

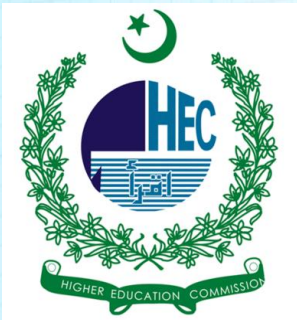
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**Construction of Power Relations in Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride*  
and Ahmad's *The Wondering Falcon*: A Critical Discourse  
Analysis**



<sup>1</sup>Shah Faisal Ullah

<sup>2</sup>Dr. Iesar Ahmad

<sup>1</sup>PhD in English scholar, Muslim Youth University,  
Japan Road, Islamabad.

Email: [faisalwazir59@gmail.com](mailto:faisalwazir59@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Professor of English Literature, Muslim Youth  
University, Japan Road, Islamabad.

Email: [iesar.ahmad@myu.edu.pk](mailto:iesar.ahmad@myu.edu.pk)

**Abstract**

This research paper will discuss the discursive creation of power relations in *The Pakistani Bride* (1983) by Bapsi Sidhwa and *The Wandering Falcon* (2011) by Jamil Ahmad using the critical discourse analysis framework by Norman Fairclough. The paper explores how the two novels reflect the workings of patriarchal power in tribal societies of the northwestern frontier of Pakistan, where power is exercised not by the state institutions but by informal codes of honor. The comparative dimension sheds light on how various positions of the author yield varying images of power. The domestic horror of the patriarchal oppression in the consciousness of women is revealed through the psychological realism of Sidhwa, the power as a depersonalized force which is rooted in the very fabric of tribal social organization, is revealed through the detached, episodic form of Ahmad. However, despite these differences, both novels uncover that power is achieved to its fullest extent when the victim accepts the reasoning of her domination. The analysis of the research adds to postcolonial feminist critique by applying CDA to situations where power is exercised through kinship networks and not state machineries. The research shows how discourse is the main mode through which patriarchal power is created, reproduced and sometimes challenged.

**Keywords:** Critical discourse analysis, Power relations, Fairclough, *The Pakistani Bride*, *The Wandering Falcon*

**Introduction**

This article defines the most important concepts in the topic of the study. It briefly discusses the problems of power dynamics in Jamil Ahmad's *The Wandering Falcon* (2011) and Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride* (1983).

*The Pakistani Bride* and *The Wandering Falcon* are distinguished novels of Pakistani literature in English that explore complicated themes of power dynamics and identity issues. This research uses Fairclough's three-dimensional method of critical discourse analysis to explore these themes under study in the novels. The main concentration of the present study is on how the selected texts depict and generate issues of language/discourses, marginalization of women, the abuse of power, and

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reactions to power under the broad umbrella of critical discourse analysis. CDA is a multidisciplinary approach that offers a comprehensive framework for examining social issues in a social context in literature (Mullet, 2018).

This qualitative study explores the construction/reconstruction of meaning in various discourses related to culture, gender, identity, power exercise, and power relationships through the study of interdiscursive features in the novels *The Wandering Falcon* and *The Pakistani Bride*. It is a study of how different discourses are related to each other to understand the complicated process of producing meaning through multiple relations that generate new discourses.

The power operative in societies, where proper state institutions are frail or absent, has been the subject of longstanding academic interest among postcolonial and tribal society scholars (Tusalem, 2016). The Pashtunwali tribal code in the northwestern frontier of Pakistan has traditionally been in charge of life and death, and in many cases, it has dominated the power of the contemporary state. This unofficial code, whose main principles include honor (izzat), hospitality and vengeance, forms a unique structure of power that is neither forceful nor totally agreeable but exists through what anthropologists have described as hegemonic processes, the internalization of domination as natural and normal (Shahani, 2013).

The study paper is a comparative critical discourse analysis of two Anglophone novels in Pakistan that explore this power set-up at a deeper level: *The Pakistani Bride* by Bapsi Sidhwa (1983) and *The Wandering Falcon* by Jamil Ahmad (2011). Although the two texts were published almost thirty years apart and used quite different narrative strategies, both texts provide prolonged meditations on how power is produced, perpetuated, and opposed in tribal patriarchal systems. The novel by Sidhwa follows the psychological path of Zaitoon, a young woman who was orphaned during Partition and married into a Kohistani tribe as she slowly realizes the power that is turned towards her (Velvizhi & Santhosh, 2021). In his novel, which is a collection of interwoven vignettes, Ahmad shows a mosaic of tribal life throughout the middle of the twentieth century, including honor killings, blood feuds, the purchase and sale of women, and the gradual intrusion of the modern state.

