

Womanhood in Fragmentation: Exploration of Intersectional Feminist Resistance in Fayeza Hasanat's The Bird Catcher and Other Stories

By

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my original work while completing a degree at BRAC University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material that has been accepted or submitted for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, who made me the woman I am and let me unmake the woman I was to become the woman I want to be.

Acknowledgement

As an anxious student, I was always concerned about approaching teachers for help, but during my undergraduate studies I found a teacher who always calmly resolved all my questions. I am grateful to my supervisor, Dr. Sabiha Huq, who encouraged me to undertake this thesis and helped me at every step. I am also thankful to the faculty at BRAC University who taught me to think critically and changed my perspective over the course of my bachelor's degree.

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Abstract

This thesis examines Fayeza Hasanat's short story collection *The Bird Catcher and Other Stories* through intersectional feminist theories to explore how womanhood in the Bangladeshi context is constructed, resisted, and fragmented. To do this, it draws on gender performativity, the theory of subalternity, the concept of hegemonic masculinity, ecofeminism, and migration, which show how women's lives are shaped by overlapping power structures. Through a close reading of the short stories and the use of secondary sources including articles and book chapters, the thesis demonstrates that women and the marginalized characters in the stories appear fragmented because they do not perform the roles society imposes upon them. Their fragmentation is not a deficiency but a way to disown the burden of unified subjects that patriarchy demands. It is a condition of resisting categories that were never built in the first place for the betterment of women's lives, especially in the context of diaspora, where womanhood is expected to adjust again to new norms under someone else's conditions. Hence, womanhood is not just a category but a structure that normalises pain for women. This womanhood has never been whole, and Hasanat shows us that freedom lies in the broken parts. Therefore, this thesis explores how such representations of Hasanat disrupt the assumption that gender must be coherent and follow rigid categories to be meaningful. It proposes a powerful feminist critique: to undo the myth of a 'true' woman is not to erase womanhood but to liberate it.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

There is often discourse about women, but they rarely centre on women themselves. In the recurrent discussions woman's image is often invoked, her rights are debated, and her body is legislated. Ironically, among all the talks about woman, her voice is silenced or overwritten. As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak provocatively asked and discussed whether the subaltern can speak or not ("Can the Subaltern Speak?" 80), the answers can be seen in the wounded bodies and lived experiences of women. The women are not even permitted subjecthood; they are always objectified. Their lived experiences continue to be repackaged through dominant narratives. This condition cannot be comprehended through simply history or philosophy as it is urgently lived. In Bangladesh and across South Asia, women are often visible through a connection with violence. This is an undeniable fact because here a woman is the victim in the news report – the disappeared daughter, the grieving mother, the madwoman behind the curtain. Yet she is rarely seen as a subject of change or a fragmented being. Even then her pain does not demand explanation but only acknowledgment. Fayeza Hasanat, a Bangladeshi American author, writes about such fragmented women. In her eight short stories, collected in *The Bird Catcher and Other Stories*, womanhood does not appear as a completed identity or an essential truth. Instead, it emerges as a condition of being in pieces, of negotiating roles that are scripted but never truly liveable. The daughter who does not smile, the wife who does not love, the migrant who does not osmose, all become 'failures' of womanhood and the failure acts as resistance. The women in Hasanat's stories do not neatly recover from the trauma of failure, and the reading of these stories feels like someone is finally saying that though these failed women mattered.

Furthermore, it has been a long time since colonialism formally ended in the Indian subcontinent, drilling us with strict ideas of gender that we never questioned. After this long time, our society still clings to rigid ideas of masculinity and femininity, as a result ignoring the hijra community that existed so long in the culture only because the British colonisers rejected it. They are gone, yet we have kept their teachings alive. Hegemonic masculinity continues to evolve, maintaining its dominance through adaptation which adjusted to new contexts while still reinforcing male dominance. In these adaptations, women are always marginalized and the men who do not conform to the rigid structure of masculinity are subordinated. In addition, men continue to disregard both women and nature as unequal forces. As a result, when nature resists their conquest, women become the substitution for subjugation and domination. In all situations, women become the victims who are trapped in a cycle of subjugation.

1.1 Background

The concept of 'womanhood' has long operated as a social, political, and symbolic structure rather than a biologically determined identity. In the context of South Asia, taking on Bangladesh, womanhood has historically been carved with layers of meaning. In fact, womanhood in the Indian subcontinent has always been burdened with too much meaning. From Sita to Birangana, from the veiled housewife to the migrant mother working abroad, the figure of the woman has long been a site where nations, families and religions impose their own ideas and values. They treat women as the centre of tradition, sacrifice, virtue, and purity. In this patriarchal structure, womanhood does not exist only as a biological reality but also as a curated structure that is constantly performed and enforced through social expectations, practices, and memory. The

images of ideal woman have been created ideologically, and these do not resonate with the experiences of women because the ideal standards set for them are different from their reality.

Moreover, the aspect of gender as performance is constructed by repetitious cycle that comes into sharp focus when thinking about the lives of women who always end up at the margins in the subcontinent. Women are labelled abnormal or incomplete when they are unable to maintain the constructed ideal femininity as within the subcontinent gender has barely been about the expression of the individual. It has been built over the years with factors like colonialism, partition, nationalist ideologies, and religious beliefs. Thus, it is a cultural creation as well as a performance repeated and rehearsed over generations. Across generations, it is carried out in silence, obedience, suffering and sacrifice. In the repetitive cycle, a girl becomes a daughter, a daughter becomes a bride, a bride becomes a mother. These transformations are not always guided by desire. Sometimes they are transformed under social expectation and surveillance. Thus, the weight of gender in our region is combined with familial, historical, political, and even mythological elements. To speak of ‘woman’ in Bangladesh is never just to speak of biology, but to speak of what she represents to others.

In *The Bird Catcher and Other Stories*, published in 2018, Fayeza Hasanat challenges these misreadings about women. She writes about those who fail to perform, underperform, or simply refuse to perform the prescribed roles. In her review of the volume, Sabiha Huq writes,

With each story telling a different tale of a woman’s tragic experience, the subject range of the book varies from biological attributes to philosophical deliberation – all of which the writer accumulates to highlight a woman’s inherent understanding of the geopolitics of her cultural roots that subvert her agency. (147)

These are women who go mad, withdraw from speech, or become strangers in their own bodies. In these stories, doing gender is not a choice. Doing gender becomes a demand and failing to do it correctly can lead to violence or institutionalization. This raises questions about what happens to all those women who fall outside this demand, who cannot be contained in one name, one role, one language or one body? Hasanat's stories answer this question through characters who are fragmented by design. Their voice continues beyond the body and that voice is not always literal, but it is there. In these stories, the undoing of 'woman' becomes their liberation.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

'Womanhood' is often discussed in a way as if it is supposed to be something natural in the literary, cultural and national discourses. It has largely been determined in relation to reproductive functions. Thus, the figure of the woman, within the South Asian cultural context, particularly in post-colonial Bangladesh, still carries a heavy cultural burden. Their role is defined for them by existing structures in the most prescriptive manner. This rigid role requires them to perform obedience and sacrifice without any objection. These norms are operated and regulated as functions of family, religion, state, and memory. The normative ideas about women assume a unified subject, a 'true' woman whose identity matches her role flawlessly. This belief prevents the possibility of experiencing gender in alternative and non-normative ways. The issue addressed in this thesis lies precisely in that structure that is created with the imagination of gender as fixed, and those who fall outside such norms rendered subhuman or invisible. Their experiences are either absorbed within ideas of deviance or simply forgotten. Moreover, they are often understood through subtractive frameworks that are incapable of capturing the relationships between power, discourse, and subject formation. In this broad range of feminist approaches to literary studies,

there also remains a critical gap in this regard that approaches these issues with an intersectional feminist framework. These issues are not necessarily placed within an intersectional framework, particularly in those representations that show up from culturally specific contexts such as Bangladesh. There is also a gap in theory in these matters with regard to how trauma and embodiment interact in these refusals as locations of epistemic resistance.

The Bird Catcher and Other Stories focuses on these marginal figures. The collection's women and intersex characters do not occupy the symbolic centre of the nation or family as they exist outside of mainstream society's understanding. Their stories require a re-examination of how gender and resistance are understood in this subcontinent. Their existence upset the norms, and such disruption has been inadequately theorized. Their narratives provide an acute site to make sense of the performance and undoing of gender to expose the incompatibility of the categories that try to contain it, even before they can attempt to recover the self. The problem here then has two aspects. The first concerns the persistence of essentialist constructs around South Asian women, and the other concerns the critical neglect of the concept of fragmentation which is often seen as a psychological failure. This fragmentation can be reimagined as a critical psychological strategy that reject the definition surrounding the negotiation of gender and voice. This thesis seeks to interrupt the assumption that gender must be stable, instead of providing alternative definition for gender and questions the violence of the definitional stability imposed on bodies.

1.3 Objectives

This thesis aims to conduct an extensive intersectional feminist analysis of Fayeza Hasanat's short story collection *The Bird Catcher and Other Stories*, with an emphasis on how fragmentation of womanhood becomes a site of resistance. This research intends to contribute to

the feminist literary studies by offering a theoretically stratified and culturally rooted comprehension of womanhood as indefinable. The primary objectives of this research are as follows:

- To explore how the book exhibits rupture of socially constructed womanhood embodied by patriarchy, colonial legacy, and migration
- To disclose that fragmentation of the ideological womanhood as deliberate literary strategy through which several characters in the stories refuse to conform to socially sanctioned roles
- To investigate how hegemonic masculinity is performed and provoked in the male characters, and how it is maintained through power, control, violence, and detachment from one's own emotional vulnerability
- To assess how ecofeminist imagery in the text is used symbolically to reflect female characters' emotions and lives
- To establish that the stories do not only portray psychological collapse in hegemonic structure but also convey a powerful feminist assertion that disrupts the myth of structured identity and opens space for selfhood

1.4 Rationale

In South Asian literature, stereotyped roles of the powerful mother, dutiful daughter, good wife or violated woman are prevailing in representations of women. The archetypes were based on sociohistorical facts that are quite retrospective in modern times, and the dominance of these archetypes veils the subversive aspects of womanhood that emerge when women cross their prescribed ideal roles. There is a deficiency in exploring how South Asian female characters,

specifically in diasporic fiction resist lucidity and consistency by contradicting the ideological construction of gender. Fayeza Hasanat's *The Bird Catcher and Other Stories* presents a ground for this research because her stories are populated by women who are fractured by society. Rather than mending such fractures, the stories perpetuate them by emphasizing their silence, madness, myth, and metaphor as means of resistance against societal pressure. As a result, this thesis argues that Hasanat's writing does not attempt to retrieve fragmented female subjects but uses fragmentation as a radical feminist strategy for refusing the myth of a whole or ideal woman. Therefore, the rationale for the thesis comes from a desire to work more closely with such writing where non-normative forms of feminist resistance are witnessed to arise from South Asian literature. Working with an intersectional and interdisciplinary approach informed by gender studies, ecofeminism, and subaltern studies, this project aims to contribute to both the critical literature on Hasanat's work and to feminist theory more broadly on questions of identity and cultural erasure.

