

Trauma of “the Other” in Nadeem Zaman’s *In the Time of the Others*

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A fruit of Western modernity has been the concept of nation-states. The word nation, originating from the French *nacion*, from the Latin *natio*, meaning “to birth,” has connotations of the primordial through blood, language, and the memory of an individual’s place of origin. On the other hand, the modern concept of a nation-state has a more civic or political dimension, ascribing allegiance to one flag, governance, currency, etc. Historically, there have been nations in the form of tribes and kingdoms that were rooted in the primordial elements of human beings, but since the Renaissance and Enlightenment in Europe, there has been an increasing shift towards the scientific, rational, and progressive nature of humans, all under the umbrella of modernity, which reached its height of manifestation in the twentieth century. This scientific or rational thinking became doubtful after the massive deaths and destruction of the two world wars, as “[w]ith each war, new weapons have brought new types of injury and new things to fear” (Krimayer *et al.* 6). Consequently, the term that has become popular among critics and scholars for studying soldiers, or even civilians, in the aftermath of these wars is trauma. An exploration of this trauma in relation to Nadeem Zaman’s recently published novel *In the Time of the Others* (2018) will be the subject of this study.

Now, colonialism was also an inevitable result of modernity, whose aim for progress required more and more resources. After decolonization, the newly independent and mostly vulnerable states continued to live in a colonial hangover, forgetting their traditional forms of governance and preferring the Western model of nation-states. In order to achieve those patriotic dreams, fighting over land became frequent, and drawing borderlines became a necessity, as witnessed in the case of the 1947 partition of India. Jeffrey Alexander writes how these newly formed postcolonial states “framed their identities inside the narrative of progress”, therefore, it was widely accepted that “the state emerging from the trauma was well worth the fight” (142). Once these states were formed at the cost of many sacrifices, people found their dreams shattered in the form of crumbling economic conditions and haunting personal memories. Alexander writes: “As the realities of postcolonial society sank in, the progressive narratives of founding were challenged and sometimes undermined. They were displaced by more tragic accounts, by stories that looked not to the future but back to the past” (143). This looking

back to the past, that is, revisiting history, has been witnessed time and again in the literary traditions of both East and West. A significant portion of Shakespeare's works is dedicated to this practice and are thus classified as history plays. In the eighteenth century, with the rise of the novel, Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) or Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (1867) also concerned the revision of history and, therefore, are called historical novels. In the Indian subcontinent too, we have seen the urge among fiction writers to take important historical contexts as inspiration. In recent history, the partition of 1947 has been a common experience among the people of three nations—Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh—and writers have drawn upon that history with ardent interest due to its traumatic impact on millions of people. In East Pakistan, which became Bangladesh later, the partition has been overshadowed by the Liberation War of 1971, which then became the center of their nationalist identity. The text that I have chosen for this study, Nadeem Zaman's *In the Time of the Others* (2018), is an example of such a historical novel based on the Liberation War of 1971.

Zaman's novel starts in early 1971 with a character called Imtiaz, a banker from Chittagong who has come to Dhaka to sell ancestral property to pay his debts. However, he falls short of being the protagonist because of his limited role and inactive participation in the events of the narrative. He proves to be more of a bystander at his uncle and aunt's house (the Chowdhurys), watching the young student protesters, guided by his aunt, plan their actions against the Pakistani army. The two other key viewpoints, in addition to Imtiaz's, are those of Judge Mubarak and Captain Shaukat. Their stories come across as more compelling than Imtiaz's, especially because their lives are entangled within the conflicts of the 1971 Liberation War, which is the focus of Zaman's novel. Literary narratives on the 1971 War have mostly engaged with the struggles and sufferings of the *muktijodhha* (freedom fighter) and the *birangona* (war heroine).¹ The *muktijodhha* and *birangona* are taken as two polarities, with the former embodying heroism and victory of the nation while the latter, quite sadly, shame and victimization, and this oppositional portrayal has dominated scholarly articles on the 1971 War (Harrington 48). This is where I found Zaman's narrative to be different, which, though about the 1971 War, does not feature any of these roles as single, distinguishable characters. The former is presented collectively by the young group of student protesters we see at the Chowdhurys', and the latter is even more vaguely mentioned as shadows in the barracks that Pakistani soldiers visit. As a result, the novel seems to lack focus because it is loosely based on the lives of various characters, mostly civilians like Imtiaz and his family, who are seen at a distance from the war. However, in Zaman's novel, there is one character who is at the heart of the war, and that is Captain Shaukat. This captain, belonging to the

