

DISINTEGRATING SELVES: EXPLORING THE POSTCOLONIAL IDENTITY IN BILAL TANWEER'S *THE SCATTER HERE IS TOO GREAT*

Faiza Jabbar

Lecturer in English, Department of English Language and Literature
Govt. APWA Graduate College for Women Lahore

faiza.jabbar91@gmail.com

Abstract:

This research paper undertakes a nuanced exploration of identity fragmentation in Bilal Tanweer's *The Scatter Here Is Too Great* through the lens of Frantz Fanon's postcolonial theory. The novel's portrayal of Karachi's violent and tumultuous landscape serves as a backdrop for the characters' struggles with identity and belonging. Furthermore, the novel's non-linear narrative structure effectively mirrors the characters' disjointed experiences, revealing the profound impact of colonial history, migration, and displacement on their sense of self. Through Fanon's concept of alienation, inferiority and dehumanization, this study demonstrates how the novel constructs a postcolonial consciousness haunted by historical trauma and modern chaos. Ultimately, it argues that postcolonial identity is a complex_ evolving construct__dynamically shaped by the intersections of history, memory, and violence.

Keywords:

Postcolonialism, Identity, Fragmentation, Violence, Neocolonialism, Fanon

Introduction

This paper undertakes an in-depth examination of the fragmented identities in Bilal Tanweer's novel *The Scatter Here Is Too Great* through the lens of Frantz Fanon. Fanon's seminal works *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) provide a foundational framework for understanding the psychological and cultural consequences of colonization. According to Fanon, the colonial experience leads to the "epidermalization of inferiority," where colonized subjects internalize their own dehumanization, resulting in fractured selves and perpetual alienation.

In Tanweer's novel, Fanon's ideas illuminate how the colonial legacy continues to shape identities in postcolonial Pakistan. The novel's Karachi__ violent, chaotic and perpetually in flux__ serves as a microcosm of a fractured postcolonial psyche. Tanweer's fragmented narrative technique, weaving multiple perspectives and non-linear storytelling, mirrors the disjointed consciousness of characters burdened by memory, displacement and socio-political turmoil. By situating Tanweer's work within Fanon's postcolonial framework, this research explores how *The Scatter Here Is Too Great* constructs a space where identity is fluid, fractured, continuously negotiated amid the forces of colonial memory, neocolonial structures and urban disarray. Ultimately, the novel serves as a powerful allegory for the postcolonial self__ fragmented, alienated, yet constantly seeking wholeness in the aftermath of historical violence.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative textual analysis grounded in Frantz Fanon's postcolonial theory to explore the themes of fragmented identity and psychological alienation in *The Scatter Here Is Too Great*. Close reading

techniques are used to analyze how Tanweer's characters' self conceptions are shaped by lingering effect of colonialism and modern violence.

Key Fanonian concepts___ such as alienation, inferiority complex, dehumanization, and internalization of colonial power___ are central to this analysis. The research focuses on how historical and political forces influence identity formation in Tanweer's Karachi, exploring the interplay between trauma, memory, and societal dislocation. This approach aims to offer a nuanced understanding of how the text embodies postcolonial subjectivity as both fragmented and resistant.

Theoretical Framework

Frantz Fanon's postcolonial theory serves as the principal framework for this research. Fanon examines how colonialism not only subjugates nations politically but also colonizes the psyche, distorting both self-perception and collective identity. His assertion that "the colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards" (*Black Skin, White Masks*) underscores how identity becomes a site of struggle.

Fanon's exploration of alienation and the fractures self resonate deeply with Tanweer's portrayal of Karachi's inhabitants. Moreover, this study draws on supplementary theoretical perspectives: Homi Bhabha's concept of "hybridity," which situates identity as an ongoing negotiation between the colonizer and the colonized; and Stuart Hall's view of identity as "a matter of becoming as well as being." Together, these frameworks elucidate how Tanweer's characters inhabit multiple, often conflicting identities within a postcolonial, globalized urban space.

Statement of Problem

This research investigates the multifaceted nature of identity fragmentation in Tanweer's *The Scatter Here Is Too Great*, examining how its narrative structure and character portrayals reflect the deep influences of historical, cultural, and societal forces. Despite the growing scholarship on South Asian postcolonial narratives, limited attention has been given to Tanweer's experimental narrative form articulates fractured identities shaped by colonial legacy and urban modernity. The study thus seeks to fill that gap, offering insight into the intersections of migration, postcolonial realities, and identity formation in contemporary Pakistan.