1.5 Research Questions

In this study the basic questions are as follow:

- How does fragmentation of constructed womanhood in Hasanat's stories work as a form of resistance against social, cultural, and gendered expectations?
- In what ways do intersectional feminist theories help to unpack the layered identities of Hasanat's characters?
- How do trauma and migration affect the characters' experiences of being and belonging in both South Asian and diasporic contexts?

1.6 Theoretical Framework

This thesis looks at how womanhood and its fragmentation is portrayed in Fayeza Hasanat's *The Bird Catcher and Other Stories*. For this, it uses several interconnected theories: gender performativity, subaltern theory, and ecofeminism, alongside key analytic concepts and socio-cultural conditions such as hegemonic masculinity, migration, and trauma. First, Judith Butler's gender performativity theory disregards the notion of a fixed 'woman' or 'man' by showing that gender is not something people are born with, as it is a mere performance (526). She argues that we retain a collection of practices, gestures, and speech from family, schools, media, and other institutions (Butler 523). By using the scripts in a repeated manner, we start to feel our gender as natural and fixed. However, whenever a person fails to perform the 'proper' script, perhaps by dressing in non-traditional clothes or by refusing to act as per the script, society labels that person as abnormal. Butler does not see such mistakes as flaws; she recognizes them as spaces where gender is revealed as something made, not born, given that gender is enacted rather than innate (528).

Furthermore, Gayatri Spivak's discussions about subalterns show that women from marginalized or colonized communities are subdued because of patriarchal power structures. As an effect of systematic oppression, these women are silenced. Even when they speak, their voice remains unheard or misinterpreted. When others try to speak on behalf of them, they miss the reality of the subalterns. Thus, Spivak reminds us about the way patriarchal society attempts to hear without understanding someone's voice ("Can the Subaltern Speak?" 93). It helps to understand the profound silence among some women whose identities do not fit with the ideals set by society.

Moreover, the concept of hegemonic masculinity by Raewyn Connell shows how society holds up one particular type of 'ideal man,' usually the tough, unemotional, and in-command type. They use institutions and media to reinforce and popularize such types. Even though most men do not actually achieve this ideal, those who try to do so are rewarded, and those who fall short are pushed to the margins. Women are not part of this equation or mainstream society, but some of them help in sustaining patriarchy (Connell and Messerschmidt 848).

Ecofeminism further reveals how the domination of women and nature is connected, as men dominate both. Susan Buckingham, in her discussion about ecofeminism, suggests that the same institutions that prioritize money and power over everything else dominate women and nature for their own benefit (1–2). She also warns against assuming an innate relationship between women and nature. It is not about saying that women are naturally closer to nature; it is about realizing that women experience ecological devastation while being at the forefront with the environmental issues (Buckingham 9–13). When ecofeminism is applied as part of the thesis, it can be seen how both the earth and the female body provide for life. Most importantly, this perspective points to a way towards healing and a resistance to create a non-violent relationship with the world.

However, women's lives sometimes become precarious when they must change their geographical location as migration pushes them to face new challenges in a new place. Migration for them does not mean going away from existing problems; it means facing new ones. In a new place, women face new challenges of agency, and most of the time they are migrated out without consultation. All these only intensify women's trauma. For them, trauma comes in all shapes and forms from different areas of life over which they have no control.

Additionally, the frameworks and concepts used in this paper connect and work together to show how gender works within the overlapping systems of power. Together, they provide a clear map of how ‘women’ are made and unmade by several factors. The idea of gender performativity shows the formation of gender as performance, while the subaltern theory extends this idea to expose how particular gendered identities are denied even the right to perform or to speak. Further, hegemonic masculinity divulges into the sustenance of masculine dominance that subjugates both women and nonconforming men. This same structure preys on nature as it takes advantage of women and links the gendered oppression to environmental damage and women’s migration. In this way, all the frameworks and concepts point out how womanhood needs to be looked at from multiple angles instead of only a gender perspective in *The Bird Catcher and Other Stories*. It is crucial to explore the intersectional theories and concepts to understand the fragmented identities, as women face diverse types of oppression and trauma at the same time.

1.7 Methodology

This thesis aims to understand *The Bird Catcher and Other Stories* by Fayeza Hasanat through intersectional feminist frameworks and the collection’s effects on making and unmaking of women. There are eight short stories in the collection and each of them has different layers of comprehension. Hence, a narrative qualitative research approach is adopted to do so as the stories require more in-depth exploration of the characters.

Research Design

A narrative qualitative research method is employed to understand the short stories from different perspectives. Close reading of *The Bird Catcher and Other Stories* is used as the primary

text in this paper. Multiple research papers, scholarly articles, and book chapters from other resources are used as secondary texts to analyse the stories and characters of the primary text. Furthermore, different perspectives of theory and analytical concepts have been adopted, such as gender performativity, subaltern theory, ecofeminism, along with concepts and conditions such as hegemonic masculinity, migration and resulting trauma. For analysis, data are collected through these primary and secondary resources.

Data Analysis

From the collected data, initially textual analysis is done by a close reading of the short stories. Then, thematic analysis is incorporated to find similar themes to analyse. Hasanat, in her stories, has used the characters to reflect different issues and different social structure. As a result, the themes are related to the theories selected to discuss the stories from an intersectional perspective. There are many steps involved in this process. First, the collected data are studied to find any reiterating themes or ideas. It has led to capturing emerging patterns. The patterns are connected to different theories used in the paper. Then, similar ideas are put under the same theme and connected to establish their profound connection. Under the same theme, different stories and different characters have been examined. The characters have undergone character analysis to find what social structure moulded them and what structure has been rejected by the characters.

1.8 Scopes and Limitations

This study focuses on understanding the stories in *The Bird catcher and Other Stories* by Fayeza Hasanat from an intersectional feminist viewpoint. It employs different but intersecting theories to analyse how different characters across stories are victims of the same structure that is

only beneficial to a few. However, the study also has a few limitations. One of them is that it focuses only on one short story collection of Fayeza Hasanat. Though it allows more grip to focus and analyse in detail, it might not capture the larger range of feminist representations in South Asian literature. Another limitation is that the reliance on textual analysis may limit the engagement with the everyday lives of South Asian women, as it is not grounded on ethnographic research or field-based research. This study also does not use theoretical frameworks such as queer ecology to dig deeper in the analysis. While the used frameworks help to understand the details, it might not show the full picture of feminist ideas in South Asian writing. Nonetheless, by adopting intersectional feminist frameworks and focusing on one multilayered text, the thesis aims to productively contribute to the discussions on intersectional feminism, literary representation, and identity politics.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Feminism through multiple waves has attempted to mark experiences of women and the people who are at the margin. Yet there are several areas to optimize as many feminist discourses are rooted in Western tradition and, when it comes to South Asia, the experiences of women are multifaceted. Hence, homogenous frameworks are not appropriate to understand gendered subjects who navigate the duress of colonial, patriarchal, ecological, and migratory systems. By synthesising a number of scholarly works, this literature review seeks to establish how gender dynamics, postcolonial feminism, environment, migration, and trauma offer opportunities for critique and resistance in literary contexts.

2.1 Understanding Gender as Performance

Womanhood is not a universal fact as no one can define and constrain it with boundaries. However, Judith Butler introduces womanhood as a cultural signifier. She comments, “in an understandable desire to forge bonds of solidarity, feminist discourse has often relied upon the category of women as a universal presupposition of cultural experience” (Butler 523). This presupposition is like a burden on women as they do not want to be defined by the constructions that are imposed on them. Butler has taken a step to focus on this and emphasized how gender is not something that can be defined as stable, it is a scripted role that can switch based on the situation and something that is generated through reproduction (522). While women may resist or reject imposed gender roles, their very identities are shaped and constrained by pre-existing social norms. Gavin Rae emphasizes on these pre-existing social norms in the creation of a gender and says that “these norms are not created by the subject but pre-exist the subject’s appearance; indeed,

the subject is born into and created from the norms supporting it [which mould the gendered self from birth]” (195).

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has also agreed on this reproduction of gender as she says about sati that “this act of female heroism persists among the patriotic tales told to children, thus operating on the crudest level of ideological reproduction” (Spivak “Can the Subaltern Speak?” 99). As a result, this ideological reproduction of gender and its role has been used to make women subservient by ignoring the fact that it is not a fixed state. This means gender is decided for us, and we are treated, rewarded, and punished in gendered ways even before we choose, so we perform the gender society offers us. Sex, on the other hand, is a biological fact as people are born with certain chromosomes and they cannot change it, but they can go through sex reassignment procedures to have the body they desire to have. As Butler says, “One is not simply a body, but, in some very key sense, one does one’s body” (521). J. T. Ton asserts that Butler is trying to establish sex and gender as equal by deconstructing the terms as some people are trying to fit into the binaries of sexes through reassignment surgeries (15). Rae clarifies that Butler’s theory along with gender explores the body as an active entity instead of a passive one. He addresses it as “a process; a verb not a noun” (Rae 202). Akin to a verb, the body and gender is active, never rigid, and involved in shaping identity. Though Ton finds the ideas of gender as instability problematic and says there are possibilities to experience it as a stable identity (11). This idea seems like an attempt to maintain gender to regulate social conventions. He critiques the theory of Butler for potentially negating the legitimacy of those who find empowerment in stable identities (Ton 15). This critique works like a paradox as he is supporting to destabilize oppressive categories of identity but at the same time asking for stability.