Pakistani army, will be discursively categorized as perpetrator rather than victim, but in the novel, quite surprisingly, he is described as an obedient soldier who, in simply following the orders of his seniors, becomes a victim of the horrors he perpetrates and sees in the war ; in other words, he suffers from trauma.

The origin of the word “trauma” is in the Greek word “wound,” which can be physical, psychological, or both. Despite ongoing debates about the definition and scope of trauma, it is now widely believed that we live in what is called a “wound culture” (Seltzer 3). Among those debates, one acknowledged difference is between individual trauma, which has been the primary focus of psychoanalysis, and collective trauma, which has been more integral to social theory. This distinction is very important for my study because it will trace how collective trauma theory can help us find possible answers to the question of why post-independent Bangladeshi authors such as Zaman are revisiting the history of 1971, while psychoanalytic theory will guide us towards a better understanding of the trauma experienced by characters in Zaman’s text. Thus, my methodology will be two-fold: one regarding the author’s position using the social theory of trauma, and the other focusing on the character’s actions (mainly Captain Shaukat’s) using psychoanalytic theory. Distinguishing between the two kinds of trauma theory, the study will attempt to find traces of collective trauma in the author, Nadeem Zaman, who chooses to write about his nation’s traumatic past, and traces of individual trauma in the character of Captain Shaukat, who becomes an exemplary case of perpetrator trauma. Both the author, with his marginalized status in the canon of English literature and trauma studies, and the perpetrator, with his contentious but often generalized role, become the “other” in my study, and, thereby, the study indicates an explanation of the ambiguous title of Zaman’s novel.

Trauma Theory

The first person known to study trauma was the French neurologist Jean Martin Charcot (1825–1893), who worked mostly on two strands: hysteria and hypnotism. His work was later taken up by his students, such as Sigmund Freud, who, being the founder of psychoanalysis, is more commonly thought of as the pioneer of trauma studies. The early concepts of trauma, which developed from medical concerns of the nineteenth century (by neurologists such as Charcot and Freud), were transferred to the urgent needs of the First World War as “analysts became intensely preoccupied with victims of shell shock, or what we might now call post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)” (Davis 35–36).

Since then, trauma has developed as an “area of cultural investigation” (Craps 45), which gained renewed attention in the 1990s with the publication of Cathy Caruth’s works (1995; 1996). While Freud and Caruth are key figures in the case of psychoanalytic trauma theory, the likes of Jeffrey Alexander and Ron Eyerman have made their marks in the field of social theory.

In his book *Trauma: A Social Theory* (2012), Jeffrey Alexander differentiates collective trauma from individual trauma. He divides trauma theory into three categories: Lay theory, Enlightenment philosophy, and finally psychoanalytic theory. Lay theory gives a very basic definition: “traumas are naturally occurring events that shatter an individual or collective actor’s sense of well-being” (Alexander 7). Enlightenment philosophy coincides with lay trauma theory, but it adds that trauma can occur both at the personal and social levels; also, the objects or events “that trigger trauma are perceived clearly by actors, their responses are lucid, and the effects of these responses are problem solving and progressive” (8). Psychoanalytic theory also agrees with basic lay theory but focuses more on the individual than the collective as the human mind, its layers, and mechanisms become more important. Alexander sums up psychoanalytic theory briefly, explaining that when traumatic events occur, human minds are not always capable of processing the experience; painful thoughts and emotions are repressed, and so “the progressive effort to develop an ameliorating response [is] undermined by displacement” (10). Thus, according to psychoanalytic theory, trauma is not only an exterior wound of the subject or the world in which the subject lives but a “breach in the mind’s experience of time, self, and the world” (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 4). At this point, a quick revision of important and relevant features of psychoanalytic theory will be helpful.