Research Questions

1. How does Bilal Tanveer employ narrative fragmentation to depict the complexities of identity in *The Scatter Here Is Too Great*?
2. What factors contribute to the fragmentation of identities in the novel, and how do they relate to migration, displacement, and memory?
3. How does the fragmented narrative structure enhance understanding of the characters' struggles with selfhood and postcolonial experience?

Research Objectives

1. To analyze how Bilal Tanveer utilizes narrative fragmentation to represent the disintegration of personal and collective identities.
2. To identify and examine the forces___ migration, displacement, violence, and cultural memory___ that contribute to the fractured self.
3. To explore how the narrative structure reflects the psychological and emotional consequences of postcolonial condition.

Significance of Study

The study contributes to the postcolonial literary criticism by bridging Frantz Fanon's psychological model of colonization with Bilal Tanweer's narrative of fragmented urban life. It underscores the continuing relevance of Fanon's insights in understanding modern identity crises with postcolonial societies. Furthermore, by examining Karachi as both a setting and metaphor, this paper highlights the interplay between space, memory and trauma in shaping postcolonial subjectivities. The findings add to contemporary scholarship on South Asian Literature, offering valuable insights into how colonial trauma and neocolonial realities shape human consciousness in 21st century.

Literature Review

Previous research on *The Scatter Here Is Too Great* reveals a growing interest in its treatment of fragmentation, trauma and urban city. Scholars such as Nadia Saleh, Omer Khalid, and Sara Haque have examined Tanweer's non-linear storytelling and the representation of diasporic dislocation, yet few have contextualized these within Fanon's postcolonial psychology.

Fanon's concept of "epidermalized inferiority" and "souble consciousness" remain central to understanding the internal fractures within Tanweer's characters. Homi Bhabha's theory of 'hybridity' and 'the third space' complements this perspective, presenting Tanweer's Karachi as a liminal zone where identities are continually redefined. Similarly, Edward Said's *Orientalism* provides insights into how internalized colonial hierarchies persist in post-independence societies, shaping the city's social dynamics. Stuart Hall's articulation of identity as "a process, not a fixed essence" reinforces the novel's emphasis on fluid, evolving selves.

Collectively, these frameworks underscore how Tanweer's fragmented narrative mirrors the postcolonial subject's fractured psyche, shaped by memory, displacement, and historical trauma. *The Scatter Here Is Too Great* thus stands as a vital text in contemporary South Asian literature, reflecting the ongoing struggle for coherence in a world scarred by colonial history and modern violence.

Data Analysis

Fragmented Narrative and the Fractured Self: Unpacking the Postcolonial Identity Crisis

The fragmented narrative structure of *The Scatter Here Is Too Great* functions as both form and metaphor for fractured identity. Through multiple perspectives and temporal disruptions, the writer mirrors the characters' psychological disarray. Aftab's lament—"I was born here, in this city, but I am not from here. I am too distant from everything I know to feel at home, and too close to ever be able to leave" (Tanweer 24)—captures this profound dislocation.

Fanon's assertion that "colonial violence disfigures not only the body but the mind" (*The Wretched of the Earth*)—resonates with Tanweer's portrayal of Karachi as a traumatized city. The bomb blast at the novel's core serves as both literal and symbolic fragmentation—echoing the explosion of identity and continuity within postcolonial life. The city becomes a real metaphor for the divided self, perpetually negotiating belonging and estrangement.

As Tanweer writes, “The city never lets you forget who you are, what you are, and who you belong to. But it never lets you feel at home either” (113). This paradox embodies the Fanonian condition: the colonized subject even after the political independence, remains psychologically unmoored.

Unraveling the Roots of Fragmented Identity: A Postcolonial Reading

Tanweer's Karachi is a city of migrants and memories, haunted by partition and subsequent waves of dislocation. The characters' attempts to reconstruct meaning amidst chaos parallel Fanon's notion of the colonized psyche struggling to reconcile fractures histories. The explosion motif in the novel literalizes this fragmentation, representing both destruction and the desperate urge for renewal.

Violence, in Fanon's view, is both a symptom and a response to colonial oppression. Tanweer's characters oscillate between silence, art, and memory as forms of resistance to fragmentation. Through Aftab's perspective, the novel demonstrates the emotional burden of living between worlds__ rooted yet uprooted, belonging yet alienated.

