“ALL MYTHS, ALL LIES:” HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY AND GENDER POLITICS IN SELECTED FICTION OF MOHAMMED HANIF

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NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN LANGUAGES

ISLAMABAD

April, 2024

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

In **English**

To

FACULTY OF ARTS & HUMANITIES

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN LANGUAGES, ISLAMABAD

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN LANGUAGES FACULTY OF ARTS & HUMANITIES

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Thesis Title: "All Myths, All Lies": Hegemonic Masculinity and Gender Politics in Selected Fiction of Mohammed Hanif

Submitted by: Sidra Ali Shah **Registration #:** 925-MPhil/EngLit/S21

Master of Philosophy

Degree name in full

English Literature

Name of Discipline

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I, Sidra Ali Shah

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Discipline English Literature

Candidate of **Master of Philosophy** at the National University of Modern Languages do hereby declare that the thesis **"All Myths, All Lies": Hegemonic Masculinity and Gender Politics in Selected Fiction of Mohammed Hanif** submitted by me in partial fulfillment of MPhil degree, is my original work, and has not been submitted or published earlier. I also solemnly declare that it shall not, in future, be submitted by me for obtaining any other degree from this or any other university or institution.

I also understand that if evidence of plagiarism is found in my thesis/dissertation at any stage, even after the award of a degree, the work may be cancelled and the degree revoked.

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ABSTRACT

This research attempts to explore the relationship between normative masculinities and the violence against women, minorities, and other marginalized subjectivities in Pakistan. My project is based on the premise that patriarchal domination begins among men by creating an internal hierarchy, as identified by R.W. Connell, which controls the subordinated and marginalized men by defining an idealized exemplar of masculinity and marginalizes women and femininity as the negative other. In Hanif's writings, we come across various characters that occupy positions of power and privilege by legitimating hegemonic ideals, as well as those who face abjection and violence for not conforming to these ideals. This thesis is thus a feminist study of Pakistani hegemonic masculinity and its socio-cultural, political, and historical dynamics in relation to violence against women and other marginalized subjectivities powerfully represented in Mohammed Hanif's *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* (2008), *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011) and *Red Birds* (2018). I approach Hanif's writings with theoretical underpinnings from a range of global scholarship on masculinities studies and feminism to identify the narratives that idealize hegemonic masculinity and their many implications, transitions and internal contradictions for a viable and effective feminist struggle in South Asia, and particularly in Pakistan.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CSMM	*Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities*
MM	*Men and Masculinities*
ACEM	*A Case of Exploding Mangoes*
OLAB	*Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisors Prof. Dr. Mohammed Safeer Awan, Dean Faculty of Arts and Humanities at the National University of Modern Languages (NUML), Islamabad, and Dr. Sana R. Chaudhry, former Assistant Professor at NUML, for their unwavering support, guidance, and mentorship throughout the entire journey of this thesis. Their dedication and constructive feedback have been instrumental in shaping this research and my intellectual growth.

I am also deeply thankful to Dr Inayat Ullah, who has been a constant source of encouragement and support, and the Department of English at NUML for facilitating me throughout the writing process.

Thank you, my dear teachers.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my children, Annabelle, Hunza, and Hussain. Creating a better world for them, and for all the children, everywhere, has been the strongest motivation that kept me going to complete this thesis.

CHAPTER 1

When I see through it, it's red.

- *Shah Hussain (translated by Mohammed Hanif)*

1.1. Introduction

More often than not, postcolonial fiction tends to incline towards a black and white understanding of postcolonial subjectivity where the us versus them trap undermines a nuanced and thus a closer to realistic understanding of the issues. The same can also be applied to academic research and scholarship: the Global North vs. the Global South, man vs. woman, patriarchy vs. women, pre-partition vs. post-partition and so on. While these binaries are crucial for establishing a subjective theoretical premise, there is often a missed possibility of looking beyond the black and white projection of gender conflicts on the individual as well as global level. Marginalization of women within a community often has a 'family resemblance' to the marginalization of the community as a whole[1]. If we talk about the discrimination against women in Pakistani society having a family resemblance to the abuse of the colonized in the Global South, the contradictions and paradoxes of the idealized 'self' represented by hegemonic masculinity must also be remembered. As a patriarchal society, the epicenter of political power in Pakistan lies in the notion of hegemonic masculinity, which controls and distributes power among men, albeit unequally, in a hierarchical gender order. In *Studying Men and Masculinities*, David Buchbinder observes that masculine power is not "something owned by individual males" but instead "something held out as promised to men" and as always only "provisionally held by individual males" (Buchbinder 80). But where does this power

[1] Family resemblance or 'likeness' is a philosophical term underlined by Austrian-British philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein in his theory of 'language games'. Taking the example of 'games' as a classification of similar kinds of activities, Wittgenstein proposes that when we categorize a number of things in a group, it might not be based on a single set of common features present in all the things in the group. Family resemblance in language, as in different kinds of games, is applied to a series of overlapping features that might be similar in some cases and not in others.

originate in societies like Pakistan? R.W. Connell, whose concept of hegemonic masculinity has been central to the men and masculinities studies scholarship, asserts that gender "is always relational, and patterns of masculinity are socially defined in contradistinction from some model (whether real or imaginary) of femininity" (Connell and Messerschmidt 848). In view of these reflections by Connell and Buchbinder, the notion of hegemonic masculinity is always an ideal to be achieved, and to be identified in reference to, both for men and women. Its power, therefore, originates in such imaginary exemplars of masculinity and femininity which reinforce unequal gender relations and a patriarchal gender hierarchy.

This research aims to deconstruct the cultural and historical meta-narratives of hegemonic masculinity and a complementary emphasized femininity in Pakistan through a reading of selected works of fiction by Mohammed Hanif. His fiction alludes to the lived subjectivities and minor histories not easy to locate within the totalizing meta-narratives of a mythical articulation of gender tied to the image of an emotionally strong (or desensitized) and physically tough, stoic Muslim male who protects his family's and community's honor by having absolute control over the lives of women in his patriarchal sphere. In Pakistan, Muslimness represents normative Pakistani masculinity, and a man from a minority religion occupies the position of subordinated masculinity. A non-Muslim Pakistani woman, therefore, is thrice marginalized in comparison to normative Pakistani masculinity.[2] Social subjectivity thus becomes coincidental with gendered religious identity, while nationality is also contingent upon religious affiliation. This basic structure becomes much more nuanced when various other markers, including class, race, and even political identities, are considered in the relational construction of gender. The nuances of gender in Pakistani writings are particularly complex considering the history of authoritarian regimes in Pakistan that left a legacy of cultural extremism

[2] In "Women Skin Deep", Sara Suleri asserts that laws in Pakistan are the ultimate authority on the lived experience of women. The inevitable result of Zia-ul-Haq's Islamization program was the curtailment of women's right to justice while curtailing a woman's testimony to half of that of a man. Suleri argues that the legislation was indeed "multicultural from the dark side of the moon" targeting women and non-Muslim men, while their evidence against a Muslim man was considered invalid according to Hudood laws (Suleri 767,766).

thriving on exclusionary rhetoric of idealized masculinities and femininities, giving way to a subculture of possession and control, which has further intensified gender conflict in an already patriarchal society.

Gender conflict, with all its inherent paradoxes, finds its due representation in Hanif's fiction which deals with the most contentious issues of power politics and gender oppression through satirical inversion and mythical surrealism. Hanif also belongs to the larger community of diaspora writers from the erstwhile colonized third-world countries. He migrated to the United Kingdom in the aftermath of censorship of his authorial voice, as his fiction predominantly represents such marginalized narratives that are denied any voice in the hegemonic and widely accepted or official meta narratives of his natal land of Pakistan. Hanif decided, however, to eventually return and settle down in Pakistan. Being a novelist and journalist, he builds up a strong connection between the two by addressing the most pressing issues facing contemporary Pakistani society: a culture of violence, gender conflict, religious and ethnic conflicts, class conflict and the role of militarization in the shaping of an authoritarian culture at the core of these conflicts. In an interview, he proclaims that "you can't match the absurdist comedy going on around yourself, I think people like me have to actually tone down stuff – believe me, my books are much less violent and less absurdist than the life on my street" (Singh). It is not just witnessing but also Hanif's investigative journalism on the crippling social and political realities of Pakistan that makes his fiction anarchic yet deeply humane.

Hanif's first novel, *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* (2008), is an unshrinking and unbelievably humorous satire of Gen Zia-ul-Haq's extra-constitutional and authoritative rule that left a far-reaching influence on Pakistani history, culture and society. All the human interaction in the novel is fundamentally framed within a militarized political space where hegemonic masculinities assume an over-arching control over the basic freedoms and lives of the individuals. Hanif's representation of masculinity, howesver, is not monolithic. More than a fixed character type, it is an intersectionality of race, class, ethnicity, religion and gender, which enables real men to occupy positions of power within a social structure of gender relations. In his second novel, *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011), Hanif views his society through the eyes of a four times marginalized subject, a Christian nurse, and once again presents an unflinchingly real image of life in one of the

largest metropolitan cities of the world, Karachi. Some writers seek to represent the marginalization of women as embellishments to their craft or zoological curiosities, such as the problematic characterization of Erica in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) by Mohsin Hamid, but Hanif's polyphonic fiction has a way of letting his characters and their subjective positions take over the narrative, revealing a rare, almost intuitive awareness of contradictory human instincts. He reproduces their fears as well as their wrath enfolded within the most brilliantly dark humor and irony. In a conversation with Asia Society, literary critic Dwight Garner asked Hanif how one prepares to write from the perspective of a female character, and Hanif's reply was that "you […] listen to them, just shut up and listen" (Asia Society 4:30–4:54). One of the central themes in Hanif's fiction is direct and indirect violence inflicted on women, religious and political minorities and other marginalized subject positions. The violence in *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* is represented on multiple yet interconnected levels: violence through language, violence through hegemonic ideology and violence against the body. This violence is perpetuated in defining and actualizing the social interaction between the male and female genders and the socio-political, religious and class hierarchies. The narrative of the novel is propelled by the power struggle which is at the core of a deeply patriarchal postcolonial society. In Hanif's fiction, the gender is intersectional, relational, and fluid.

The third and latest work of fiction by Hanif that I have selected for this study is *Red Birds* (2018). This text is a fitting choice for my research project as it moves the construction of gendered identities to the crippling conditions of an active war zone, which both complicates and critically informs my conceptualization of hegemonic masculinity. Hanif has employed an ambitious narrative technique here, in which all the central characters are protagonists in their own narrative. There is less direct violence depicted compared to his earlier novels, yet more gravity in how characters view the world around them. A peculiar sense of foreboding in Hanif's dark humor comes from his astute, unfiltered critique of Pakistani society as well as Western imperialism. The fact that he trained as a pilot in the Pakistan Air Force informs his keen insight and firsthand experience of military training and flying, which is a crucial element of his first as well as his third novel. *Red Birds* is a biting satire of the US foreign policy and military engagements in an unnamed country in the Middle East, Central Asia, or, most

probably, Pakistan's border with Afghanistan. Hanif says that his inspiration for the novel comes from the constant state of random wars which the world has been caught into after the end of the Cold War and the subsequent deaths, destruction and displacement/dislocation of the refugees and survivors of the war-torn areas in the Global South (17:21–18:30). The theme of how the perpetrators forget about distant/abandoned wars but the victims continue to live the trauma is evoked on multiple levels in *Red Birds.* The gendered subjectivities of characters contradict and challenge the hegemonic discourse, which places the 'humanity' of American hegemonic masculinity and femininity superior to the third-world Muslim masculinities and femininities. As the plot thickens, it reveals how the imperial wars have become insidious and indirect, yet all the more devastating through the gender hierarchies of a neoliberal capitalist world order.

Hanif's imagination is significantly informed by his work as an international journalist, and needless to say, his two occupations are characteristically interconnected. He has been actively reporting on the cases of illegal abductions and disappearances of political minorities in Pakistan, which is a major theme in *Red Birds*[3]. He has also been critical of the obsessive religious fundamentalism which has brought almost a paradigm shift in the cultural outlook of Pakistani society, particularly during and after the eleven years of General Zia's so-called Islamist rule. On this account, however, he had been censored from the mainstream print and electronic media in Pakistan and now works as a BBC correspondent. Hanif has a unique and prognostic sense of history, which comes from a remarkable access into the deepest recesses and intricacies of human experience. In *Red Birds*, the most intriguing character of Mutt, the philosopher dog, is Hanif's mouthpiece for a compassionate understanding of gender politics which could only be delivered by a character devoid of any gender, race, class, religion and nationality. However, his surrealism and cutting-edge satire are often not only misunderstood and condemned but ironically also considered a case for the very elements and centers of power that he aims to disarticulate and dismantle. The dark humor that Hanif employs in

[3] In his interviews, Hanif dedicates *Red Birds* to the memory of his friend and a prominent social and human rights activist, Sabeen Mahmud, who was shot dead in 2015, shortly after organizing a public discussion in Karachi about the disappearance of political activists. As a prologue to *Red Birds*, Hanif quotes a part of Mahmud's speech at the event.

deconstructing the myths of hegemonic ideologies and gender stereotypes is at times interpreted as a glorification of these stereotypes.

Through a close reading of the selected novels by Hanif in the context of the machinations and interests of local, regional and global hegemonic masculinities, this study aims to unpack the hitherto uninvestigated or overlooked link between Hanif's feminism and the structures of masculinities satirized in his fiction: between internal and external hegemony of the patriarchal gender order and its cost to women and non-hegemonic masculinities.

1.2. Thesis Statement

Hanif's fiction satirizes gender construction at work in Pakistani society that not only bears witness to the historical resistance of women and other marginalized subjectivities against regional and global hegemonies but also dismantles the grand narratives of race, culture, religion and gender that sustain patriarchal gender relations in the interest of hegemonic masculinity.

1.3. Research Questions

i. How does hegemonic masculinity bring into play the racial, cultural, religious and gender essentialisms to sustain patriarchal gender order in the selected novels?

ii. How do women and marginalized masculinities in Hanif's fiction resist and subvert the gender constructions upheld by hegemonic masculinity?

iii. How far and in what ways do the regional and global hegemonic masculinities interact in shaping each other and the non-hegemonic gendered subjectivities in the selected novels?

1.4. Significance of the Study

Hanif is among those Pakistani intellectuals who have often been marginalized and censored on the one hand for his razor-sharp satire on cultural and religious fundamentalism and the other for his unapologetic criticism of the hegemonic masculinities created through militarization of society. The paranoid surrealism in the fiction of Hanif is a representation of voices which are marginalized by the normative

hegemonic meta-narratives of cultural and nationalistic essentialisms. No substantial scholarly work has been produced on Hanif's fiction in Pakistani academia that addresses the need to disarticulate the structure of masculinities, which provides a rationale to explore the hitherto uninvestigated dimensions of Hanif's political narrative. There is also a need to explicate the full range of Hanif's employment of black humor to speak the unspeakable. My study aims to explore and interpret those aspects of the selected novels that bring hegemonic masculinity into light as the object of study for social activism and its implications for the gender dynamics in Pakistani society.

1.5. Delimitation of the Study

Owing to time and space constraints, my research is delimited to the textual analysis of three novels by Hanif, namely, *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* (2008), *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011) and *Red Birds* (2018). I approach these texts through engagement with the central theorists of hegemonic masculinity, feminist insights on the usefulness of CSMM for feminism, and the scholarship on militarism and masculinities. Due to the issue of accessibility to international archives as well as the lack of book-length research on Hanif, I have included the limited material available through the local archives, which, while not internationally recognized, do give important insight into how South Asian scholars have approached Hanif's writings to date.

1.6. Organization of the Study

I have organized my study according to the following research plan:

In chapter one, I introduce the premise and objectives/rationale of my study along with the controlling research questions. In chapter two, I review the existing scholarship on primary texts and the development of theories related to my project and locate the research gaps. In chapter three of my thesis, I outline the theoretical framework and research methodology that I have employed in my work. Chapters four, five and six comprise the textual analysis of my selected primary texts. In chapter seven, which is the last chapter, I discuss the findings of my research and suggested recommendations for the future direction of research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

Before undertaking the review of scholarship on Hanif's fiction for my research on South Asian Anglophone literature, I expected to find an overwhelming range of existing scholarship given the scope of Hanif's literature and its longstanding association with and importance for human rights issues, identitarian gender politics, the violence of regional and global hegemonic structures and the consequent erasure of indigenous history. However, as I embarked upon my research, it became evident that Hanif's fiction is surprisingly under-researched in some critical areas and remains short of establishing the crucial links between the resistance narratives that Hanif constructs through his fiction. One reason for this could be that these narratives defy any sense of absolutism, and therefore, any neat categorization of his fictional subjectivities, making it indeed a difficult task for the scholar to analyze his work within the larger paradigm of postcolonial fiction. Another reason could be the widespread implicit and/or informal censorship of the issues highlighted in his fiction. I was particularly in search of scholarly works on Hanif's depiction of the multiplicity and diversity of historical masculinities and their contextual sociopolitical projects, but surprisingly, there is no significant research carried out in this area. At present, scholarly research on Hanif's fiction through various theoretical frameworks focuses on the context of postcolonial literature, feminism, political historiography, subaltern studies and trauma studies, which I will review in detail in this section. Most of this research, however, is based on the textual analysis of his first two novels, *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* and *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*. The scholarship on *Red Birds* is limited so far, although the novel itself has been extensively reviewed and critically acclaimed by the international press.

This chapter is divided into three sections, including this brief introduction of the scope of the literature review, the main body of the review of secondary sources, and

conclusion. The second section of this chapter, which forms the main body of literature review, is further divided into two parts. As this study explores the historical construction of hegemonic masculinity and its relationship to violence against marginalized gendered identities and minorities in Hanif's fiction, the first part of this literature review will focus on the critical texts exploring the central concern of the study with reference to Hanif's fiction. I have been careful while choosing the secondary texts for review to avoid taking any irrelevant theoretical direction. However, due to a stark gap in writings exploring the construction of masculinities in Hanif's fiction, I have included the literary criticism that explores the feminist, socio-political, and existential themes in the selected primary texts as closely relevant and suggestive in understanding the context of this study. The second part of the literature review section includes an overview of theoretical interventions and summarizes the development of the concept of hegemonic masculinity, its relationship with feminism, and the valuable contributions of central theorists in both fields that helped me move forward in this interdisciplinary research project.

This chapter has also been particularly helpful in deciding the orientation of this research by identifying the areas that existing scholarship on Hanif's fiction has not ventured into, and the theoretical underpinnings that are relevant and useful for this analysis. The gaps that emerged in my critical readings enabled me to organize my research so as to make a fresh, timely intervention in the field of South Asian literature, and particularly Hanif's fiction.

2.2. Literature Review

In the interest of clarity, I have divided the literature review into two parts: the academic scholarship on Hanif's fiction and the development of relevant theory:

I. Representation of Hegemonic Masculinity in the Selected Fiction of Mohammed Hanif
II. Feminist and Masculinities Studies Scholarship on Hegemonic Masculinity

(I)

I was interested in the fact that while there has been considerable research published on Hanif's first two novels, most of this scholarly work has been directed towards the exploration of the political regime of Gen-Zia-ul Haq's military dictatorship in *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*, or the representation of the subaltern woman and feminist struggle in *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*. Both areas are indeed major themes in Hanif's fiction and closely related to the purposes of this research. However, my critical concern, i.e., the relational construction of masculinities through a hegemonic ideal which enables these systems of socio-political and gendered oppression has hardly been taken up in the current scholarship on Hanif. I address this lapse by establishing important links between the various themes explored in the existing studies and connecting the dots to present a more structured and comprehensive feminist interpretation of Hanif's novels. For this purpose, I study how gender is implicated in the structures of social subjectivity, institutions, laws, and cultural and historical narratives, which further develops and complicates the claims made by the existing scholarship on the writings of the distinguished author.

Tanvir, Arif and Hayat offer an analysis of praetorianism in *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*, interpreting Hanif's first novel as a national allegory which narrates various instances of General Zia's praetorian regime by contextualizing the socio-political history of Pakistan during the 1980's under his rule. Their ex-post facto investigation includes a detailed study of the colonial shape of Pakistani society and politics formed by the objectives and priorities of the early governments that came into power after the independence. The authors attach a historical significance to the novel as a fictional testimony to the military's role and interference in the civil administration and as a realistic account of General Zia's personality "as the Chief of Army Staff and afterwards as the elected president, who remained a perfect example of a praetor throughout his reign of a third world country, named Pakistan" (Tanvir et al. 97). Praetorianism is defined as an over-arching authority exercised by the armed forces of a country, permeating into the "interior life of a nation", that does not limit itself to international

wars and aspires to maintain its stronghold in the domestic politics and policy making to support either its corporate interests or a particular political ideology (97). A praetorian state is thus a state "where military rules in all the cases, though it be dictatorship or democratic government in the country" (98). These observations form the basis of my assertion that the ontological and epistemic effects of internal and external militarization of society by hegemonic masculinities go far beyond the duration of its military regimes.

The authors of the paper refute the widely held claim that it has been the dynamics of international politics and the failure of democratic structure which caused the military intervention in the country's internal affairs. They argue that the military coups in Pakistan were not preceded by any critical international crisis and suggest that to understand the unusual relationship of Pakistani politics with the military, it is pertinent to take into view the colonial legacy from which the relationship has advanced. However, Norbert Elias' notion that "colonialism is not simply a matter of legacy but of active, immediate and constitutive determinants" brings home the realization that the state's close alliance (or the ambivalent relationship) with the US since the 1950s played a key role in the increased militarization of the domestic sphere (98). The fact that Pakistan came into being as an insecure state with a defensive position against the very real threats to its survival also sealed the hegemony of its armed forces in the role of the saviour. The authors, however, do not venture into the cultural implications of valorization of war and excessive militarization of society and its effects on the gendered social behaviors of individuals. The dynamics of the US-Pakistan relations within the emerging neoliberal world order also need to be considered for a productive criticism of the militarized space in Hanif's fiction, which points towards a global process that intensified militarism in the region.

Qaiser Shehzad explores the manifestation of capitalism in *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* and traces the journey of Hanif's subaltern protagonist in an oppressive society divided in hierarchical classes on many levels. He considers Hanif's depiction of Alice's resistance against all odds heroic, as she is not ready to submit to the subjugating norms of patriarchy, classism and religious fundamentalism. According to Shehzad, she is triply marginalized, yet she speaks and fights back against the double standards of an unjust

system which insists on identifying her as an abject figure. A subaltern is a subject "socially and politically outside of the Hegemonic power structure" (Shehzad 63). Alice is marginalized by society due to her economic class, religious affiliation and, finally, her gender identity. She struggles to survive and claim respect in a hostile culture without trying to pass up as a Muslim. Shehzad argues that even though Alice is a subaltern, she is a subaltern who can speak with the courage to strike back and demands accountability from her oppressor. The author reads the novel through the lens of Gramsci's concept of hegemony in observing the materialism of a capitalist society that identifies or rejects individuals according to the established order of hierarchy, eventually leading to their total annihilation. As hegemony operates through a dominant ideology, it suppresses all the possibilities of an alternate reality.