The theoretical framework is the critical discourse analysis of Norman Fairclough (1992), which focuses on language on three levels that are interlinked: textual analysis

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of linguistic features (modality, transitivity, lexicalization, metaphor); discursive practice analysis of intertextuality and discourse consumption; and social practice analysis of more general ideological and power structures.

### **Method and Material**

In this research, it is proposed that a qualitative, comparative critical discourse analysis design is utilized based on a three-dimensional framework by Norman Fairclough (1992). The main sources include two Pakistani Anglophone novels, Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride* (1983), and Jamil Ahmad's *The Wandering Falcon* (2011). The two novels have been chosen due to the centrality of tribal cultures and patriarchal structure in the northwestern frontier of Pakistan, the focus on honor-based violence and the working of Pashtunwali as a discursive formation, and the different subject positions of both novels.

The theoretical framework is a three-dimensional model by Fairclough, which involves analysis at three levels that are interconnected. Textual analysis involves first the study of formal linguistic characteristics of passages of interest, such as lexicalization (choice of words to construct a certain representation of reality), modality (degree of certainty and obligation), transitivity (grammatical structures that assign agency), metaphor (figurative language to frame social relations), and pronouns (construction of in-group and out-group identities). Second, discursive practice analysis looks at intertextuality (the way texts use and remake other discourses), discourse consumption (the ways characters read and appropriate discourse), and the conditions of production (social, institutional contexts of discourse production). Third, social practice analysis relates discursive events to larger social structures, power relations, and ideological processes such as ideological naturalization (how discourse makes contingent arrangements seem inevitable), hegemonic processes (how dominant groups get others to agree), and material conditions (economic, political and historical circumstances that shape discourse).

The data collection was done in stages. The two novels were read completely to reveal common themes and scenes of importance to questions of power and violence. Selected passages in each novel were chosen to undergo close linguistic analysis regarding thematic centrality to research, concentration of linguistic features of interest to CDA, representativeness of larger trends, and comparative analysis

possibilities.

Analysis of data was done systematically. In the textual analysis, every passage was analyzed lexically by identifying the main lexical areas and evaluative language, grammatically by discussing patterns of transitivity and modality functions and pronouns, and metaphorically by identifying conceptual metaphors and their naturalizing roles. To analyze discursive practice, every passage was analyzed in terms of intertextuality, which is the discourses used and the way they are mixed or challenged and discourse consumption, which is the way characters interpret and react to discourse either compliantly or resistantly. To analyze social practice, each passage was analyzed in terms of ideological function (what the discourse naturalizes and to what interests it is directed); power relations (what asymmetries exist, is power exercised by coercion or consent); and contextualization in history (where passages are located in terms of overall conditions, e.g., Partition, state formation, tribal autonomy).

Ethical issues involved not being sensational or voyeuristic in examining scenes of violence, cultural specificity without being critical towards the practice of patriarchy, and the fact that the researcher is an outsider to the cultures under investigation. The study has limitations, such as being based on two novels, which cannot be claimed to represent Pakistani Anglophone literature in general; no ethnographic fieldwork or oral histories of tribal communities; interpretation by a single researcher; and no systematic reception analysis in tribal communities or in Pakistan overall.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical background of the present research is the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach developed by Norman Fairclough, which is recognized as a multidisciplinary approach to the analysis that combines linguistics, sociology, cultural studies, and political analysis. The CDA by Fairclough offers a broad model of the analysis of the functioning of language as an effective social process. It is capable of mirroring and building power relations, ideological orientations, and social inequalities. Its strength is based on the fact that it is able not only to examine linguistic qualities, but also the broader social and political contexts within which texts are created and received, thereby enabling us to conduct a sensitive analysis of

discourse as a means of social preservation or change. Since understanding that there is no single approach that could embrace the complexity of discourse and the way it works in society.