In Freudian psychoanalysis, the two main ideas surrounding trauma are absences and repetitions. In *Moses and Monotheism* (1967), Freud gives the example of a man who survives a train accident without any physical injury but later develops symptoms that give away the truth that he has been traumatised; the initial absence of signs is followed by “a series of grave psychical and motor symptoms,” and thus the subject enters what Freud calls “traumatic neurosis” (84). Colin Davis explains this by saying that we must realize that “trauma isn’t there. This is not to say that it is not real or that it does not exist, but its sources are not always immediately manifest” and so, “[w]e have to be prepared to interpret gaps and absences as much as explicit statements and obvious clues” (29–30). On the other hand, referring to the early sections of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), Fletcher comments on repetitions: “Freud interrogates the repetition of painful or distressing experiences in order to ascertain what forces might be responsible for such behavior” (288). Based on Freud’s idea of

absence, Caruth speaks of a period of latency when trauma is waiting to be “claimed” as mentioned in her pioneering work *Unclaimed Experience* (1996). In the same book, Caruth asks if trauma is an “encounter with death or the ongoing experience of having survived it” and if between these two polarities lies what she refers to as “*history in the texts*” (7-8).

In her earlier book, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995), Caruth proposes a similar idea, emphasizing how history and trauma are inextricably connected as “[t]he traumatised, we might say, carry an impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot entirely process” (5). However, this traumatic history is difficult to grasp due to its essential nature of incompleteness, making the work of historiography problematic. This gap in historical knowledge can only be filled by the imagination of literary works. On this, Caruth remarks, “If Freud turns to literature to describe traumatic experience, it is because literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing” (*Unclaimed Experience* 3). Alexander also mentions how, as traumatic “residues surface through free association in psychoanalytic treatment, they appear in public life through the creation of literature” (11). Therefore, the importance of literary works in revealing the history and nature of trauma has been repeatedly supported by various scholars. Though Caruth’s works popularized trauma theory, other researchers, including her contemporaries, such as Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub (1992), have made significant contributions to the field. Recently, however, there has been criticism of their works, especially Caruth’s, as being too Eurocentric.

Ann Cvetkovich accentuates how their works are partial towards the Holocaust, and their description of trauma as an accident may not work for “traumatic histories that emerge from systematic contexts,” as we often find in the case of the former colonies (19). Stef Craps also argues how the Western model of trauma, which is based on certain events, falters in explaining other forms of trauma stemming from an atmosphere of racial or political oppression, which is again more commonly found in ex-colonies such as Bangladesh, and, therefore, the use of Western trauma theory for all groups results in a form of “cultural imperialism” (48–50). Michael Rothberg, on the other hand, tries to make peace between these two sides by proposing “multidirectional memory,” where the memory of one tragedy does not lessen others but draws more attention to them. In support of his argument, Rothberg recounts how W. E. B. DuBois, on visiting a Warsaw ghetto, found traces of the demons of slavery and, therefore, felt “the relationality of different histories of racial violence” (527). Therefore, a vast scholarship on the Holocaust does not mean the negligence of others; instead, it can make others come forward and

speak of their traumas as well. This is, perhaps, already happening in South Asia, with increasing research on trauma and memory around the 1947 partition and now the 1971 Liberation War (Mahbub and Saba 122).

The Author's Trauma & Collective Trauma

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, there has been renewed interest in 1971 across literary and non-literary fields, addressing issues of post-1971 identity, nationhood, and gender politics. This has occurred due to the growing importance of Bangladesh in South Asian geopolitics. Now, how did this interest come about, especially among non-resident Bangladeshi writers such as Nadeem Zaman?

