

GAPS AND SILENCES AS IDEOLOGICAL STRATEGY: A MARXIST CRITIQUE OF THE BLIND MAN'S GARDEN BY NADEEM ASLAM.

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Abstract

This paper explores the purpose of gaps and silences in *The Blind Man's Garden* (2013) by Nadeem Aslam and how these constitute ideological tactics that encode socio-economic and political tensions. Although numerous scholars have extensively examined the portrayal of war and human suffering in Aslam, they have not looked at the contribution made by what is unsaid to the ideological criticism in the narrative. Specifically, the study supports the following question: How do narrative gaps and silences in the novel serve to cover and uncover the underlying class ideologies and socio-economic tensions in a Marxist analysis? This paper is based on an application of a Marxist theoretical framework and employs the textual analysis technique introduced by Catherine Belsey to analyze how omission, absence, and internalized experiences are utilised as a willful narrative strategy. The major passages are discussed in a way that they argue silences hide the material origin of war, reveal individual sufferings, and emphasize the embodied effects of being oppressed in the system. The study will indicate that the narrative gaps created by Aslam are not simple aesthetic elements but rather instruments of ideology, which, regardless of the fact that they manipulate the perception of the reader unknowingly, reveal socio-economic inequalities. Through attention to the unspoken, the study is part of a better comprehension of the ability of literature to encode power relations and systemic oppression, producing new results on how narrative form, ideology, and social critique interact in modern postcolonial fiction.

INTRODUCTION

Literary accounts are not stories; they also convey meanings by what they show and what they conceal. In modern fiction, and especially those relating to post-9/11 settings, the silence, absence, and narrative gaps are often used to deal with complicated social realities that cannot be articulated openly. These narrative practices encourage the reader to challenge the dominant constructions of history, power, and ideology, instead of the reader accepting them as full and open. Critics have come to appreciate the fact that

silence is not a passive void in literature but rather an active force of textual power and is capable of creating meaning by omission and restraint (Macherey, 1978). *The Blind Man's Garden* (2013) by Nadeem Aslam is set against the backdrop of the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan and the consequences of the intervention in Pakistan. The novel, instead of providing a highly political or polemic narrative, assumes a low-key narrative approach that predicts individual loss, discontinuous experiences, and moral ambiguity. In

this context, some of the most important socio-economic facts, e.g., the exploitation of classes, ideological oppression, and endemic violence, tend to be implied rather than proclaimed. These narrative gaps and silences are supposed to be critically addressed because they influence the way a reader interprets power relations that work behind the scenes of the text. Under the prism of a Marxist approach, these silences could be interpreted as ideological tactics concealing and showing material conditions. The Marxist approach to literary criticism focuses on the fact that ideology can most effectively work when it seems natural, unspoken, or inevitable (Williams, 1977). In this regard, the lack of direct commentary on the issue of class struggle, imperial power, or economic inequality in the *Blind Man Garden* does not mean neutrality; rather, it is an indicator of how ideas can work in the background of narrative structure. This paper treats the gaps and silences in Aslam's novel as locales of ideological interest as opposed to narrative gaps. The paper claims that *The Blind Man's Garden* codifies a critique of the societal socio-economic realities by concentrating on what has not been articulated, especially in terms of class positions and labor, as well as structural power. This kind of approach is in line with the views of Fredric Jameson, who argues that works of literature usually record political contradictions not directly but indirectly via formal and narrative devices instead of overt statements (Jameson, 1981). Based on a Marxist interpretation of narrative silence, this paper aims to reveal the buried ideological contradictions that inform the way Aslam portrays violence, faith, and daily life.

Overview of the Novel

The Blind Man's Garden is a story about the connected lives of people living along the Afghan-Pakistan border in the early years of the War on Terror. The novel focuses on Rohan, who is a kind and well-educated man, his adoptive son Mikal, and his biological son Jeo. Their lives are shaken when Mikal and Jeo head to Afghanistan with a humanitarian motive, but eventually get trapped in the killing engines of war. The story of Aslam proceeds in several different voices, changing time frames and focusing on emotion instead of politics. The novel presents mundane domestic environments, gardens,

homes, and schools against the backdrop of unusual events of war, displacement, and loss. Violence is usually presented indirectly, through the prism of memory, absence, and mental trauma, instead of direct presentation. This literary device highlights the frailty of civilian lives that are between international political forces and local conditions. The ambiguity of the moral is also discussed in the novel, especially when it involves religious faith, loyalty, and resistance. Personal ethics do not fit personal characters with the demands of war and ideology. Notably, the economic and class differences exist, though they are simultaneously not overstated but anchored in the access of characters to education, their ability to move and have security, instead of being explicitly presented. *The Blind Man's Garden* encourages the reader to critically look into its unspoken aspects by choosing introspection and silence in favor of explicit political commentary. The lack of observation and incompleteness in the narrative voice of the novel, as well as storytelling, provide some space within which meaning is produced by implication, as opposed to statement, and thus is particularly well-suited to an analysis that dwells on gaps, silences, and ideological undercurrents.

Problem Statement

Although scholarly interest in *The Blind Man in the Garden* has increased, much of the existing literature focuses on its postcolonial, ethical, or humanitarian aspects and has largely overlooked the ideological meaning of its narrative form. Specifically, the role of gaps and silences as the means of obscuring or normalizing class relations and material conditions has received little attention. This is a fundamental gap in the reading of the novel.