In contrast to authority, hegemony is a "lived social process" informed by the dominant perspective of "values and beliefs" that appear to be the norm and are thus internalized as the only way of being a part of the society, and when myths fail to achieve consent, force is used (67). To explicate his argument, Shehzad states Gramsci's assertion that while force or coercion may be exercised by the state authority, consent is achieved through social institutions which are interconnected in an intricate web of capitalism. Gramsci's only hope is struggle for a new paradigm, a new culture, to gain a "new intuition of life" that replaces the old ways of interpreting reality (68). Referring to the question Hanif poses in the novel, "How can a person stand against a tyrannical system with empty stomachs and multiple frustrations?", Shehzad argues that Alice is a character who shows unusual courage, which is very much evident from the title of the novel where "Our Lady", according to him, depicts the respect she has gained through resistance (69). She acquires education in highly unfavorable circumstances, encounters religious intolerance at the nursing school, survives jail time and faces the court and justice system as a revolutionary figure. While Alice is courageous to the point of putting herself in danger by attacking the surgeon who implicates her in a false accusation, she is also smart enough to devise her own "survival strategies", simultaneously refusing to appease anyone against her integrity (70). When forced to perform fellatio by Begum Qazalbash's son, she daringly retaliates by slashing him with a razor blade. However, the incident becomes the cause of her decision to marry Teddy Butt, who becomes the agent of the

same class that denies her agency and finally kills her (72). Shehzad attributes Alice's suffering and her fateful end to the materialistic values of capitalism. He likens the act of pouring acid on her to the dissolution of her identity by an agent of capitalism. Shehzad's focus on capitalism as a driving force behind the division of society into hierarchical classes exposes the hegemony of the economic elite to maintain the status quo by regulating class segregation, which contributes to my analysis of the power struggle between gender and class subjectivities in Hanif's fiction. This analysis can be extended to explicate how the indigenous class system interacts with the global hegemony of neoliberal capitalism.

The question of subalternity, however, remains contested in some postcolonial critiques of the representation of women in Pakistani literature in English. Some scholars argue that Pakistani women are represented as victims of religious, cultural, and social violence in these works to the point of exaggeration. Abro Nazar claims to identify stereotyping strategies used in Hanif's work to represent Pakistani women by applying postcolonial scholar and theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's theory of the subaltern. She challenges the representation of Pakistani women as meek, helpless creatures devoid of any individuality and argues that it has only marginalized them even further. According to her, "Postcolonial societies have created their own subaltern[...] Phallocentric tradition has reduced the chances of women representation in literature" (Nazar 268). She supports her claim with Spivak's argument that when one attempts to represent another, they are caught in the dichotomy of self and the other. Spivak, in her 1988 seminal essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" argues that the disempowered became marginalia both in the writing of history and the dominant political discourse. Building upon this argument, Nazar asserts that Pakistani women are a myriad group of people living in diverse circumstances, and not only colonial representations of these women are faulty, but some native representations are also problematic. She applies Spivak's term "native informant" to accuse Hanif of being a "cultural sell-out" arguing that "these writers are unable to give voice to the subaltern because they are native informants, and they are speaking for the first world intellectuals" (Nazar 269). Nazar makes an interesting claim by asserting that the image of the subaltern Pakistani women is censored for this purpose, and the books written by authors like Hanif are only approved by

Western publishers as ‘counter canonical’ to the mainstream indigenous literature. According to her, Hanif’s privileged male subjectivity is a hurdle in his way to understand the Pakistani women. Since Spivak has given the verdict that the subaltern cannot be represented so “somewhere Hanif has further silenced Alice rather than giving voice” to her (269).

This attribution to Hanif’s fiction is not rare in the mainstream Pakistani media and is substantiated by the fact that Hanif could not find a publisher for his first novel in Pakistan and when it was translated to Urdu after ten years of its first publication, the copies were confiscated by the authorities. Academically, it is argued that his representation of the marginalized communities is not in the interest of the ‘subaltern’, as they cannot be represented. The opinion is conveniently advanced by seeking theoretical support from a simplified understanding of Spivak’s arguments, where she asserts that since the subaltern have no voice of their own and thus no history in terms of discourse, they cannot and must not be represented by the oppositional category of the ‘educated elite’. In Hanif’s context, it is interesting to look upon the literal meaning of the word subaltern, which according to the Oxford English dictionary is a low-ranking officer in the army, especially a second lieutenant, from late Latin *subalternus*, from *sub-* ‘next below’. By this definition, Hanif himself could be a subaltern as he had also been serving in the air force as a junior pilot officer. He successfully subsumes the experience of a military subaltern, through his characters, in the representation of hegemonic hierarchies which inform the cultural norms in a militarized society. At the same time, being a feminist in Pakistani society also puts him in a marginalized position.

Nazar also states that Hanif’s criticism of Pakistani society and culture is not only unbalanced but also biased in favor of the Western stereotypes. She renders it an ‘us versus them’ case and considers Hanif’s metaphor of the Sacred Heart Hospital for Pakistan misplaced. As she writes,

> It is the metaphorical description of the country[...]Sick Charya ward symbolizes the elite class of society. The class which is making laws and is involved in corruption… In Hanif’s world of fiction, every idea, every action performed by any department in Pakistan reaches through the dark siege. (273)

There is an unmistakable conceptual dissonance in this observation if we suppose that Charya ward represents Pakistan's ruling elite. Hanif's metaphor for Pakistan's ruling class is constructed from his peripheral vision of the ruling elite and not from the position of complicit inclusivity, which is evident in his satirical criticism of the bleak life at the Sacred Heart, while she claims that Hanif belongs to the native elite. We do not find any glorification of the actions or ideologies of the ruling elite in the novel. The difference between self-reflexivity and pandering to the West is conveniently ignored in her claims.

Nazar's claim that Alice is over-obsessed with her body also appears to be a misogynistic observation, which implies the normative hegemonic assumption in Pakistan that women's bodies do not belong to them. If, according to Nazar, Alice cannot walk in the street without being conscious of her body, it only proves the imminent threat to the sanctity of a woman's body in Pakistani society, the evidence of which can be gathered from daily newspaper reports. In "Pakistan: where daily slaughter of women barely makes the news", Hanif writes that given the dreadful number of women killed every year and

> Pakistan's rating as the sixth most unsafe country for women in the world, you would think there would be an urgent debate on the issue. You would expect parliamentary committees, thinktanks trying to figure out why are we killing so many women. But sadly, it's not on the national agenda. Whenever there is a debate […], (it) usually gets mired in religious dictums, western influences are blamed, and rape and domestic violence statistics are brought up. (Hanif 2)

He observes that at least one thousand women are killed every year in Pakistan in the name of honor ("Pakistan: Events of 2022" para 18). With this background, Nazar's argument that Alice's obsession has hampered her mental growth as "her whole being is defined by a pair of breasts and a vagina" appears to be a willful dismissal of the threat to women that looms large in Pakistani society (Nazar 275). It is difficult to concur with Nazar's observations and claims, as they appear to be lacking proper research on the plight of a triply marginalized woman in the current Pakistani society, which becomes four-fold in the case of Alice being a Christian nurse with the stigma of untouchability. After the promulgation of the Law of Evidence in 1984, the legal testimony of a non-

Muslim woman is one-quarter in value to that of a Muslim man which makes women from minority communities most vulnerable to violence (Dasgupta 228). Nazar's claim that the depiction of women in Hanif's novels serves only to further their unspeakability is not supported by sufficient evidence from the text. Through the narrative of Alice's struggle, Hanif shows that if the subaltern cannot speak, she can act. Alice might be a victim, but she is not a passive victim, as I will demonstrate in my thesis. Hanif's depiction of the intersectionality of Alice's gendered subjectivity indeed corresponds to the historicity of gender in the shaping of Pakistani society.

Ashraf and Farooq construe a postmodern transformation of history in *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* and argue that the novel, as a work of postmodern historiographic metafiction, reconstructs the traditional accounts of history through memory, parody, self-reflexivity, and intertextuality (Ashraf and Farooq 395). The authors explicate the interdisciplinary relation of fiction with other fields of discourse, especially history. Their research is based on the postmodern theoretical concepts of Canadian theorist and literary critic Linda Hutcheon. The postmodern debate in literary theory can be traced back to the 1970s, emerging as an extension and reaction against the modernist school of thought as a cultural development. Its significance is acknowledged due to its atypical treatment of truth, reason, power and language. Postmodernism thus stands for undoing the sense of completion or closure in thought, culture, and life as it came to be institutionalized in the second half of the twentieth century. It influenced and overturned the existing trends in every field of art, overthrowing the notion of singularity of truth and experience. Ashraf and Farooq highlight the contribution of theorists and philosophers such as Nietzsche, Hegel, Habermas, Foucault, Lyotard, Hutcheon and Derrida in inspiring postmodern criticism as a distinct academic field by questioning the status of knowledge in relation to various disciplines. The authors analyze various excerpts from *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* where the characters deliver personal commentaries on the history of partition and independence, which makes the novel a work of metafiction as it calls attention to its knowledge claims. They argue that both history and fiction are in a continuous process of making. Kamila Shamsie, in her article "The missing Picture", observes that a novelist builds upon silences, that is, those missing fragments of history which never make it to the official accounts or are relegated to its margins (Shamsie 10). The historiographic

metafiction thus "combines the 'constructedness' and 'story-telling' together" (Ashraf and Farooq 395). The authors find irony in the fact that socio-cultural and political situation of Pakistan remains the same, if not having been deteriorated, after gaining freedom and independence, while the ghosts of personal narratives of partition events continue to haunt and shape contemporary social behaviors. The researchers conclude that in *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*, Hanif establishes the postmodern connection "between past, present and future" which ought to be the direction that future research takes to recreate a society that gives space to the marginalized narratives (400). The multiplicity of history that Ashraf and Farooq derive from their interpretation of *OLAB* is a function of historiographic metafiction which provides a human dimension to the dehumanized official accounts of history through foregrounding of minor histories. For this purpose, as Ankhi Mukherjee argues in her 2009 research on deterritorialization of Indian and Pakistani novel in English, Hanif appropriates English together with the conventional folklore, cultural myths and even popular comics to "commute the acrolects, sociolects, and idiolects of a fauled [sic] state" (Mukherjee 290). In other words, as Mukherjee quotes Gauri Viswanathan in identifying a continental drift, Hanif "refocuses attention on language rather than the nation as the creative principle of literature" (Mukherjee 290).

Mushtaq Bilal presents a similar study of historical revisionism in his work titled "'Yes, I am Joseph Bhatti Choohra:' Reading Joseph Bhatti as a Palimpsest". Bilal reads Joseph Bhatti's instinct as the impulse of the "untouchable" which has developed through his "hereditary" impurity and survived through religious mobility in the context of the subcontinental history of caste hierarchies. He highlights the permanence of such a hereditary impurity that cannot be eliminated with any amount of ritual cleansing of the body. He considers Joseph Bhatti's awareness of his ascendency from the pre-Aryan aboriginal tribes as a project of "historical revisionism" (Bilal 2). Joseph Bhatti thus becomes the palimpsest of the historical, socio-cultural and political transformations and substantiations in the development and preservation of the caste system, which has survived through "the Aryan invasion, the inauguration of the Varna system, the Muslim invasion, and the British colonization" and "the Partition" (3). Bilal argues that the impurity of Joseph Bhatti contrasts with the "abstraction called Pak ness" of the society that represents the "land of the pure", and the word "Pak" in Pakistan "also has a

metonymic association with being a Muslim, as Rahmat Ali had articulated" (4). Such a notion of purity, he asserts, ironically takes up the very Brahmanical purity constructed against the untouchability of the Dalits, which prompted the mass conversions to Christianity in the late nineteenth century. Joseph Bhatti's instinctive awareness of the ailments choking the society that marginalizes him is as deep-rooted in the subcontinental history as the abjection ascribed to his Choohra caste. Culture takes precedence over religion in the intersectionality that excludes his caste and its subjectivity from the structural ideal of Pakistani society, which supports the claim of this research that Muslimness at the core of authentic citizenship in the hegemonic nationalist discourse is a constructed normative religiosity that cannot be disentangled from indigenous cultural sedimentation and the regional political history of masculinity.

In terms of historical construction of gender, the dismantling of hegemonic metanarratives is at its finest in *Red Birds*. Asim Karim sheds light on the importance of satirical humor in laying bare the cultural myths on "both sides of the novel's apparent binary: that is, the advanced neo-imperial US and an economically precarious Third World Muslim country" (Karim 747). He argues that while international media have perceived it as a satire of US foreign policy and its doctrine of 'preemptive war' being replaced by a new doctrine of 'preventive war', *Red Birds* is also a depiction of a third world society caught between a number of regressive, opposing forces. According to Karim, Hanif portrays the conflict between the globalized world and conservative social structures: or, between imperialist corporate designs and a third world country's economic and political destabilization driven by its "internal dynamics of greed and ineptitude" and "hankering for quick monetary gains" (748). The most significant element of US military intervention in the novel, Karim observes, is the manipulation of "local boys" to find targets and direct drone attacks, erasing the difference between civilians and combatants, ironically through a humanitarian and development discourse of the white saviour masculinity. In a perfect *Catch-22* situation, the imperial discourse of bringing peace and humanitarian aid to third world countries comes full circle by further alienating and dividing the inhabitants of the affected communities (Heller). *Red Birds* is an exposition of not only the imperial politics but also the local Muslim culture, which is plunged in a quagmire of its own absurdities, contradictions, and corruption. Karim's

research findings were informative in my exploration of fluidity and diversity of masculinities and how gender performance shifts according to its attachment, and sometimes, estrangement to the project of hegemonic masculinity in the war zone.

The satire in Hanif's fiction has been tenaciously committed to resisting the banalization of "the unspeakable violence and the vulgar disparity of life", to borrow Arundhati Roy's expression, through discourses of benevolent hegemony and sacrificial violence for nationalist, ideological, or global humanitarian causes (Roy 79). The trauma inflicted by the destruction of war in *Red Birds* displaces the victims and suspends the social structures that legitimate and enable the assumption of normative ideals of gender. Muhammad Ejaz Khan et al. trace the signs and symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) experienced by the characters in *Red Birds* through the lens of Raymond Benedict Flannery's theory, offering an awareness of the outcomes of trauma. When trauma causes arousal, intrusive, and avoidance symptoms, it is indicative of PTSD (59). The authors assert that works of fiction created around war and calamities are representations of psychological damage since fiction writers can look into the perturbed minds of characters affected by devastating experiences. They draw a connection between psychology and literature, as it deals with human life and its literary depictions, and argue that *Red Birds* attempts to provide a comprehensive view of psychological issues related to trauma.

War is a devastating experience that causes a heightened sensitivity in the affectees and develops a threatening implication for their well-being by inflicting their psyche and taking them to a hapless end. The study claims that all the central characters in *Red Birds* show symptoms of PTSD (60). A person who has PTSD tends to have "flashbacks, nightmares, evading events, thoughts, places, or spirits that recapture the trauma and feel nervousness", which leads to an unending repetitive experience of trauma (61). PTSD is a distinct response that is dissimilar to despair and the regular biological response to everyday life stress. The researchers found three kinds of symptoms of PTSD in the characters of Mother Dear, her fifteen-year-old son Momo, and Mutt (the dog who is a philosopher): intrusive, avoidant, and arousal symptoms. Mother Dear shows intrusive symptoms where she tends to go back in time and relive the past again and

again. Momo shows signs of evasion by escaping reality, while Mutt responds with hyper-arousal, vigilance, and over-reaction (61). The study concludes that the symptoms of PTSD are experienced differently by Mother Dear, Mutt, and Momo based on their experiences or subject positions (65). While the other two are occasionally distracted, Mother Dear shows the most debilitating signs of trauma after her son, Ali goes missing and it haunts her until she finds out that he was killed by the US troops at the Hangar.

The study provides an important interpretation of the novel by exploring the various facets of trauma experienced by the inhabitants of refugee camps in war-torn areas. The identification of the symptoms of PTSD in the characters of *Red Birds* gives a crucial dimension to my analysis of the crisis of gender order that confronts the victims of trauma in conflict-hit areas as they struggle to construct their gendered identities from the remains of war. Momo's thwarted masculinity challenges the imperial narrative of the "Young Muslim Mind", while also defying the regional hegemony of militarized masculinity.

(II)

To proceed with a non-essentialist feminist depiction of the ubiquity of gender structure in Hanif's fiction, I have reviewed theories of feminism, men and masculinities studies, and other related concepts where gender politics in regional and global spheres is theorized in terms of the construction of hegemonic masculinity. The emergence of a vibrant field of scholarship on men and masculinities in the 1980s added a new dimension to the feminist understanding of gender relations. Many feminist scholars have welcomed the opportunity to advance their research in different fields by incorporating critical insights about the construction of masculinities and looking for ways in which an essentialized notion of masculinity as inherently toxic and oppressive can be subverted to present more effective strategies of resistance. In this section, I track the key developments in the concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' —from its emergence in relationship to feminist movements in the West to the development of its current theoretical form in South Asian scholarship— to understand how it is both challenged

and assimilated in the cultural and historical context of Hanif's fiction. I will take R. W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt's 2005 collaborative publication "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept" as the tipping point that prompted a series of theoretical concerns critical to my thesis.

The concept of a hierarchical structure of masculinities was first presented as a critique of the male sex role essentialism in "Towards a New Sociology of Masculinities" and later systematized in *Gender and Power* and *Masculinities* to analyze power relations through hegemonic masculinity and essentialized femininity (Carrigan et al. and Connell). It was also the time when feminist theoretical interventions by women of color drew attention to the overlooked race bias "that occurs when power is solely conceptualized in terms of sex difference" (Connell and Messerschmidt 831). A hegemonic masculine subject position thus evolved out of the need to develop a nuanced, diverse, and nongeneralizable notion of masculinity in contradistinction to the radical feminist idea of masculinity as singular, toxic, and biologically determined to be violent. According to Connell and Messerschmidt, critical research on masculinities was motivated by feminist theories of patriarchy and the Gramscian idea of hegemony as an invisible power gaining prominence in the 1970s. Concurrently, social sciences researchers provided empirical data showing multiple constructions of masculinities and local gender hierarchies in different sociopolitical settings. Connell and Messerschmidt defined hegemonic masculinity as a pattern of practice that legitimates and maintains men's domination over women, and it is differentiated from subordinated or marginalized ways of practicing masculinity. While not statistically dominant, as only a minority of men might practice it, hegemonic masculinity represents *the* appropriate way of being a man, placing all men in relation to it and legitimating a subordinate status of women. The initial formulation in *Gender and Power* presented a single pattern of global dominance of men over women, which, Connell admits, was:

> Inadequate to our understanding of relations among groups of men and forms of masculinity and of women's relations with dominant masculinities. For instance, dominance in gender relations involves an interplay of costs and

> benefits, challenges to hegemonic masculinity arise from the "protest masculinities" of marginalized ethnic groups. (847)

The authors assert that the concept of hegemonic masculinity is manifested most powerfully in relation to complicit men and women who benefit from patriarchy without practically asserting male dominance. It demonstrated that hegemony is not always achieved through violence; culture and institutions are the key elements in establishing consent or even reverence for a hegemonic ideal of masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity supports the patriarchal model of gender relations and hierarchies that are subject to historical change.

Since masculinities are constructed and reconstructed in changing circumstances, there is always an active contestation for hegemony which requires regular adjustment and change across time, location, and various other axes of intersectionality like race, class and culture. By applying Demetrakis Z. Demetriou's notion of dialectical pragmatism, Connell highlights how various forms of masculinities impact each other and the hegemonic form changes by incorporating certain practices/narratives of non-hegemonic patterns of masculinity, which indicates the latter's agency and viability (847). She defines "protest masculinity" as a marginalized pattern of masculinity which "embodies the claim to power typical of regional hegemonic masculinities" but does not have the economic privilege or institutional authority that underwrites the hegemonic pattern (848). Such masculinities are to be either incorporated into a prevalent gender order or discredited through discourse, and to be discredited means to be symbolically as well as actively oppressed through violence.

All hegemonic and non-hegemonic forms of masculinity are defined in relation to an emphasized femininity; therefore, Connell argues, it is essential to pay attention to the complicit femininities and the historical interdependence of masculinities and femininities. She asserts that the agency of the subordinated groups is as critical as the power of dominant groups in understanding the constitution of gender hierarchy. Though Connell's formulation of relational masculinities is critical in my study of the multiplicity of masculinities in Hanif's fiction, the notion of gender construction mainly through

consent for hegemony cannot be easily mapped onto the embodiment of gender in the cultural and historical environment that Hanif constructs.

Moving on from this foundational aspect, the location of masculinities, social embodiment, and gender dynamics are key areas for the exploration of diversity in masculinities. From a geographical perspective, the essay draws a pattern of local and regional constructions of masculinities in relation to the processes of neoliberal globalization and, in due course, a global hegemonic masculinity. Christine Beasely, in her 2008 paper "Rethinking Hegemonic Masculinity in a Globalizing World" points out the discursive ambiguity in the use of the term and the political implications of Connell's formulation. Quoting William Connolly from *The Terms of Political Discourse*, she asserts that "conceptual disputes […] are surface manifestations of basic theoretical differences that reach to the core" (Beasley 87). Her claim is that a 'slippage' has occurred in the deployment of the term 'hegemonic masculinity' as a framework for the analysis of masculinities in the global context, which, according to her, "may be summarized as a slippage between its meaning as a political mechanism tied to the word hegemony […] to its meaning as a descriptive word referring to dominant (most powerful and/or most widespread) versions of manhood" (88). She finds it deterministic to equate the *dominant* masculinities with the *hegemonic* forms of masculinities that authorize men's superordination over women. The notion of hegemonic as also socially dominant may lead to a fixation with actual groups of men or personality types instead of subjective positions or praxis. While acknowledging the usefulness of actual groups of men for political activism, as in identifying the 'human face' of gendered powers, she warns against undermining its consequences for the same. Beasely's suggestion to deal with this conundrum is to extricate hegemonic from merely dominant (widespread) masculinity. In her view, "while actual working-class men may not wield institutional power, muscular working-class manhood is commonly employed as a highly significant mobilizing cultural ideal intended to invoke cross-class recognition and solidarity regarding what counts as a man" (90). This approach has been critically important for my understanding of how Hanif problematizes a straightforward transfer of patriarchal privilege to complicit and subordinate masculinities in the selected novels.

Moreover, Beasley identifies a theoretical underdevelopment of the term in Connell's 2005 work that magnifies when applied on a global level. The author challenges Connell's assertion that transnational business masculinities occupy world hegemonic status and argues that it underlines an inclination to understand masculinity merely in terms of class relations and ignores the military and political power in the representation of world hegemony. Giving precedence to a substructure which is "comparatively passive and responsive" in constructing relations between men also ends up excluding the role of women in the development of world history out of focus. Her 'rethinking' of the concept offers a narrowing down of the meaning of the term with a simultaneous taxonomical expansion of subjectivities to highlight various alternative forms of masculinity. To resist the slippage towards "the monolithic, global hegemonic status of a specific group" of actual men, she defines hegemonic masculinity as "a political ideal or model, as an enabling mode of representation, which mobilizes institutions and practices" to promote hegemonic scripts and establish solidarity between men (93).

The antagonism of MM studies scholars to the 'symbolic' or 'discursive' representation creates a divide between the discursive and the material, with an emphasis on the latter as decisive in constituting gender relations. Connell supports this distinction in *Masculinities* by arguing that "discursive approaches have significant limits. They give no grip on issues about economic inequality and the state" (Connell XIX). Indeed, the contradiction between Connell's insistence on maintaining a distinction between nonmaterial and material while defining hegemonic masculinity as an 'ideal masculinity' is followed by an erratic understanding of global hegemony as a top down and primarily economic process. Beasley notes that a regional (in this case, Australian) hegemonic construction is extrapolated to the global context without an engagement with critical globalization research, which shows that globalization discourses generate material consequences for the international political economy and the construction of gender relations. From this view, transnational business masculinity could be seen as an influential model driving material processes *associated* with the project of globalization. What is required here, according to the author, is a dissociation of the concept with mere social dominance along with a demassification of a singular monolithic global hegemonic

pattern. For this purpose, she proposes a taxonomical expansion to include more terms like "*supra* and *sub* hegemonic" to further break down the hierarchy within hegemonic models to represent local hegemonic masculinities which Connell herself identifies as "tactical alternatives" to maintain hegemony in specific sociocultural settings (Beasley 98, Connell 847). From Beasley's criticism it can be inferred that her primary concern here is to reduce the apparent ambiguities in the definition of the concept by drawing the focus on its function as an ideational force that enables political mobilization for the construction of masculinities and femininities. It cannot be refuted that the material and the discursive are not distinctly separate spheres. As I show in my analysis of Hanif's fiction, actions, or performances, that construct and reconstruct gender relations and hierarchies are directed and controlled by cultural and political discourses.

