent, civilian victims in war. Pramod Nayar in “Bama’s Karukku: Dalit autobiography as Testimonio." states that the Testimonial is a genre commonly associated with Latin American atrocity narratives. Quoting John Beverley who defines it as a novel or novella-length narrative in book or pamphlet (that is, printed as opposed to acoustic) form he states how it is usually told in the first person by a narrator who is also the real protagonist of the events he or she recounts, and whose unit of narration is usually a “life” or significant life experience (84). As fictional testimonies, the Afghan novels attempt what Vickroy states is the “extraordinary act of sympathetic imagination: an identification with experiences or stories not” their own (10). Like written accounts of survivor memoirs that retain intrusive literary conventions such as chronology, characterisation, dialogue and a direct narrative voice, Hosseini and Rahimi bear testimony through their texts to the suffering of the innocent in the many wars of Afghanistan. Further as Beverley states the genre is the voice of one who witnesses for the sake of another, who remains voiceless, Hosseini and Rahimi speak for their fictional victims perceiving for them and giving them agency and control within the alternative world of their texts. Through these individual testimonies they also represent collective catastrophes in their erstwhile homeland. Testimonial narrations are Nayar points out collective documents that enable this representation ("Bama’s Karukku: Dalit autobiography as Testimonio." 85).

As the Testimonial is a narrative that represents those subjects excluded from authorized representation these texts recover stories of a “subaltern cosmopolitan” (Heftler, 70). Laurie Vickroy points out how testimonial literatures have been valuable for politically or socially marginalised witnesses (12). Being as Vickroy calls them “documents of atrocities and suffering” the texts bring us into contact with the victimised- whether a Hassan, Mariam, Laila, Dastaguir or the unnamed woman (12). Thus the speaking subaltern subject of the narrative gives voice to the lived experiences of those like herself and of those who are victims of social and linguistic-literary marginalisation.
The Testimonial, Nayar points out is a narrative of “double witnessing” (Bama’s Karukku: Dalit autobiography as Testimonio, 93). Not only is the narrator the witness who recounts the trauma, but like the genre of legal testimony, Testimonial literature asks readers/viewers/listeners to bear witness. Nayar locates two levels of witnessing, the “primary witnessing by the victim and the secondary witnessing by the reader” (Bama’s Karukku: Dalit autobiography as Testimonio, 94). The primary witnesses in many of the Afghan texts are the victims whose focalization the heterodiegetic narrator narrates as a testimonial act. As the secondary witness of a Testimonial, the reader has to respond to the suffering and trauma of the other. These texts as Testimonial literatures bridge the gap between the suffering individual and the communities of listeners who (should) provide empathetic responses.

To enable this witnessing by the reader, each author uses a different language within his exilic context. As stated in Chapter-2, Shobasakthi’s use of Tamil to write his nation is an act of what McClennen calls “counternationalism” but such a writing in exile also becomes a way of forging a Diasporic collective(21). The Tamil original is addressed to the Tamil collective of Sri Lanka and the Tamils of India also have an access to the works. These collectives, familiar with the language, of the lexical texts, collocations, probabilities, idioms and dialect, are readers of Tamil who have internalised the properties of local discourse. Rahimi’s audience is not as specific as he writes in the language of his exiled homeland-Dari and in the language of his adopted homeland- French. In choosing an Afghan language to narrativise pain; Rahimi empathetically records as a fellow Afghan with Dastaguir the loss of roots and home.

Apart from addressing the reader language in Shobasakthi’s Tamil novels and Rahimi’s Dari novella is also an important medium of power and discourse. What Ngugi says in his essay “Moving the Centre” about his novel A Grain Of Wheat would enable an understanding of Shobasakthi and Rahimi’s choice of Tamil and Dari respectively. It is in the words of Ngugi a “struggle for the right to name the world for ourselves” and “to give voice to the people’s collective identity and history” (10). In writing in the language of the homeland from which one has been dislocated, complexly so in Shobasakthi’s case, the texts speak for the people and to the people. In the words of Fanon we can say the narrative voice in Tamil and Dari “contribute to the construction of a national discourse”. However in his other novel of protest Rahimi chooses the language of his host land. In the Introduction to The Patience Stone, written by Hosseini, the latter quotes Rahimi as having stated that French
gave him a certain freedom, that was not available in his “self-censoring Dari” (3). Thus in Rahimi’s *The Patience Stone* the setting is Afghanistan while the woman protests in French. Rahimi calls French his “acquired language” which “gives me a kind of freedom to express myself away from this self-censorship” and “the unconscious shame that dwells in us from childhood” (3).

Dr Vanamala Viswanatha states how the translated text does a “double speak: it represents the original text as in speaks for it to an uninformed reader and re-presents the text in the context of the reader” (xi). The English translations of Shobasakthi and Rahimi’s novel, do this “double speak” across languages, cultures and borders.

While Hosseini’s audience is clearly the West as evident in his language and the transliterations “paratextual annotations” he offers within his texts, the English novel of Ondaatje need not however be written to what Spivak calls the “homogenous Western readership” (qtd in Ruvani Ranasinha 29) Despite the rich Sinhalese references in *Anil’s Ghost*, Ondaatje like the translated Shobasakthi novels does not offer “paratextual annotations” that would obscure and overwrite the text. The texts therefore become “cross-cultural discourses on the conflict” (Spivak qtd in Ranasinha, 29). As “translated men” whatever be the language of discourse they all however verbalise the language of pain, suffering, loss, fear and in some cases recovery and reconstruction.

Thus despite the different genres and languages the Sri Lankan and Afghan texts use to narrativise conflict and recover the traumatic experiences of these conflicts, it forces us as readers to face difficult human issues: vulnerability, the human capacity for evil and bearing witness to horrible events. While in some contexts the narrative makes it easier to take sides between victims and perpetrators, sometimes we are trapped like the traumatised subjects in a “Grey Zone”. Where should the reader’s sympathy end and disgust begin? When does the disgust become anger and where does one direct this anger towards victims who are now victimizers? Terrorists who destroy? Or states that violate basic human dignities? How or whom does one judge and weigh in the scales of good and evil?

The telling of the trauma itself is the beginning of the healing of trauma the reassessing of the past leads to recovery of a sense of self and agency in the face of devastating losses. Shobasakthi’s novels, Rahimi’s *The Patience Stone* and Hosseini’s novels function as a witness to a community’s suffering whether the ethnic or the gendered minority and call upon the reader to undertake a rhetorical listening as a secondary witness. Ondaatje in *Anil’s Ghost* and Rahimi in *Earth and Ashes*, on the other hand witness and participate in the conflict through their literary texts, a participation not otherwise possible in
their exiled spaces. Shobasakthi’s texts are born from trauma; the texts are a retrieval of the trauma through re-presenting it in the literary space. In the other texts, the trauma is born in the text, represented through other’s encounters, “vicariously” experienced by the exiled writers in their texts. Thus if through (what Ratti calls) the “semioethical” space of literature Shobasakthi attempts (what Nayar terms) “empathetic unsettlement” - by making others witness what he has undergone, the other writers attempts through this space an empathetic participation , a need to witness what others have undergone (Ratti127; Nayar 96).