As mentioned earlier, writers often like to revisit histories of national interest, and this is more the case for those who live away from that nation. Writers living in diaspora naturally feel alienated from their new surroundings on the one hand, and nostalgic about their homeland on the other. Consequently, their writings often reflect feelings of displacement, identity, and nationhood. South Asian writers, especially a vast number of Indian-origin writers such as Salman Rushdie, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Amitav Ghosh, have successfully exemplified such a body of work at the international level. Bangladesh has struggled to catch up with its towering neighbour; nevertheless, there have been attempts by writers like Monica Ali (*Brick Lane* 2003), Tahmima Anam (*A Golden Age* 2007), and, more recently, Zia Haider Rahman (*In the Light of What We Know* 2014). While for some of the writers, the new country with its cultural differences and challenging integration has been more appealing; for others, the memories of the past rooted in their homeland have been of greater influence. This second point has been explored and emphasized repeatedly by critics and scholars over the last few decades. Among them, one writes that “[i]ssues of home and nation are a well-recognised aspect of postcolonial debates, and they continue to be key ideas, both politically and culturally, to South Asian writers in the United States and Britain” (Maxey 28).

Interestingly, Maxey makes a distinction between writers living in the USA and the UK, which have traditionally been the two most coveted countries for South Asian people. The author of my chosen text, Nadeem Zaman, is part of this South Asian, particularly Bangladeshi diaspora, and has been living in the USA for years. The fact that he has chosen his homeland, Bangladesh, and its most momentous history as the subject of his very first book comes as no surprise when we realize that

this tendency to draw inspiration from the motherland may also owe something to the American literary traditions which have influenced such writers ... For some critics, the continuing emphasis by US-based writers on South Asia is also part of a cultural contingency plan, since Americanness is still largely associated with whiteness and racism continues to impact in multiple ways on Americans of colour. (Maxey 29)

These South Asian writers living in diaspora, mostly in English-speaking countries, are seen as using English as their medium of creative expression rather than their native languages. From Bangladesh, when we think of writers such as Tahmima Anam and Nadeem Zaman who have employed English rather than Bangla in their writing, we realize that they have received education in English, whether within Bangladesh or outside, and are living in the USA or the UK as permanent residents. Thereby, it is difficult to categorize them as diasporic since the word is heavily loaded with forced migration, whereas these writers have willingly moved to the West. Without digressing into an argument on whether these writers can be labelled as diasporic, I want to focus on how, despite living abroad most of their adult lives, they have chosen the history and politics of their home country as subjects of their stories. For writers such as Anam and Zaman, the experience of 1971 is a vicarious one that they have received through the oral narratives of their parents and other older family members who were present during the war. This is where I will intervene to argue how their choice of 1971 has been the product and process of the enduring cultural trauma that Alexander speaks of.

According to Alexander, an individual's trauma arises from moral and psychological suffering, but collective trauma is rooted and embedded in cultural and political landscapes. To change individual suffering into collective trauma is a cultural work that includes literary and visual representations. Thus, in social theory, collective trauma works through material resources and powerful symbols bearing stories that are either repressed or represented. Alexander calls this system of meaning formation the "trauma process" and its sources "carrier groups." In his words, "[t]he gap between event and representation can be conceived as the trauma process" and "[c]arrier groups are the collective agents of the trauma process" (Alexander 15–16). Similar to Jeffrey Alexander, Ron Eyerman writes how collective trauma differs from individual trauma by identifying "loss of identity and meaning, a tear in the social fabric" rather than the psyche of a person; also, he continues to clarify that by this definition: "the trauma need not necessarily be felt by everyone in a community or experienced directly by any or all" (2). Therefore, though we live in a posttraumatic age, as mentioned earlier, not "everyone is equally traumatized or suffers in quite the same way" (Worsham 170).

However, in such an apocalyptic age, with increasing agonies on a personal and global scale, there is always an eerie feeling of threat and

danger to one's identity as well as peace of mind. Thus, in "this context, the term *trauma* applies not only to those who *directly* suffer traumatic events but also to those who suffer *with* victims of trauma, or *through* them, or *for* them, and thus live their lives as survivors of traumatic history that *is* and *is not* their own" (Laub 57-58, quoted in Worsham 171). This is where writers like Nadeem Zaman and Tahmima Anam, who have grown up hearing stories of 1971 from their parents and grandparents, intervene with their literary imaginations that have historical contexts of trauma. Thus, they are characterized as what Alexander calls "carrier groups." Eyerman explains how these groups can be extensive: "[a]s social groups are mobile, [and] so are the borders of its memory and collective identity-formation. ... While they may be rooted in relatively specified geographic boundaries, with the aid of mediated representation they may span such restricted space to reach exiles and expatriates" (10). This explains why post-independent Bangladeshi authors like Nadeem Zaman are going back to the history of 1971.