To be sure, the discord between feminism and masculinities studies lies beyond these surface arguments: the so-called incompatibility between the conceptual tools deployed in the development of their respective theoretical positions. Kalle Berggren, in her 2018 essay "Is Everything Compatible? A Feminist Critique of Hearns Composite Approach to Men and Masculinity", took up Beasley's understanding of the 'muddled manner' in which men and masculinities scholars tend to unite the structuralist and post-structuralist paradigms without attending to the (in)compatibility between the two approaches. She criticizes the work of Jeff Hearn, who is considered one of the central figures in the field, for insufficient recognition of the contradictions that arise out of this arbitrary engagement of his theoretical ideas firmly rooted in the radical feminist Marxist tradition with the deconstructionist feminist approaches. Hearn keeps the binary oppositions like materialism/idealism intact and rejects the pluralization of masculinities as taking the focus away from "men's practices" and insists on identifying "the hegemony of men" in contrast to "hegemonic masculinity" (334). This commitment to identifying men as men and as inherently patriarchal is, according to Berggren, not consistent when he also finds the multiplicity in masculinities useful in referring to "various things associated with men" and such a position "undermines the whole men-over-masculinities movement" (335). By giving an ambivalent approval to the multiplicity of masculinities and patriarchies, Hearn aspires to incorporate plural perspectives from feminism and sexuality studies, but on the other hand, he accepts the

proposition that it is impossible to reform masculinity, so it needs to be abolished. His theoretical affinity with Marxist radical feminism presents men as a "gender class" and subsume all other power relations under economic relations (333). Consequently, his take on the concept of intersectionality is dismissive of its origin in anti-racist feminism.

Berggren argues that despite the efforts to be more inclusive, the formulation Hearn offers is, at best, a paradoxical account of conflicting perspectives rooted in irreconcilable philosophies. His foundational and unwavering distinction between cultural and reproductive, or discursive and material, renders men and masculinity theorizing at odds with the feminist deconstruction of binary gender identities. In this, notwithstanding his pro feminist agenda, Hearn falls into the same trap he warns against: "citing feminist work and then continue with the study of men without following through the implications of that work" (340). I find the discord between the rigid emphasis on the fixed materiality of the body as the origin of gender construction by masculinity scholars and the feminist concern with an equally critical influence of discursive formations absorbed in the lived experience of Hanif's characters. When it comes to the manifestation and implications of hegemonic ideals, the body becomes the ultimate site of assimilation or refutation of social practice making it a historical and cultural citation for the reconstruction of discursive ideals.

Berggren's disappointment with Hearn's dual ambition and her inference that it is not possible to reconcile the developments in feminism with CSMM's predominantly modernist frame of reference becomes less definitive in the light of Beasley's another essay published in 2020. In this article, Beasley views feminism and men and masculinities studies spread across a continuum within the field of Gender Studies and argues that since CSMM emerged with a pro-feminist perspective, it is not possible to disentangle the subfields without breaking down the linkages that contributed to their development. She acknowledges the delayed engagement of men and masculinities theorizing with the postmodernist thinking and the significance of social constructionism for its scholarship yet maintains that this should not imply that these theoretical trajectories are necessarily oppositional, as far as they are useful for understanding the construction of masculinities and femininities. This approach articulates a more

appropriate understanding of what Hearn perhaps aimed to propose: the raison d'etre of feminist and men and masculinities scholarship is the same, i.e., the subversion of existing gender hierarchies. Therefore, to challenge a power structure which is constantly shifting and mutating, it is rather productive to approach it from all the possible angles rather than a single perspective (more on this in chapter 3). Hanif's polyphonic narrative can indeed be a case study of how modern and postmodern thinking must essentially interact to create a substantial response to the issues of power and the distribution of violence.

A comprehensive contemporary overview of scholarship on hegemonic masculinity, its appropriation across various academic fields and the maturation of the concept through dialogue with feminist critics is presented in Messerschmidt's 2018 publication titled *Hegemonic Masculinity: Formulation, Reformulation, and Amplification*. This book is an attempt to refine the concept by focusing on the "structured action theory" that delineates the relationship between hegemonic masculinity and intersectionality, embodiment, and the challenges posed to it. Besides reasserting the difference between dominant and hegemonic masculinities, terms such as "hybrid" and "fleeting" hegemonic masculinity are introduced, considering new research (Messerschmidt 82, 92). The evidence for such diversity in masculinities and the differences among the variety of hegemonic masculinities at local, regional and global levels show that they have a ubiquitous presence and are often hidden in 'plain sight', disseminating the "cultural knowledge people utilize to guide their gendered social action" (106). Gender inequality is thus obscured within social structures that are both produced by and, in turn, recreate culturally ascendant gender relations.

Conceptualizing hegemonic masculinity in terms of structured action theory draws attention to the reflexive construction of gender as an embodied social relational project. Messerschmidt argues that "doing sex and gender" is an ongoing process where individuals, having *attached* themselves to a fundamental project of gender, must continually make reflexive choices and "construct patterns of embodied presentations and practices" in varying sociocultural and historical circumstances (113). These choices are guided by ever impending accountability implicit in how the embodied practices qualify

to align successfully with the available social structures and how others interpret them. Therefore, the process of 'doing' gender that corresponds to sex involves reflexivity through deliberation over the desired outcomes and possible consequences. In this view, personal agency is actualized in "reflexive and embodied structured action" (118). To be sure, people decide to perform gender in certain ways within the constraints of contextual relational and discursive social structures that are interdependent and provide a sense of reality as *the* truth. However, a gap always remains between discursive social structures and their actualization through embodied social practices. Reflexivity may give way to subversion of these structures, and new configurations of practice may evolve as a form of resistance. A "dualism rather than duality occurs", argues Messerschmidt, "whereby structure and action are disconnected" (119). This notion of reflexive agency may work in different and unequal ways depending on the axes of intersectionality, as we witness in Hanif's novels.

The relational approach of structured action theory is also amplified in another dimension. The author identifies a trope of the "hero-villain" relationship between hegemonic and subordinate masculinities represented in the foreign policy speeches of US Presidents during the invasion of Iraq and in the aftermath of 9/11. In this discourse, hegemonic masculinity assumes the heroic role of saviour in the global war on terror to protect the helpless, victimized people of the world from 'global terrorists' like "Osama Bin Laden, Al-Qaeda, the Taliban, Saddam Hussein" (80). This otherwise relevant illustration takes a bizarre turn when Messerschmidt identifies the "benevolent" and "compassionate" hegemonic masculinities of the US presidents as a challenge to the notion of hegemonic masculinity as essentially "pernicious and toxic" (81). In *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*, Hanif controverts the discourse of US commitment to the so called War on Terror by a humorous account of the presence of OBL (Osama Bin Laden) at the Fourth of July party at the American Ambassador Arnold Raphael's residence (Hanif 207). The failure of Messerschmidt's perspective to follow the historical dimensions of the Global War on Terror and its consequences for the 'Other' people of the world highlights the same lack of "paradigms of explanation" from global South that Connell highlights as the dilemma of the global privileging of the Northern theory (Connell 520).

I will come back to this self-attribution of benevolent violence in my review of Moolji's deconstruction of sovereign attachments.

From what Messerschmidt elucidates in a different context, I identify the hegemonic masculinities in the Global War on Terror as contradictory, hybrid and "hidden in plain sight" (Messerschmidt 82, 83). Shenila Khoja Moolji explicates a similar mechanism of regional hegemonic masculine constructions in her 2021 publication *Sovereign Attachments*. Through the mechanism of hegemony, she explores how public consent for the project of sovereignty at the regional level is secured through cultivating emotional attachments to contextual power relations. The claim to sovereignty over a territorialized nation or community, both by state and non-state actors, is contested in a militarized society by working and reworking of memory and, ironically, by invoking the same figurations of attachment to the hegemonic masculinity. A comparison can be drawn here between what Connell and Messerschmidt identify as the moment of engagement and what Moolji calls the moments of attachment that "are often accompanied by the re-citation of the old othering figures, and creation of new ones: fictionalized enemies, objects subjects in danger, and agents ideally placed to undertake rescue" (Moolji 3). The conceptualization of the ideal public is achieved through affective politics, which involves feelings and emotions. Taking the case of Pakistan, she carries out a discourse analysis of autobiographies, newspapers, magazines and media representations to posit how cultural scripts of gender and Muslimness are mobilized to recapitulate the sovereignty of competing hegemonic masculinities. A normative representation of religion and gender interacts with race, class, culture and ethnicity to engender a hegemonic masculine entitlement to violence and the 'body' emerges as the ultimate site of contestation to uphold the contradictory narratives of absolute sovereignty. Moolji identifies "Islamo-Masculinity" as the culturally ascendant performative that binds the "paternal and fraternal publics" together in their political attachments to legitimate violence in the service of national sovereignty (4). Moolji's conceptualization of Islamo-masculinity directly corresponds with the regional and global hegemonic masculinities Hanif represents in *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*.

Since the claim to sovereignty is performative, there are also moments when estrangements surface, in contrast to attachments, that do not validate the hegemonic projects. These divergent publics are actively countered through a discourse of exclusion and/or disciplinary action, and the hegemonic ideal thus prevails with necessary adjustments. For instance, the kinship metaphor of a mourning mother who reframes the loss of her son as a sacrifice to the national (or global) cause has occasionally been challenged by the protests of grieving mothers who demand accountability from the state. Among various marginalized subjectivities in Hanif's novels, the femininity of Mother Dear in *Red Birds* is the exact embodiment of such an estrangement, which betrays the fabrication and constructedness of nationalist and ideological attachments that claim absolute power over minds and bodies. Individual resistance to these attachments is dismissed as an anomaly lying outside the normative relational social structure and is conveniently erased through discredit. When these estrangements emerge in the form of political activism, militant uprisings, and imperial challenges to sovereignty, a shifting strategy is adopted whereby the dissenters are either appeased through negotiation or termed as villains to prepare grounds for counter insurgency, which explains the paradox of US-Pakistan relations on the international level, as depicted in Hanif's fiction, and the indigenous public sentiment in Pakistan.

The hegemonic masculine sovereignty is maintained at local, regional, and global levels through the discursive and relational reiteration of an Islamo-Masculinity as the "natural, singular" claimant to legitimate violence (Moolji 13). Referring to the works of feminist scholars like Rubina Saigol, Moolji observes that popular and cultural texts "inform public opinion over who must die and who deserves protection" (14). Subjects are included in or excluded from the sphere of belonging based on their symbolic attachments to "masculinity, heteronormative family life, honor, normative Islam, and past Muslim glory" (15). What the author demonstrates by the discourse analysis of famous autobiographies of former prime ministers (including Benazir Bhutto) and military publications such as *Hilal for Her* is that the contribution of women and female bodies is crucial in the construction of hegemonic masculinity, which draws power from the emotional and reproductive labor of women. Sometimes, women are facilitated to break the gendered norms, but only in the name of strengthening nationalist sovereignty

and not as a performance of individual autonomy, which keeps their gendered subordination intact, which is highly relevant to the depiction of the First Lady in Hanif's first novel (139). Her argument that in Pakistan, the hierarchy of masculinities is structured in a specific postcolonial context is also well-supported by Mrinalini Sinha's exploration of the historiography of colonial India for the study of South Asian masculinity.

To detach male bodies from a static concept of masculinity, it is imperative to understand masculinity not as a fixed attribute of male bodies but rather as something that is both formed by and integral to a wide range of social interactions. Sinha emphasizes the need to study masculinity within specific historical and cultural contexts and argues that the contestations of political power in precolonial and colonial India should be given due consideration in studying the historical mapping of qualitative attributes as markers of gender (Sinha 446). The shifting of the ascription of manliness in relation to the codes of Mughal imperial masculinity to British imperial masculinity in the late eighteenth century provides a rich sociopolitical context to the gendered power dynamics that shaped the history of men and masculinities in the region. Moolji's view is that it is against the loss of political sovereignty that the colonial Indian Muslim elite began to evoke the notion of divine sovereignty and its materialization on earth through 'ummah' (Moolji 18). The political community thus mobilized attached itself to the project of a modern nationalist Islamo-masculine hierarchy in the postcolonial nation-state, and it remains the historic bloc in the subsequent constructions of hegemonic masculinities since partition.

Fatima Syeda has carried out commendable research on the representation of male bodies in Partition fiction as equally receptive to power dynamics as female bodies, in terms of colonial and postcolonial subjectivity and as "a site for violent markings inscribed by the communal, cultural and political agencies" (Syeda 157). Her analysis of the experiences of both complicit and subordinated men indeed highlights how they must pay the cost of masculinity whether they choose to conform to the hegemonic ideals or attempt to resist and subvert them, albeit in different ways. She argues that in their encounter with colonial oppression and in the face of the violence of partition, men chose

to inflict violence to remain attached to their socially defined masculinities to avoid emasculation. In some cases, when they resisted the gendered expectations that arise from the myth of masculinity as naturally aggressive and violent, they were rendered incapacitated and emasculated for failing the test of normative masculinity. Syeda's research is focused on how the binary gender discourse has harmed not only women but also men through emotional and physical violence. She writes that "[t]he bodies of both the genders were thus rendered 'docile' in the wake of the brutality executed during Partition. Rather, in the cases of forcible conversions, male bodies were more susceptible to be encoded and remodeled" (Syeda 253). The violence committed upon male bodies is intentionally silenced for the same reasons that suffocate the voice of violated women, i.e., the communal and cultural notions of honor and shame. Referring to John Munder as quoted by Ira Brenner, the author brings attention to the conflicting masculinities assumed by men to assert that "'Men … struggle against two dangers—the danger of succumbing to their feminine nature and the danger of affirming their masculine integrity through repeated acts of aggression'" (qtd. in Syeda 86). It is important to remember that Syeda's research is rooted in the fictional representations of the subordinated men under direct colonial rule and during the Partition and the secession of East Pakistan, which indeed are some of the most critical events that inform the historical construction of masculinities in Pakistan. While she successfully demonstrates the often overlooked vulnerability of men's bodies in the light of the trauma of colonial and communal/ethnic violence rampant in the subcontinent during these events, as represented in literary texts such as Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India,* Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, and Sorayya Khan's *Noor*, her research also provides an opportunity to explore some of the key hegemonic masculine "social and discursive formations which have strengthened the conventional image of masculinity" in the region (257). Her question that if men are also victims of gendered violence, then "who is the real perpetrator?" can be answered through an investigation of the historical regional and global sociopolitical dynamics that enable an internal hierarchy of masculinities in the postcolonial state, as represented in Hanif's writings (257).

To sum it up, the interaction between MM studies and postmodern feminism on the theoretical limitations of the concept gives way to a less ambiguous and more

nuanced formulation that foregrounds the symbiotic relationship between the discursive and the material in the construction of hegemonic masculinities. This development is more evident in the works of South Asian feminists like Sinha and Moolji, who draw on the historical and sociopolitical context of gender construction in the region before, during, and after the British colonial rule. The historical ruptures as well as continuities in the changing discourses of competing local, regional, and global hegemonic masculinities show how their actual representation remains ever elusive. However, the relational effect it engenders in the subordination of women and ethnic and religious minorities through symbolic and physical violence and destruction of life remains constant, which becomes evident from the review of the existing scholarly works on Hanif's fiction in the first part of this section. The studies of praetorianism, capitalist exploitation, religious discrimination, violence, and PTSD in these writings can be reframed by a gendered perspective to locate the origin of power that sanctions the symbolic and actual violence inherent in these phenomena.

2.3. Conclusion

This literature review points out the lack of critical engagement with the construction of hegemonic masculinity from a feminist historical perspective and the dynamics of gendered subjectivities structured in relation to such idealized masculinity in Hanif's fiction. To my knowledge, there is no research on the depiction of militarized masculinity in *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*, while the research on *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* is overwhelmingly focused on the victimization of Pakistani women.

An overview of theoretical works on the concept of hegemonic masculinity highlighted differing historical and geographical dimensions that regional hegemonic masculinities have been conceptualized in global scholarship. There are also discords between the feminist and masculinities studies theorizing that are not remarkable in the works of South Asian scholars. The concept of hegemonic masculinity and its feminist criticisms have helped me identify the gaps that were useful in outlining my theoretical framework to analyze the depiction of hegemonic masculinities in the selected primary texts, which I will discuss in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. Introduction

A review of the secondary sources in Chapter 2 has been helpful for me in framing a suitable theoretical approach for the analysis of Hanif's fiction. In this chapter, I discuss in detail the concepts of hegemonic masculinity and the intersectionality it creates in the South Asian context of the selected texts and explain the reasoning behind the approach I have thus developed. My research approach is mainly interpretive, exploratory, and situational, but potentially relevant in global contexts. I will explicate the theoretical underpinnings that inspire the direction of this research project in the following sections and then illustrate my research methodology.

3.2. Why Men and Masculinities?

The study of gender politics in Hanif's fiction has mainly been carried out from feminist theoretical perspectives that focus on the marginalization of women and minorities in a vacuum. Without a broader, gendered understanding of the cultural, legal, and geopolitical history of Pakistani society that has been shaped primarily by relations and interactions between men as men, and without enabling a consciousness of the cost of normative masculinity for men, feminist theory and social activism remains inadequate to mount any pressure for change in the hegemonic structures that enable systematic oppression. Therefore, to analyze the significance of Hanif's fiction for its overarching political purpose, it is important to create an interdisciplinary framework that charts the grey areas in the lived experience of his characters. The multiplicity of voices and gendered subjectivities in Hanif's narrative prompted me to look beyond the binary of man and woman, masculinity and femininity, victim and perpetrator, and follow the ideas and ideals that propagate these unequal binaries.

I have borrowed certain theoretical underpinnings from the works of feminist and men and masculinities studies theorists like R.W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, Chris Beasley, Mrinalini Sinha, and Claire Duncanson, that engage with cultural concepts of gendered subjectivities, the stereotypical norms, and figurations that they raise for both women and men, and their manifestations in the forms of race, class and religious marginalization. While it is a strenuous exercise to engage both modern and postmodern theoretical paradigms, I will outline an interdisciplinary approach that considers both the modernist identification of gender binaries and the postmodern interventions in terms of subjective truth. Feminist theorists have been developing their conceptions based on the experiences of women and other marginalized subjectivities. However, as it is widely acknowledged that gender inequality is produced by systemic privileging of the perceived interests of men over women, it is not possible to work towards a future of gender democracy without studying the dynamics of hegemonic gender order. I take Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity as my theoretical point of departure to highlight the construction of multiple masculinities in terms of their relation to women and other men, and the choices these masculinities make either in pursuit of hegemony or due to the fear of thrown into abjection by the society.

The institutionalization of Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities emerged in response to a simmering concern of radical feminism in the 1970s and 80s: "Can men be subjects of feminist thought?" (Hearn and Howson 20). These feminists argued that men have always enjoyed an 'absent presence' as the apodictic subject of scholarship in almost every field of study, and this presence has always been taken for granted, where men and masculinity were largely seen as "ungendered" and "naturalized" point of reference to explain everything else about human nature and sociability (19)[4]. This theoretical turn in feminist thought led to several interdisciplinary studies focusing on men and masculinities as gendered categories. Although there have been differences

[4] Derrida's deconstruction of phallogocentrism and the metaphysics of presence has greatly influenced some feminists in their understanding of the neutralization of subject in 'Man'. In a 1987 seminar "Women in the Beehive", Derrida recapitulates the idea by stating that when 'Man' is taken to imply neutralization as a universal category of mankind, it only confirms the power or presence of man as defined against the gendered 'woman'.

between variegated approaches within the field of men and masculinities studies, according to Hearn and Howson, Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities propose

> Critical, explicitly gendered accounts, descriptions and explanations of men and masculinities in their social and societal contexts that bring them into sharper relief as objects of theory and critique. The idea that gendering men and masculinities derives from a fixed, inner trait or core is problematic, even antagonistic, within CSMM; men are not to be essentialized and reified. (21)

To summarize, CSMM may be characterized by its emphasis on the historical, cultural, relational, anti-essentialist and deconstructive studies on men and masculinities, spanning both the material and discursive approaches, as part of feminist theory and praxis. It is important to note that the editors of the publication, Lucas Gottzen, Ulf Mellstrom and Tamara Sheffer introduce masculinities studies as "minor literature", which connects the personal with the political. The authors advocate for a rhizomatic approach to theorizing men and masculinities, one that circumvents establishing any "rigid and hierarchically organized systems of thought" (5). This perspective actively opposes the establishment of canonical, 'proper' literature. Simultaneously, it seeks to disrupt the foundational ontology of masculinity, challenging traditional perceptions and interpretations.

3.4. Hegemonic Masculinity: Where Does Power Lie?

Patriarchal power operates the gendered construction of society in Hanif's works through a convergence of various sociocultural and historical phenomena associated with hegemonic political projects, which makes the concept of hegemonic masculinity central to my study of masculinities. In their 2005 collaboration, Connell and Messerschmidt explore the idea of hegemony that has influenced the area of CSMM since its inception. They argue that individuals learn and internalize gender stereotypes within a society, and then begin to construct/reconstruct their self-conceptions upon these stereotypes. Replacing the one-dimensional treatment of hierarchy and trait conceptions of gender that initially dominated masculinity studies, Connell emphasizes a more specific treatment of embodiment in the context of privilege and power and a stronger emphasis on the relational construction of masculinities. The authors define the concept as a pattern of practice that *legitimates* and maintains men's domination over women, a culturally

ascendant model or exemplar of *the* appropriate way of being a man in a particular context.

In the subsequent amplification of the concept, Messerschmidt draws on Schipper's notion of 'quality content', along with 'fleeting', 'hybrid', 'protective' and 'dominant/widespread' masculinities that I find particularly useful in my framing of the hegemonic masculinity in Hanif's fiction. He quotes Schipper to argue that it is in the "'idealized *quality content* of the categories 'man' and 'woman' that we find the hegemonic significance of masculinity and femininity'" which signifies "changing relational attributes in sundry historical and social situations" (Messerschmidt 120, 121). The idea of hegemonic masculinity is more than a simple idea of cultural control as a linear process, and it is possible to identify the oppression of men as well as the oppression by men. The gender hierarchy, thus defined,

> is a pattern of hegemony, not a pattern of simple domination based on force. Cultural consent, discursive centrality, institutionalization, and the marginalization or delegitimation of alternatives are widely documented features of socially dominant masculinities. […] hegemonic masculinity need not be the commonest pattern in the everyday lives of boys and men. Rather, hegemony works in part through the production of exemplars of masculinity […] that have authority despite the fact that most men and boys do not fully live up to them. (Connell 846)

While hegemonic masculinity in its entirety might only be found in the form of cultural myths, its practical ramifications are visible in how it legitimates and regulates a relational and complementary emphasized femininity. The issues raised in Connell and Messerschmidt's formulations are critical for understanding the power struggle and public and private violence which Hanif portrays through the interactions between men and women as well as among men. However, while Connell, in the spirit of the Gramscian concept of hegemony, insists that hegemonic masculinity gains power primarily through consent and cultural ascendancy, it is not the case in Hanif's narrative. On the contrary, hegemonic masculinity in Hani's fictional landscape is directly associated with the distribution of institutionalized violence to sustain hegemony.