These concepts can be used to analyse characters from *The Bird Catcher and Other stories* as some characters challenge traditional gender norms while still seeking recognition and belonging. However, the theory of gender performativity is rooted in Western gendered subjects. In South Asia, among many factors, the performance is conditioned by colonial engraving and the exploitation of patriarchy. The performance of gender here intersects with social, political, migratory, and religious constraints. This perspective is limited in Western-rooted theories when applied to South Asia, and this thesis aims to explore the region's specific socio-cultural context.

2.2 Subalternity and the Problem of Representation

Drawing on Butler's notion of performativity, the question of who gets to 'perform' and whose voice is recognized leads directly into the issue of subalternity. If gender performance is regulated through society, then the subaltern women are at the most constrained position. The subaltern woman's voice is often silenced by intersecting structures of patriarchy, colonialism, and class hierarchy. These women remain under the travesty of masculine imperialist ideology, even in the postcolonial setting, as Spivak says, "the subaltern woman will be as mute as ever" (Spivak "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 90). This happens because their representation has been taken away from them and the lost voice has yet to be reclaimed. She says women's voice has been overshadowed in the history of the subcontinent as "White men saving brown women from brown men" and brown men trying to oppose such attempts created a battleground of men where women remained in the background (Spivak "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 93). In these scenarios women had to be protected and men were the ones who came forth as heroic figures. There is no space but the subalternity for women as they fade "into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the 'third-world woman' caught between tradition and modernization" (Spivak "Can the

Subaltern Speak?” 102). The western intellectuals tried to give a space to women but, in that attempt, they also suppressed the women’s voice and reinforced the structure they began to destroy with. J. Maggio asserts that the issue is not in the subaltern’s silence. He says, “The subaltern speaks all the time: We are simply unable to hear them” (Maggio 437). On the other hand, Esther Ngan-Ling Chow’s work on the development of feminist consciousness among Asian American women reflects Spivak’s concerns. She argues that the feminist discussions in the West often leave out or downplay the experiences of non-white women (Chow 286). Apart from that, “Women who consider racism and classism to be pervasive that they cannot embrace feminism at the same level may subordinate women’s rights to other social concerns, thus limiting the development of feminist consciousness” (Chow 286). This happens because the woman goes through multifaceted issues and if they raise their voice for one concern, another issue comes and this cycle again makes their representation fall short. Women of colour suffer more in this as they fail to be a part of the “white women’s system” (Chow 293). Therefore, for the subaltern women whose representation Spivak says is faulty, Maggio proposes translation. He says that through the translation of everyday life and culture of the subaltern, scholars can hear what the subaltern has to say (Maggio 433). This translation appears to be careful, context-embedded, and secure individuality.

Despite that, while Maggio’s call for translation appears promising in theory and tries to overcome the pessimism in Spivak’s warning against the representation of subaltern women, it poses serious challenges in practice. The process of “translating” subaltern experience still relies on interpretive power, which may once again distort women’s realities. The translation of trauma, silence, or embodied suffering cannot always capture the depth of the subaltern’s pain. In *The Bird Catcher and Other Stories*, Hasanat’s women occupy precisely this difficult space where subaltern women fail to be included and stay silent as their presentation has been taken away from them,

they fail to be in one place or another, and their emotions are interpreted or narrated, while much remains untranslatable. This tension between voice and translation marks the contemporary gap in subaltern studies that this research aims to explore.

2.3 Hegemonic Masculinity and Institutional Control

In human society, women are pushed down by those power structures that benefit men largely. However, not all men share the same power experience. Some men are not ideal ‘real men,’ so they become marginalized as well. The men who embody the ideal of powerful, emotionless, dominant men are the ones to whom greater respect and authority are given. This is what hegemonic masculinity entails. Mike Donaldson talks about this hegemonic masculinity and says that one of the core components of hegemonic masculinity, which comes from “winning and holding power,” is to see women’s existence as an object of sexual pleasure and looking down on men who see other men as objects of sexual pleasure (645). The objectification of women and the marginalization of homosexual desire are key practices that sustain hegemonic masculinity and reinforce patriarchy. As Raewyn W. Connell explains, hegemonic masculinity represents “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy” (Connell, qtd. in Demetriou 340). It is never fixed or “closely [related] to the lives of any actual men. Yet these models do, in various ways, express widespread ideals, fantasies, and desires” (Connell & Messerschmidt 838), revealing how hegemonic masculinity operates symbolically as a cultural script that legitimizes and sustains male dominance. Demetrakis Z. Demetriou elaborates on this by saying that there is a space known as the “masculine bloc” where different forms of male behaviours overlap and their practices continue to allow for the existence of patriarchy (348).

Furthermore, Raewyn Connell and James W. Messerschmidt argue that women play a significant role in this system because masculinity is oftentimes maintained by different women's roles. As they put it, "women are central in many of the processes constructing masculinities" through their "compliance to patriarchy" (Connell & Messerschmidt 848). While women help sustain hegemonic masculinity through their roles, men who attempt to step outside these prescribed norms also face structural and social limitations. Men who try to challenge traditional masculinity through domestic labour, which is generally done by women, the same structure imposes constraints, as "there are no prizes for being a good father, not even when being one is defined narrowly in terms of breadwinning" (Donaldson 652). In *The Bird Catcher and Other Stories*, the male and female characters act according to this setup, and such action dictates the lives of men and women present in their world. The stories show the way masculinity is not only concerned with men but with a system which extends its influence to everyone. Although existing studies analyse the construction and consequences of hegemonic masculinity, there is limited research on how these dynamics operate in South Asian literature, which reveals the complex ways both men and women navigate gendered roles under intersecting structures such as subalternity, migration, and ecofeminism, as shown in *The Bird Catcher and Other Stories*. This thesis seeks to address this gap by examining how Hasanat's narratives expose the interplay between hegemonic masculinity and these intersecting factors, revealing how power operates not only through men but also through cultural, familial, ecological, and social systems.

2.4 Gendered Bodies and Landscapes

Ecofeminism is simply an association of women and nature. Alicia H. Puleo says ecofeminism looks at "the environmental issue from the categories of patriarchy, androcentrism,

care, sexism and gender” (30). The relationship between nature and women is forged not only because women are compared with nature all the time but also because the construction of women has pushed them nearer to the environment. Karen J. Warren says this happens because “the exploitation of nature and animals is justified by feminizing them; the exploitation of women is justified by naturalizing them” (12). However, according to Greeta Gaard, ecofeminism has faced criticism for alleged essentialism, framing nature as feminine, promoting elitist practices, benefitting Western perspectives, and insufficiently addressing intersectionality (35–41). When discussing the Indian subcontinent, Spivak illustrates how Western development projects, such as the Flood Action Plan in Bangladesh, declare to help the environment while in fact imposing control over it (“Responsibility” 44). This type of kind domination corresponds with patriarchal structures that declare to protect women only by restricting their autonomy. For Spivak, such contradictions reveal that “thinking of responsibility is also a thinking of contamination” (“Responsibility” 23) as every act of concern is intertwined with hidden power. As long as global inequalities rooted in industrial capitalism and the lingering effects of colonialism continue to exploit both women and nature, ecofeminism remains an essential force of resistance (Gaard 43).

Such global power dynamics also operate through gendered socialization. Alicia H. Puleo says women did not have access to weapons that can destroy nature as well as they were given more caregiving activities, and the further knowledge of hegemonic discourses made them more inclined to take incentive about nature’s safe keeping (27). Besides, women are the ones who face the most environmental disadvantages compared to men. Susan Buckingham states that in places like Bangladesh women tend to be poorer than men with the similar social and economic characteristics to experience poverty, which in turn contributes to poor environmental living conditions (12). As a result, the woman’s body bears the dreadful consequences of the environment

and the environment bears the atrocities of men, solidifying the bond between women and nature. Buckingham demonstrates that in adverse environmental situations women become prone to violence, but they are ignored by male dominated management sectors (12–13). The pollution of environment can cause many chronic health issues in women, and this is one of the reasons why feminism focused on ecology. Additionally, Warren says “there is strong evidence for the existence of gender related differences in reactions to environmental toxic substances” (10) and, as Buckingham reveals, “historically, safe chemical loads have tended to be calculated on the basis of men’s body tolerance” (13). This gendered bias in environmental policy reveals how patriarchal systems exclude women from decision-making but also render their bodies vulnerable to ecological harm. Ruthanne Kurth Schai extends ecofeminist ethics beyond women to include children, arguing that genuine environmental responsibility must encompass “justice and compassion for children [who] are advanced within a context of environmental responsiveness, not exploitation” (207). She critiques adult-centred models of child ethics such as protectionist and liberationist approaches, showing that they fail to recognize children’s complex experiences and their connection to ecological well-being (Schai 199). By doing so, Schai draws out ecofeminism in a space that links the oppression of women, nature, and children within the structure of patriarchal control.

In *The Bird Catcher and Other stories*, the women and children are shaped by multifaceted pressures and often find themselves caught between the demands of family or society and a powerful yearning for the natural world. Existing scholarship has focused on gender, trauma, and migration in Hasanat’s work, but the ecofeminist dimensions of her narratives have garnered little attention, where the oppression of women, the vulnerability of children, and the exploitation of the natural world intersect and shape their lives. This study addresses this gap by analysing and

positioning *The Bird Catcher and Other Stories* as a text that can expand our understanding of ecofeminist theory in South Asian contexts.