These writers are the "carrier groups" and their works, through what Alexander calls the "traumatic process", contribute to the difficult task of representing the story of East Pakistani Bengali suffering to the world. They can be compared to African American writers in the nineteenth century who wrote extensively about their traumatic ancestry of slavery. Speaking of these African Americans, who feature an integral part of Eyerman's discussion, the social theorist argues: "If slavery was traumatic for this generation of intellectuals, it was so in retrospect, mediated through recollection and reflection, and, for some, tinged with some strategic, practical, and political interest" (2). A similar phenomenon can be attributed to Bangladeshi-origin authors living in the West and writing about 1971. At the same time, living in self-chosen exile and writing from the margins of Western nations, these authors become the voices of now-almost-overused instances of the "Other." Whether the author, Nadeem Zaman, refers to himself and his contemporaries as the "Others" in his title or to the characters in his novel is uncertain, but more discussion in the following sections can lead to some possible answers.

The Perpetrator's & the Individual's Trauma

Stories are always about heroes (or victims embodied with a sense of heroism in their suffering), but not conventionally about villains. Recently, however, with the poststructuralist breakdown of binaries such as good and bad, we are seeing the other side of the coin too. This becomes very difficult in cases of genocidal or mass killings because

the narratives of perpetrators are rarely recorded, given the nature of denial. Almost all world genocides are denied by their perpetrators, except the Holocaust. Among other reasons, one of the most basic reason is the attempt of later German generations to distance themselves from Nazism and, thereby, free themselves from the responsibility of the catastrophe. On the other hand, the Turks continue to refuse the Armenian genocide, which is believed to be the first genocide of the twentieth century (1915–17); the Japanese continue to deny the Nanjing Massacre (1937–38); and the Communists in the former Soviet Union, China, Indonesia, and Cambodia also follow this tradition of denial. Similarly, Pakistan, besides expressing some tangential regret, never openly admitted its atrocities in 1971. Therefore, literary narratives or scholarly research on the perpetrator, in this case, the Pakistani army, have been absent or lacking. Zaman's novel, in imagining the mind of the perpetrator through the character of Captain Shaukat, gives us an opportunity to address this gap, which is one of the two aims of this essay.

In *In the Time of the Others*, Captain Shaukat's characterization is not that of the typical villain or enemy only engaged in killing and torturing Bengali civilians. The captain is shown as a complex man torn between his cruel actions, which are dictated by his professional duties, and his better intentions, inspired by his personal opinion and judgement of the situation. The first time we see Captain Shaukat is at Judge Mubarak's house party in Chapter 5, but here we mostly learn some facts about him from the conversations among the crowd. Since the entire novel is written from a third-person omniscient point of view with continuous shiftings of the focal point, it is not until Chapter 7 that we enter the mind of Captain Shaukat. He has now come, with his resolute team, to capture and kill the students at Dhaka University; this can be fairly assumed to be the infamous "Operation Searchlight" of March 25, 1971. The attack is described through the eyes of Captain Shaukat, who is numbed by the sounds of bombing and firing inside the residential halls of Dhaka University: "The shelling suppressed the shrieking of the students. Shaukat saw ant-like scrambling around the windows and doors where students were trying to get out, most of them standing no chance" (Zaman 52). A little later, we learn that though Captain Shaukat has been in the middle of this commotion, he has not fired or killed anyone. That is why he has been chastised by his senior, Major Shahbaz, to be more active. Consequently, after he finally takes a shot at a student, he gets into this frenzy of shooting a line of more students, thus shocking his colleagues, but nothing is said of his trauma at this point, neither from what he sees nor what he does.