The two theories of CDA of Teun van Dijk and Ruth Wodak are also included in the research. The approach highlighted by Van Dijk (2001, 2013), because of its emphasis on the ideological and cognitive dimension of the discourse as well as the way in which social dominance is constructed and reproduced through the use of discourse, supplements the model offered by Fairclough (1992, 2001) as it focuses on the mental models and the processes of power that are employed in texts.

Similarly, the methodology proposed by Wodak (2004, 2015) is more inclusive and involves the inclusion of the findings of the three primary paradigms of CDA, as it was founded on discursive construction of social realities and analysis of institutional discourse, which focuses more on historicized and contextual aspects of discourse analysis.

This paper attempts to achieve a more multifaceted and multidimensional interpretation of the functioning of discourse as a tool of exercising or contesting social power, and it has a multifaceted critique, which cuts across linguistic particularity, ideological critique, and sociopolitical context.

The CDA by Norman Fairclough (2013, 2001) is a basic approach to examining the internal connection between society and language. His theoretical approach conceives discourse as a social practice and a starting point of power relations that performs an important role in the social reproduction and possible change processes. Unlike the neutral linguistic models, the model by Fairclough brings to the fore the fact that language has ideologies, power relations and social identities, which are intrinsic in the composition of social interactions and institutional discourse.

## **Analysis**

### **Power Relations in *The Wondering Falcon***

#### **1. Discourse on Power in the Tribal Heartland**

The selected excerpt serves as a good reflection of the narrator's journey, navigating discursive practices. The ideology that Hamesh Gul knows innately is the unwritten code, and the narrator needs to acquire it.

**Text**

*'If you have remained away for all these years, your cousins must have captured your fields. I hope they do not find your return irksome. Shall we start out now?'*

*The word 'cousin' in my father's language meant both a family relationship and one's bitter enemy. If I had thought to impress him with the romance in the story, I had failed. His matter-of-fact acceptance of the reasons for my journey nettled me.*

*Perhaps to him, there was nothing strange about an Afridi, even a half-Afridi, visiting his homeland. Perhaps such a compulsion was to be taken for granted. I half began to understand the intensity of feeling that had rent my father's heart at his inability to move back among his people. ' (Ahmad, 2014; pp. 111-112)*

**1.1 Description**

The comprehensive analysis of the linguistic characteristics of the text constructs the processes by which ideology is coded. The most potent lexical object is doubtlessly the word 'cousins.' Its overt dual meaning, family/bitter enemy, produces a semantic field in which the notions of family and that of a bitter enemy cannot be separated. It is not an ambiguity but an exact synopsis of a social reason where loyalty and rivalry are the two sides of the same coin. It is also important how Hamesh Gul uses the verb "captured." The field of conflict and usurpation is the domain of the meaning of war and rebellion (captured, enemy, irksome), not such notions as law or legacy. This makes the situation not a legal conflict but a fact accomplished with the help of force, in which case the narrator is instantly dispossessed.

Hamesh Gul's modality is declarative and free of uncertainty. He does not say 'they might have,' but 'they must have taken your fields.' This claims a high level of certainty, and the way he interprets it is a natural and unavoidable development of the absence of the narrator. His following line, 'I hope they do not find your return irksome,' uses a sort of politeness, which, in an actual sense, is more of a threat or warning. It makes the narrator not an epic hero but a possible troublemaker, a violator of the status quo. These two relational works by language instantly give their roles: Hamesh Gul as the insider knowing about the rules, and the narrator as the outsider who has to be taught the rules.

The agency patterns are vivid in the excerpt. The active, strong parties in the discourse of Hamesh Gul are the cousins; they have already taken the fields. The

grammatical patient is the narrator, the one who is done to, whose property has been stolen. Even in his story, he is deprived of agency. His reaction in the story is not action but an internal one (nettled me; I half began to understand), which further reinforces his early helplessness in the face of this discursive attack.

### **1.2 Interpretation and Explanation**

This level analyzes the production and interpretation of these features of language in the interaction and expresses a conflict between worldviews.

The narrator creates a discourse of nostalgic reversion. His quest is driven by the memory, legacy, and a nostalgic connection to their father and his sad and lonely years of living. He anticipates his story to be perceived as something different and interesting. However, Hamesh Gul reads this story through the hegemonic, ubiquitous discourse of tribal pragmatism. His reply forms a tribal tradition in which land is not just for the blood, but for the presence and might.