2.5 Migration and the Crisis of Belonging

To leave one's home country is not simply a matter of crossing boundaries since it is an issue of losing pieces of oneself and being forced to rebuild them elsewhere. Migration for women is particularly not just about movement as it reshapes the way they perceive themselves and are perceived by others. Silvia Pedraza states that all migrants face "rupture, separation, and loss" that affect their mind but the way women face it is distinct from men (320). Their agency, identity, and sense of belonging become precarious. In Bangladesh, mainstream cultural practices often require women to leave their natal homes after marriage and relocate to their husband's household, a form of domestic migration that already enacts displacement on a smaller scale. Some women also experience another form of migration when they leave their homeland, adding layers of displacement and adjustment to their sense of identity. Fang Gong et al. take this into account, reporting how international migration affects mental health across a person's lifecycle (1618). They argue that those who are in control of their planning and decision to migrate, who possess what they term "human agency," suffer less psychological stress (Gong et al. 1619). However, many women lack this agency, especially the ones belonging to patriarchal or traditional societies. These women migrate because the decision is made for them by others. In the decision, they are powerless and prone to harsh consequences. Morsheda Akhter and Philip Q. Yang write about the second wave of immigration in America and reveal observations about the Bangladeshi immigrants. They say that "[a]round half of the [Bangladeshi] immigrants were already married at the time of arrival, and they had to wait for other family members to join them" (Akhter and Yang

5). This would imply that many Bangladeshi women entered the country not as independent migrants but as dependents whose identities were constructed through their male relatives. This happens because migration is often a family strategy to navigate “the challenges that accompany underdevelopment, and economic and political transformation in the Third World” (Pedraza 308). Even when they relocate for their betterment, Bangladeshi immigrants’ have very low average incomes (Akhter and Yang 9). As a result, women lose their homes and belongings, and on top of that, face economic constraints due to migration.

This connection between displacement and belonging can be found in the diasporic characters, where the women face multiple forms of displacement in *The Bird Catcher and Other Stories*. Their fragmented identities reveal that on top of colonial, patriarchal, and ecological burdens, migration positions them as fragmented in the search for belonging. This aspect of women’s experiences in diasporic contexts has received little attention in the literature, and this study aims to fill that gap.

2.6 Trauma and Feminist Literary Resistance

Trauma in South Asian fiction often manifests as an emotional wound and a form of inherited silence, marked by history, gender, and power. In the chapter “Complexion, Infertility, and Sexual Orientation: Narratives of Trauma in Fayeza Hasanat’s *The Bird Catcher and Other Stories*,” Goutam Karmakar argues that Hasanat tries to build a “psychic correlation between trauma and literature” (Karmakar 120). He analyses how in the stories the complexion of dark skin leads to a severe ordeal known as “skin-tone trauma” (123) and these stories at the same time deconstruct the “structural hegemony of colour” (124). Another character goes through trauma and exploitation because of his sexual orientation, another for infertility, but most importantly, these

traumatic events change their potential capability, cause cognitive hazard, and transmute their perception about themselves (Karmakar 129). While Karmakar maps what trauma does to the characters' psyche and body, Spivak adds another layer to this by questioning how such suffering is inscribed within systems. She critiques the capitalist model of labour that ignores the woman's body and emotional labour, arguing that "the entire problematic of sexuality [must] be fully broached, and not merely in terms of overt socio-sexual politics" (Spivak "Feminism and Critical Theory" 244). Her idea pushes to see trauma not just in obvious violence, but also in the everyday systems that devalue women's experiences and contributions. She further states, "the understanding of pain should not be only as the determinant of abnormality but of normality" (Spivak "Feminism and Critical Theory" 244–245). Hence, in a patriarchal society trauma has become normalized for women.

In addition, Spivak questions the attempts to represent the subaltern lives, especially women, without assuming to speak or know them completely. This posits that responsibility lies in the partial, ethical act of listening to singular experience rather than reducing them to categories. This conception runs through Hasanat's broken portraits of trauma and femininity, where characters are not provided with neat conclusions but rather pull the reader into a messy and irresolvable ethical encounter. Spivak's argument that "the subaltern's inability to speak is predicated upon an attempt to speak, to which no appropriate response is proffered" (Spivak "Responsibility" 62) affirms the need for a feminist reading where silence is not absence, but a site of trauma where speech has been stopped or lost. Like Spivak's concern with the ethics of representation, Gubar is concerned with feminist complicity within patriarchal structures, as even some forerunners of feminist consciousness internalize patriarchal discourse and reproduce the misogyny they critique. Mary Wollstonecraft, who argued for women's rights, pathologizes

femininity as “a virus to contaminate and destroy men and their culture” (Gubar 456). It is traumatic because, in striving for equal rights, women are haunted by inherited misogyny, becoming both victims and perpetrators of feminist misogyny. Further, Gubar notes that “feminist misogyny might bring to critical attention the interlocutory nature of representation, that is, the crucially different effects of the sentence ‘I am this’ and ‘You are that’” (Gubar 465) which can undermine the traumatic experience of one. This idea is deeply relevant to Hasanat’s women characters, many of whom internalize patriarchal standards and turn them against themselves or other women. Such internalized trauma complicates simplistic feminist binaries and points toward a more intersectional and self-reflexive feminism, one that both Spivak and Gubar, in diverse ways, call for. Together, their work enables a reading of Hasanat’s fiction where trauma is not just a past wound but an ongoing ethical crisis, a gap in existing literature that this thesis seeks to examine.

Chapter 3

Discussion and Analysis

3.1 Fragmented Womanhood: Performing under Patriarchal Control

In *The Bird Catcher and Other Stories*, female and non-conforming characters exist in different timelines and stages of life, yet they face similar social expectations that compel them to perform presupposed forms of womanhood. The presupposition assumes that a woman has to be feminine, she has to be a wife, mother, daughter, and caregiver who quietly sacrifices her life for others. These expectations crush their desires as they do not want to be constrained and confined by rigid categories. They are forced to perform as “women” when gender is not a fixed category as argued by Butler, only resulting in a fragmented subjectivity, where the self is caught between social perception and personal resistance. This fragmentation in South Asian context is intensified by colonial histories and patriarchal surveillance that dictate how womanhood must appear to be socially accepted.

In “The Anomalous Wife,” the female protagonist has many names as she is “Nirjhara, Labonyo, Chandra, Ameera, Durba” (Hasanat 15), but the doctors and her husband reduce her to relational identities such as “Mrs. Khandakar” and “Ranji’s mother”, titles that stabilize her existence within the patriarchal order. This stable identity is viewed as empowerment in their eyes. As J.T. Ton argues, it is possible to experience gender identity as stable (11), but such stability often exists at the expense of others as if it is stable for one, it becomes unstable for another. It is precisely this false stability that suffocates her by constraining her individuality. She wants to be called “Kadombori, Kadombini, or Sylvia; Virginia, Lizzy, Anne or at least Edna” (Hasanat 15) because she loves these fictional characters, but socially imposed roles demand the performance of an identity that is never fully her own. She is expected to perform the role of a happy, fulfilled

wife because her husband provides material comforts, and “there [is] nothing missing from [her] life” (Hasanat 23). As a matter of fact, she does not ask for it; it is assumed by her husband that all these things, such as being in America, having a paid-off house, cars, solid retirement fund, adjoint burial spots bought in advance, children, especially boys, ensure her “safety, security, happiness” (Hasanat 23), because that is all a Bangladeshi woman can dream of. As Spivak observes, people often speak of sati as a heroic act for the reproduction of ideology (“Can the Subaltern Speak?” 99); similarly, Nirjhara’s husband reinforces this ideological reproduction when he tells her, “How many women from our part of the world have all that you have” (Hasanat 23), a remark meant to keep her subservient under the guise of privilege. In reality, she only craves the ocean after being burdened for so long with the expectation of being a proper woman. Her craving for the ocean is a resistance against the constraints of performative femininity. She is tired of being subservient to her husband, for whom she is only an object of satisfaction. The forced enactments of wifehood and sexual availability clashes with her inner desires. When she refuses to perform her expected role and attempts to follow her inner desire, her husband sends her to a psychiatric clinic for treatment. This does not stop her as she has decided to pursue her desire no matter what. She has already become a silent rebel who has gone through years of suffocation in her own home and her own body. For instance, her dislike and rejection of the colour white as seen in the white horses, the white sofa, the white teeth, the white screen, can be read as a symbolic refusal of the purity demanded by patriarchal norms and a rebellion against submission that defines ideal womanhood. Even her sexual interactions, wherein her husband imposes role play while she wears “a funky white cap” (Hasanat 17), exemplify the conflict between imposed gender performance and personal desire. It is perhaps for this reason that she comes to despise white itself not merely as a colour, but as the symbol of her husband’s fantasy and the purity he demands of her body. Her

rebellion, however small or private, signals resistance within the concept of womanhood to show that it was never whole, it was always socially constructed to force women to enact and punish when denied.

Furthermore, many women become accustomed to gendered performance to a point that they refuse to believe it is only a performance and internalize the performance to perpetuate it. In “Bride of the Vanishing Sun,” Aandhi is such a woman. Aandhi’s mother and grandmother push her brother to pay a handsome amount of money to marry her off because she is dark toned, but Aandhi never cared about “men and never considered marriage a happy ending” (Hasanat 33). Her marriage happened during the time when Bangladesh was known as East Pakistan, and women had limited access to diverse areas of life. Slowly, women’s empowerment grew after independence, but Aandhi, now a mother, enforces similar norms on her daughter in the independent country. Aandhi has become a mother of a dark-toned girl named Sheila and thinks “a girl’s only rightful right is to make a good wife when schooling is done” (40). Despite her personal rejection of these norms, Aandhi perpetuates the very expectations that once confined her. She sees her daughter being treated like an object, in the same manner her mother once had seen her. Nevertheless, she does not support her daughter’s decision to study for a master’s. She acts similarly to Sufia who thinks that in marriage women become complete. This similarity between the mother Sufia and daughter Aandhi shows how the ideas of womanhood survive generation after generation. The internal determination against such beliefs of Aandhi breaks down under the pressure of the outside world’s cruel force. She becomes a perpetrator of the same cruel force to survive and teaches her daughters to do the same. She also gradually accepts her role as a devoted mother because sometimes a fixed identity might provide the illusion of empowerment

and ease. As a result, she thinks she is guiding Sheila, but her guidance is constrained by the same structures that limited her freedom.