As explained earlier, psychoanalytic theory proposes an initial absence of signs. It is only later, with symptoms such as his dreams (or rather, nightmares), that we realize he has developed traumatic

neurosis. One day, he falls asleep and has a “claustrophobic dream” of being stuck in a warehouse in Old Dhaka, where “[h]e was laying on a pile of corpses that rose high enough to kiss the roof. His face was pressed against the ceiling, crushing his nose and emptying out his lungs of breath” (Zaman 141). This dream proves how Captain Shaukat has been traumatized by his experience on the field. Though he is an oppressor, he is a soldier surrounded by violent killings, some of which he witnesses and others in which he participates. Later, Major Shahbaz, remarking on Shaukat’s sudden and frenzied shooting of the students, claims that Captain Shaukat looked “possessed” and “made many men envious that night” (Zaman 108). In the same scene, when Captain Shaukat is puzzled by his senior’s strange compliment, Shahbaz affirms to him that they are Punjabis and Pathans, thereby the rightful rulers of Pakistan, because it is in their blood to be warriors and defenders of their country (Zaman 109).

This is echoed by his own thoughts later, when, despite feeling sick in his stomach for his actions, Shaukat justifies the killing by assuring himself that the students are not true Muslims; otherwise, they would not have sided with the state’s enemies, the Hindus. So, he thinks he has done the right thing by killing the students because he is defending his country and his religion. Now, this religious aspect makes his character intriguing to analyze from a psychoanalytic perspective. This is because, even though Freud’s *Moses and Monotheism* is an analysis of the Jews and their history, “psychoanalytic studies on religion have been remarkable for the absence of any mention of Islam” (Massad 195). Fethi Benslama, a Paris-based Tunisian psychoanalyst, explains this limitation of early psychoanalysis by contending that “if Islam, or more precisely, Muslims, really did gradually enter modernity beginning in the nineteenth century, this entry took place in terms of colonial violence and without the illumination of modern thought, without the Enlightenment that remained the privilege of the elite” (51).

However, there are critics of Benslama and his rigid view of “[t]he opposition of science to religion and the correlate characterization of psychoanalysis as a ‘science’ that is opposed by Islam as ‘religion’” (Massad 203). Massad writes that not all Islamists oppose psychoanalysis and gives the example of Ahmad al-Sayyid ‘Ali Ramadan, an Egyptian professor of psychology, who “is not only tolerant of Freudian psychoanalysis but offers an Islamist assessment of the positive and negative aspects of it from an ‘Islamic’ perspective” (Massad 206). The debates over how far Islam opposes or embraces psychoanalysis are beyond the scope of this essay, but it is generally agreed that “[h]istorically, in the West since the end of the Thirty Years’ War (1618-1648), secularism has entailed that the religious and political authorities must not interfere with each other” (Vescovi

6-7). Thus, the collective fixation with God or religion moved into more private spaces of individual practice and became diluted from its earlier ties with social life. The practice of religion in a private space requires “subjective autonomy in relation to the beliefs of its community,” and these “individual elaborations require certain favourable conditions,” which “depend on scientific education and the guarantee of political liberties that are not present in the Muslim world today” (Benslama 53–54). As a result, the Muslim subject like Shaukat in this book has little to no means of separating himself from the religious identity of his state or questioning that identity at all. Thus, Shaukat, like his seniors, wants to purify Pakistan, which translates as “Land of the Pure,” from non-Muslims and those who are lesser Muslims in their jingoistic view.

As for the individual Shaukat, he is more complex, as we find out with the progress of the plot. He is both foolish and kind in trusting the words of the American journalists, Helen and her husband Walter, and letting them go without arresting them. He recalls that he met Helen at Judge Mubarak’s house, and the old man’s reference saves the two foreigners. Shaukat still goes to Judge Mubarak to confirm that they are not journalists but guests of his. During their conversation, Shaukat’s speech reveals his dilemmas. When the judge remarks on the violence of the army, Shaukat admits that, being a junior officer, he does not have the luxury of opinions. For Bangladeshis, this helplessness of the perpetrator will be immaterial due to their greater offences, and yet this opens the possibility of considering that not all perpetrators have the same story, just as not all victims have the same. The micronarrative, though giving a humane dimension to the monstrous enemy, must also be noted, for excuses are common among military officials, as mentioned by Bernhard Giesen, one of the few scholars who have worked on perpetrator trauma. With respect to the acceptance-denial dichotomy of the Holocaust, Giesen writes: “But even if crimes were committed beyond any doubt, the perpetrators tried to relativize their guilt by referring to the inescapability of military orders: *Befehlsnotstand*” (122). This is accentuated by Shaukat’s thoughts when he tries to justify their actions, this time by assuring himself that “[t]hey were not the mindless killers Bengalis were accusing them of being. They were men of integrity who followed orders and didn’t question superiors” (Zaman 274). However, this confidence is eroded by further experiences of violence, of which the most traumatic one is his visit to the house where Bengali women are kept and raped by Pakistani army men.