Asymmetrical Power and Discursive Competence: There is a large asymmetry in the interaction. Hamesh Gul has what can be called discursive competence in the tribal code. He is a native speaker of this social language, and his matter-of-fact tone indicates how deeply he is unconsciously immersed in its ideology. On the contrary, the narrator is an amateur. His effort to impress, through the use of romance, is futile, as it is a discourse that cannot do anything in this situation. This discursive inequality is what causes his failure, and after that, he feels nettled. He is learning the rules of a game he was not aware that he was playing.

The study explains the ideological purpose of the text to situate this discursive conflict within the broader socio-cultural context. Hamesh Gul's language use directly explains the dominant ideology that governs the tribal regions, a sort of societal Darwinism in which possession is a privilege of authority and constant vigilance. According to this ideology, the conflict in the kin group is naturalized as a method of resource regulation as well as social order. This ideology stresses the shared firmness of the tribe, even at the cost of individual privileges, founded on long absence.

Power as Socialization and Disciplinary Force: The power, in this case, is not forceful (no one is threatened with violence); however, it is extremely powerful. The capacity of a social system to interpellate the individual, to address him, and to place him in a subject position is its power. Hamesh Gul's statement makes the narrator the

'returning claimant,' 'the half-Afridi,' and the 'irksome' presence. It is a punitive power that initiates the narrator into the ugliness of his culture and shatters his idealistic fantasies.

The Reconstruction of Identity: The inner reaction of the narrator, 'I half began to understand... father's heart,' is a turning point of ideological change. He starts to absorb the same social reality that drove his father away. He is reconstituting his identity as a romantic chaser into a realist, in which belonging has become conditional and disputable. The conversation has not merely explained one power relationship. However, it has also been operative on him, making him, unwillingly but necessarily, recalibrate his understanding of himself within the strict patterns of tribal society. In the excerpt, we observe how the microphysics of power works through language to construct and define human subjectivity.

## **2. Discourse on Patriarchal Hegemony**

This passage is a strong literary part where we see how firmly patriarchal oppression is rooted. The concept of hegemony of Antonio Gramsci, applied in the context of Fairclough in CDA, does not imply direct domination (Donoghue, M. 2018). It also implies disseminating a ruling ideology as common sense, in a way that its power structures are perceived to be so natural, inevitable and beyond challenge that all, even the oppressed in the society, feel the same.

### **Text**

"Who is it, wanting to know?" a woman's voice shouted back. "It is I, Hamesh Gul, Amir Khan's son-in-law." "Which daughter of mine have you married?"... "The one after the eldest. I have brought two guests." After a minute or two, the door was unlatched and an old woman beckoned us inside. We tied the mules outside. As we entered, she caught Hamesh Gul by his sleeve. "How is my daughter?" she asked. "She is well," he replied. "I will ask her to look you up." It was not until later that I came to know that Hamesh Gul had never visited his in-laws, nor had the old woman seen her daughter after the marriage. That was now more than twenty years ago" (Ahmad, 2014; p.115).

### **2.1 Description**

The use of language is a social construction that women are nonexistent and disposable at the textual level. The obvious side of the identity is that of the daughter

who is completely unidentified. The noticeable aspect of identity is the daughter's total lack of identification. The expressions "Amir Khan's son-in-law," "Which daughter of mine," and "The one after the eldest" are used to describe her in relation to males. It is the consequence of this nominalization that deprives her of a name and even a distinct identity herself by reducing her to a category holder within a kinship system that men have constructed. She is a unit of exchange rather than a human being. The discourse is not just a family bond but more like a business deal. In the line "Which daughter... married?", the question the mother poses indicates that her children are a group of some sort (my daughters), and she must be told which of these group members is being referred to. It influences her position in the chain. The identification procedure is finished with Hamesh Gul's response, "The one after the eldest," which lacks any personal or emotional resonance. This discussion is one of barter and not individual connections. Hamesh Gul's pledge, "I will ask her to look you up," has a noteworthy modality, or level of boldness. It is a meaningless display of authority. His authority on the topic is never questioned, and he declares an action he has no intention of carrying out. This empty promise reinforces his position as the gatekeeper of the connections and mobility of his wife.

## **2.2 Interpretation and Explanation**

The selected excerpt illustrates how hegemony is continued through collective, implicit cultural knowledge.