Similarly, in “The Hyacinth Boy,” Hasanat exposes how social and cultural systems limit the acceptance of gender identity and punish those who exist beyond them. In the story, Shojol has an intersex body, and this unsettles the binary framework of male and female gender. He eventually becomes the target of both exploitation and erasure. Hijra in Bangladesh is a community that has existed for centuries in the Indian subcontinent but due to the colonial failure to understand them, they became ostracised from the mainstream society. In Bangladesh if someone turns out to have intersexed genitalia then they are handed over to the Hijra community. Shojol is a hijra in this sense that he has both male and female genitalia and his very existence in the mainstream society living as a man challenges what society considers damnable. The abuse he suffers from Rahimuddin, Kana Bokul, Milton, and the social labelling of him as “hijra” reveal how systems of power operate in a society like Bangladesh where a hijra was not recognized as a gender until 2013. They are recognized as the third gender but mostly ignored as human. Thus, unlike Nirjhara or Aandhi, Shojol is denied even the illusion of stability. His intersex body places him outside socially accepted categories, depriving him of the kind of empowerment and stability that this society provides for gender binaries. He shows us that a person can only have rights if they fit into the categories of gender made by patriarchal society. Shojol fights back against those imposed identities by being himself while rejecting others’ perception about himself. His wish “to protect a chest that housed his heart” (Hasanat 74) means that he has chosen to protect his true feelings rather than fitting in. This moment captures what can be seen as performative resistance whereby, existing outside of the gender norms that attempt to define him, Shojol exposes their instability. As Rae suggests, “there is then a bodily dimension to the symbolic construction of gender, but the

symbolic signification of gender cannot capture all aspects of material being” (189). In the end his tragic death becomes symbolic of how the rigid gender systems destroy the bodies they cannot comprehend.

Like Shojol, Daisy in “Darkling, I Listen” is also trapped within the patriarchal demand to be a woman according to reproductive norms. She is deemed inadequate because she cannot bear children, another example of how society defines women through biological function. For her father, she is a precious child who “thought women were real people” (Hasanat 112), a realization that saddens Daisy, for she understands she is not seen as a person but as a vessel for carrying a child. She recognizes that she is “stuck playing the role of a good wife” (Hasanat 114), forced to remain restrained when her husband plans to remarry. Her inability to protest becomes part of the performance expected of her to remain obedient, enduring, and quietly accepting. In this way, Daisy’s body becomes a victim of patriarchal ideology that defines women not by their humanity but by their capacity to reproduce. Her refusal to this quiet performance becomes her defiance against the norms that define her. While Daisy is punished for failing to perform reproductive femininity, Bala is coerced into performing it too early. Bala from “Make Me Your Sitar” is not even an adult when she is forced to act as a woman. She is married off and raped against her will by her husband. Nobody stops this, not even her mother-in-law Motijan, who realizes how cruel this is because Bala is married to her son, and he has the right over her body. Hence, a child is compelled to become a dutiful wife because that is what society expects her to do. Her defiance comes in not grand but in little manner when Motijan asks her to recite sura during birthing, but she sings, letting herself to express her own way that is beyond what the world imposes on her.

In Hasanat’s stories, these characters are not what they are labelled as. Nirjhara, Aandhi, Daisy, and Bala are not what others expect them to be as they fail to act according to the ideals

their spouses impose upon them, and this deviation renders them unworthy in their husbands' eyes. This reveals what happens to women when they fail to conform to the prescribed images of womanhood. Yet, by resisting these prescriptions, they experience fragmentation that becomes their mode of asserting what it truly feels like to be a woman. Shojol occupies a prescribed role but fails to belong to any category, and this failure becomes his wound, the mark of his deviance. Through these characters, Hasanat exposes how womanhood and even the very idea of belonging to a gender becomes just a coerced performance.

3.2 Voice Beneath Silence: Subaltern Women and the Politics of Speaking

Subaltern women are those who are marginalized and cannot speak freely, trapped in a system of colonialism, patriarchy, class, and race, within the dominant structure of power. In a postcolonial context, women may be out of colonial oppression, but other systems of oppression remain the same. In Hasanat's *The Bird Catcher and Other Stories*, women are confined in such structures and cannot speak freely. They try to reclaim their voice, but most of the time it is unheard; nonetheless, the attempt shows subaltern women are on the path of reclamation of their rights.

In "The Anomalous Wife," Nirjhara is one of the subaltern women in the sense that she is not silenced by class or caste, but by the patriarchal sphere of her private life. Her heart longs for the ocean, yet her husband perceives this desire as a sign of psychological disorder and sends her to an asylum. There, she tries in vain to explain to the doctor that she only wishes to return to the ocean. Her husband dismisses her longing, and the doctors disregard her yearning for freedom. Spivak has asked, "Can the subaltern speak?" and Maggio has questioned, "Can the subaltern be heard?" But the pressing question here becomes: what happens when the subaltern can speak and

can be heard, yet her voice is ignored? Ultimately, the only way Nirjhara makes others listen is through her final act of going into the ocean, an act they can no longer overlook. Moreover, Aandhi and Sheila are also subaltern women in the story “Bride of the Vanishing Sun,” as their voices remain unheard due to their complexion and cultural expectations. Aandhi does not care for marriage or men, yet her family silences her wishes and marries her off with a dowry. In repeating this cycle, she too ignores Sheila’s protests against marriage, arranging her wedding with a dowry that may even cost her husband his job. Aandhi thus becomes an example of what Spivak describes as women’s inability to escape subalternity and their descent “into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the ‘third-world woman’ caught between tradition and modernization” (Can the Subaltern Speak? 102).

In the same way, Daisy in “Darkling, I Listen” is trapped between tradition and modernity. Although she is educated and self-aware, her pain does not matter because of her subaltern position in society. She says nothing when she hears the decision of her husband’s remarriage. Her silence exposes the structural impossibility of speaking within patriarchal marriage. Like Spivak’s “brown woman,” who is spoken for by patriarchal structures, Daisy’s voice is overwritten by her husband’s decisions. He does not care for her words and instead makes the decision to leave her by offering her a separate home, giving her the option to settle abroad, and finally divorce. She knows denying him has no effect on the decision. Thus, similar to Nirjhara, she turns to self-sacrifice by setting herself on fire in her husband’s house. Her final act is so loud that it forces those around her to finally listen.

This same inescapable condition is reflected in Bala, in “Make Me Your Sitar.” She is another subaltern figure, though her marginalization begins in childhood. A child of barely thirteen, she belongs to a poor family. Hence, she is married off to thirty-one-year-old Mafiz. She

is marginalized economically and physically as Mafiz physically abuses her against her wish, and “she lay in Motijan’s lap like a wounded animal” (Hasanat 126). Her body and voice are treated as possessions rather than as her own. Although Motijan, Bala’s mother-in-law, occasionally saves her, she feels helpless as she cannot save her for all the time. The patriarchal order of her village is such that it does not accept a woman’s reluctance against intimacy as her right but as a denial of her duty. Bala’s cries are then dismissed as part of womanhood, and Motijan, who empathizes with her, recognizes the futility of resistance within that social framework. Bala knows no one can help her; as a result, she does not even say anything and only cries after every blow. When she feels she cannot breathe because everything around suffocates her, trees become her solace. By climbing the trees even after people ask her not to, she fights back against the suffocating world below her.

These women are either silent or silenced because their voices are trapped and neglected in a structured way. Hasanat shows this reality clearly in her portrayal of Nirjhara, Aandhi, Sheila, Daisy, and Bala. These women are stuck as subaltern women, but they create challenges within this rigid idea. Their stories reveal that silence is used to oppress them, but they also use silence to express themselves. When they cannot talk or are not allowed to talk, their bodies, postures and actions transcend into voice. Thus, Hasanat reveals the fragmented and rebellious voices as the voices of women in postcolonial societies, where they are ignored and misunderstood. As J. Maggio has argued translation to be helpful for subaltern women, it seems women need to work for themselves, even if through silence, to change their situation because translation fails women too. It is a reminder that even within structures of dominance, the will to be heard continues to exist and transform.

3.3 Hegemonic Masculinity and the Crisis of Power

In Hasanat's stories, masculinity is often performed and enforced. As R. W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt have argued, hegemonic masculinity "embodied the currently most honoured way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men" (832), revealing both the fragility and violence of patriarchal power. Men assert control over women and children, believing their authority is natural and unchallengeable, yet these performances of dominance frequently expose their own crises of power. Not all the characters fit under hegemonic masculinity, as it has hierarchies of masculinity, such as hegemonic, complicit, and subordinate masculinity, according to Connell and Messerschmidt. The hegemonic masculine man acts according to a false ideal that nobody can achieve; it is a fantasy. The complicit man cannot embody the ideal hegemonic masculinity, but they enjoy the advantages of it. Lastly, the subordinated or marginalized masculine men who are at a disadvantage due to their class, race, or sexuality, still enjoy more privilege than women. The male characters are performers of such masculinities, and in many stories, women help to sustain this hierarchy of patriarchal power that pushes women to the margin. Aandhi's grandmother perfectly summarizes the hegemonic men across the story collection as she says, "They are just a bunch of opportunist men, and men usually see what they want to see" (Hasanat 39). Hasanat, through her characters, has vividly portrayed the several types of masculinities and their sustainability in her stories, which makes us face the fact of institutionalized hegemonic masculinity that we normalize in our culture.