Connell also highlights the possibility of change by asserting that the dominant form of masculinity has always been challenged by women's resistance to patriarchy and by alternative masculinities that identify the personal and emotional cost of adjustment with hegemonic ideals. One of the costs of such an idealization of masculinity takes the form of violence distributed by honor culture, which has plagued the gender relations in Pakistani society. In his interview with Imran Qureshi, Hanif says that Pakistani men are "taking women down with them. They buy into these bizarre ideas, which are a strange mixture of nationalism, [politicized] anti-Americanism, ideas about being wronged, ideas about how we were grand once, and how we ruled the world – and we did all of that because we were pure, our women were kept veiled, they were not seen by strangers, which is completely not true" (Qureshi 189). Indeed, the depiction of honor killing in *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* and the other forms of violence inflicted on subordinate masculinities challenges the notion of masculinity as inherently patriarchal and toxic. It indicates a more complex relationship of violence with masculine vulnerabilities and a notion of accountability *within* the hierarchy of masculinities. The notion of hierarchical masculinities is necessary for a multipronged approach that acknowledges the complexities of multiple masculinities in relation to hegemonic masculinity. The diversity among men in Hanif's fiction, from unassertive heterosexuals to dominating or aggressive males, highlights how men enact manhood in different ways, and is central to decoding the depiction of gender politics and gender relations in Pakistan.

Despite its usefulness, the concept of hegemonic masculinity has provoked some criticism regarding its arbitrary use in various studies of masculinity. Feminist theorists like Beasley and Berggren argued that there is a slippage between its understanding as a political ideal or a mobilizing force for hegemony, a particular *type* of masculinity (essentially violent and oppressive), and specific groups of actual men. This criticism is framed by the postmodern bend of feminism towards resistance to conceptualizing fixed categories of gender and the perceived dichotomy of the discursive and the material in the construction of gender. Beasley argues that although the field of CSMM derives its theoretical development from feminist theory, certain divergences are marked by their "differential theoretical engagement with postmodernism" (Beasley 36). These differences are exposed in their use/application of gender identities. On the other hand,

masculinities studies scholars argue that the postmodernist accentuation of language tends to undermine the materiality of social relations. While it is imperative to deconstruct binary categories for providing an open space for discursive possibilities, according to them, it does not provide any tools for social change. It could be observed that marginalization occurs, irrespective of location and time, when certain groups fail to embody the hegemonic ideal revered by society. Their experiences are situated and diverse, and their resistance is usually unorganized. The hegemonic, however, is defined by the authority and ideals it aspires to achieve, and thus becomes the embodiment of an identifiable and coherent subjectivity. Beasley proposes that though it is important not to lose sight of these "disjunctions" between the two approaches, the very incoherence gives way to the possibility of "strategic essentialism" for investigating gender categories (37). In her words:

> While theoretically gender identity categories must be unsettled and resisted, in practice use of a universalized group identity may sometimes be strategically necessary[...]'Strategic essentialism' might involve not foreclosing certain usages of gender categories but, rather, paying robust attention to them—that is, paying attention to those categories concerning the privileged, even as they are subjected to continuous critique—precisely in order to mount strategic responses to power and advance a shared feminist/pro-feminist agenda regarding social change. (37)

For the practical purpose of overcoming rigid emphasis on the binary of theory and practice, Beasley's assertion suggests a coalition between postmodern refusal to recognize any fixed or unified gender identities in favour of fluidity of subject positions and Connell's modernist paradigm of hierarchical masculinities as defined by their historical materiality. Hanif's fiction precisely achieves that object; he creates character types for the representation of hegemonic masculinities as agents of patriarchy while at the same time challenging the meta-narratives of a nationalist history and culture through the representation of minor histories and individual stories of women and marginalized masculinities that defy hegemonic prescriptions. The move towards strategic essentialism thus prepares the ground for prospects of social change through scrutiny of the

hegemonic masculinity while simultaneously questioning and deconstructing the discursive process that shapes the subject under scrutiny.

3.5. The Importance of Location and Intersectionality

Connell identifies three locations of hegemonic masculinity, namely, local, regional and global. The regional and local constructions of masculinities are shaped by the interplay of these gender formulations with global processes (Connell 849). In *ACEM*, the coercive tactics of Gen Zia-ul-Haq in dealing with any voice of dissent against his draconian laws and the case of Zainab, who is sentenced to death for being unable to identify her attackers, create an ideal of regional hegemonic masculinity[5]. In a broader view of Hanif's narrative in the selected novels, this political ideal of hegemonic masculinity is then replicated or contested in the local constructions of masculinities embodied by the characters of Major Kayani, Under Officer Shigri, Teddy Butt, Father Dear, Major Ellie and Momo. On the other hand, it is also contested by the comeback of Zainab in the form of a death curse delivered by a crow in a masterful stroke of magical realism, while Alice and Mother Dear boldly resist and retaliate in the face of oppression. The articulation of gender surfaces at the intersections of race, class, culture, and religion. In the global context, it is most explicit in *Red Birds*, where American military interventionism shapes the gendered subjectivities of the survivors who are living in a refugee camp in a Muslim country in the Global South and who, in turn, defy the foreign occupation and haunt the ghosts of American soldiers left behind. It is also evident, however, that the relationship between local, regional, and global masculinities is of mutual constitution, which shows that the study of hegemonic masculinity cannot be grounded in the isolated history of any group.

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[5] The case of Zainab is a representation of the infamous rape case of a teenaged blind girl named Safia Bibi, who was raped by a landlord and his son in 1982 in Sahiwal, Pakistan. Because she was unable to prove her case in court, she was charged with fornication under the Hudood Ordinances (Offence of Zina Ordinance 1979) and sentenced to three years' imprisonment, fine and 15 lashes, while the court acquitted the accused men. Following a national and international outcry against the judgement, the Federal Shariat Court repealed the verdict on technical grounds. Safia Bibi, however, had served 6 months in jail and received the punishment of 15 lashes by then.

In the same vein, a cultural formulation of gender cannot be read in isolation from the intersecting axes of race, class, religion and gender and solely in terms of the man-woman binary. Mrinalini Sinha, in her essay "A Global Perspective on Gender: What has South Asia Got to Do with It?" notes that the dissociation of gender from man-woman binary in South Asia was brought into focus by the scholarship on men and masculinities in the context of "colonizer-colonized" relations (Sinha 366). In this vein, the gender identities of women in the subcontinent transpired during the interwar period not exclusively in their relation to men but in their oppositional relation to the collective identity of their communities, "defined by religion, caste, ethnicity, and so on" (367). In a telling remark on being a woman in a South Asian society, while educating Alice about the history of Sacred Heart, which can also be read as a symbol for the Pakistani society, Sister Hina Alvi asks Alice if she knows that "Fatima (Jinnah) was a dentist, a trained dentist? But she sacrificed her whole life for this country. And how do we remember her? As an old spinster. Someone gives you their whole life and what do you call them: mother of the nation" (Hanif 46). The white-washed metanarrative found in Pakistani school books conveniently ignores Fatimah Jinnah's personal achievements and her strong anti-establishment politics and remembers her solely in terms of her relational identity to the founder of the nation and nation itself.

Similarly, in *Red Birds*, when Father Dear threatens Mother Dear for not covering her arms, she asks him, "And what's wrong if my arms are showing? My head is covered. Isn't that where all your honor lies? Or is it in my arms, tell me for once" (Hanif 86). Sinha argues that since the burden of representing the respective communities fell on women, it provided the communities with a "right to control 'their' women", thus making it "a moment of arrival" for early Indian feminism in the subcontinent (Sinha 368). She observes that while the historical context of this development in the trajectory of South Asian feminism could have become a dynamic opportunity to explore the women/community nexus for a more appropriate and relevant understanding of gender construction, it has unfortunately been obscured by a traditionally typical discourse of gender rooted in the man-woman binary. In her words:

> Indian feminists were caught in a very different paradox that was rooted in their investment in an agonistic liberal universalism: the simultaneous disavowal, and constitution, of collective communal identities in the claims made on behalf of women […] The dilemmas for a contemporary politics of women cannot merely draw on superficial comparisons with the trajectory of feminisms elsewhere; it needs precisely to engage with the particular legacy of early Indian feminism […] The point is not merely to register continuities, but to understand better the very particular dynamics that have informed the legacy of the gender politics of women in India. (369)

Thus, the matter of concern for contemporary feminism in the subcontinent, and by extension in Pakistan, is not just to register the differences within women and between various schools of feminism in the global context; the more pertinent question would be to delineate those relational terms on which the notions of gender are received and reproduced in the hegemonic discourse, in terms of race, class, ethnicity, religion, caste, and other axes of identity. Sinha concludes her study by insisting on raising a different set of questions about our past, whose present manifestations in the form of public and private violence are too significant to be ignored.

3.6. Militarized Masculinities

Hanif's canvas is broad, and his take on the oppression of marginalized subjectivities inevitably leads to a connection between militarism and masculinities in the Pakistani context. Claire Duncanson's research titled "Masculinities, War and Militarism" sheds light on the argument that masculinities are causal in militarism and war while introducing the pioneering scholars in gender studies. She also gives space to the perspectives that complicate this concept by paying attention to the heterogeneity of masculinities at play in militarism and war and their inherent contradictions. In the later view, militaries are not dominated by men because they are more violent by nature, but because most cultures propagate the notion that the battlefield is the most important site to prove manhood. Duncanson quotes Cynthia Enloe, who states that "'If masculinity in the raw were sufficient, there would be little need for the sweat, blisters and humiliations

of basic training'" (Duncanson 467). She also refers to Sandra Whitworth's opinion that most cultures accomplish the transformation of boys into men

> Through the denigration of everything marked by difference, whether that be women, people of colour, or homosexuality. It is not by coincidence that the insults most new recruits face are gendered, raced and homophobic insults: young soldiers are learning to deny, indeed to obliterate, the 'other' within themselves. (467)

Nothing could be more directly relevant to Under Officer Shigri's description of the plight of military officers under the dictatorial rule of General Zia in *A Case of Exploding Mangoes,* and Major Ellie's ignorance to the reality of US air strikes on the already devastated refugee camp in the *Red Birds.* It is difficult to prepare men for the horror of combat without desensitizing them to the absurdity of war through segregation and isolation.

Moreover, an increasing number of studies have emerged with the argument that militarized masculinities are not essentially produced by a formal training by only state militaries, but also by non-state actors, terrorist groups, separatist movements, etc. This is where Connell's position that masculinities are not merely multiple "but rather exist in relations of hierarchy, dominated by a loosely coherent and evolving hegemonic form" becomes relevant to my study (Duncanson 471). Duncanson argues that reverence for a certain way of being a man is a cultural norm which yields serious societal consequences by privileging certain behaviors and acts over others, and the very norms cut across all the institutions of society as ideals of masculinity. Samuel Johnson's 1778 assertion that "every man thinks meanly of himself for not having been a soldier" confirms the systematic propagation of militarism in most cultures and Pakistan is not an exception to it (710 Boswell). This universal reverence for the figure of soldier, however, does not translate into militarism and war as natural to the construction of masculinity. Another kind of relationship can be observed between militarized masculinity and hegemony in the conflict hit areas. Studies have emerged that problematize the cultural ascendancy of militarized masculinity as hegemonic in war zones (Myrttinen et al.). As we see in *Red Birds*, the US imperial discourse of humanitarian soldiers and saviors that is

foregrounded in *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* is turned on its head; being a US soldier or having an association with the US military is looked down upon by the characters in the Camp. In this space, the relationship between hegemonic masculinity and prevalent gender order is not that of consent or reverence but control through violence and brute force. Therefore, the figure of the soldier is both foregrounded as the hegemonic archetype and decentered as the cultural ideal in my study.

In conclusion, the concept of hegemonic masculinity in my analysis of Hanif's fiction enables me to identify the ideas and narratives, as well as the institutions and figures that are associated with the hegemonic model that I identify as what Shenila Khoja Moolji calls 'Islamo-masculinity' (see pp. 29). The relational construction of masculinities informs my study of the intricacies of gender relations and how they are translated into violence against marginalized subjectivities in the background of internal and external militarization of Pakistani society. Beasley's idea of the connections between feminism and masculinities studies links the concept of hegemonic masculinity to Sinha's conceptualization of gender construction in the context of the subcontinent and the key moments of its geopolitical history. This theoretical framework sheds light on the multiplicity of masculinities and their relation to other men and women as performed by the characters in the selected texts, while Duncanson's work on the relationship between militarism and masculinities amplifies a critical analysis of the implicit and explicit continuity of the theme of armed conflict in Hanif's fiction.

3.7. Research Methodology

I have carried out an exploratory reading of postmodern Pakistani Anglophone novels. This study is interdisciplinary, interpretive, subjective, and reflective. I have used a qualitative approach for data analysis, which is most suitable for literary studies.

According to Glaser and Strauss, interviews, observations, and document analysis are primary sources of data that can be used to draw qualitative findings (Glaser and Strauss 45). In this research, I have used documents, i.e., literary texts as my primary data source. When applied to literary texts, qualitative research methodology involves an exploratory analysis of textual data to interpret underlying meanings and implicit and explicit representations. My qualitative research methodology is largely based on Kathy

Charmaz's constructivist Grounded theory (GT). For literary analysis, grounded theory suggests that interpretations and theories should emerge from the data itself rather than imposed upon it. Literary texts are not just to be analyzed through predetermined theories; they are intricate structures from which meanings must arise organically. A constructivist grounded reading lets the text speak for itself, allowing thematic patterns to emerge and build interpretations based on these emergent patterns. It allows the qualitative researcher to closely attend to the situational context by "turning away from acontextual description" (Charmaz 271). This approach has helped me in being conscious of my interpretive role throughout this research process, understand my biases, and channel this self-reflexivity for a more nuanced analysis of the primary texts.

3.7.1. Research Method

I have chosen the method of textual analysis presented by Catherine Belsey in her 2005 essay "Textual Analysis as a Research Method". In this essay, Belsey defines textual analysis as a technique for understanding "the inscription of culture in its artefacts" (Belsey 160). She demonstrated this method by selecting a painting (Titian's *Tarquin and Lucretia*) as her research material and reading it as a text. This choice itself is intended to show how descriptions of works of art are a great source to learn about exploring the nuances of culture in a text that might be obscured by explicit imagery. By closely observing her first impressions of the painting and raising the most basic questions suggested by her theoretical assumptions regarding the images of women in Western culture, Belsey shows how a researcher can start developing a hypothesis which might involve ideas that have existed before but not in the combination that the researcher will bring to it.

Belsey's method is inspired by multiple critical perspectives such as Derrida's deconstructive approach to meaning making process, Barthes' liberation of the reader in "The Death of the Author", Foucault's response to Barthes in exploring "What is an Author?" and Freud's focus on the details that "pulled against the coherence of the official, intentional story" (165-174). It prescribes a post structural cultural relativist analysis in which the meaning making is relative not only to the position of the critical reader but also to those who are the reader's intended audience. Her approach challenges

the idea of a fixed or stable meaning in texts and instead sees meaning as a product of the interplay of language, structures of knowledge, and power relations.

In this method, the context(s) in which a text is produced and interpreted becomes the central focus of the analysis and this is why it is particularly useful for my research. It enabled me to develop an interpretation of my primary texts in relation to the cultural and historical context(s) in which they were produced and then locate it in relation to the secondary texts.

3.8. Conclusion

Based on my review of the relevant theories in the previous chapter, I have taken the concept of hegemonic masculinity as my key analytical concept and developed it into a theoretical framework by approaching it from the perspective of South Asian feminist deconstruction of gender, and militarized masculinities as given by feminist IR scholars in response to my controlling research questions. I have applied qualitative research methodology and Catherine Belsey's research method of textual analysis to critically analyze the selected primary texts in the following three chapters.

Chapter 4

A CASE OF EXPLODING MANGOES: SPEAKING THE UNSPEAKABLE

I never figured out what the hell Tony Singh was doing in the air force of the Islamic Republic anyway.

— Mohammed Hanif, A Case of Exploding Mangoes

4.1. Introduction

In *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*, Hanif's caricature of the hegemonic masculinity, both as an ideational force to mobilize consent and its embodiment by the characters, provides the most emphatically penetrating representation of the hierarchy of masculinities and its gender dynamics during the peak of the militarization of Pakistani society. By deconstructing the metanarratives that legitimated this hierarchy down to their most unflattering historical stimuli through sardonic humor, the novel successfully subverts the official history of militarized hegemonic masculinity and provides a space where it is challenged by its own internal contradictions.

Born in 1964 in Okara, Pakistan, Mohammed Hanif acquired his basic education from Pakistan's rural public education system. He graduated from Pakistan Air Force academy, which is also the backdrop of *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*, but subsequently left to pursue a career in journalism and writing. He has written for Newsline, New York Times, The Washington Post, India Today, and Counter Punch. In 1996 he moved to London to work for the BBC, eventually becoming the head of BBC's Urdu service. However, he moved back to Pakistan in 2008 and settled down in Karachi. His debut novel *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* was published in the same year and shortlisted for the 2008 Guardian First Book Award, longlisted for the 2008 Booker Prize, and won the 2009 Commonwealth Best First Book prize, among other awards. His other works of fiction include two novels, *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* and *Red Birds*, published in 2011 and 2018, and a feature film, *The Long Night* (2002). He also penned a thought-provoking

BBC radio play, *What Now, Now That We Are Dead?* and a stage play, *The Dictator's Wife* in 2008, which offers a satirical look at power and its domestic entanglements. He also wrote a compilation of interviews of those impacted by enforced disappearances published by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan in 2013.

Hanif's writing style is characterized by its incisive wit and satirical edge, which he employs to dissect complex socio-political manifestations of hegemonic masculinity. His irreverent black humor allows him to speak the unspeakable and the reader to confront the gravity of corruption and profound dysfunctionality of a postcolonial state, all while being engaged by the levity of the street humor and popular lore he writes back in (Mukherjee 290). A master of irony, Hanif's work is textured with layers of meaning and subtext that bare the hypocrisies within Pakistani society and governance. The storytelling is rooted in the power of humor in dealing with the dictators that "give you the feeling that they are never gonna go away" (TFCC 9:03–9:07). While the suffering of the marginalized might be an inevitability, a bitter laugh is an unexpected response over which hegemony has no control. It is no coincidence that a fellow soldier Andre Breton met during his medical service in the army materialized his first definition of black humor; "'a sense … of the theatrical (and joyless) pointlessness of everything'". He saw that in his fellow soldier, "in utmost secrecy, a principle of total insubordination was undermining the world […] reducing everything that then seemed all-important to a petty scale, desecrating everything in its path" (Polizzotti). Hanif's personal experience of having served in the Air Force not only provides him with the minutest details of military life but also enriches his art with a sense of absurdism in the glorification of militarism. In an interview, Hanif tells how it was the revenge of a struggling novelist and a young officer deprived of his youth in the Islamized military service that inspired him to write his first novel (ISAS).

In *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*, almost all the meaningful relationships are between men which is indeed a commentary on how, during Gen Zia's dictatorship, the US and Saudi sponsored militarized hegemonic masculinity became more consolidated as an Islamo-masculinity by narrowing down its selfdom and thus tightening the hegemonic control over subordinated masculinities and religious minorities through a politics of

exclusion, dehumanization, and violence. The corresponding idea of an ideally subordinated femininity, defined solely in terms of its complementary relationship to the hegemonic masculinity, shrunk the public space for women by limiting them to an essentialized domestic sphere. The main characters in the novel are Ali Shigri, a young aviation cadet soon to be passed out from the Air Force academy, and the military chief, Gen Zia-ul-Haq. The novel opens with Under Officer Ali Shigri's official statement about his roommate Under Officer Obaid's absence without leave, their activities during the time leading up to this sudden disappearance, and the nature of their relationship. Since being AWOL (absent without leave) is a serious military offence, Shigri is arrested on suspicion of involvement in the case.

As it unfolds in due course, Obaid's absence is not a casual adventure of a young cadet, rather it is a part of a series of events leading up to the most critical event around which the story revolves: the unsolved political mystery of the C-130 crash that took the life of Gen Zia-ul-Haq along with those of several other members of the Pakistan military establishment and the American ambassador to Pakistan Arnold Raphael on 17th August, 1988. This incident coincides with the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, creating a backdrop that highlights the US-Zia-Saudi nexus at the end of the Cold War and its aftermath for the region and the socio-cultural and political evolution of Pakistani society. My analysis of this novel focuses on highlighting the relationship between these socio-economic, political, and historical dynamics and the intersectionality of regional and global hegemonic masculinities in shaping discursive and relational gender identities.

4.2. Construction of Hegemonic Masculinity in *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*: Intersectionality of Militarism and Islamism as the Quality Content

Feminist scholars and philosophers have written much about the invisibility of men as men in history, which has led to the need to explore not just the masculinity of history but also the history of masculinity. Masculinities studies have further brought to attention how gender is implicated in the discourse and structure of all the institutions and organizations that are influential in shaping social relations. The institution of the military, as depicted in *ACEM*, appears to have an overarching authoritative control on

how and what attachments individuals form to the contextual project of hegemonic masculinity. Structurally, it is an all-male establishment, entirely segregated from civil society, operating with an internal hierarchy that privileges certain gendered behaviors and political attachments over the other and consequently creates a masculine 'self' that must be differentiated from the feminine 'other'. Hegemonic masculinity derives power by a complementary otherization which is rooted in the gendered attributes that determine how different masculinities are placed in the hierarchical gender order and, in this case, privileges some with institutional and social ascendency while relegates others to inferiority; "a step behind in life", as Ali speaks of Obaid (Hanif 44). In *Hegemonic Masculinity*, Messerschmidt draws upon Schipper's notion of "quality content" to explicate how the legitimation of unequal relations between men and women and *among* masculinities transpires (Messerschmidt 120). He defines it as the essentialized characteristics or qualities of appropriate masculinity that legitimates a hierarchical relationship only when "symbolically paired with a complementary and inferior quality" associated with femininity (120). In his words:

> The significance of hegemonic forms of masculinity then is found in discursive meanings that legitimate a rationale for structured social relations and that ensure the ascendancy and power of men as well as specific masculinities. […] a certain masculinity is hegemonic only when it articulates discursively particular gender qualities that are complementary and hierarchical in relation to specific feminine qualities. For example, such a complementary and hierarchical relationship might establish masculinity as constituting physical strength, the ability to use interpersonal violence in the face of conflict, and authority. (121)

However, it does not refer to some fixed universal character traits but contextual and relational requirements that change according to different sociocultural and historical settings. Discursivity plays a critical part in regulating hierarchical gender relations by providing the legitimating rationale that justifies or naturalizes the superiority of certain masculinities over others in different situations. In one of his interviews, Hanif says that we live in a homosocial society where "boy to boy, man to man relationship is […] not explored enough, it is not talked about enough" (ISAS 50:48–51:23). Following this lead,

I will focus my analysis on the quality content that upholds the hegemonic masculine project in *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* by engendering a metanarrative that binds every character to the political objectives of a militarized Islamo-masculinity.