The City as a Postcolonial Psyche: Karachi as a Character

In *The Scatter Here Is Too Great*, Karachi emerges as more than a backdrop. It becomes a psychological entity, embodying the fractured consciousness of its inhabitants. The city's constant chaos, noise, and violence symbolize the collective trauma of postcolonial society still haunted by its colonial past. Fanon's theory that “colonialism leaves its indelible marks upon the urban space” is vividly illustrated in Tanweer's Karachi, where boundaries, divisions, and bomb blasts translate the internalized violence of the colonized mind into spatial form. The city's architecture__ crowded streets, broken buildings, and transient spaces__ reflect the disordered inner lives of the characters. By portraying Karachi as a fragmented organism, Tanweer transforms it into a symbolic mirror of the postcolonial psyche__ a city both alive and broken, much like individuals who inhabit it.

Inherited Wounds: Intergenerational Transmission of Colonial Trauma

The Scatter Here Is Too Great also captures how trauma and fragmentation are transmitted across generations, shaping identity beyond direct experience of colonialism. Aftab's reflections reveal an inherited sense of displacement and anxiety that echoes its parents' and grandparents' migration experience. Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* contends that the “poison of colonization seeps into the very veins of generations” a notion vividly illustrated in Tanweer's portrayal of post-partition Karachi. Even those born after independence carry the weight of unresolved histories, their identities haunted by collective memory. The younger generation in *The Scatter Here Is Too Great* inherits both the chaos of the city and the disillusionment of its elders. This continuity of psychological and emotional fragmentation reveals that decolonization, while political, has not yet achieved psychological liberation. Tanweer's exploration of generational trauma demonstrates that the process of reclaiming selfhood in postcolonial societies is slow, cyclic, and incomplete. The characters' struggles thus reflect a broader social reality__ one where the remnants of colonial domination continue to fracture both individual and communities.

Conclusion

Bilal Tanweer's *The Scatter Here Is Too Great* offers a compelling meditation on the fractured postcolonial self. Through its fragmented structure and multi-voiced narration, the novel captures the psychological disintegration of individuals shaped by violence, history, and displacement. Fanon's theory elucidates how these fractured identities reflect the enduring scars of colonialism—psychic wounds that persist in the collective consciousness of postcolonial societies.

Tanweer's Karachi thus becomes both setting and symbol—a site of chaos and resilience, disintegration, and rebirth. Ultimately, the novel challenges the notion of a unified identity, revealing instead a self that is dynamic, hybrid and perpetually in flux. In doing so, it affirms the enduring relevance of Fanon's insights for understanding identity formation in contemporary postcolonial contexts.



Works Cited

- Ashraf, Junaid. "Gender and Fragmented Identity in *The Scatter Here Is Too Great*." *Journal Of Postcolonial Studies*, vol. 12, no. 3, 2021, pp. 45-60. Bhabha. Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994.
- Farooq, Amira. "Trauma and Identity in *The Scatter Here Is Too Great*." *Contemporary Diasporic Narratives*, vol. 8, no. 2, 201, pp. 120-135.
- Haque, Sara. "Memory and Displacement in *The Scatter Here Is Too Great*." *Journal of South Asian Literature*, vol.10, no.1, 2020, pp. 87-102.
- Khan, Aliya. "Space and Identity in *The Scatter Here Is Too Great*." *Postcolonial Studies Quarterly*, vol. 5, no. 4, 2019, pp. 74-89.
- Khalid, Omar. "Fragmented Identities in *The Scatter Here Is Too Great*." *Postcolonial Identity Studies*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2021, pp. 63-79.
- Nadeem, Fatima. "Narrative Fragmentation and the Postcolonial Condition in *The Scatter Here Is Too Great*." *Journal of Postcolonial Literature*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2023, pp. 55-70.
- Rafiq, Kiran. "Language, Identity, and Displacement in *The Scatter Here Is Too Great*." *Language and Identity in the Diaspora*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2020, pp. 33-48.
- Saleh, Nadia. "Diasporic Experiences and Fragmented Identity in *The Scatter Here Is Too Great*." *Diaspora Studies Review*, vol. 13, no. 4, 2022, pp. 101-115.
- Tariq, Jameela. "Cultural Hybridity and Identity Fragmentation in *The Scatter Here Is Too Great*." *Journal of Contemporary Postcolonial Literature*, vol. 16, no. 2, 2018, pp. 50-66.
- Wodak, Ruth, and Ben Rampton. "Migration and Fragmented Identity: A Study of Diasporic Communities", *Language and Society in the Postcolonial World*, vol. 22, no. 1, 2006, pp. 129-144.