The collection starts by showing Nirjhara's husband as someone who embodies hegemonic masculinity, a prime example of patriarchal power in "The Anomalous Wife". He considers himself an ideal successful man, husband, and father because he has achieved economic success in America, provided his wife with material things to make her content, and shaped his sons into

copies of himself. He does all these and believes he has the right to do so. He does not consider others' opinions important, especially his wife's, because, according to him, he can treat her the way he desires, and this is what a man should do. With this mindset, he has replaced Nirjhara's legs "with a mermaid tail" (Hasanat 23), and now she has lost her ability to walk. Nirjhara says, "Life is a pair of bitten lips and bruised breasts and broken wings and a virgin heart" (Hasanat 21), meaning what matters to her husband is not her emotion but just her body, as Donaldson says hegemonic masculinity sustains through objectifying women as sexual being rather than seeing them as humans. This is what hegemonic masculinity does to a woman and makes it seem legal. Not only that, her husband prefers his sons over his daughter because he can make them like him, but he cannot contain his daughter as he did with his wife. His twin sons are called "twin projects" by him; but he was not equally happy when his daughter was born. Nirjhara perfectly puts him into the category of hegemonic masculinity as she says, "You are the epitome of a universally acknowledged truth: a successful Bangladeshi man, who has lived the American Dream to the fullest, must have in his possession a few perfectly designed children and a content wife" (Hasanat 24). He kills her spirit in this way to claim the position of a dominant man but does not face any punishment for it. This is the reality that women face: men can destroy their spirits and yet remain unharmed, as society has given them the right to do so. The social system fails to provide women like Nirjhara with justice, leaving them to seek it themselves.

When it comes to the definition of ideal manhood, those who deviate, particularly through non-heteronormativity or by existing outside subordinate or marginalized masculinity, are punished for gender nonconformity. Shojol in "The Hyacinth Boy" suffers for such nonconformity in a patriarchal world that cannot tolerate deviation. The men in Shojol's life embody diverse types of hegemonic masculinity and punish him for being an intersex person and thereby posing a threat

to the masculine order. The supposed father figure, Rahimuddin, financially supports them when Shojol's father leaves, but under predatory motives. He sexually assaults Shojol and objectifies his mother, saying, "A pretty woman's smell must match her looks, don't you think?" (Hasanat 73). He is thus a socially recognized patriarch who appears benevolent on the surface but is abusive beneath. Furthermore, Milton who was once Shojol's friend, embodies the violent form of hegemonic masculinity. He is a goon who knows Shojol's secret of being an intersex person and weaponizes both language and gender when he says, "Bitch... I'll be coming for you" (Hasanat 74). His threat performs his masculine domination and control over Shojol's body, as it is a way for him to prove his masculinity within a patriarchal hierarchy. On the other hand, Kana Bokul disguises himself as a protector but forcefully undresses Shojol to check his genitalia as though it were a public property. He says, "I'll be your protector from now on" (Hasanat 80), but the next moment, he plans to sell Shojol to Matuli Hijra. This shows how patriarchy also dominates bodies beyond binaries and renders them inhuman. All these hegemonic masculine men in Shojol's life reinforce the idea that they must dominate the feminine to be a man.

Hegemonic masculinity can also be sustained through invisible but absolute power. In "When Our Fathers Die," Daniel's father is such a figure who, through his apathy and control, maintains his position as the household's unquestioned authority. Daniel's father loves and prioritizes his snakes and his boa over his wife and child. When his boa tries to eat his wife, he chooses the boa over his scared wife, dismissing his wife's fear as weak. It makes the wife realize that there is no place for her or her opinion, as she reads his inaction as an assertion of power and silent dominance. He does not even spare his son Daniel, scaring him for life by saying that if he does not do his homework, he will feed him to the snakes. His refusal to connect emotionally and his act of instilling fear in Daniel produces emotional alienation. He lets his boa devour Daniel's

chihuahua and another boy's cocker spaniel. When he sees the cocker spaniel being devoured, he stays still, allowing the boa to finish, symbolically reinforcing his own dominance. He treats both his snakes and humans as objects of his own satisfaction. Through his emotional domination and control over care, Hasanat critiques how masculinity can subtly dehumanize the people around it.

Nonetheless, women also help sustain this structure of dominance. Connell and Messerschmidt point out, "women are central in many of the processes constructing masculinities as mothers; as schoolmates; as girlfriends, sexual partners, and wives; as workers in the gender division of labour; and so forth. The concept of emphasized femininity focused on compliance to patriarchy, and this is still highly relevant in contemporary mass culture" (848). They often become complicit in the patriarchal system that ultimately harms them, having been moulded into believing that this is the right thing to do and that women are naturally subordinate to men. In "Bride of the Vanishing Sun," Aandhi and Sufia are such examples of complicity within patriarchy. Aandhi is initially reluctant to accept her compliance, but her mother, Sufia, and the people around her make her believe that because of her skin colour and gender, she is at the mercy of any man who would agree to marry her. She is also at the mercy of her brother Abdur Rahman who is her family's current head and seals her fate by finalizing her marriage. Like Abdur Rahman, Nizam's father also controls Aandhi's life as he asks for dowry to sanction this marriage. Nizam remains a silent partner in this bargain in compliance with sustaining hegemonic masculinity and eventually gains profit. Years later, Nizam takes part in this bargain because now he has to marry off his daughter and deal with a man who, like his father, wants dowry. This shows even men cannot escape from the same system they created and once benefited from. As a result, hegemonic masculinity keeps changing the dynamic to sustain the power hierarchy.

Similar to Nizam, Daisy's husband Amir is also a part of the hegemonic masculinity through compliance. In "Darkling, I Listen," he decides to marry again because Daisy cannot have biological children. However, he does not admit this in front of her and hides behind the excuse of his parents by saying, "I am powerless. I can't hurt my parents. I'm their only son" (Hasanat 114). In this issue, he remains unhurt because of his male privilege and lets Daisy suffer social humiliation for reasons she cannot control. He does not harm her physically, but he harms her mentally by making her take the blame. His mother, like Aandhi and Sufia in "Bride of the Vanishing Sun," is a perpetrator of this system. She verbally abuses Daisy, accusing her of trapping her son in a marriage where she cannot offer him an offspring. Her constant humiliation of Daisy and her family is a way to sustain masculine dominance by cornering women. In contrast, while Amir's mother supports her son's actions, Motijan in "Make Me Your Sitar" condemns hers. However, although she is not directly complicit in patriarchy, she cannot put an end to it either. Mafiz, a violent patriarch, believes he can do anything to his underage wife. When Motijan tries to stop her son, Mafiz says, "Mother, don't come between a man and his wife. You'll burn in Hell if you do" (Hasanat 128). After Mafiz is done with her, "Bala return[s] at dawn, broken and dishevelled" (Hasanat 128), but Motijan can only pretend to unsee this. Motijan's silence in this situation reflects her powerlessness to break hegemonic masculinity even when this is done by her son. Thus, hegemonic masculinity both legitimizes male dominance and renders women powerless within its structure.

Altogether, Hasanat's stories make visible how hegemonic masculinity is sustained by staged performances, invisible authority, and social practices that both produce and conceal crises of power. The male figures in the collection, from Nirjhara's husband and Daniel's father to the predators of Shojol, perform dominance in ways that normalize violence, objectification, and

emotional neglect, even as these performances mask insecurity and dependency. Hasanat also shows how this system reproduces itself and how other men benefit from the hierarchy, while some women, shaped by socialization, reproduce its logic. The result is a perpetual structure in which nonconformity is punished and silenced. Legal and social institutions fail to deliver redress to these issues. The types of masculinity in the narratives highlight that the problem is structural and not individual. These harmful ideals must be challenged not only at the level of behaviour but in the everyday practices that validate them.

3.4 Ecofeminist Currents and Embodied Ecologies

Hasanat's *The Bird Catcher and Other Stories* act as an ecofeminist consciousness through which women's desires for freedom often manifest as metaphors of the natural world. The stories expose how women and nature are victims of patriarchal control, reduced to commodities, and pushed into silence. As Karen J. Warren has said, "Animalizing or naturalizing women in a (patriarchal) culture where animals are seen as inferior to humans (men) thereby reinforces and authorizes women's inferior status" (12). Through her female characters, Hasanat draws this connection between ecological degradation and gendered violence, and points to the fact that this is rooted in the same system that privileges domination in the guise of progress. Women wounded by men express desire, pain, and freedom through the natural world. Consequently, nature becomes an ally to their resistance, as these women turn to water, trees, birds, and storms to regain the autonomy denied to them by men.

Nirjhara from "The Anomalous Wife" has had only a willow tree as her friend, to which she confides her emotions and songs. Her husband cannot not see this bond, and like a colonial or capitalist man, he metaphorically cuts it down, a gesture of ownership disguised as cultivation, to

curb her will. She says, “Husband, because you were afraid that someday I might grow stronger than my willow tree, you had cut my hands and feet and replaced them with lotus stems. And now, all I crave is water” (24). She is a human being who could have grown and outgrown him, but he is not ready to grow with her. Hence, the husband transforms her body-parts into a lotus stem that grows underwater so that she can never outgrow him like a willow tree and remain below the surface of social visibility. Like the environment colonized under the pretence of progress, Nirjhara is domesticated and submerged. This left her craving the ocean that she can only relate to, a yearning to dissolve the boundaries that bind her. From her childhood, Nirjhara has received calls from water as if it were her prophecy. As a child, she was learning to swim when she was taken “to the bottom of the pond “(Hasanat 21) so that she would not have to face what awaited her in the future, a patriarchal world that would drown her voice before she could speak. Later, as she gives birth during a flood that nearly submerges Dhaka, her aunt’s words, “I need to cut this belly open before the baby drowns inside” (Hasanat 19), parallel her body with the city, her motherhood with the monsoon. When the city and the woman are described with the same language, Hasanat maps how urban setting, gendered violence, and environmental transformation operate through the same logics of containment as they are all submerged in water. Nirjhara has birthed a baby from this water; now it is her time to return to the water. Her craving for the ocean becomes both a literal desire and a longing for unregulated space, without any ownership.

While Nirjhara’s relationship with water reveals her longing to go back to nature, Hasanat expands this link between the female body and the natural world with the women from “Bride of the Vanishing Sun.” In that story, Aandhi’s mother Sufia never got a break from being pregnant, like nature, which never gets a break from human devastations. Such a tired woman found solace in the “monsoon storm raging through the dark evening sky” (Hasanat 31) and gave birth to a girl

whose complexion resembled the weather. Here, the cycle of pregnancy and the dark evening sky reveal an ecofeminist move as gendered labour is made to synonymize with nature's perpetual productivity and Aandhi's complexion, as weather shows how bodies are controlled according to a cultural economy of beauty. The nature manifests in Aandhi, who was fond of moonlit nights and had eyes "wider than a gazelle's and prettier than the rays of morning" (Hasanat 34). When her skin was compared with the dark evening sky, her eyes were compared with an animal and sunrays, revealing both wildness and radiance. Aandhi's future was fixed then under twilight, "when exit meets entrance and mystifies the yearning of time present for time future" (Hasanat 36), and she was bound with Nizam. Years later, Aandhi's daughter Sheila inherits her beauty and her darkness, and she also becomes bound with her groom before the sun sets. They become the wives of the vanishing sun, not their husbands, as they are visible only at certain times, usable only under certain lights, and frequently claimed by others before they can claim themselves. Their complexion limits their world like men limit nature by destroying it.