The episode of the tortured women is the most haunting in the book, and it is also described in an unnerving manner. There are no particulars about the place, the women, or the inhuman practices. Instead, it is captured through the experience of Captain Shaukat, who

is traumatized by the very sounds and smells of the place. The eerie atmosphere of the scene prepares the readers for the horrors, and yet when those horrors are evaded, readers may feel somewhat relieved for not seeing too many details of human torture or frustrated for seeing another male silencing of women's suffering. On the one hand, the omission of details in the nameless and faceless women lends more credence to the traumatic experience of Shaukat, and on the other hand, the same absence contributes to the long tradition of silencing female experiences. As mentioned earlier, much of the narrative of the 1971 war is divided between the heroism of the *muktijoddha* and the suffering of the *birangona*. However, the latter came to print and was discussed almost two decades after the war. From the late 1990s, local women's organizations, independent bodies, and regional feminist researchers actively tried to reclaim the lost, misinformed, and silenced histories of women's brutal experiences of violence, which led to several publications, starting with Nilima Ibrahim's *Ami Birangona Bolci*, translated as *War Heroine Speaking* (1998).

Recently, Bangladeshi feminist scholar Firdous Azim has reminded us of the "limits of representability" when it comes to such violence towards women, which in turn leads to silence, and she describes this silence as "the inability to speak horror" (40). These unspeakable horrors result in trauma for Shaukat, which is thought of as "an event that has no beginning, no ending, no before, no during, and no after," and "[t]he absence of categories that define it lends it a quality of 'otherness'" (Laub 69; quoted in Worsham 174). The last word here brings to mind the ambiguous title of the novel, where it is not clear who the "Others" are, and yet, the word's connotations of the contradiction or the peripheral in literary theories point in the direction of characters like Shaukat, the perpetrator, who in his villainy is an enemy or outsider in the dominating discourse of 1971. In *Shaukat*, Zaman has done an excellent job of showing how the binary of victim/perpetrator is broken or becomes blurry as he is both a victim and a perpetrator in this case. Now, the absence of details in this scene could be due to the author's lack of resources on the subject since the novel is based on oral histories from his family members who may have been fortunate to be spared from this tragedy. Nonetheless, it complicates the victim/perpetrator binary as it challenges our assumptions and categorizations of individual roles in human history. However, because Shaukat is a victim of witnessing rather than experiencing the violence himself, the silencing of the women's suffering here adds to the gender politics that has conventionally polarised scholarship on this topic since 1971.

Going back to the novel, we find that Shaukat is all senses and no thoughts because his mind has been splintered by the unthinkable images and sounds in that house. The scene is so vaguely and

disturbingly produced in the mind of Shaukat that it seems almost like another of his nightmares rather than reality and, therefore, part of his traumatic neurosis. Unlike Shahbaz, Shaukat does not engage in raping and torturing women but quickly finds his exit. Coming home, Shaukat tells his wife Umbreen about “the house of horrors he was led into.” While narrating the story, he acts like a madman, and it is said that “[s]he would not be surprised if he had lost his mind.” However, he remembered every detail and spoke eloquently, which made Umbreen wonder “if he had hallucinated the whole thing” (Zaman 201). Shaukat’s situation here can be described as what Lynn Worsham writes about trauma being “preeminently rhetorical” (176). Again, echoing the words of scholars like Dori Laub, Worsham writes that individual trauma puts one “in a paradoxical situation” where “the traumatised subject is left in profound silence without the motivation or resources to construct a narrative” but, at the same time, driven by “an overwhelming need” to convey the unsayable story (176).