The passage's strength lies in the shocking revelation that follows: Hamesh Gul had not seen his in-laws, nor had the old woman seen her daughter since the marriage. It had been over two decades since then. The important thing about this plot in CDA is that it is revealed to both the narrator and the reader, but it is not a conflict among the characters. This is a normalized, albeit painful, reality for Hamesh Gul and his mother after 20 years. This is the culture of hegemony; a highly repressive norm is embraced as the way things are.

The Complicit Silence of the Mother: The actions of the old woman primarily indicate hegemonic control. She does not insist on visiting her daughter; she does not object. She is waiting, stealthily seeking news, and taking the vain pledge. She has internalized patriarchal system rules and this is indicated by her quiet desperation. She is aware of her location and the scope of her influence and this shows how the

operation of hegemony works by getting the subordinated to give consent.

The discourse's relation to broader sociocultural practices constructs the severe, materialistic reality it supports.

The convention constructed in the selected text is not a social tradition as it is, but a sociocultural tradition aimed at consolidating patrilineal authority. The system guarantees a woman's complete economic and social reliance on her husband's clan by permanently severing her final connection to her maternal family. She is his possession, and any interference with her birth family is destroyed. This is a way of managing reproduction, succession and tribal affiliations.

The Ideology of Erasure: The text shows that discourse is the main instrument of this ideology. Anonymity is an active language that generates the social erasure of women (which daughter?). The discourse renders their personal pain and solitude invisible and inaccessible to the workings of the tribal society by not referring to them. The authority of the patriarchs (both the father and the husband) is replicated each time a daughter is mentioned in this transactional, anonymous manner.

### **Power Relations in *The Pakistani Bride***

#### **1. Discourse on Power, Perception and Submissiveness**

The text discursively projects institutional authority as coercive in determining and dictating individual identity. This control takes various forms, including surveillance, control, and enforcing norms. Individuals are subtly and overtly induced to adopt predestined roles and expectations, which are seldom in their favor.

#### **Text**

*"The following summer, the leader summoned Nikka into his august presence. "Tell him to bring along the Pathan as well." The interview was discreet. "Qasim and Nikka were led through a thickly carpeted corridor, opulent with the gleam of copper and carved mahogany, into a luxurious room." "A tall, dark man with a sleekly oiled moustache sat behind a desk." "They knew he held most of the power in the land. His bloodshot, heavy-lidded eyes appeared to measure them in the subdued light." He extended his hand. Qasim and Nikka padded nervously through the air-conditioned space scented by tuber-roses and expensive cigars. Stiff with awe, Qasim stood, studying the pattern in the Persian carpet. With an ease born of generations of gracious living, the leader motioned them to a corner of the study darkened by black*

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*leather upholstery. Qasim, who had never sat on anything so soft, sank, he thought, into a cloud. Nikka stammered ingratiatingly, "Yes, my lord, yes, my lord," to everything the man said, and Qasim, who had never seen him so obsequious, blushed for the two of them." (Sidhwa, 1983: pp.81-82)*

## **1.1 Description**

The words "summoned, "august presence," "discreet, "opulent, "luxurious," and "gracious living" are words of a formal and ceremonial register, which is attached to sovereignty and aristocracy. This makes the leader a quasi-monarch.

The use of detailed nouns "copper", "carved mahogany", "Persian carpet", "black leather upholstery", "tuber roses", "expensive cigars" generates an over-density of the semantic space of controlled luxury. It is no description but a lexicon of intimidation by excess in which wealth is posed as an extension of power. The leader is the chief performer in material and verbal operations that dictate and organize: he summons, motions, and speaks. His moves are forceful and domineering.

The objectives or the senses of reactive processes are mainly Qasim and Nikka. They were led, paced, stood studying, sank, and blushed. Their agency is removed; they are the ones who acted, and they feel psychological awe and discomfort. The sole verbal operation of Nikka is the sycophantic repetitive saying Yes, my lord, " which is an absolute abandonment of discursive authority.

The story uses assertive categorical modality ("They knew he held most of the power in his hand; His bloodshot, heavy-lidded eyes appear to measure them"). No hedging is done, and the domination of the leader is represented as an indisputable reality.

The focus shifts from the internal to Qasim (he thought, Qasim, who had never...), and the reader is given the chance to feel the room's overwhelming sensory and psychological effects through the subject, naturalizing his awe and strengthening the power of the Leader.