When some women are victims of the larger ecological cycle of exploitation, some men are ostracized and discarded as infertile, like a barren land. The story of Shojol is a reminder of this. The title of the story "The Hyacinth Boy" reminds of the 'hyacinth girl' from the first section of T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land," who is described as "neither living nor dead" but a girl with hyacinths (39–40). In this story, the boy Shojol becomes a boy with hyacinth, but not in his hands but in his motionless body "to hide the gaping void of a deferred manhood from the relentless gaze of humankind" (Hasanat 83). Nature covers social deficits implicated in the body by men. Men in the story tries to economize Shojol's body as men try to economize the environment, but in the end, they destroy both. Nature comes in to comfort the boy who could not get comfort from the world. In the same way, nature comforts Daisy from "Darkling I Listen" who finds peace in her

“moonlit rooftop, where [she has] spent most of [her] ten years of prison time nurturing greeneries in potting soil imprisoned in planter cells” (Hasanat 115). The relationship here is of reciprocity, not of ownership, as Daisy cares for her greenery that contests the commodification of nature, and they care for her. They both are imprisoned, she in her husband’s house and the greeneries in the planter cells. Yet together they insist on the very act of nurturing. Though she listens to the music of her “night jasmines” and “kick the world one more time before flying away like a blazing phoenix” (Hasanat 116), as the patriarchal society has pushed her to the edge, the way it has pushed the environment. Both Daisy and Shojol show how Hasanat complicates human-nature relationship, allowing nature to heal and humanize what patriarchal society deems deviant or infertile.

Furthermore, in “Make Me Your Sitar,” Bala’s husband Mafiz thinks there is a Jin with Bala because she climbs banyan trees at night. The same night before she climbs, he rapes her as he has married her and thinks that makes her his property, in the same manner a man thinks the land to be their property. Thus, Bala’s climbing is a search for a shelter that the household denies. When asked about climbing at night, Bala replies, “I was choking and needed some fresh air” (Hasanat 127), and the tree provides her security while the household converts her into a private property. Bala says a hand is the reason she climbs and it wants her betterment. She sometimes imagines it to be a woman, “a woman with strong arms and dark eyes” (Hasanat 129), and she follows the strong scent of sandalwood the woman has, “to be away and free” (Hasanat 129). For her, nature is like a companion that helps her assert bodily autonomy and ecological belongingness against imprisonment, and she imagines nature to be a woman because she is imprisoned by a man, and the one who saves her cannot be a man. Eventually, Bala is tortured because of her longing for freedom. Mafiz calls a man who, in the name of driving the Jin away from her, brutally abuses

Bala while she is pregnant. The violent thrashing of Bala's body parallels the violent thrashing of common lands, as both are acts that transform the living into objects for extraction.

The ecological allegory of Hasanat ends with the title story, "The Bird Catcher." In the story the bird represents elements of nature as well as females who are at risk of the atrocities of men. The story also includes a bird catcher, who functions as a figure for colonial-capitalist conservation, which only focuses on material gain, even at the expense of the environment. For the bird catcher, "life meant love of life" (Hasanat 141), akin to human beings who destroy nature and only love the present and their pleasure. The bird catcher says, "What you have, I must own" (Hasanat 146), showing greed for more when all he is doing is ravaging. Like men who confine women in the name of love, he catches the bird and gives her berries, raisins, nuts, and adorns her with long anklets in her elegant cage, but the bird does not want this. He cages her like the men in other stories who cage women without asking what they desire, only giving what they think the woman desires. This is the same logic that turns biodiverse landscapes into curated property for elites, or that treats women's bodies as sites to be adorned and displayed rather than listened to. Then, the recluse is the possible ending that the ecofeminists want for humans and nature. The recluse "was once the slave of his needs" (Hasanat 154) but is now moved by desire rather than need. In the same way, ecofeminists want society to be driven by the desire to protect the environment and women. Recluse says, "You and I, Bird, you and I are inseparable" (Hasanat 160) as it is an alternative relation that recognizes autonomy, reciprocity, and refusal.

Therefore, across Hasanat's stories, the natural world intertwines with women's suffering, silencing, and defiance. The stories reflect how nature absorbs women's pain, shelters their secrets, and restores their sense of agency. Nirjhara's longing for the ocean, Aandhi's inherited darkness, Daisy's imprisoned greenery, Shojol's descent with hyacinths, and Bala's ascent to the banyan

tree all articulate different modes of ecofeminist rebellion where women turn to nature when human institutions deny them a voice. Hasanat blurs the boundary between the female body and the landscape to show how both are colonized under patriarchal and capitalist ownership. Yet, within this lies the possibility of renewal as seen in the form of a recluse who represents hope. Through these fragmented but tough figures, Hasanat reimagines the possibility of coexistence that refuses domination and seeks freedom through connection.

3.5 Migration and Displaced Self

Displacement reshapes gender, memory, and belonging as diasporic women perform multiple cultural scripts to survive within alien geographies. In *The Bird Catcher and Other Stories*, Hasanat portrays such women's in-between identity as a site of negotiation, neither wholly at home nor wholly away. These women are displaced and taken to a foreign country without their active participation in the decision which they are obliged to follow. In this way, migration and womanhood parallel each other, as migration involves uprooting, and women are forced to rebuild themselves in unfamiliar and foreign spaces. These diasporic characters simultaneously long for their home and feel burdened to rebuild their home in the new country. This constant negotiation becomes a negotiation of womanhood, always unfinished and fragmented. Hasanat portrays the stories of these diasporic women who are fragmented because, on top of other layers, migration is another layer that women must embrace.

Dr. S from "When our fathers die" is such a woman who embodies this fragmented identity in a diasporic context. As a Bangladeshi migrant in America whose first language is Bangla, she accounts for accent mishaps while teaching in English. This posits her as the 'other,' and she must manage both her life abroad and her way of speaking. From taking care of her life outside the

country to managing her speech, she takes a decision that alters the entire course of her life. The decision was to pull the plug on her father, who was in a coma in Singapore. While deciding whether she should give the green signal about withdrawing life support, she confronts the limits of agency that migrant women often face. Dr S's dilemma about withdrawing life support portrays the limits of what Gong et al. call "human agency" during the experience of migration. Gong et al. suggest that planned, self-planned migration reduces psychological strain, but Dr S's moment in the hospital reveals the opposite effect. She must perform the moral labour of the family in the absence of shared local support. It is her relationship with her father who once lovingly wove a saree to match her favourite dark bottle-green colour that adds complexity to her situation. Her decision becomes tough as it is mixed with duty, grief, and the burden of being the family's moral arbiter across borders. Nevertheless, she makes the hardest decision that creates fragments in herself that is painful to live with. Her final decision to pull the plug on her father's life support becomes conditioned by the dire truth of diasporic life.

Further, Noor Jahan from "Mother Immigrant" presents a contrasting diasporic trajectory as she embraces the social life in America and social vitality in the Bangladeshi community in West Palm Beach. She performs as both Bangladeshi and American, resisting the assimilative metrics imposed by the host society, and her strategy can be read in light of Akhter et al.'s observation about dependent migration when migration is filtered through family arrangements where communal ties frequently become the primary setting of recognition and support (9). Described as a "highly opinionated woman" (Hasanat 87) who makes friends wherever she goes, Noor Jahan insists that "home is not where you are from. Home is where you live" (Hasanat 95). It functions as a performative claim that attempts to reconstitute belonging within a diasporic field of relations, yet the violent interruption of public humiliation demonstrates the fragility of such

claims. The narrative complicates Noor Jahan's belief when she experiences harassment and a frightening encounter at her son Azmol's house that leads her into an old cemetery, experiencing the supernatural. The cemetery episode reveals that social recognition in the diaspora is conditional, and she realizes, "this country is not for old people like [her]" (Hasanat 101). Initially in the story she believes that "language is never difficult, but people are" (Hasanat 87), but this misconception breaks down when she mistakenly goes to the men's washroom and people jinx her for the mistake. This finally breaks her down, and in her outburst, she says, "She no foreigner, too! She from Bangladesh. But she American! She speaks Bangla, but she understands you. Do you UNDER-STAND HER?" (Hasanat 105). This bold assertion reveals that age, language, and public visibility constrain even those who appear socially successful. Even when Noor Jahan has fashioned networks of care, these networks remain vulnerable to public denunciation. Therefore, communal agency can be creative yet ultimately precarious under the hierarchies of the host society.

Moreover, not all women can embrace migration and happily create their new home in a foreign country. Nirjhara in "The Anomalous Wife" moves from Dhaka to America but cannot leave behind the one close companion she had, her only friend, the willow tree in Dhaka. She treats the tree as if it were human, "holding its stooping branches as if they were strands of Rapunzel's sad hair" (Hasanat 22). Nirjhara's attachment to the willow tree makes Pedraza's formulation of migration more comprehensible as "rupture, separation, and loss" work as an index of relational personhood that migration violently severs. Her inability to settle in the new country is read by her husband as weakness, a gendered judgment that erases the uneven reasons behind their migration. Nirjhara and her husband's situation show how migration affects people in the same family differently. While his material prosperity is seen as a sign of success, Nirjhara's longing for nature

is seen as a sign of instability by others. Thus, Nirjhara's loss of the willow tree becomes symbolic of women's loss in migration, where they are uprooted and forced to act joyfully within a household that does not care for their desire.