Ali Shigri's formal statement about Obaid's disappearance and the subsequent chapters in first-person narrative go back and forth in time, recounting his life at academy, the troubled relationship he had with his father, who he believes was killed for standing up to Gen Zia, and his casually intimate relationship with Obaid, all the while neatly holding back his secret plan to avenge his father's death. There is also a third person narrative intertwined with Ali's voice, which creates a narrative structure where Ali's consciousness grows as other characters and their experiences fill the gaps in what he knows about the world around him and his place within it. Ali appears to be an isolated, emotionally detached, politically disengaged, rebellious young man who is highly confident about his ability to make the world go round, partly because he is not a civilian. He condescendingly reminds the reader that he is "picked from a population of one hundred and thirty million, put through psychological and physical tests so strenuous that only one in a hundred applicants makes it" and that he belongs to the cream of his nation (14). Later, when he encounters a civilian during his captivity at Lahore Fort, he grapples with his disillusionment in these words:

> I thought civilians loved our uniforms. There are songs on the radio, and dramas on television and special editions of newspapers celebrating this uniform. There are hundreds of thousands of ladies out there waiting to hand their phone number to someone in uniform. My civilian neighbour is probably suffering from an extreme case of jealousy. How the hell am I supposed to know about civilians or what they think? All I know about them is from television or newspapers. On Pakistan National Television they are always singing our praises. The only newspaper that we get in the Academy is the *Pakistan Times* which on any given day has a dozen pictures of General Zia, and the only civilians who figure in it are the ones lining up to pay their respects to him. They never tell you about the nutters who want to spit at you. (130)

This passage highlights the collapse of freedom of expression by a total hegemony of state narrative over print and electronic media. On the other hand, Ali's bewilderment shows that being a second-generation soldier has kept him psychologically and practically completely segregated from mainstream society, and this is precisely what earns him a privileged position not just within the academy but also in prison, in contrast to that of Obaid. The difference in their treatment on suspicion of similar charges proves the working of a complex internal hierarchy even within the officer class of the same military force. Claire Duncanson argues that although the hegemonic model in militaries is context dependent, it is a cultural ideal by which "certain ways of acting are privileged: competition over compromise, action over consultation, force over talking, etc. – and those men who most resemble the hegemonic model are privileged" (Duncanson 471). This is precisely how Ali views his success:

> Despite the lack of an academic bone in my body, or maybe because of it, I was soaring ahead in the drill department, already commanding the squad, whereas he [Obaid] still loitered in the reserve pool. Anyone who could sit down and read a book outside the classroom for ten minutes straight would never make a good officer let alone a coherent pair of military boots on the parade square. (161)

The figure of the soldier, which has almost become the fundamental component in the construction and reconstruction of hegemonic masculinity in the militarist culture of Pakistani society is subjected to multiple patterns of internal hierarchy, just like the Commandant of the Air Force academy in the novel is "always adjusting his sails to the winds blowing from the Army House" (Connell & Messerschmidt 844, Hanif 20). The interaction of Muslimness and the figure of the soldier is just the tip of the iceberg which only gets more and more nuanced as we delve into other specificities of hegemonic military masculinity that tightened its grip on gender relations during the Zia era. There are multiple instances and clues in the novel that indicate a gradual Islamization of the Air Force academy, of the military culture, and consequently, of the whole society in the wake of Gen Zia's unconstitutional coup. Here is a headline he reads with satisfaction from the Pakistan Times:

> *"The Battle for Our Ideological Frontiers has begun."* He was particularly pleased with the three-picture strip idea that the *Pakistan Times* had come up with to illustrate the main points from the extempore part of his speech. *First of all I am a Muslim* was the caption under a picture of him draped in a white cotton sheet with his head reclining on the black marbled wall of Khana Kaaba in Mecca. *Then I am a soldier of Islam* appeared under his official portrait, in which he was wearing his four-star General's uniform. *And then, as an elected head of the Muslim state, I am a servant of my people* was the caption for the third picture, which showed him in his presidential dress, looking dignified in a black sherwani […] he jotted a note in the margin of the paper to tell the Information Minister to nominate the editor of the *Pakistan Times* for a national literary award. (91)

While the battle for 'ideological frontiers' manifests itself in comically ambiguous ways in the daily life of cadets at the Air Force academy, it indeed serves as an irreparable blow to the coexistence and representation of minorities in the Islamist regime.

After the coup, Gen Zia declares in his first meeting with his Staff Officers and heads of military organization that because there is no God but Allah, and since the country was founded in the name of Allah, the word God must be abolished officially; "Let's stop pretending God is Allah", and then finding the right nerve to strike, he ends his long speech with "Even Hindus call their six-armed monsters their gods. Isn't that a reason enough to stay away from this word?" (32). Gen Zia's ideological xenophobia then trickles down to every segment of society, creating fissures that polarized an entire people. As Ali subtly observes, "across the country battle lines are drawn between those who like Asha and those who like Lata. Tea or coffee? Coke or Pepsi? Maoist or Leninist? Shia or Sunni?" (64). In the academy, daily prayers become mandatory with a roll call, which, however, turns out to be a superficial display of phony pieties as the cadets are found playing cards in the mosque when 2IC takes Ali to the mosque and demands that he takes oath on the Quran to prove his innocence. The 2IC "gives them an appreciative look as if merely by pretending to pray they have absolved themselves in his and Allah's eyes" (38). Another change caused by this wave of puritanical Islamism is that Tony Singh, a non-Muslim cadet, is expelled from the academy on a flimsy charge of

un-officer like behavior. Despite his indifference to religion, Ali's ideological conditioning becomes obvious when he wonders "what the hell Tony Singh was doing in the air force of the Islamic Republic anyway […] I thought the Partition took care of all the Tonys and the Singhs, but apparently some didn't get the message" (15). This is how, gradually, and informally, partition narrative shifts from the freedom for the Muslim minority of the subcontinent to the exclusive purity and supremacy of Islam and Muslims against people belonging to any other faith.

Normative Muslimness interacts with patriarchal military structure to further marginalize the already subordinated position of women in the gendered social hierarchy. As Duncanson asserts, "the ideal masculinity in any context may shift but is always valorized over that which is designated feminine" (Duncanson 471). In a surface reading, the structure of the novel represents the structure of a society where women are excluded entirely from the public space and appear only where they are complicit in the hegemonic gender order. The First Lady is a typical embodiment of the figure of subordinated "army wife" that Shenila Khoja Moolji illustrates in *Sovereign Attachments*; committed to "taking on supportive roles" so that the soldier can "advance the political project" of Islamo-masculinity (Moolji 136, 124). This, however, would be an interpretation that stands short of analyzing the nuances in the femininities embodied by the women in the novel and the way women are referred to by men in the novel.

In the academy, any reference to femininity is either used to make derogatory remarks about or discredit the masculinity of cadets or to completely detach them from any external attachments by psychologically attacking the figure of mother. This is how Ali defines the "Shigri treatment" that he takes credit for:

> Hasn't he heard about the Shigri treatment? Doesn't he know that I used to get invited to other squadrons in the middle of the night to make the new arrivals cry with my three-minute routine about their mothers? Does he really think that fuck-your-fucking mother, even when delivered at strength 5, still has any meaning when you are weeks away from the President's annual inspection and becoming a commissioned officer? (Hanif 14)

In another instance, he notices that:

> Someone in the neighbouring dorm was sobbing, probably not getting used to all the F-words being poured into his ear about his mother whom he was definitely still missing. […] Me? Spent my sixth birthday in a dorm like this one. Never had that problem. (46)

The idea that extreme humiliation could only be attached to the figure of the mother and such abuses come out "rapid fire" and require "no imagination" does not elevate the sacredness of the figure of the mother but shows how it is the easiest and most crucial target to shatter the emotional integrity and familial attachments of a son (14). To be appropriately related to hegemonic masculinity demands a sacrifice of and by the mother. Moolji avers that a soldier's mother undertakes gendered emotional labor by giving her son permission to die on the battlefield (Moolji 138). With this permission, it should be added, is also linked the permission to be desensitized to his emotional attachment to the mother.

Effeminacy is also a regular trope that appears in instances where cadets are shamed or humiliated for being physically weak, sensitive, or even intellectually stimulated. A piece of poetry is "thrown" at Ali as proof of his inappropriate behavior and the Commandant calls him and Obaid "pansies" for sharing and keeping poetry (Hanif 19). The feminine connotation of the word makes Ali realize how the use of such words maintains the Commandant's authority (21). In his turn, he snaps back at Obaid by telling him, "I am not a city boy like you. I am from the mountains where only women get headaches" (125). There is a two-pronged assumption of superiority in this expression; he cannot have a headache because he is not a woman *and* because he is not a city boy like Obaid. He is superior to women as well as men like Obaid, who do not negate (presumed) feminine weaknesses.

Hanif's grim depiction of the dehumanization of women and femininity under the rule of Gen Zia, however, is not reifying. In Zainab, he creates an exception that proves to be the most damning indictment of an obscurantist dictator who is bent upon denying her justice in the name of God. The accountability that is demanded on Zainab's behalf enrages Gen Zia, whose implementation of the Hudood ordinance has a completely opposing agenda; confinement of women within the four walls of domesticity through

structural violence implicit in a legal code that provides impunity for rape, “the penultimate expression of conquest” (Sharlach). On the contrary, Zainab’s case has led to women’s demonstrations and international press coverage criticizing him for being a “barbaric, wily dictator […] who is relentlessly marching his country back in time.” (135). She is the first woman who is going to be stoned under the new law, which is a mockery of both Islamic and secular codes of justice, yet there is no trace of self-pity in her demeanor. The archaic ritual of killing the crime by stoning a body to death does not make sense to her. Despite having a marginalized position, she embodies a powerfully resilient femininity. In the chapter that narrates Zainab’s character, the black humor and the comic element that mocks the absurdity of human suffering recedes, as if in acknowledgement of her extreme disenfranchisement, and is replaced by a formidable stroke of magical realism. When the orders come from the General to transfer her to solitary confinement in Lahore Fort so that the press cannot access her,

> Blind Zainab who had listened in silence when a lecherous judge sentenced her to death, she who had not given her tormentors the satisfaction of a scream, she who had spent her life thanking God and forgiving His men for what they did to her: Zainab screamed and Zainab cursed. "May worms eat the innards of the person who is taking me away from my home. May his children not see his face in death. (169)

The symbolism of the returning crow, that has been with her in childhood and now becomes the messenger of death curse for Gen Zia, is not just an act of resistance but also retaliation with an equalizing effect that defies the subordinated position of femininity.

Hanif foregrounds Pakistani women’s courage and resistance by showing that the only direct confrontation Gen Zia faces in the novel is when an “incredibly young woman, barely out of her twenties” infiltrates the gathering of widows arranged for a television recording with Gen Zia, and “removed the dupatta from her head and unfurled it like a banner before the camera. Free Blind Zainab, it read” (121). Such a depiction of masculinities and femininities deconstructs the official history of the hegemonic quality content as inherently paradoxical and contradictory in terms of embodiment. While Gen Zia is ready to confer the title of “honorary man” and even “mujahid” upon Joan

Herrings, “to whom he could not apply his social rules about women”, his insolent refusal to provide justice to blind Zainab lays bare his pseudo piety (97). Hanif, as a novelist, successfully brings together both of what Kamila Shamsie calls the two categories of missing pictures: those that are excluded from the images of official history as well as those that are “either lost or never taken to begin with” (Shamsie 12). Women activists emerged as one of the most fearless oppositions to Zia’s Islamization of the constitution and later joined forces with other civil society organizations for the restoration of democracy and equal rights for minorities, fully recognizing the importance of a democratic political process for ensuring the protection of women and their fundamental human rights.

4.3. Local, Regional and Global Hegemonic Masculinities: Overlapping, Contradictions and Challenges

The overlapping and tensions between the local, regional, and global constructions of hegemonic masculinity, as represented in *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* during the Afghan Jihad, provides a rich historical context of the dynamics of gender hierarchy in Pakistan. Gen Zia’s rightist totalitarian politics merged with the US and Saudi interests and worked up a farcical cultural hybridity not embodied by any of its agents but imposed as the cultural ideal that binds all the subjects in a gendered attachment to the state. In War and Peace, Tolstoy writes:

> The deeper we go in search of causes, the more of them we find, and each cause taken singly or whole series of causes present themselves to us as equally correct in themselves, and equally false in their insignificance in comparison with the enormity of the event, and equally false in their incapacity (without the participation of all other coinciding causes) to produce the event that took place. (Volume 3, part 1)

That is not to say that it is impossible to identify the agents and ‘legitimists’ of the hegemonic project as the concept of hegemonic masculinity “embeds a historically dynamic view of gender in which it is impossible to erase the subject” (Connell 843). Tolstoy also tells us that individuals strive for personal goals, and their actions are informed by a relative degree of freedom. Nevertheless, an action “committed at a certain

moment in time," becomes "irreversible, and makes itself the property of history" (Tolstoy Volume 3; Part 1). According to Connel and Messerschmidt, the fundamental characteristic of hegemonic masculinity which differentiates it from dominating masculinity is that it has the authority to *legitimate* unequal gender relations. Since the legitimating authority or power is never absolute or contained within a specific type of masculinity and may "shift in relation to different axes of power and powerlessness", the hegemonic masculinity must be understood as the ideational force that enables masculine hegemony by policing men as well as discrediting or excluding women (Messerschmidt 120). Rather than a top-down approach that holds the US neo-liberal imperialism as *the* decisive stimulant of Zia's self-defeatist policies, I will argue that power does not operate in a single direction. Foucault's conception of modern power defines it as "an interactive network of shifting and changing relations among and between individuals, groups, institutions and structures; it consists of social, political, economic and […] even personal relationships" (Taylor 3). Power, therefore, is relational and becomes effective interactionally between its components.

Ali knows that although "Bannon is merely a drill instructor from Fort Bragg--only a lowly lieutenant--in the Academy's food chain he is somewhere between a shark and a spotted leopard" (Hanif 41). However, he also knows that his father, a decorated colonel and "one of the ten men standing between the Soviets and the Free World", was killed because he had fallen out with Gen Zia (75). The death of Colonel Shigri is made to appear as a suicide, which is later reframed as martyrdom, and Ali wonders whether he would "prefer to have a father who was alive and manufacturing fake American brands or a legend hanging from a ceiling fan" (46). Veena Das's argument that "the individual experience of war might be remarkably different from the public celebration of the virtues associated with 'civilized' men" is highly relevant to the situation of Col Shigri, who is excluded from the hegemonic project because he reflexively embodies a protest masculinity that challenges the internal contradictions in the hegemonic military masculinity (Das 286). The night before he is found dead, he puts up this rhetorical question to his son before throwing twenty million US dollars into the fire: "Americans are in it for winning. And us?'' (Hanif 240). From the global actors to Gen Zia, and from Gen Zia to his subordinates and the junior most trainee officers, there is a complex

fluidity in how these diverse masculinities interact with the hegemonic discourse in the construction of gender. There is an active contestation for hegemony that engenders a course of history that eventually compromised the prospects of a civil society celebrating diversity and an egalitarian gender order in Pakistan.

On the eve of Gen Zia's military takeover, the so-called civilian government of PM Bhutto was fraught with the ideological contradictions reflected in the Secretary General's insightful commentary about "the dialectics of our history" (132). He is a labor activist who had been trying to organize a farmers' uprising and then headed a sweepers union against the capitalist exploitation of the working class, a reference to the suppression of labor unions during Zia-ul-Haq's rule. His story is one of the links in the chain of successive atrocities committed by Gen Zia that tightened the noose around him. Being a Leninist in the State that serves as a US proxy against the Soviet army in Afghanistan, his position is more critically adverse than his pro-Beijing Maoist friends, who he believes betrayed him by collaborating with the State agencies (Ishtiaq Ahmed). He extends comradeship towards Ali by saying that "According to our party manifesto, there is no difference between a sweeper and a soldier, […] These are both forms of exploitative labor that the military-industrial complex thrives on" (Hanif 142). A telling remark that shows that while the project of an Islamist makeover of the State and society was substantially supported by the steady income of US dollars and its anti-communist agenda in the region, the elements that materialized it were indigenous and driven by the interests of the local and regional comprador elite (Murtaza and Yasmeen).

The personal project of Gen Zia's character is that of holding on to absolute power by indefinitely prolonging his rule in the name of God while the US actors in the novel, Arnold Raphael, Bill Casey, and Joan Herring, are committed to the mission of destroying the bipolar world order; the Afghan Jihad is only another, though decisive, covet CIA operation for them to achieve this objective. Gen Zia makes the most of this opportunity by a religious framing of the conflict and advances his agenda by introducing a series of structural reforms that transforms the social fabric of the entire Pakistan-Afghanistan region. In the nexus thus formed, multiple and often conflicting hegemonic masculinities enter a fleeting alliance that keeps falling apart due to the provisional

attachment of the US establishment to Gen Zia's project. What Ali speaks of his American drill instructor is equally relevant to the US-Pakistan relationship; "Banon's memory has more holes than an overused short-range shooting target" (Hanif 41). Within the military, ready compliance is shown by the generals who "would go on to govern provinces" after retirement, unlike those who "would be replaced by their juniors" (34). However, the hegemony is never fully achieved despite the privileges and provisional promises attached to this project. Gen Zia only grows more and more befuddled after he restricts himself to the army house which is a "colonial" bungalow that reminds him of the "old black-and-white films", an indication of his colonial conditioning, and the reader is asked, "What is a lone man standing at the crossroads of history to do?" (25, 26). The lone man, as Hanif shows us, goes on to further alienate himself by internally colonizing the country he rules with increasing psychosis. In a brilliant move of satirical inversion, Gen Zia deliberates about changing "the famous slogan that The Founder of the Nation had given this country" while he is being examined by Saudi Prince Naif's royal doctor for a case of tapeworms:

> "Faith. Unity. Discipline." Suddenly, the slogan seemed not only banal and meaningless to him but too secular, non-committal, almost heretical. Faith? Which faith? Unity? Discipline? Do soldiers need that slogan? Aren't they supposed to be united and disciplined by the very nature of their calling? […] It also dawned on him that when the Founder came up with this slogan, he had civilians in mind, not the armed forces. This slogan, he told himself, had to go. […] Allah had to be there. Jihad, very important. He knew it would please his friend Bill Casey. He couldn't decide on a third word but he knew it would come. (83)

But Bill Casey is not happy with the General's zealotry, and Arnold Raphael wants to let him know that his job description as the US ambassador "didn't include being used as a guinea pig for spreading Islam in North America" (67). Desperate to find an approval for his historically unprecedented political maneuvers, he asks his Security Officer Brigadier TM, "Did Jinnah ever have to fight with Russians in the morning and convince Americans in the evening that it is a fight still worth fighting? Was he ever a prisoner in

his own Army House?" (155). The incisive irony in these words sums up how the hegemonic narrative is grounded in contradictory political exigencies of power struggle. Hegemony is never fully achieved, and tides are already changing to give way to a different form of hybridization.

Hanif constructs a deeply meaningful representation of the interplay of regional and global hegemonic masculinities that entrenched a state of injustice, paranoia and internal conflict in the gendered subject bound in a social contract with the State. Theoretically, consent to the social contract guarantees the freedom and protection of individuals by entrusting power to the state sovereign, along with the consent to be killed in what is framed as the sacrificial or disciplinary violence accepted for the preservation of the nation. Practically, however, as Das argues and as Hanif depicts in the representation of Gen Zia's draconian politics, "the state's monopoly over […] 'legitimate' violence does not end violence—it redistributes it" (Das 284). Actual and potential unbridled and self-indulgent violence becomes the sword that threatens the perpetrator itself as we see Gen Zia "marinating in his own paranoia" when he refuses to leave the Army House because he suspects a murder plot against him (Hanif 177). Gen Zia's fear shows his vulnerability to the system of oppression he legitimates and deprives him of his hegemonic position.

While Connell argues that hegemony is not necessarily achieved through violence, though it may be co-opted with consent through discourse, in *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*, violence appears to be the primary tool for creating consent for and eliminating any threat to the hegemonic gender order. Gen Zia's hegemonic masculine narrative is represented by the language used to mark the bodies that are not sufficiently complicit and could be subjected to violence as a disciplinary measure. "Moral of the country's armed forces", "Islam", "ideological frontiers", "forces of good", "forces of evil", "national security", "good soldier", "the bravest man", "guardians of our frontiers", and "women's honor" are the notions repetitively evoked throughout the novel to establish a hegemonic monopoly on violence (Hanif, *ACEM).* What is crucial in this analysis is that hegemony is not dependent on a show of consent but a state of fear. A sense of betrayal and mistrust overshadows not only the subordinated and marginalized

subject but also the lives of men who occupy the highest echelons in the hierarchy of hegemonic masculinities. A slow revelation gives way to an awareness that constructs a subject internally divided between survival and ethical dilemma precisely represented in the character of Ali. The masculinity he embodies cannot be readily categorized; within the academy, he successfully performs a dominating or fleeting hegemonic masculinity through physical and emotional toughness and the "inner cadence" of a good soldier who "learns to shut out the noise" of the humiliation and emotional abuse that cadets are subjected to as a part of their training "and de-link" these insults "from their apparent meaning" (15). His awareness grows as history comes full circle, and he ends up incarcerated in the torture cell that was designed by his own father. He now relates to the non-Muslim sweeper and tries to obtain his freedom, but Ali's intervention only gets the sweeper killed sooner rather than later, and that too with the last impression that it is Ali who betrayed him.

The realization that hits home with Ali from these shocks and his time in prison further strengthens his perception that civilians are subordinate to the military, which shall continue to be complicit in the US imperial hegemony. Ali and Obaid are released from prison when Gen Beg takes charge of matters at Lahore Fort, and Ali notices that their savior "wears Ray-Bans" and reads Iacocca, foreshadowing the imminent hegemony of US neoliberal capitalism in the coming years of Pakistani political establishment (229, 285). Later, he says to Obaid, "Who else can do it, Baby O? Do you think these bloody civilians can do it?" (239). With its multiple implications and Hanif's idiosyncratic irony, the question cuts both ways. Are the 'bloody civilians' not invested enough in this gendered political discourse, or do they not have a voice in the hyper nationalist metanarrative of hegemonic masculinity that evolves only to give way to new hybridizations of colonialism? In what ways do gender equality and cultural diversity challenge hegemonic masculinity? The fragments of Hanif's postmodern jigsaw puzzle could be joined together in multiple ways to raise all the important questions regarding the intersectionality of gender structure and the political history of Pakistan.

4.4. Conclusion

My feminist analysis of *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* deconstructs the representation of hegemonic masculinity that gained cultural ascendancy in Pakistani society under the military dictatorship of Gen Zia. By analyzing the gendered subjectivity of various characters in the novel, it can be asserted that the supremacy of normative Muslimness and piety interacts with militarized masculinity as the legitimate quality content of hegemonic masculinity. The characters in the novel embody diverse subjectivities that are relationally positioned in a hierarchical gender order in terms of sex, race, class, religion, nationality, and political attachment to the hegemonic project.

On the regional level, there is an active contestation for hegemony, among multiple masculinities interacting with the neoliberal global politics of the Cold War and Saudi interests in the rising unipolar world order. Hanif's satire is packed with a subtext that challenges the metanarrative of militarized hegemonic masculinity, highlights the inherent contradictions that exposes its anxiety towards public resistance, and indicates a crisis of political legitimacy. The implications of dehumanizing laws pertaining to women and religious minorities and a brutal crackdown on intellectual and political liberties seal the image of Gen Zia-ul-Haq as the author of a militarized Islamo-masculinty that continues to remain the historic bloc that challenges the possibility of change in the patriarchal gender order in Pakistan. However, the gap between this hegemonic ideal and its actual embodiment, which does not materialize in any of the multiple masculinities of Hanif's characters in the novel, also continues to challenge the scripts of gendered identities in Pakistan.

The contradictory impulses in the characters of Col Shigri, Ali Shigri, and Obaid show that militarism is not a natural extension of masculinity. It is propagated and reinforced as the culturally ascendant model of hegemonic masculinity through systematic dissemination of ideas that cultivate the figure of Muslim soldier as the ultimate savior of the nation, which places non-military masculinities, women, and minorities in a subordinate position and justifies the use of violence to silence any dissent to this metanarrative. Ali's interaction with civilians proves how segregation between civilian and military masculinities and between men and women is critical in the

construction of politically disengaged, hypermasculine, militarized masculinities disconnected from the historical and contemporary sociopolitical realties. Despite an active reconstruction of this social structure, however, militarism and Muslimness are never fully embodied by the characters as they are idealized in the quality content of hegemonic masculinity.