That is why traumatised people like Shaukat here can appear both lunatic and lucid simultaneously. Once his tirade is over, he gets ready and goes back to his horrendous work as if nothing had happened. This behavior can also find meaning in psychoanalytic theory, which sees traumatised subjects as experiencing a split in their consciousness because they cannot detach themselves from the site of trauma: “The subject has both returned and not returned. The subject who returns is now irrevocably cut off from the subject who went away” (Davis 42). A loss of faith in the community that has served as the cornerstone of Shaukat’s identity has also contributed to this trauma. Jenny Edkins thus writes: “It seems that to be called traumatic—to produce what are seen as symptoms of trauma—an event has to be more than just a situation of utter powerlessness. In an important sense, it has to entail something else. It has to involve a betrayal of trust as well” (4), and this betrayal comes to Shaukat from his seniors, such as Shahbaz, who are raping and killing innocent Bengali women.

Conclusion

As we approach the end of nine months in the novel, the war is coming to an end with the aid of India. West Pakistan knows that they are losing, and as they are about to surrender, the military takes one last blow at the Bengali intelligentsia on December 14, 1971. This infamous killing took place at Rayerbazar, which is now a memorial site in Dhaka. In the book, Zaman describes the night as another of Shaukat’s nightmares.

At the end of this episode, Major Shahbaz commits suicide by shooting himself, and how Shaukat feels about it or what happens to him later is left blank in the pages of the novel. His story ends abruptly with an anticipation of denouement, much like his own trauma, which occurs with a sudden breach in the mind and needs to be claimed. Both have no resolution. However, someone who has found a definite ending is Major Shahbaz. Since this study has been more focused on the character of Captain Shaukat, I will not go into a detailed analysis of Shahbaz's ultimate action; nevertheless, a few words on the shocking decision seem needed. His unexpected death leaves the impression that he might have also been suffering from an extreme case of trauma where denial has acted predominantly, making him act confidently throughout until he has snapped from an overwhelming sense of guilt and horror; this notion, however, is open for discussion and further research. After all, Freud has suggested that no amount of interpretation is enough and that there needs to be constant revision of dream analysis, and "what he says of dreams here can be extended to other forms ... of text and narrative" (Davis 43).

In light of this statement, I want to conclude by saying that more insight can be gained by studying other characters, such as Bihari Judge Mubarak, who also forms the voice of the marginalized. However, within the scope of this brief study, where I have highlighted the trauma of Captain Shaukat, I hope to have made critical and enlightening points of entry in the field of perpetrator trauma studies. As stated by the Freudian notion above, there may be a need for further discussion and analysis of individual trauma, but the first section of this study on the author, Nadeem Zaman, can be considered more conclusive. His motives, conscious or unconscious, behind choosing 1971 as the subject of his first novel surely characterize collective trauma, which Bangladeshi-origin writers both suffer as well as exploit through creative expression. Nevertheless, as a concluding and cautionary remark, I would like to add one suggestion from Davis who points out that vicarious forms of trauma may have instructive value, "but it may also be self-indulgent and ethically delusional" (27). Despite claims made by the likes of Dori Laub on the empathetic nature of trauma studies, it is important to remember that speaking of others' traumas has risks of ethical boundaries, and while we may analyze mediated representations of trauma as seen in Zaman's novel for the greater good of social and cultural use, we must acknowledge that literary representations have their own limitations in capturing the actual horrors of certain human histories, of which 1971 is one.

Notes

1. The honorary title *birangona*, meaning brave or heroic woman, was given by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to Bengali women who were raped and sexually tortured in the 1971 Liberation War, but whether they received real honour is still contested. See Firdous Azim, “The Forgotten Women of 1971: Bangladesh’s Failure to Remember Rape Victims of the Liberation War” (2019).

2. *Al-Badr* and *Al-Shams* were anti-Bangladesh Islamist groups made up of local Bengalis who collaborated with the Pakistani army to carry out the mass killings in 1971. Scholars tend to disregard 1971 as genocidal since most of the heinous crimes were committed by fellow Bengalis who betrayed their own kind, and, therefore, still today they are notoriously called *Razakars*. See Sarmila Bose, *Dead Reckoning: Memoirs of the 1971 Bangladesh War* (2011).

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