The room is symbolically built as a theatre or a court (august presence, audience). The corner... dimmed with black leather turns into a place of submission. Qasim falling into a cloud is the metaphor of the confusing, mushy entrapment of the luxurious hold, and power is felt as alluring and paralyzing.

## **1.2 Interpretation and Explanation**

The discourse serves to naturalize and glamorize autocratic power. It builds an attractive setting for the leader and a ritual for visitors and conceals the potential of brutality or corruption in the regime. The legitimacy of power is created by being associated with heritage (generations), taste, and gravitas. This is similar to what Geertz (1980) theorized, the theatre state, whereby political power is exhibited and maintained through a ceremonial spectacle and not necessarily through bureaucracy.

It discloses a strict hierarchical social order. The power relation cannot be negotiable; it is a vertical relation whereby sovereignty of the leader is determined by the conscious oppression of his subjects and redefining their identities. The way Nikka becomes an obsequious tool rather than an independent agent is a miniature of the manner in which such systems work: they take their potential competitors by co-opting and sucking them in.

The discourse is actively relational in the creation of identities. It is exactly the production of Qasim and Nikka as the awestruck supplicant and the sycophantic underling that inducts the Leader into being the powerful "sovereign" himself. One is inseparable from the other. Their blushing, stammering, and looking at carpets are the required performances that provide the Leader role with its social reality. The obligatory, repetitive quality of Nikka's (Yes, my lord) submission is another indication of performativity, in which identity is constructed through the stylized repetition of acts required by and supporting power structures (Butler, 1990).

This text is a critical reflection on the culture of the "Darbar" (court culture), which was common in feudal and post-colonial politics, in which entry to the leader is a performance that strengthens paternalistic leadership. The wealth denounces the intersection of political authority and land/industrial riches. Meanwhile, the obsequiousness indicates a clientelist political culture in which power is an extension of personal loyalty to a patron rather than institutional functions or civic egalitarianism (Alavi, 1972). The fact that the Pathan (Qasim) is being summoned underlines the manner in which ethnic intermediaries are exploited in this system, despite being nothing but powerless at its core.

With the help of CDA by Fairclough, we can observe that the passage is a powerful discursive act. Its linguistic properties (text) produce a naturalizing narrative

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(discursive practice) of coherence that supports an ideology of autocratic, neo-feudal power and contingent, performative identities required by it (social practice).

### **Conclusion**

This research paper engages in a comparative critical discourse analysis of *The Pakistani Bride* and *The Wandering Falcon* to examine how power relations are discursively constructed, prolonged, and, at times, challenged in the patriarchal tribal cultures of the northwestern frontier of Pakistan. Based on the three-dimensional framework by Norman Fairclough, analysis has established that power in both novels' functions based on interlocking discursive processes that extends well beyond the use of physical force to include the production of subjects, naturalization of ideology and internalization of victimhood.

One of the key observations of this research is the notion of discursive victimhood, as how ideology takes over the consciousness and thus the oppressed are a part of their own disgrace. The ultimate victory of hegemonic discourse is Zaitoon and her climactic vision, where she understands and accepts the justice of her death based on the tribal code. The system has made its victim believe that her annihilation is justified, needs to be done and even is holy. She escapes later on but this does not undo this; instead, it only turns her into a survivor who is tormented by the sentence she was trained to predict. In *The Wandering Falcon*, this internalization is more widespread yet just as strong; characters hardly ever raise a question about the code, acting within its frame and negotiating the best deals they can, their factual acceptance being the most damaging testimony of the hegemonic power of the code.

The comparative aspect of the analysis has helped to reveal how the various authorial standpoints and narrative effects create diverse yet complementary critiques of patriarchal power. The psychological realism with which Sidhwa creates an ambiance of interiority in the reader enables us to follow the slow realization of the forces marshaled against Zaitoon, her horror and her resignation. Through this approach, a distinctly feminist analysis is created, which focuses on female suffering and resistance. The cool, fragmented form of Ahmad, on the contrary, denies the interiority, showing the characters as seen through the outside, in a plain, straightforward language that shuns sensationalism and sentimentality toward violence. This objectivity is also a criticism in that it shows the operations of the code

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as a matter-of-fact reality and not exceptional brutality. Where Sidhwa is personal and emotional, Ahmad is critical and historic.

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