Chapter 5

OUR LADY OF ALICE BHATTI: "THE HONOR BUG"

State vs Alice Bhatti: Alice Bhatti hazir ho. Alice walks into the dock with her head held high, handcuffs clinking, staring purposefully at the judge as if saying: you?

[…] the law is the eternal whore for those who can pay for its upkeep.

– *Mohammed Hanif, Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*

5.1 Introduction

Women and minorities in Pakistan have been bearing the brunt of hegemonic distortion of national and religious ideologies, which ironically undermines the history of the freedom struggle of Muslims and Christians as minorities of the Indian subcontinent. Despite the Quaid's often repeated promises to safeguard the religion, faith, life, property and culture of the religious minorities in the independent state, the gradual Islamization of the constitution of Pakistan has practically rendered its minorities as second-class citizens.[6] The intimidating power of the religious right has been complicit in the dehumanization and victimization of women and religious and ethnic minorities by the militarized regimes that took over the corridors of power right after the untimely death of

[6] Dr Alexander John Malik provides a detailed account of how the inclusion of Islamist laws like marriage laws, the Blasphemy Law, barring of religious minorities from ascending to higher administrative positions, reservation of Zakat funds, Law of Evidence, separate electorates, and other such injunctions that started burgeoning with the Objectives Resolution concretized the systematic violence against women and minorities in Pakistan.

the Founder.[7] Despite the low ratio of reported crime to the actual violence committed on a daily basis, the statistics that Dasgupta provides in registering the plight of religious minorities in Pakistan show a staggeringly dismal scenario (Dasgupta 224). While these statistics provide an essential context for the study of humanities, it is indeed literature that defamiliarizes the everyday horror of lived experience that can only be chronicled through minor histories and marginalized narratives that provide a human dimension to the official, ideologically driven, whitewashed metanarratives.

Hanif's keen journalistic experience and observation construct very real, lifelike fictional characters struggling to survive on the peripheries of citizenship and subjectivity. He makes brief yet suggestive forays into the history of the identitarian politics that constrain or enable the reflexive construction of gendered social identities. The scope of this analysis does not allow me to study the crisis of religious or national ideology in detail. Instead, I delimit my analysis to how the violence against women and minorities is linked with and engendered by a continuation of the patriarchal hegemonic formation discussed in the previous chapter. I will explore how the internal hierarchy of hegemonic masculinity externalizes sacrificial and coercive violence to sustain unequal gender relations. Within the social structure of a hierarchical gender order, Hanif's female protagonist depicts the never-ending struggle and resistance that a Christian woman from the economically underprivileged class of society undertakes in both domestic and public spheres. Through a nuanced view of the multiple masculinities that Alice negotiates with to sustain her struggle, Hanif highlights the structure of violence implicated in the construction of normative gender order.

Our Lady of Alice Bhatti is Hanif's second novel. It was published in 2011 and shortlisted for the Wellcome Book Prize in 2012 and the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature in 2013. Set around the late 1990s in the largest city of Pakistan, Karachi, the novel is a tribute to the four times marginalized life of a junior Christian nurse, Alice

[7] In a newspaper report, Akhtar Balouch discusses how certain passages from Fatimah Jinnah's *My Brother*, a biography of the Quaid-e-Azam, were removed from the manuscript, deemed "against the ideology of Pakistan". The phrase has become a free-floating metaphor for silencing any dissent against the political exigences of the hegemonic projects.

Bhatti, who works in The Sacred Heart Hospital for All Ailments, a dilapidated Catholic establishment in the megalopolis. Alice has been sent to prison from her nursing school to cover up the negligence of a male surgeon. After being released from prison, she manages to find a job at the Sacred Heart that lands her in a disastrous encounter with Junior, an influential feudal lord with a private army of uniformed guards whose vehicle numberplate says, "*Devil of the Desert*" (Hanif 45). Teddy Butt is a bodybuilder and a police tout who works for the extrajudicial encounter unit, "the clean-up guy" who "provides valet parking for the angels of death" (127). The need to protect herself from Junior compels Alice to marry Teddy, but the gunpoint confession of love culminates in an acid attack that kills Alice.

Hanif's portrayal of Karachi is "startlingly detailed but not exoticised, more realist than romantic […], bristling with guns, and chaotically interconnected" (Yassin-Kassab). Political intricacies and multiple crises of governance overshadow the daily life of the inhabitants of Karachi; a blatant abuse of the justice system, crumbling infrastructure, organized crime mafias, and gang wars in the wake of religious extremism, sectarianism and ethnicism. In this chapter, I will analyze the implications of the internal hierarchy of masculinities and gender politics among men at the local level of Karachi, its historical and regional dynamics, and how it eventually leads to violence against women, minorities, and subordinated masculinities.

5.2. The Historic Bloc in the Localized Hegemonic Masculinity in *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*

Themes of weaponization, violence, conflict, and politicization of religion are constant in the representation of hegemonic masculinity in Hanif's fiction. While the projects taken up by locally dominant, complicit, subordinate, and marginalized masculinities are not singularly and ideologically attached to the Cold War hegemonic masculinity explored in the analysis of *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*, they are implicitly influenced by the historical regional hegemonic model as the mobilizing force for relational social structure. In the civil society represented in the novel, the transformative impact of militarized Islamo-masculinity is;

> Symbolically represented through the interplay of specific local masculine practices […] The exact content of these practices varies over time […] yet regional hegemonic masculinity shapes a society-wide sense of masculine reality and, therefore, operates in the cultural domain as on-hand material to be actualized, altered, or challenged through practice in a range of different local circumstances. (Connell 850)

Hanif's narrative reflects a persistent commitment to feature the long-term consequences of Zia-ul-Haq's praetorian project manifested in the internecine conflicts that terrorized civil life in Karachi through radicalization and weaponization of male bodies. The cultural framework within which daily practices and interactions are materialized in the novel is thus shaped by the historic bloc that maintains the status quo on the regional level.

As we enter the Sacred Heart Hospital, the sign on its gate is "slightly askew and not painted in a long time, in the hope that people will forget that it is a Catholic establishment" and the office in which Alice is being interviewed is decorated with an "ornamented gold-framed verse from the Quran" which "carries the logo of Ciba Geigy", a symbol of capitalist appropriation and commodification of faith (Hanif 5,6). The Orthopedic Surgeon who dominates the administrative decisions "has just received his Canadian visa and it has given him more confidence than those twenty-five years of setting bones in an operating theatre" (8). Neocolonial psyche prevails in the society along with the religious conditioning that upholds not only the supremacy of normative Islam, but also the global hegemony of neoliberal capitalism, reinforcing a power structure constituted by multiple hierarchies that intersect variously along the axes of sex, class, caste, ethnicity, religion, and nationality to construct gendered subjectivities. Messerschmidt asserts that each of these forms of inequality is critical as their significance shifts according to context and place. In a particular instance, class, caste, and sexuality might be important for understanding the construction of hegemonic masculinity, as in the relational subjectivities of Dr Pereira, Alice, and Joseph Bhatti. In contrast, sexuality and religion are more significant between Alice and Teddy, and in yet

another situation, class and age are more important than religion or sexuality, as represented in Teddy Butt's relationship with his father and Inspector Malangi.

Inspector Malangi is the personification of localized hegemonic masculinity, as a praetorian agent of preventive counterinsurgency, with the legitimating power of regulating unequal gender relations. It can also be said that inspector Malangi's character is fluid, and it fleetingly assumes protective and/or hybrid masculinity, claiming the role of savior while distributing potential and actual violence with sadistic brutality. Though he is a police officer, in a more complex and insidious manner, the scope of his power is comparable to the power of Intelligence officers in *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*, as the elite unit of police that he has brought together is "not really an entity commissioned by any law-enforcing authority. The name of the unit doesn't exist on any official register, on letterheads or websites […] it does not hold press conferences to unveil the criminals it catches or kills, or more often catches and then kills" (15). The squad performs the role of an armed group that has at its disposal official resources but not the constitutional legitimacy to dispense 'justice' as it deems suitable or convenient in Malangi's judgement. The magnitude of lawlessness, multifaceted terrorism, violence, and street crime in Karachi, as depicted in the novel, provides him with a pretext for acting outside the precincts of the law for a "good cause" (15). The good cause is a reframing of a project of bad faith as the nexus between Malangi and Junior represents the dark side of a governance structure in which, as Brigadier TM says, "the cops and thieves" are the same men (Hanif, *CEM* 152). Terrorism and violence in Karachi are in many ways an explosion of militarization and Islamization of the country during the Zia regime. The ideologically militarized hegemonic masculinity, having lost its purpose after the end of the Cold War, seeks other political attachments for self-actualization within and outside the region and brings home an increasingly polarized society that is a battleground for competing hegemonies.

The gender politics that structures the internal hierarchy among masculinities requires the assumption of multiple masculinities by men over time or according to varying social situations or relational dynamics. Teddy Butt embodies a masculinity that assumes subordination to acquire the validity of his masculinity that his father initially

discredited. The theme of the problematic relationship with the father continues from *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*. Teddy Butt, like Ali Shigri, is raised by a distant father. The dissimilarities in the relational dynamics of the two characters are, however, more remarkable. While Ali wants to continue his father's mission, Teddy's masculinity is constructed as a reaction to his father's reputation and patriarchal disapproval; Ali does not wish to be hailed as a son by Gen Akhtar, but Teddy Butt is ready to go through sacrificial violence to prove himself worthy of being a part of Inspector Malangi's family. Despite the dissimilarities, both Ali and Teddy assume protective, dominating and fleeting hegemonic masculinities in different situations and relational contexts. How Teddy suppresses his emotional undercurrents, has "very little experience of sharing his feelings", and uses coercive and sacrificial violence to construct a fleeting hegemonic masculinity to show consent lays bare the discord between the hegemonic ideal and lived experience (Hanif, *OLAB* 55). While he is apparently attached to the notion of a physically tough, action oriented, heterosexual masculinity associated with a state sanctioned armed force as *the* appropriate way of being a man, practically, his body and skin are reacting to the violence it bears to win the bodybuilding competitions and Inspector Malangi's approval (29). Hanif foregrounds the increasing precarity of the *body*, through the centrality of the hospital that receives a vast diversity of gendered bodies attacked, mutilated, and dismembered by armed groups of men with conflicting ideologies and motives, in the informal constitution of the body politic.

It is through the materiality of the body that Hanif exposes "the inadequacy of the metaphysics of suffering" (Abbas 170). As Moolji explicates in *Sovereign Attachments*, a consenting public that approves sacrificial violence is created through the evocation of kinship metaphors of attachment that involves feelings and sentiments; "Inspector Malangi knows that an arm around someone's shoulder is the first step towards law enforcement" (Hanif 13). Through emotional affectation, Teddy is made to believe that he is part of a fraternity that demands loyalty in his own best interests. The inspector tells him, "You may not love your family, but as far as I know, this is the only family you have got" (13). Moolji argues that "such relationships become the structure of feelings that permits the classic and everyday acts of sovereignty that we immediately recognize: violence and governance" (Moolji 21). Teddy's loyalty to his newfound "family"

demands that he assimilates himself to its code of conduct and cultural repertoire. While Malangi and his men are apparently far removed from any pretension of religious piety or heteronormativity, they nevertheless draw legitimacy from the normative discourse of religious, gendered and even racial supremacy, represented in the instance where Teddy pretends to have taken part in the gang rape of a Bangladeshi prisoner, because he does not want to be considered not man enough (Hanif 55). Teddy is a Punjabi Muslim, an intersectionality that has been coded superior to Bengali ethnicity in the political history of Pakistan owing to the British colonial profiling of martial and non-martial races in India.

Hanif draws an imagery of posters and banners around the city, on the streets and writings on the walls of the Sacred Heart Hospital that depicts political activism fraught with religious extremism and dehumanization of the 'other', the enemy, or that which needs to be eliminated. For instance, the wall where Teddy Butt gets his thumb battered for Inspector Malangi is full of posters and stickers; "The Coalition for the Protection of Honour of the Mothers of the Faithful, reads the poster with a chador covering a faceless woman. Liberty or Death, demands a little sticker under a red hatchet and the proposed map of a state where liberty or death will prevail for eternity. Three slogans in different colours proclaim Dr Pereira to be a dog, a donkey and a Christian preacher" while another banner accuses him "of being an Indian dog, a Jewish agent and a land grabber" (17, 118). The salient feature in this depiction of gendered political sentiment is the regional hegemonic discourse of Islamic supremacy symbolized by the purity of Muslim mothers, and the exclusion of non-Muslims. The structural dynamics of gender are, therefore, linked with the sedimented consequences of hegemonic projects in the past, which need to be explored to provide meaningful insight into the discursive formation of gender in the novel.

Hanif's fiction provides an opportunity for tracing back the history of South Asian masculinity beyond the transformative years of the Zia era, with the symbolism of "Mughal dungeons" and various references to the history of partition (Hanif, *CEM* 186, *OLAB* 46). While exploring the historicity of South Asian masculinity, Sinha's work has been critical for my analysis of gender at work in Hanif's fiction. She calls for delinking

gender from its Eurocentric understanding as binary sexual difference, as the empirical material suggests that women and men are "historically and discursively constructed not necessarily only in relation to one another, but also in relation to a variety of other categories, including dominant formulations of the political and social spheres, which are themselves subject to change", while Messerschmidt points out that academic research on masculinities in the Global South shows how "colonialism disrupted gender relations and imposed gender hegemony" through a binary discourse of gender premised on the superiority of men and the inferiority of women (Sinha 360, Messerschmidt 102). According to Sinha, masculinity as a gender identity in South Asia was brought into focus not "in the context of binary sexual difference, but in the context of colonizer-colonized relations" (Sinha 366). In another essay tracing the history of masculinity from the historiography of colonial India, Sinha takes O'Hanlon's exploration of "Issues of Masculinity in North Indian History" as one of the historical gender regimes that I find highly relevant to the representation of hegemonic masculinity in Hanif's fiction. O'Hanlon observes that the "codes of martial bravery" deployed by Mughal rulers to establish the norms of appropriate manly behavior were central in the eighteenth-century sociopolitical dynamics in North India (Sinha 452). This gendering of the imperial history in precolonial India problematizes the widely held scholarly claim of a complete overturn of the "fluid gender identities of pre-colonial India" into "the rigid gender identities introduced under the British" and suggests that the colonial gender system was not a mere extension of the Victorian hyper-masculinity but constructed interactionally with the indigenous cultural material (453). The decline of the Mughal imperial masculinity and its integrative potential for various communal masculinities through a shared code of martial bravery had implications for the redrawing of communal boundaries under the British.

For the Muslim scholarly elite, the shift in the political hegemony led to the alternative debate on the questions of divine sovereignty, "ultimately concerned with examining authority structures that mediated the divine human encounter", as a survival strategy in colonial India and the subsequent Muslim nationalist movement (Moolji 46). The colonial interaction between the Mughal codes of martial bravery and the British institutionalization of Victorian idealization of manliness and militarism in the Indian

elite male culture, bureaucracy, and army, and later, the neocolonial revival of normative Islam brought into effect the power dynamics of the post-independence nationalist hegemonic masculinity. Considering the ever shifting 'logics of practice' that guarantee the hegemony of a particular project makes it imperative to examine masculinity not only in the cultural context but also factoring in the material, economic and sociopolitical milieu of a particular location and time in history. While localized embodiments of masculinity might not be perfectly aligned with the regional ideal, their plurality is compatible with the regional hegemonic masculinity in constructing unequal social relations. Teddy's locally dominant (widespread) masculinity is a conflicted embodiment of his fluid personal history with a suppressed longing for a father figure and a peaceful life; he attaches himself to the hegemonic ideal of manliness associated with institutional violence as "he sees nothing but glorified Filipino maids" in the "fitness instructors with their gym bags and second-hand Nike tights (Hanif 127). The fear of emasculation and marginalization, i.e., of being at the receiving end of institutional and cultural violence, is more prominent in his psychosocial development as he tells Alice that "[we] live in dangerous times. We live in a dangerous place. It's better to know the danger, to work with it, to tame it" (130). He often considers leaving the Squad and finding some alternative job opportunity; however, he also believes that he is bound to serve Inspector Malangi to avoid his wrath.

The embodiment of masculinity in *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* is indeed a contradiction of the hegemonic ideological content. Rape, molestation and extra-judicial killings are normalized as state sanctioned violence and punishment for defiance of hegemonic masculinity. As Sancheti writes, for the Gentlemen's Squad, "violence and benevolence are natural extensions of each other" (Sancheti 45). Homosexuality is interestingly common among men, contrary to its negation in the ideological content. However, there is a relational construction of masculinities as masculine and feminine in the practice of homosexuality, as we see in the relationship between Ali and Obaid in *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*. Hypocrisy and corruption as underhand practices are an acceptable deviation from hegemonic ideology because it does not have a representative claim and, therefore, is not a threat to the hierarchical gender structure that sustains the collective superiority of men over women. Veena Das writes that the relation between

social order and the domestic order is complicated by the "profoundly masculine Leviathan" that is "formulated on the explicit exclusion of women" (Das 286). She argues that since the emergence of the social contract was rooted in violence as the normal state of nature for men, it is the father as the head of the family, who consents to the sovereignty of the state on behalf of his family to guarantee the protection of the individual against other individuals.

The figure of the father is thus implicated both in the state's monopoly over legitimate violence and the father's authority over his family, which is at work in the hierarchy among masculinities and the subordination of women in the domestic sphere. The fatherly authority is depicted by Teddy's traumatized memory of his father:

> PT teacher starts to unbuckle his belt […] Teddy goes into a corner and assumes the position, looking down at his shin where blood has begun to congeal in the shape of a dog taking a nap. Teddy hears howls of laughter. "See, I am trying to breathe here and my son thinks that I want to thrash him. Is that all I do in this house? Don't I work all day to put food on the table? Who works hard all day to keep this roof over your head? But you and that mother of yours always pretend I am some kind of slave master holding you hostage. (Hanif 110)

The symbolic authority of a father also frames inspector Malangi's relationship with Teddy on two levels: as the head of Teddy's adopted fraternity and as the representative of a state institution. Teddy believes that when Malangi asks for a battered thumb as the evidence against a suspect, it is "not a suggestion, not even an order, just an expectation, how a father would expect to be addressed […] by his sons" (15). By the same structure, Teddy assumes his authority over Alice as the head of the family; "they look like a boy and his father in a mock boxing match. Through it all Teddy grimaces and whistles a happy song: *We are one under this flag. We are one. We are one…*" (32). In the next section, I will explore the sociocultural dynamics engendered through the domestic/sexual contract, that create a relational essentialized femininity as a subordinate position in the external gender hierarchy.

5.3. Relational Subordination of Essentialized Femininity and Minorities in *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*

To understand the relational subordination of essentialized femininity, I will go back to its historical dynamics in the context of Islamo-masculinist nationalism. Sinha writes that having lost political hegemony in the "outer" world of men in colonial India, the emerging neocolonial masculine nationalism placed the symbolic burden of keeping intact an authentic and untainted Indian identity on the figure of Indian woman, which is a component of the historic bloc of postcolonial Pakistani hegemonic masculinity as well (Sinha 449). In her words, "[t]he new gender identity of Indian women [during the transitional phase before and after partition] emerged not in opposition to men but in opposition to the collective identity of communities, defined by religion, caste, ethnicity, and so on" (Sinha 367). In this context, Sister Hina Alvi speaks to Alice about Fatima Jinnah:

> Have you read her letters to her brother?" Sister Hina Alvi asks her and continues without waiting for an answer. "Did you know that Fatima was a dentist, a trained dentist? But she sacrificed her whole life for this country. And how do we remember her? As an old spinster. Someone gives you their whole life and what do you call them: mother of the nation. Alice agrees. Sister Hina Alvi might be a control freak, but at least she has a sense of history. (Hanif 46)

In the official narratives of Pakistani history, there is an erasure of Fatima Jinnah's political activism and unrelenting struggle for the restoration of democracy against Ayub Khan's 'one-man rule'[8]. The fact remains that had the electoral process not been rigged, she could have become the first female President not only of Pakistan but the whole Islamic world. However, the mainstream media and textbooks present her only with the symbolic title of Mother of the Nation, who supported the Founder of the Nation during the independence movement. Hina Alvi sarcastically remarks that they did not call her "*sister* of the nation" because then she could have been mistaken for a nurse, which, in

[8] The essays by Azmat Ullah et al. and Summer Sultana discuss in detail the political commitment of Fatima Jinnah to the progress of Pakistan as a democratic society and the defamation campaign against her launched by Ayub Khan's establishment.

Pakistan is considered a low life profession associated mostly with Christian women who are treated as "garbage bins in uniform" (141). Within a regional hegemony that does not exempt even the Mother of the Nation, Hanif's protagonist is acutely aware of the intersectionality of gender, race, caste, class, and religion that constitutes her acutely marginalized subjectivity and the inevitability of violence that comes with it as she witnesses the mutilation of women's bodies in the name of honor; "what she learned was that nobody was surprised; there were no police detectives sitting around matching clues, no parliamentary subcommittees discussing ways of saving this endangered species. It was as inevitable as the fact that it will not rain in March…" (79). This inevitability of violence against women is linked to the notion of honor in the quality content of hegemonic masculinity, which is complex, arbitrary, and politicized in terms of gender relations.

Heydari, Teymoori, and Trappes write that in honor-based cultures, it is characterized as "the public recognition of one's moral worth, prestige and social standing" which "serves as a license for social participation" (Heydari et al. 4). As the ability to participate in the group through holding honor requires group recognition, the individual's sense of honor is derived from how their community perceives and evaluates certain actions of its members. In other words, "honor codes become a unifying element of the culture that regulates individual's social life" (4). Therefore, for a communal group identity that is constituted primarily through the value coding of honor in the cultural purity of domesticated femininity, which applies to the society represented in *OLAB*, any claim of women's sexuality and self-determination destabilizes the masculine power that draws strength from the subordination of women. It is a relational notion that increases the precarity of a woman's body as a soft target. Alice observes that "most of life's arguments, it seemed, got settled by doing various things to a woman's body. […] Even nomads living in improvised tents could catch the honour bug and settle a game of cards that had gone on for too long in the night by trading in a woman" (Hanif 79). Ironically, it also jeopardizes the stability of the hegemonic project since the power of hegemonic masculinity lies not in the individual honor based on self-contained positive values but externalized in the subordinated sexuality of the essentialized femininity; in other words,

an externalized self-defeating manhood that is always preoccupied with a struggle against vulnerability.

But Alice is not just a woman. She is a Christian woman, a junior nurse, and belongs to a caste culturally associated with the social stigma of untouchability. Noor, the ward boy, believes that her fatal flaw is that she is not apologetic and does not pay gratitude when it is not earned (21). However, it is indeed a refusal to assume an inferior position based on the difference of sex, class, caste, and religion. She is doubly marginalized compared to a Muslim woman, and in relation to Junior and her husband, her disenfranchisement becomes fourfold. Nevertheless, she not only takes on the cultural challenges to her ambitions of social mobility but also physically retaliates against the violent attacks on her right to practice the faith she has inherited; she single handedly fights off the mob of girls who attack her nursing hostel room chanting "'Who Belongs to Pakistan, Musalman, Musalman'" (138). These incidents challenge the notion of physical weakness and timidity as the quality content of essentialized femininity. However, "like all battle-hardened warriors she has managed to preserve her gift for the fight but forgotten why she became a fighter in the first place" (140). It is no surprise then, that she forgets to reflect on her motives in resigning to Teddy's marriage proposal.