These diasporic narratives by Hasanat show the profound impacts of migration on women. It changes where they live and who they are while making womanhood a site of fragmentation. Through the journeys of Dr. S, Noor Jahan, and Nirjhara, Hasanat exhibits that each woman performs identity under different pressures of displacement. Dr. S performs it under the moral dilemma, Noor Jahan acts it through the negotiation in the community, and Nirjhara portrays it through the profound melancholia of being uprooted. Their experiences show that migration increases the insecurity of women which already exists within rigid patriarchal structures. These women's lives go on as repeated performances of survival within systems that estrange and define them. Hasanat's diasporic women thus occupy a course of life where fragmentation becomes their way of being. In their fractured belonging lies the cost and strength of fragmented womanhood in migration.

3.6 The Shape of Intersectional Trauma: Fragmentation as Resistance

Across the eight stories in *The Bird Catcher and Other Stories*, Fayeza Hasanat constructs a cluster of intersectional forces causing trauma, where women's experiences and emotions emerge through fragmented narratives against containment. Karmakar talks about several types of traumas in the stories, such as "skin-tone trauma" (121), "sexual orientation and trauma" (124), and "[trauma] on being infertile" (128), but it is a lot more and beyond. Therefore, the same wounded figures keep resurfacing in different frameworks as if trauma manifests in new forms within each framework of oppression.

In this cluster of traumas, the narrative breaks, repetitions, and silences that negotiate “The Anomalous Wife” or “Bride of the Vanishing Sun” are not merely stylistic gestures, as they are the consequence and continuation of what patriarchy and culture demand of women’s obedience. In “The Anomalous Wife,” Nirjhara’s trauma is gendered, but also shaped by migration, as her desire to belong is caught between Dhaka and America, illustrating how displacement intensifies vulnerability. Her trauma accumulates over the years. The continuum of her trauma begins with marrying someone who is absent when she gives birth to her first child during a heavy rainstorm, followed by the trauma of leaving the only friend she knew, being treated as a sexual object rather than a companion by her husband, being blamed when her husband could not mould their daughter as he did their sons, the trauma of being unseen over the years, and finally ends with the trauma of being confined to an asylum to silence her after she expresses her desire to be one with the ocean. The fragmentation of her dismissed voice during her trauma is caused by subalternity and patriarchal erasure. Against this erasure, she decides to go to the ocean whenever she gets out of the asylum, because beneath the surface of prescribed womanhood, she is fragmented, and she embraces this fragmentation of being a woman. On the other hand, the trauma of Aandhi and Sheila is intensified by their complexion and cultural expectations. Sufia extends the generational trauma of giving birth to a dark-skinned daughter to Aandhi, and Aandhi passes it down to Sheila. Sheila already knows her voice does not matter, only her complexion does, as “her mother’s extra care signified her lack of beauty—not the overabundance of it—and that the treasure she hid beneath her skin or within her heart did not matter to anyone” (Hasanat 43). It will not take her much time to internalize this trauma and give up as Aandhi did, losing the way she perceives herself in the process. It is more than skin tone trauma because it connects to residues of colonial structure. They become the scapegoat of colonial and patriarchal ideals that frame lightness as superiority and

darkness as inferiority. This inferiority is passed down as trauma of inheritance. As a result, in the story, these women become both victims and agents of perpetuating hegemonic patriarchy, illustrating how trauma operates in relational and social models that ultimately rupture womanhood. Yet Hasanat allows those ruptures to speak, to occupy the space of meaning precisely where their voices are ignored.

Furthermore, trauma does not spare anyone across the stories. Daisy in “Darkling, I Listen” experiences both emotional and social trauma as she is insulted by her husband and mother-in-law. She is deemed less than a woman because of her infertility. Infertility becomes a part of womanhood where her worth is only measured by her reproductive ability. Yet even women who fulfil this role, those with multiple children in other stories, are not spared trauma either. In Daisy’s case, her self-doubt due to her inability to conceive arises when her lover Reza says that he does not care about having children but leaves her for someone else. Her wounds deepen over time with Amir’s mother’s public insults of her as “an empty drum” (Hasanat 112). Daisy’s father’s proud mention of her to the Queen of England contrasts with her mother-in-law’s badmouthing. This tears her sense of self as she is celebrated in one space and humiliated in another. This also creates a fragmented self as she questions who she is. Her trauma is then both social and internal, a condition of visibility and erasure that has made her wounded for life. She ends this condition by setting herself on fire in her in-laws’ house to unveil how much the trauma they have given her has pushed her.

While Daisy’s trauma unfolds within the domestic sphere of patriarchy, Hasanat connects this pain across borders, where the wounds of womanhood in “Darkling, I Listen” find new forms in “Mother Immigrant” and “When Our Fathers Die.” These stories trace the dislocation through exile and inheritance. The diasporic characters demonstrate that what we call trauma is already

intersectional, as it is a mixture of gender, nation, and history altogether. As a result, migration fractures Dr. S's subjectivity, and the intersecting pressures of care and diasporic expectation illustrate how displacement intensifies emotional and ethical trauma when the decision of her father's life taken miles away scars her for eternity. In Noor Jahan's case, trauma intersects with age, nationality, and language. Despite apparent social success, her embodiment of multiple identities exposes her vulnerability and the peril of diasporic women's agency. In these instances, the fragment is both symptom of patriarchal oppression and a form of resistance as it is an interruption of the linear narrative that patriarchy insists upon for survival through multiplicity. Therefore, Hasanat's women do not return to wholeness; they persist in the fractures, and it is in that persistence that resistance becomes thinkable. To fragment in this sense is to refuse subjugation.

Just like diaspora, the fragmented identities manifests through the body itself along lines of gender, age, and social expectation as seen in Dr. S and Noor Jahan. In Hasanat's other narratives, trauma demonstrates how socially imposed hierarchies of gender and power inscribe themselves onto physical and psychological beings. In "The Hyacinth Boy," the body that cannot be named, neither man nor woman, neither child nor adult, exposes the instability of categories that promise social recognition. Trauma is embodied and symbolic in Shojol's body as it reveals how patriarchal society erases deviations from normative masculinity, magnifying the vulnerability of non-binary or gender-nonconforming individuals. He faces trauma due to his gender and class, while his body becomes a site of objectification and threat. Like Shojol, in "Make Me Your Sitar," the wound is both physical and mental as it is where patriarchal order asserts itself most violently and scars even before a child becomes an adult. Bala, a vulnerable child like Shojol, faces trauma due to her position in the society but constitutes resistance. Then, the fragment is not

the remainder of a wholeness lost, but the form through which subaltern becomes legible, though never fully represented.

Finally, in “The Bird Catcher,” the bird is a strong metaphor for the woman and nature itself, revealing the trauma of both. Similar to the patriarchal impulse to control and possess what is free and independent, the bird catcher catches the bird and turns her freedom into a site of trauma. The imprisoned bird loses her freedom, her faculty to be with the recluse, and is finally killed in the cage that represents both the physical and existential captivity. The bird that could fly across places and time is reduced to fragments of memory, memory of a once-liberated self. The recluse who sees these remains inherits not only the pain of the bird but also her trauma because trauma may be transmitted, sensed, and remembered by others. In this way, Hasanat expands trauma beyond the human body, showing how domination scars both women and the natural world, turning freedom into fragments.

Thus, to speak of trauma in the plural, Fayeza Hasanat compels us to recognize that it is never simply an event but an intersecting history of domination. The women and nonconforming characters in *The Bird Catcher and Other Stories* live in worlds where pain cannot be located in a singular moment or in a singular framework. It scatters across time, across language, across gender, across colour, across fertility, across humanity, across family, and across syntax itself.

Chapter 4

Conclusion

In *The Bird Catcher and Other Stories*, Fayeza Hasanat, brilliantly portrays how Bangladeshi women and other marginalized figures are mistreated and abused as they fail to fit into categories created to sustain patriarchy. Apart from fictional stories, these marginalized figures also appear in the real world where we encounter their stories every day. The very struggles depicted in the narratives can be found in news reports. In every case, women are abused because the idea of ‘womanhood’ is used by those in power to control and punish anyone who defies it. This thesis began by asking how the fragmentation of womanhood in the stories works as resistance. To answer the question, traditional womanhood has been seen as a category that secures patriarchy and hierarchy. Because of that, the defiant characters of Hasanat appear fragmented for taking down the functioning of the same system that refuses to accept their existence. Their fracture is not only an effect; it is an inscription of refusals. In this way, fragmentation becomes resistance because it exposes the impossibility of achieving the coherent female subject that normative power sets. Further, in an attempt to unpack the layered identities of Hasanat’s characters, the research staged an encounter between a set of theoretical frameworks and the texts, where the politics of representation and the erasure of voice are familiar. Intersectional feminist theories allowed us to show how these characters are overwritten with expectations related to gender, the silencing of the subaltern, the power of hegemonic masculinity, the constant dilemma of migration and attachment, a connection with the environment, and the trauma that shapes even the innermost relationships. Hasanat’s defiant characters face these multidimensional oppressions for deviating from what patriarchal society has decided as their fate. Lastly, this research asked how trauma and migration complicate the characters’ sense of belonging. The findings indicate that it rearranges the

conditions which decide whether the wounded can speak or not. Migration intensifies this rearrangement by placing the characters in unfamiliar places that do not recognize their past, desires, or wounds. Women, in one way or another, have to migrate from their homes, with displacement leaving them always with more challenges than opportunities.

Moreover, during the research process, this thesis required reading each story as a closed narrative that demanded attention to silence as much as to speech and to the generational entanglements that shape how women come to know themselves. In the close analysis, the research does not try a new definition of womanhood as it exists in ways that no rigid equation can ever fully hold, nor does it offer a stable map of resistance. It invites readers to see how the fractured women destabilize rigid structures and insists that resistance resides in these fractured selves, showing the oppressed that they are not alone and not at fault for being themselves. Hence, this thesis can be helpful in further studies examining how fragmentation works in other Bangladeshi stories or in South Asian fiction. It may also be helpful in clarifying how literary fragmentation acts as resistance for women negotiating similar pressures outside the text. Overall, the stories of *The Bird Catcher and Other Stories* remind us that order is imposed from patriarchy, while fragmentation is what remains when women refuse to be fully claimed by those demands.

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