Teddy apparently falls in love with Alice, and he "believes that being a lover is something that falls somewhere between paying them and slapping them around" (55). Between the two reference points, Alice's relational position is close to being a sex worker and accepting potential sacrificial violence according to Teddy's idea of essentialized femininity. His idea of love is also derived from a collection of "100 Best Love Songs of the Past Twenty Years", typifying the notion of nihilistic love found in popular culture and movies (70). Sara Ali draws an illuminating illustration of how the popular media and Bollywood culture glorify the image of an entitled lover who entirely disregards a woman's consent (Ali 88). He tells Noor that a man is not really a man if he can pass nine seconds without thinking about a woman, by which he means "a woman's body parts, not the whole woman" (34). Before he brings Alice home, the G Squad members tell him that they tried to find a Christian virgin for his warmup night, but "the pimp said […] the last one was taken more than two thousand years ago" (83). In this

hegemonic cultural discourse of essentialized femininity that conditions Teddy's relationship with Alice, her femininity is constructed as already doubly inferior due to her religion. She is 'not a whole woman' but an object of desire that needs to be guarded jealously, owing to her femininity *and* her religion. Her character is already compromised, as Teddy feels "that she is complicit in every premature ejaculation in the city" (86). Alice, too, is apprehensive that though she has been able to ward off other men, Teddy "is going to be her real nemesis" (32). So, what moves her to concede to Teddy's proposal?

It has been argued, as Alice observes herself, that her decision to marry Teddy Butt is a survival strategy employed by a Catholic woman in a predominantly Islamic society (76). However, the incident that moves her to this fateful strategy is not an unconditional desire for social mobility. It is not the incident in the VIP room where Junior forced her to perform fellatio at gunpoint; neither is it a passing infatuation or romanticism. It is her conversation with Sister Hina Alvi about filing a complaint with the police that makes her realize that the state has failed her in the social contract. Veena Das explores the relationship between the social contract and the sexual contract as establishing consent to the political order through the domestic order; "what happens when the social contract is sexualized: Consent is forced, even parodied" (Das 284). She argues that "underlying the ideological grid dividing the social contract and the sexual contract is the ever-possible presence of male violence in the home" (293). Hanif's meditations on love in the novel frame it as a "protection racket" that may kill to protect, as Malangi tells Teddy it is for their own good that sometimes women must be put down, like animals (Hanif 68). The novel highlights and problematizes what Das calls the "taken-for-granted character" of women's consent to domestic violence (Das 293). Alice has had enough experience with law enforcement during her time in prison on false charges, and when Sister Hina Alvi says that if she goes to the police, she will have to deal with not one but a room full of men in her face, she knows it is true. Alice's survival strategy, therefore, can be interpreted as her only hope that she will be able to deal with Junior if she marries a man who works for the police. What she is not expecting is that Teddy is indeed going to be "that final man, the last inevitable man, who wants to slash

her throat" (Hanif 80). However, the trajectory of Alice's fate from her premonitions to Teddy's attack on her is not simply determined by a domestic conflict between the two.

Acid attacks are indeed a premediated crime; however, Teddy's initial and individual reaction to the perceived abandonment by Alice does not directly translate into the inevitability of her murder. When Teddy goes to the Squad office, he feels like a pet whose owner has decided to move and not take him along, which shows a defeated and gloomy but not a vengeful disposition. Dissatisfied with Teddy's behavior, Inspector Malangi takes it upon himself to make a man out of him. To be sure, the violence against women is less motivated by their defiance than the competition and self-policing among men to prove their masculinity as invulnerable. Commissioned by Junior to punish Alice for his humiliation, Malangi shatters Teddy's hopes to reunite with Alice by using a mystical notion that if he loves her, he must kill her; "When a filly goes mad, there is not much you can do […] They need to be put down. For their own good. There is no other way" (167). He goes on to exemplify his 'manly' conduct by recounting how he killed the woman he loved most. He acknowledges that it might not bring him peace, still insisting it is the *only* way love can culminate honorably if a woman does not reciprocate it. Ironically, as Teddy approaches Alice to disfigure her beautiful face with acid, he is "professing his eternal love" for her (180). The love of violence ultimately ends up in the violence of love. It is important to point out, however, that Alice loses her life not to Teddy alone but to the structure of hegemonic masculinity that shames Teddy for not being man enough.

Alice's death has been a point of discord in various interpretations of the novel. Some scholars argue that "Hanif has carved Alice Bhatti as a saint by the end of the novel with the help of magical realism" as she and some others are looking up to a supposed apparition of the Holy Virgin in the sky when she was attacked (Siraj et al. 107), while others assert that Alice is granted a magical agency "to restore her feminine prestige and primacy in the real mundane phallocentric world" (Shaheen, 107). Mariam Mirza, in her astute interpretation of the novel argues that magical realism in *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* is a satire of the ever-increasing religious extremism and superstition in Pakistan; "It accentuates [Hanif's] rejection of magic and religion (the two categories, in fact, collapse

into each other in the novel), as an adequate form of resistance to subaltern oppression" (Mirza 160). Following Mirza's analysis, I argue that in a society where religious expression underpins exploitative powers more than individual spirituality, Hanif satirizes magical realism by using it as a symbol of religious superstition that is devoid of the liberating effect conventionally attached to it.

There is almost a carnivalesque depiction of the miraculous and the sacred in a language that simultaneously evokes and subverts Marquez's characterization of Remedios the Beauty in depicting Alice's ascension to heaven; unlike her, Alice is very much a being of this world and knows that not getting a job cannot be the worst thing that could happen to her at Sacred Heart (Marquez *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Hanif 5). However, it is also Alice who "likes" the jealousy in Teddy, making his toxic attributes hidden in plain sight, even though he is foreshadowed to become Alice's nemesis (Hanif 173). Despite her realistic disposition, she also unconsciously approves of men who are possessive and do not show feminine attributes. Her expectation that Teddy can tell him what is troubling him at work appears paradoxical, owing to her gendered conditioning that shapes her view of ideal masculinity.

The use of magical realism in *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*, unlike Hanif's other two novels, does not provide any relief by preventing Alice's murder. With every suggestion of a miracle, Alice herself expounds an equally plausible refutation of it. As Sancheti argues, the very use of the technique displays "a mistrust of both the realist and the magical narrative strands, setting them apart from more conventional examples of magical realism" (Sancheti 136). Alice's death comes as a shock, not inevitable to the reader, despite the early foreshadowing. Joseph Bhatti's letter in the epilogue tries to make sense of it with a heightened flourish of absurdity that keeps going off on a tangent as if to question its own purpose. Hanif refuses to romanticize the death of the subaltern and the power of the miracles to simplify Alice's death. It is an act of extreme violence, but he does not resort to aestheticizing her brutal murder or pain. To be sure, she is not for a single instance been directly intimidated in the novel by anyone; "Alice has never accepted a wound without trying to give one back", and so her death, too, takes us back to the beginning of the novel to reread her story, with the knowledge of her death (Hanif

140). Hanif leaves the reader with a cyclical narrative of violence that is indeed carried on through the miraculous and the mythical and could only be disrupted by facing the stark realism of the precarity of a Christian woman's life in Pakistan. Alice's life and her resilience not only defy the essentialism imposed on her but also expose the myths and lies of hegemonic masculinity, which itself appears as an organized religion.

5.4. Conclusion

Hanif's depiction of the localized hegemonic masculinity reinforces the regional hierarchical gender order structured by the historical codes of martial bravery, an attachment to institutional authority, normative Muslimness, and a competitive subjugation of femininity and women as the historic bloc for gender construction. The subtext of internecine conflicts between competing masculinities spread across Karachi's diverse and volatile landscape catalogs the aftermath of the global project of militarized Islamo-masculinity that implicitly gained strength through the commodification and weaponization of the religious, ethnic, sectarian, and political differences during the Zia era.

Hanif problematizes the notion of consent to hegemony by representing it as constitutive of violence committed upon the bodies and a reflexive survival instinct that informs minoritarian and subordinate identities either lacking in or excessive of the hegemonic cultural scripts. Within this narrative, Alice's Christian femininity reflexively constructs a resounding and exceptional resistance to the state sanctioned violence, and her death should be read as Hanif's refusal to mitigate the horror of hegemonic masculine apathy towards non-hegemonic gender identities.

In Teddy, Hanif constructs a locally subordinate masculinity that shows sedimentary layers of regional and local hegemonic masculine projects to which he attaches himself for provisional and relational privileges. However, these "privileges" are metaphysically framed notions of masculine honor and do not bring him any relief from his economically subordinate subjectivity other than giving him an illusion of control over the uncertainty of his gendered position. His actions are driven by policing and shaming by men like his father and Inspector Malangi for being vulnerable to emotions and femininity. This is how the gender politics that begins among men eventually leads to

Teddy's self-destructive act of killing Alice and his unborn child and paying a high cost of toxic masculinity. In this reading of Alice's death, the satirical inversion of magical realism in *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* is used as a tool to redeem the gendered bodies from the violence of religiocultural myths that informally legitimate unequal gender relations, marginalization of minorities, and an outrageous and unforgivable denial of justice to Alice and Joseph Bhatti on the intersectionality of gender, race, religion, class, and caste.

Chapter 6

Red Birds: "All Myths, All Lies"

'Something has happened to everyone and if it hasn't happened yet, it will happen. Only a matter of time.'

- Sabeen Mahmud, as quoted by Mohammed Hanif in Red Birds

We are not here to save our national honour, we are not here to save our national anything. […] There can be no victory if I don't take my firstborn home. My son's safety is my victory. That's my entire war plan. That's my ideology. That's my tactics. That's my strategy.

- Mohammed Hanif, Red Birds

6.1. Introduction

The Afghan jihad that began with the neo-liberal capitalist liaison with the military regime in Pakistan during the Cold War engendered such far reaching sociocultural, political, and economic consequences that historically transformed the entire region. Reframed as the War on Terror in the wake of 9/11, America's foreign policy became invested in a shifting discourse that sought to eliminate the very Islamist extremism it funded and promoted against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s. Similar conflicts, however, seem to have been replicating in different parts of the world with an alarming speed, including the Middle East and other global peripheries. This chapter analyzes how Hanif attempts to make sense of the absurdity of the paradox of a never-ending war that goes on even when there is nothing left to destroy, glossed over with humanitarian aid and rehabilitation programs, through a dystopian survival narrative in *Red Birds*. The conflicts of gender, power, and culture are embedded in the political economy of the neo-liberal global hegemonic metanarrative of third-world

Muslim culture, and the manifestations of trauma inflicted upon the survivors have a shattering impact on their sense of identity and orientation of the self.

Red Birds was published in 2018, three years before the final exit of US Forces from Afghanistan, and its profoundly prognostic relevance has only increased in this context. This novel is markedly different from his first two novels in that it leaves them behind in its setting as well as its narrative technique. The first person episodic narrative structure provides all the central characters with their own narrative voice, which develops into a dialogic sense of truth akin to Dostoevsky's polyphonic fiction. The narration evades any attempt to specify the location of the novel's setting, as Hanif remarks about it in one of his interviews that "It is actually set in my head", which highlights the inevitability of a writer's lived experience playing into their imaginative creations as well as the symbolic nature of the novel's setting (The London Library 5:15–5:40). The refugee camp in the novel where most of the action takes place represents the increasing number of such refugee camps around the world, specifically in the Global South, which has become a boneyard of forgotten and abandoned wars. A US Air Force pilot, Maj Ellie, crash lands and dies in a desert near the refugee camp that he was supposed to wipe out of existence. Ellie is not aware that he is dead, and his ghost is ironically saved by Momo, a "very angry" fifteen-year-old from the Camp that was a village before it was destroyed by American bombing (Hanif 68). The archetype of hegemonic masculinities articulated by global gender intersectionality of race, class, culture, and religion is satirized through interactions between Maj Ellie, Momo, Mother Dear, and a USAID worker, Lady Flowerbody.

My analysis in this chapter focuses on how women and men in *Red Birds* embody gendered identities as the inhabitants of a refugee camp in the aftermath of an abandoned war, which turns out to be just another potential market for the US military industrial complex. Their gendered subjectivities varyingly reify and challenge the hegemonic discourse which renders them as the exotic 'Other' of American hegemonic masculinity and femininity.

6.2. Benevolent Violence, Neoliberalism, and the Business of War

International media and the scholarship that has emerged so far on *Red Birds* have viewed it as a satirical representation of the US military invasions of third world Muslim countries justified by the discourse of War on Terror and the indirect subjugation through the narrative of humanitarian aid, reconstruction, and rehabilitation. However, as Asim Karim argues, the novel has a broader scope in highlighting humanitarian issues and exposing the relationship between 'the invisible hand' of neoliberal capitalism and "the internal dynamics of greed, ineptitude, and hankering for quick monetary gains" (Karim 748). Hanif has indeed used a mirror effect to show how "both sides of this apparent binary, notwithstanding the disparities in power and resources, contain dark forces which threaten to overwhelm their respective policies and cultures" (748). Through a satirical use of the master language of neoliberal capitalism, Hanif unpacks the project of neo-imperial hegemony by accounting for the losses of the victims of war. Commenting on the unspecified/imaginary setting of the novel, Hanif says that

> The setting is not that abstract […] it's a refugee camp. We have been at war for about forty years now […] The refugee camps of my childhood are proper slums now, some are even proper towns and villages. And new refugee camps are still coming up. We keep forgetting about the ones that were set up last year. (Singh)

The forty years of war that has increasingly destabilized the Pak-Afghan region since the rise of the neoliberal capitalist world order, "with a few years' break here and there", has been facilitated by the thematic structure of benevolent violence of imperial savior that rescues third world victims from third world savages within the neoliberal globalization discourse (Singh). In fact, it has increasingly blurred the difference between the savages and the victims not only in the peripheries but also in the hegemonic center and created a boomerang effect, which raises questions about the impact of the so-called legitimate violence on world peace. In this section, I will take the context that Hanif provides in his interviews and analyze the satirical depiction of benevolent violence and human rights narrative at work in the relational construction of gendered subjectivities in the era of neoliberal globalization. As I quote Messerschmidt in Chapter 2 while discussing the relational construction of global hegemonic masculinity, the foreign policy speeches of the US Presidents in the past few decades present them as "embodying strength,

assertiveness, knowledge, invulnerability, and the ability to protect others (as masculine qualities) through the 'global war on terror'" (Messerschmidt 80). The 'Other' people of the world in this discourse appear as passively dependent, ignorant, and vulnerable to terrorism. Messerschmidt argues that these complementary sets of qualities are associated with masculinity and femininity in the Global North and, therefore, legitimates an unequal gendered power relation by discursively constructing the supremacy of white hegemonic masculinity as the savior of the world community.

This discursive construction is echoed in the embodiment of masculinities in the characters of US bombardier Ellie, who is a "victim of the failure of war technology"; Father Dear, a servile local logistics officer at the Hangar (US Airforce base) who is chronically depressed on account of his unrequited love for Americans, and his teenaged son Ali, a disillusioned native informer who tries to infiltrate the Hangar and stop the war single handedly, and as a consequence, goes missing (Hanif 138). Momo believes that Ellie, too, is a disillusioned spy who is afraid of his people because he "does not want to be one of them" (172). The spatial structure of the novel juxtaposes the 'Hangar' and the 'Camp' to present "a composite picture of the usual triad of US allied activity in contemporary war zones" (Sadaf 4). The symbolic names given to these positionalities accentuate the dilapidated life in the refugee camps contrary to the ironically well-equipped military installations in the contemporary war zones of the Global South. Lady Flower Body, the USAID consultant and researcher who is "conducting a survey on post-conflict conflict resolution strategies that involve local histories and folklore" completes the theatre of the absurd that goes on despite the extensive research on human rights issues being carried out in the northern academia (Hanif 44). While she arrives with a "patient, benevolent demeanour" of "well-fed do-gooders", Ellie believes she is not ready to face the simple facts of life (63, 113). He wants to ask her, in perhaps the most unsettling passage of the novel:

> If I didn't bomb some place, how would she save that place? If I didn't rain fire from the skies, who would need her to douse that fire on the ground? Why would you need somebody to throw blankets on burning babies if there were no burning babies? If I didn't take out homes, who would provide shelter? […] If I didn't obliterate cities, how would you get to set up refugee camps? Where would all the

> world's empathy go? Who would host exhibitions in the picture galleries of Berlin, who would have fundraising balls in London? […] If I stop wearing this uniform and quit my job, the world's sympathy machine will grind to a halt. You don't hold candlelight vigils for those dying of old age and neglect. You need fireworks to ignite human imagination. I can see now that she belongs to that civilian world of eternal deceit […] people wanting to arrive somewhere without risking the journey. (164)

This is an incisive critique of the neoliberal mechanism that engenders a cyclical process of destruction and reconstruction for the profit of international organizations and global markets. Lady Flowerbody is doing research on Momo's Young Muslim Mind "that will pay for her six-handed massages and her toned skin", but what Momo gets in payment is a fake Cadbury chocolate, though "the wrapper is real" (62, 120). While Momo dreams of signing postwar reconstruction contracts, Mutt knows that "this is not how distribution of wealth works in post-war economies" (51). Mutt also believes that if you start spending too much time with "American-sponsored researchers", you might begin to think "you can make money out of sand and beautiful birds" (75). Hanif uses Mutt and Ellie, a brilliant dog and a ghost, to voice his sharpest commentary on human affairs. However, Ellie gains clarity of his position only after he dies and lingers as a ghost waiting to be rescued by the honors that a soldier deserves, to be found and taken back home and buried with medals, which never comes to pass.

Hanif's framing of the neoliberal economy of war is strongly reminiscent of the depiction of the business of war in *Catch 22*, summed up in Milo Minderbinder's iconic phrase, "everybody has a share" (Heller). However, the share in the business of war is not distributed equally to all the agents of war as promised provisionally, and the disproportionate losses and destruction undermine the privileges associated with being a war hero. Ellie observes that while his seniors in the Central Command find nirvana following the military ideology of the "Path of Oneness", what he gets is "blisters and dysentery" (17). His position in the global hierarchy, however, dramatically shifts when juxtaposed with the masculinities in the Camp, albeit in a paradoxical way. Ellie's resentment at not being given enough importance by the very people he was going to bomb, people who had been displaced by his unit's previous missions, shows a complex

phenomenon. While he is initially convinced of the superiority of his race, class, nationality, and culture, and despite the structural, physical, and economic dominance of white military masculinity in the Camp, Ellie cannot assume the hegemonic masculinity in the local culture, which is evident from his interactions at the Camp.

Ellie assumes a moral high ground based on the military briefing in which he is (mis)informed that the Camp is full of "bad people", an undifferentiated mass of savages, which is an existential threat to world peace (16). After his plane crashes to the ground, however, Ellie makes some contradictory observations challenging the cultural differences that ought to place him on a higher pedestal of humanity compared to the men at the Camp. The first important question he asks himself when he wakes up in limbo is whether he had dropped the bomb or not, "Was the world a little bit safer now […]? (15). He is relieved to see that the boy who rescues him talks in English with an American accent, calls himself an entrepreneur, and loves dogs (78). But this relief is soon turned into disappointment when Momo gives his pet dog more importance than Ellie, and he eventually reaches the conclusion that he hates the Camp and its culture not because it is unfamiliar and savage but because it is the same as the American culture (77, 92). On the other hand, the word 'American' is regularly used in the Camp as an insult, which makes him wonder why his nation is so hated in this community. At first, he questions the humanity and decency of people who depend on USAID for daily provisions and shelter but do not honor a US pilot on a relief mission (he assumes this role in the Camp to gain sympathy). With all his post-crash rationality, however, he thinks it better not to ask Momo why he is out of school and driving an unlicensed vehicle, questions he would have asked an American fifteen-year-old (78). As I discuss in Chapter 4, segregation and negative stereotyping of the 'Other' are critical for creating consent to the hegemonic project. The contradiction in Ellie's information about the Camp when he takes off to bomb it and what he experiences when he is forced to stay there after death completely decenters the hegemonic US narrative of war on terror and humanitarian aid. Ellie is no longer a hero in this liminal space, and as Mutt articulates it better, he comes to realize that it has been all myths and lies, and "global security is nothing but social engineering through job creation" (187). It can be a reframing of Hanif's commentary on love being a

protection racket in *OLAB*, where those being protected are more vulnerable to their protectors than the presumed threats against which they are offered protection.

The attachments to the hegemonic project, which is still an intersectionality of American neoliberalism and the interests of the "Arab Sheikhs" in the region, are constantly challenged in the space that Hanif has constructed in the *Red Birds* (75). In the next section, I will discuss how cultural hegemony ceases to work in conflict zones that are not actively governed by a state and lack any institutional authority that legitimates a culturally ascendant model of hegemonic masculinities.

6.3. Thwarted Masculinities in the Conflict Zone and the "Young Muslim Mind"

In *Hegemonic Masculinity*, Messerschmidt refers to Laleh Khalili's study on the relationship between US soldiers and the local Iraqi forces they were training as proxies. Iraqi men enlisted as there were no other opportunities for earning a regular income during the war. Khalili found that during their interactions while training, a global gender hierarchy was constructed by effeminizing and berating Iraqi men who were "seen as inadequate and passive enforcers of good order by their trainers" (Messerschmidt 101). In this discourse, hegemonic masculinity was constructed through an unequal relationship of race and nation, and those who refused to fight along with US forces were already considered inferior or feminine, as the imperial project was considered *the* appropriate performance of masculinity.

Myrttinen, Khattab, and Naujoks argue that there is a need for research on masculinities in the conflict zones that see the militarized masculinity or insurgents as "unwanted outsiders, while unarmed, civilian community leaders are treated with far more respect" (Myrttinen et al. 107). The authors argue that violence is not necessarily associated with hegemony unless the public consent for violence is regulated through social norms and state institutions, which, as Moolji argues, is achieved by structured feelings and attachments. Based on the field research on conflict affected masculinities in various countries, the authors argue that men and boys

> Often faced contradictory expectations that do not fit easily with a one-dimensional notion of violent masculinities being hegemonic in conflict-affected

> situations. Men and women are confronted by the need to take up new roles in conflict affected situations while the underlying gender norms may remain the same. The ensuing expectations can be contradictory, including in relation to the use of violence. (107)

Conditions engendered by internal displacement and suspension of normative social structures cause a shift in traditional gender roles and expectations. While women might take up masculine-coded roles, men and boys struggle to embody the ideals of being "decision-makers, protectors, and breadwinners" (108). The gap between gendered expectations and the social, physical, economic, and political opportunities to achieve them becomes extremely difficult to overcome in the reality of conflict zones, giving way to 'thwarted masculinities', as Hanif depicts in the characters of Father Dear, Bro Ali, and Momo. There is an intriguing multiplicity in the three masculinities of the same family and how they come to deal with their thwarted projects in the wake of US occupation, destruction, and abandonment of their land.

Father Dear is a typical symbol of the colonized masculinity that reifies the Oriental notions of brown men. Hanif's characterization, however, is never straightforward or black and white. Mother Dear thinks that she "should have seen the beginning of that slippery slope […]. He had father issues" (Hanif 189). Having rebelled against his father, who was a tribal leader and practiced traditionally toxic masculinity, in his quest for appropriate masculinity, Father Dear finds an alternative way of being a man by attaching himself to the project of USAID, which he is convinced, due to his colonial conditioning and estrangement with father, is a superior masculinity. Like Col Slatter, he sees war as a personal opportunity (14,190). For all his revolutionary ideas of sex education and the greatness of Western culture, his expectations of an essentialized femininity remain traditional as he constantly threatens to divorce or murder Mother Dear because he cannot control her expressions. His elder son, Bro Ali, initially follows him by tracking American military targets in the Camp. Father Dear and Bro Ali attach themselves to the imperial conquest of their land by helping the Americans clean the village of "bad guys" (59). I read their masculinities as caught between the local corruption and marginalization and the narrative of white saviors. This subjectivity, however, does not make their alliance with the occupying forces inevitable or a safeguard

against oppression. Despite being an important character, Father Dear has no narrative voice in the novel, which shows that Hanif does not spare Father Dear from the charge of betraying his community. As Hanif comments in an interview, "we are suffering the world because he [Father Dear] collaborated in making this world" (Quadri). Momo tells everyone that his father has sold Bro Ali, who disappeared after he went to the Hangar with his father. The foreshadowing tells us that Ali is dead, but there is no confirmation until the last chapters.

The theme of missing people and those who are killed in a conflict is the mainspring of Hanif's narrative in *Red Birds*. In one of his interviews, when asked what the red birds in the title represent, he said: "Missing someone who is gone. And hoping someone who has gone misses you as well" (Singh). In *The Baloch Who is Not Missing and Others Who Are*, Hanif writes that it was not before the 80s that enforced disappearances became so widespread in the country (Hanif, *The Baloch* 2). One of the consequences of the totalitarian politics that Gen Zia practiced during the Afghan Jihad was that during and after his years in power, a precedent was set by which political opponents could be silenced with total disregard for legal process and human rights (2). Since the ideology was paradoxically appropriated during the successive regimes to build public support for the US led War on Terror, as a reaction, the society became ideologically conflicted, resisted US involvement in the region, and the militarized Islamo-masculinity that was constructed by the support of US neo-liberal and Saudi Salafist agendas became estranged to hegemonic project. Bro Ali represents a similar case of bad faith, though from the other end of the perspective. As soon as he decides not to cooperate with his white employers in spotting the militants, he disappears. Mutt tells us that "If you are cooperating with the people who destroy your houses, it can have tragic results. […] you don't sell your sons even if you are being paid in dollars. Even if your son is a brat. Even if your son is asking for it" (Hanif 32). The psychological violence of enforced disappearances is played out exceptionally by Hanif as he subjects the reader's mind to the same experience. The boundary between life and death, victim and perpetrator, is suspended as the ghosts of people who are missing and those who are left behind struggle to make sense of this liminality of violence. It also shows a pattern of thwarted masculinities, especially in young boys in conflict affected areas being

increasingly vulnerable to violence and economic constraints that make it impossible for them to live up to the notions of normative masculinity. As a reaction, they may act in violent ways or make self-destructive choices.

While Father Dear and Bro Ali try to appease the Occupier to gain some privilege in the local gender hierarchy, Momo chooses a different path. Apparently, Connell's notion of a 'transnational business masculinity' as an influential global hegemonic model is more relevant to the hypermediated development of Momo's masculinity. The only education he gets comes from occasional streaming of "Nat Geo" and business magazines like "Cosmopolitan" and "Fortune 500". Momo thinks that

> The real education was on TV. It doesn't always work but when the signal is good you catch bits of Nat Geo Xtra and *Capital Talk*. And Father brought back an old copy of a book called *Fortune 500* from the Hangar. There are men in that book got their own personal yachts.
>
> […] I focused on my business education and I became an entrepreneur. No, it doesn't mean that since you can't beat them you join them, because they wouldn't let you. And you definitely don't fight with them because you'll lose.
>
> I became a businessman. […] It's the process through which you turn ideas into hard cash, you take positions on futures and you see what bits of the past are gonna do well in the markets. But sometimes the past is very costly merchandise. (23)

Momo and Mutt are perhaps the most iconic characters Hanif has ever written. The former is hatching a new business plan in every instance, and the latter not only matter-of-factly keeps busting them but also gives us prophetic insights on human nature and the Mutt philosophy about the intimate relationship between love and violence. When Momo's cherished plan of training a kite into a falcon and selling it to Arab Sheikhs that come to the Desert for hunting is foiled by Mutt, who wants to show him that a kite is a kite, Momo's reaction to Mutt's "act of mercy" is expressed through a violent hit that leaves Mutt with a broken leg (50). Putting his experience in a broad perspective, Mutt makes a profound observation about how violence begets more violence: "It's a well-known fact that those under assault from outsiders take it out on their own. The opium eater gets kicked in the bazaar and since he can't hit back, he

comes home and kicks his kids. […] You can't bring an enemy plane down with a stone, but you can smash your neighbour's window" (30). In other words, those under assault from 'above' in terms of hegemonic gender order take it out on those 'below' them.

In terms of Lady Flowerbody's humanitarian mission, which is to explore the thought process of a "Young Muslim Mind" as it is perceived in the hegemonic Western discourse of terrorism, Momo's "Young Muslim Mind" turns out to be, as Ellie observes, no different than "young anybody's mind anywhere in the world" (148). What is more unsettling, is that Momo's mind identifies himself not with the regional hegemonic model of militarized Islamo-masculinity but with an ethnic identitity, and with a bit of a stretch, with the Mongol conqueror Genghis Khan; "Linking up my own condition with some imagined medieval trivia helps you live in these parts. It makes my mild depression feel like a part of the great march of the humanity through millennia" (62). But then he remembers that "history can wait" and he would rather "address the economy first" (62). In terms of identity, the ultimate site of contest for Momo is the global market and he wants his fair share in it. He expects Lady Flowerbody to find him some venture capitalists who could "invest" in his Young Muslim Mind rather than explore it (106). Notwithstanding his ambitions, however, his masculinity is more critically structured by the loss of his elder brother, and the grief and expectations of Mother Dear and the community he wishes to command.

Momo plans to recover his brother by exchanging Ellie, who is the "right" color for negotiation, as a prisoner of war. He shares the plan with Ellie, who realizes that behind all the façade of toughness and a "sharp tongue", Momo is only a child struggling to understand what is expected of him (153). His masculinity is constrained not just by the weight of these expectations but also by the lack of means to live up to these expectations. His project of changing the camp into a thriving hub of business activity is far removed from the sociopolitical living conditions of a conflict hit zone, which constructs a hybrid masculinity that simultaneously distances itself from his father and brother's attachment to the militarized masculinity but remains attached to the notions of white supremacy as it is shown in his love for the 'I Heart NY' cap and a fake American accent. Underlying this contradiction, however, is the helplessness of dispossession, displacement, and the loss of his elder brother who he believes, despite all his

shortcomings, was the real hero. When he finds his brother's body at the hanger, he feels accountable to his mother for failing to bring her brother back alive, depicting a relational construction of masculinity aligned with his loss.

6.4. Third World Feminist Consciousness: The Ultimate Sight of Resistance

Among the dissonance of many voices, the one that represents unconditional resistance and emerges as the final voice in *Red Birds* is that of Mother Dear. The feminist consciousness and self-awareness of her character are translated into the loudest rejection of resigned victimhood ascribed to women from traditional tribal societies. Having lost her son who was abducted by American forces, she is not "wearing her depression like a badge of honour, but turning it into a subtle form of resistance", and finally, when she realizes that it is not one of the men in her family who will rescue her son, she decides that "miracles don't happen when your existence is tied to your stove" and goes out herself for the evasive action (Hanif 72, 176).

Mother Dear's femininity is a relational intersectionality of being the wife of the community leader and mother of two sons; one of them is missing, and the other one's life is under threat not only because he is a young boy in a conflict zone, but also because he must rescue his brother. While most of the information Ellie gets in his "cultural sensitivity" courses turns out to be useless, Hanif has, at times, used his voice to share some difficult realizations. He tells us that "the more sons a mother has the more respect she gets, but it also means she has to do more housework" (154). Culturally, therefore, she appears to be in a position where her strength and the respect she commands come from her identity in relation to her sons, and by the same token, her very existence is also under attack as she struggles to bring one of her sons back and to keep the other one alive while doing so. Khan, Shehzad, and Roohi highlight the symptoms of PTSD in the characters of *Red Birds* that are most strongly and persistently depicted in Mother Dear (Khan et al.). Mutt tells us that "in her grief our Mother Dear is as stubborn as those lizards on their ceilings" (Hanif 113). Despite her grief, which is exacerbated by the uncertainty of her missing son's condition, her response does not show symptoms of evasion apparent in Momo and Father Dear. Because her project is univocally that of a

mother, she puts her motherhood to scrutiny in trying to locate the cause of her trauma. Though she accuses her husband of selling his son to his white masters, she tells herself that she is equally responsible for letting it happen because she allowed Ali to go. Compulsively repeating the traumatic incidents in her mind, she blames herself for thinking how she could have saved her firstborn by sending Momo in his place, only because he could have had a better chance of survival.

Here is a feminist consciousness that refuses to accept victimhood by ascribing it to the sociopolitical and cultural constraints of her subjectivity and takes on the responsibility of her actions by assuming agency. It does not, however, mitigate the seriousness of the emotional and structural violence she is exposed to through her relational identity, which compels her to imagine bargaining one son in exchange for the other. She identifies the hopelessness of her mental negotiations with the past, "as if this was a game of chance that one could play better than the other" (180). Hers is also the only character among the living in the novel that finally reaches a clarity of purpose. When Lady Flowerbody tries to treat her trauma through a Eurocentric diagnosis of her condition, she outrightly rejects that framing: "This can't be left to chance anymore. Flowerbody tried to teach me to manage my grief. Managing your grief soon becomes a full-time, dead-end job. It's like managing a small business that never makes any profit" (180). When Lady Flowerbody tells her to put her loss into a "global perspective" and make her own decisions, she is quick to remind her that it is indeed she who makes the decisions for her family (176). Mother Dear's introspection of her motives shows how the sociopolitical dynamics of conflict affected spaces drive men and women to perform unexpected reflex actions. Mother Dear lets Ali go, thinking he will have a "proper job in the middle of the war, a job that didn't involve fighting" (177). But when he does not return, she starts collecting weapons instead of resigning herself to passive victimhood. She cleans up and sharpens her machete because "raising a son is like sharpening a weapon day after day and then waiting. Even when you have no appetite for weapons, you need one because you don't know who might come after your child" (180).

In the final act of the novel, it is Mother Dear who leads an army of living and dead men against ghosts of soldiers in the Hangar who are also separated from their mothers and families, rejected by the gods of heaven and the earth, waiting in the

purgatory to be relieved of their liminal existence, to rescue her son. She purifies their souls with her salt dagger and tells them, "We are not here for revenge. We are not here to save our national honour, we are not here to save our national anything. […] I'll hold on to my dagger but I'll talk first. There can be no victory if I don't take my firstborn home. My son's safety is my victory. That's my entire war plan. That's my ideology. That's my tactics. That's my strategy" (197). Although Mother Dear has a strong presence in the first two sections of the novel, "In the Desert" and "In the Camp", she gets her own narrative voice in the last section, "To the Hangar". It is a powerful move by Hanif to not whitewash her marginalized subjectivity in the third world Muslim culture, yet give the final voice, the decisive voice, to the same marginalized subjectivity that defies the hegemonic masculine narratives of good and evil, self and the other, and profit and loss.

Veena Das argues that the relationship between gender and violence is "not only about how worlds are unmade by violence but also how they are remade" through mourning (Das 293). But Moolji makes a distinction between mourning and melancholia in the context of the figure of a bereaved mother who is expected to reframe the death of her son as a sacrifice for the national interest, or as in the case of Mother Dear, global peace (Moolji 312). By refusing to mourn the loss of her son without the resolution of trauma, Mother Dear turns her grief into melancholia that holds the hegemonic powers accountable for her loss and, therefore, represents the ultimate site of resistance against the neo-imperial hegemonic discourse of legitimate violence in the name of humanity.

6.5. Conclusion

I have analyzed the relational construction of gendered subjectivities in the liminal space of a conflict zone where the enabling factors for the cultural ascendancy of hegemonic masculinity are suspended. While the deep-rooted cultural ideal of masculine dominance over femininity retains its power as the ideal masculinity in the Camp, the regional model of militarized Islamo-masculinity is practically decentered. It fails to achieve internal hegemony as the regional and global dynamics are no longer conducive for its propagation and is now taken up by the protest masculinity, indicated by the 'targets' in the Camp. While Father Dear acts as a facilitator for the US invasion, the

characters of Ali and Momo represent thwarted masculinities, caught in between the competing narratives of appropriate masculinity and the struggle for socio-economic survival.

Among the various challenges to the legitimacy and righteousness of the US neo-liberal discourse of the War on Terror, the most potent and incisive rejection of both the Eurocentric narrative of peace and the nationalist discourse of sacrificial violence is depicted in the character of Mother Dear. Through a satirical representation of the neoliberal capitalist discourse *and* the normative local cultural codes of masculinity, Hanif blurs the line between their divisive metanarratives of redemptive wars and successfully unsettles the apparently opposing binaries of the global North and the third world Muslim regimes that eventually draw strength from each other in legitimating the unequal gender relations globally.

Chapter 7

CONCLUSION: THE DIRECTION OF THE WIND

Crime constantly monopolizes the headlines, but the criminal appears there only fugitive, to be replaced at once.

- Albert Camus, The Fall

"[…] nothing is easier than cutting off heads, and nothing is harder than to have an idea."

- Fyodor Dostoevsky

7.1 Situatedness of the Researcher

Daily news headlines in Pakistan impress upon the masses that violence has been embedded in the very fabric of our society, and to seek justice and peaceful coexistence could be nothing short of provoking an identitarian crisis. Only two days after celebrating Independence Day this year, an organized mob led by a religious organization with a violent ideology burnt the houses of the Christian community in Jaranwala and desecrated and burnt the churches and the Holy Bible on allegations of blasphemy, which is not a rare incident of its kind. In the past, similar incidents have taken place in other cities and towns[9]. In November 2014, at Kot Radha Krishan, a pregnant Christian woman, Shama, and her husband, Shahzad Masih, were brutally tortured and then burnt alive in the brick kiln where the couple worked as bonded laborers for alleged blasphemy. According to an estimate, at least one thousand Hindu women and minor

[9] In *My Pakistan*, Dr Malik records a hundred cases of violence, from 1997 to 2012, against religious minorities and their places of worship, incited by hatred, religious intolerance, allegations of blasphemy, and land grabbing of graveyards and other sites. In most of these incidents, he notes, no blasphemy was proved (135).

girls are kidnapped and forced to marry Muslim men and convert to Islam in a year (Al Jazeera). Ironically, while these cases are justified in courts, if they ever reach there, by championing the right of abducted women to marry at will, the same right to self-determination is denied to many Muslim women who are often killed in the name of honor for choosing their husbands. Violence in the name of religion, however, is not committed only against women and religious minorities. In 2017, Mashal Khan, a bright young Muslim student at a public sector university in KPK province, was savagely lynched to death at the university campus on blasphemy allegations. These cases are not even the tip of the iceberg that represents structural violence against the marginalized groups in Pakistan, a category that is being widened in scope with time. At present, Pakistan is ranked the second worst country in terms of gender parity and the sixth most dangerous country for women[10]. Silencing of political minorities and forced disappearances have also become a norm in today's Pakistan.

Despite this precarity of life, there is an assumption of consent to the violence these groups must suffer for the very ambiguous larger interest and ideological purity of the nation. Suffice it to say that the situation is dismal but not unforeseen if we compare these systems of oppression with the structural and symbolic violence evident in the constitutional history of Pakistan. In the West, on the other hand, growing Islamophobia and the consequent victimization of Muslim populations in the Middle East and Central Asia gives the impression that our religious far right, in alliance with the native elite, is complicit in the global subjugation of the underprivileged, the progressives, and the indigenous left in the Third World, keeping them chained in shackles of internal colonialism. It is perhaps this convoluted state of affairs that turns journalists like Mohammed Hanif into authors of fiction, which allows them and us to make sense of the betrayal, violence, and injustice that has become the informal culture sustaining the global gender hierarchy. What Ayesha Jalal says about Manto's stories being "a treasure trove of rare insights into human nature" is also true for Hanif's works of fiction (Jalal x). It is indeed literature that gives voice to the individual and personal experience that remains missing from the empirical archives of history and newspaper headlines. Being a Pakistani researcher situates my study within the narratives of resistance to endemic

[10] According to Word Economic Forum and Thomas Reuters Foundation reports.

violence rampant on multiple yet interconnected levels in Pakistan. The cultural and historical context in Hanif's fiction grounds my thesis on the local, regional, and global hegemonic masculinities in Pakistan during the watershed moments of its history.

7.2 Conclusions

What kind of author creates oppressor and oppressed, and savior and victim, in the same character and yet moves the reader to identify oppression apart from its human embodiment? Perhaps a writer like Dostoevsky who knew that "the reasons for human actions are usually incalculably more complex and diverse than we tend to explain them later, and are seldom clearly manifest" (Dostoevsky 580). Or a writer like Manto, whose relationship with his characters transcends the cultural conventions to humanize the bodies that are otherwise excluded from national imaginaries. The spirit of resisting absolutism in Hanif compels me to suggest that his fiction indeed possesses a similarity both to Dostoevsky's psychologically penetrating art of characterization and Manto's commitment to look for and write stories that could only be told through fiction. What is common between these writers is that they look beyond the totalizing metanarratives of subjectivity and locate the causes of human actions not in individuals but in ideas and myths that propagate them. In other words, they are the kind of writers who know the direction of the wind. Manto's prognostic sense of history foreshadows the future direction of the newly born postcolonial state in "Letters to Uncle Sam", while the depiction of gendered violence in Hanif's fiction warns against the narratives that provide impunity for crimes against the underprivileged in Pakistan.

My research project begins with the premise that Hanif's satire of gender order in Pakistan deconstructs the grand narratives of race, culture, religion, ethnicity, and gender that sustain patriarchal gender relations in the interest of hegemonic masculinity. I also argue that Hanif's subversive humor is a testimony to the historical resistance of women, minorities, and other marginalized subjectivities that are threatened by erasure in the official discourse of history. I approach this study with three controlling research questions exploring the essentialisms that constitute the content of hegemonic ideals, the interaction between the regional and global hegemonic masculinities, and the resistance of women and the subversion of hegemonic ideals. I employ the concept of hegemonic

masculinity as the political ideal of appropriate masculinity that mobilizes a hierarchical gender order in various contexts.

Through the analysis of *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*, I have provided a sketch of the regional hegemonic masculinity consolidating during the Zia regime as the legitimating quality content in relation to which the Pakistani hegemonic masculinities have been constituted during and after his rule. The content of this political model is normative Muslimness and militarized masculinity or the figure of the soldier, interacting with US neoliberal politics of the Cold War and the Saudi agenda in the region in the subtext. I have highlighted how the domestication of women and polarization of society through Islamist identitarian politics is used as a tool to create rigid gender categories of masculinity and femininity. Hanif's characters embody diverse subjectivities that are relationally positioned in a hierarchical gender order in terms of sex, race, class, religion, nationality, and political attachment to the hegemonic project of Afghan Jihad. The implications of dehumanizing laws introduced by Gen Zia regarding women and religious minorities and a brutal crackdown on intellectual and political liberties continue to sabotage the possibility of change in the patriarchal gender order in Pakistan. I have contextualized the story of blind Zainab with the corresponding historical instances that challenge the metanarrative of a militarized and Islamized hegemonic masculinity and highlight the inherent contradictions that indicate a crisis of political legitimacy. Additionally, a gap between the hegemonic ideal and its actual embodiment, which does not materialize in any of the multiple masculinities of Hanif's characters in the novel, also continues to challenge the scripts of gendered identities aimed at eliminating cultural diversity in Pakistan.

My exploration of localized hegemonic masculinity in Chapter 5 identifies an unmistakable yet fluid reconstruction of the regional hierarchical gender order structured by the historical codes of martial bravery, an attachment to institutional authority, normative Muslimness, and a competitive subjugation of femininity and women as the content of appropriate masculinity. The long-term impact of Gen Zia's Islamization project raises its ugly head in the devastating internecine conflicts between multiple and competing masculinities, which proves that the glorification of militarism promotes the

weaponization of male bodies on the society-wide level. In contrast to the concept of hegemony as primarily achieved through public consent, I highlight the notion of consent to hegemonic masculinity by interpreting it as constitutive of violence as the quality content. The purely cultural ascendancy of the regional model is an illusion formed by the strategies of survival in a society where the distribution of violence is normalized through metaphysical notions of honor and the ideological purity of Muslim women. Within this environment of hostility, I argue that Alice, as a Christian woman, puts up a heroic resistance to the state sanctioned violence, and her death should be read as Hanif's refusal to sidestep the horror of violence against minorities and women in Pakistan. The failure, rather complicity, of the justice system through informal impunity for crimes against women and minorities is defamiliarized through Magical Realism in *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*. The technique is used as a tool to redeem the gendered bodies from the violence of religiocultural myths that informally legitimate unequal gender relations, marginalization, and discrimination in access to justice, based on the hierarchies of sex, race, religion, class, and caste.

The primary condition for hegemonic masculinity is that it requires *legitimation* through institutionalization of the prevalent gender order, even when it is coupled with violence as the tool for hegemony. However, as I argue in Chapter 6, in *Red Birds*, gendered subjectivities are constructed in the liminal space of a war zone where the enabling structures for the cultural dissemination of hegemonic masculinity, i.e., the institutional authority for legitimation, are suspended. While in the first two novels the subordinate masculinities remain attached to the regional model of militarized Islamism, the model is practically decentered and fails to achieve cultural hegemony for men in the Afghan refugee camp, relying solely on the use of power to subjugate thwarted masculinities. Simultaneously, the Camp subverts the US neo-liberal discourse of the War on Terror, and the most powerful resistance to the Western narrative of world peace and the nationalist discourse of sacrificial violence is represented by the character of Mother Dear. She refuses to reframe the death of her son from the perspective of world peace and constructs a non-hegemonic femininity that discredits both the nationalist discourse and the US imperial narrative of global saviors and human rights by demanding accountability for her loss.

My analysis of *Red Birds* strengthens my proposition that through a satirical representation of the neoliberal capitalist discourse *and* the normative local cultural codes of masculinity, Hanif blurs the line between the supposedly antagonistic metanarratives of their hegemonic projects, and successfully unsettles the apparently opposing binaries of the global North and the third world Muslim regimes that eventually draw strength from each other in legitimating the unequal gender relations globally. The hybridity of the hegemonic model in Pakistan indicates multiple patterns on the regional and local levels as it interacts with changing dynamics of social, economic, and political forces for external hegemony. However, what remains constant through these historical shifts is the marginalization of women and subordinated masculinities. It can be concluded that if we are not careful enough in creating an understanding of power and how it shifts in relation to gendered attachments to hegemony, we are sure to be eluded by its pervasiveness all around and within us in the form of cultural norms and ideologies, hidden in plain sight, that shape our sense of identity and cultural belonging.

Hanif's fiction reveals how metaphysical ideas and myths create narratives that propagate and reify cultural norms and gender relations, which in Pakistan are increasingly translated into widespread violence, disseminated systematically through social structures, institutions, and organizations, and originate from the content of hegemonic masculinity. However, these narratives may evolve in unexpected ways in their interaction with each other and the historical developments in a particular sociopolitical setting. While the current situation may seem bleak, the possibility for an alternative configuration of hegemony cannot be eliminated which is evident in the many contradictions, challenges, and even failures of hegemonic masculinity, as depicted in the lived experience of characters in the selected novels.

7.3 Future Research

My research project is an attempt to pave the way for further historical readings of Hanif's texts from a gendered perspective. The construction of femininities in *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* and *Red Birds* remains under researched. There are opportunities for a comprehensive investigation of historical masculinities in Hanif's fiction and their implications in the South Asian as well as global contexts. A study of gender in Hanif's

work is particularly urgent for a deeper understanding of gender relations in war zones and the discourse of regional and global savior masculinities. My dissertation intervenes by making necessary connections between various systems of oppression in Hanif's fiction through the concept of hegemonic masculinity, which is critical to understanding the full range of his political purposes. I intend to further develop this research into a book-length study and contribute toward laying a foundation for critical scholarship on the politics and ethics of hegemonic masculinities in Pakistan. For this purpose, I draw my inspiration from Hanif's own ambitions: an academic, ethical, and personal commitment to feminism in the hopes of critical intervention on human rights activism in Pakistan.

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