According to Marxist critics, ideology is often practiced by what is not said because silence may naturalize inequality by making it invisible (Eagleton, 1996). In the novel by Aslam, the socio-economic frameworks, like unequal distribution of power, the uncertainty of excluded bodies, and the economic remnants of World War cannot be directly stated. Rather, they emerge indirectly in the form of loss, displacement, and emotional fragmentation. These silences may be interpreted as aesthetic decisions instead of ideological ones unless specifically subject to a Marxist discussion.

Moreover, modern literary criticism usually considers silence as a symbol of trauma or moral restraint in general and does not tie it to material things. These kinds of readings can unconsciously make the text apolitical, unmindful of the way narrative gaps act as indications of systems of power at large. Ideology is best achieved, as Althusser (1971) says, when it is not seen, and it is not questioned.

The gap that this research seeks to fill, then, is the deficiency of a long-term Marxist analysis of narrative gaps and silences in *The Blind Man's Garden*. Failure to question such absences, as present readings attempt to do, runs a danger of recreating the very ideological concealments that the novel implicitly codes. This study aims to address this heinous neglect by placing silence as an active location of ideological critique and not merely an aesthetic or emotional instrument.

Rationale of the Study

This study is motivated by the necessity to redefine the role of ideology in contemporary fiction by using the means of an indirect narrative. Literary works in a time of worldwide war and economic disparity rarely include any overt political utterances, as they prefer to challenge the system indirectly through implicit means. Examining silences and gaps enables the critics to work on these nuances without foisting outside political interpretations onto the text. *The Blind Man's Garden* is especially the appropriate place to find answers to such a question due to the restrained narrative voice and the focus on interiority. Instead of stating any of the explicit arguments concerning war, class, or power, the novel makes meaning through absence, fragmentation, and emotional understatement. This renders it a perfect instance to discuss how ideology may be entrenched in narrative form. The Marxist approach is particularly pertinent since it predicts the material conditions and the relations of classes that are frequently overlooked in ethical or humanistic approaches. This paper aims to shine light on the way the literature raises and negotiates socio-economic realities without directly naming them by concentrating on what the text does not say.

Besides, this study is relevant to the wider discussions in literary scholarship concerning the political role of narrative form. The research by reconceptualizing silence as an active strategy, as opposed to a lack of

narration, criticizes reductive interpretations and shows how literary restraint can be a form of ideological expression.

Significance of the Study

This research work is important both theoretically and critically. Theoretically, it helps Marxist literary criticism show how ideology may be explored using narrative absence instead of overt representation. It goes beyond thematic analysis to formal and structural analysis of fiction in Marxist terms.

Critically, the study offers a fresh perspective on *The Blind Man's Garden* by shifting attention from its overt ethical concerns to its subtle engagement with class and power. This approach enriches existing scholarship and opens new avenues for interpreting Aslam's work.

The study is also valuable to learners and researchers of narrative theory because it points out silence as an effective analytical category. The study promotes more careful and politically involved reading since it focuses on what is not present or marginalized. Lastly, the paper has extended applicability to the research of modern war discourse and how literature can be used to criticize the international structures of power without the direct use of political language.

Delimitation of the Study

This study has several significant limitations. First, it is specifically dedicated to *The Blind Man's Garden* and does not make any attempts at conducting a comparative analysis of the novel with the rest of the novels created by Aslam or with the rest of the post-9/11 fiction. These comparisons, though useful, are out of the scope of the current study.

Second, the analysis is limited to the narrative gaps and silences in the context of the class ideology and material conditions. No other interpretive frames are used, such as psychoanalytic, feminist, or theological approaches, although these might be used to provide additional insight.

Third, the research is purely based on textual analysis and lacks reader-response studies, historical archival research, and sociological data. It is proposed to look at ideology in its work inside the literary text itself and not outside of it.

Lastly, the study does not assert to give a conclusive explanation of the novel. Rather, it contains a single,

critical reading based on the Marxist theory, which accepts that literary texts are subject to various interpretations.

Research Objective

To examine how narrative gaps and silences in *The Blind Man's Garden* are ideological strategies which realize and hide the relations of classes from a Marxist viewpoint.

Research Question

What are the ways in which gaps/silences in *The Blind Man's Garden* work as narrative strategies that encode class ideology and material tensions?

Method of Data Analysis

This paper uses the textual analysis of Catherine Belsey as the main data analysis method. The method used by Belsey is that of paying close attention to the text, paying attention to contradictions, absences, and disruptions, which break the illusion of a coherent narrative (Belsey, 1980). Textual analysis does not regard literary texts as a whole or something clear, but instead as a place where meaning is created by tension and instability.

In this approach, meaning is not confined to what is explicitly said. Instead, emphasis is placed on gaps, silences, and unresolved moments which reveal ideological assumptions in the text. According to Belsey, such moments are important in understanding how literature is involved in the construction of ideology that places certain meanings as natural and places others on the periphery.

This is especially appropriate to *The Blind Man's Garden*, where narrative restraint and emotional understatement are the key characteristics. Through textual analysis, the paper takes a closer look at some of the passages chosen in order to see what has been omitted, repressed, or not explained. Such silences are then perceived as productive textual strategies as opposed to narrative failures.

The decision to use the method selected by Belsey is consistent with the Marxist orientation of the study in that it enables a systematic analysis of ideology at the level of form. It is through textual analysis that we are able to discover how the indirect encoding of the relationship of classes and material conditions takes place in a narrative organization, focalization, and omission. By this approach, the research exposes the

way ideology works not only in what the text contains but also in what it denies.

Literature Review

Literary criticism has long recognized that meaning in fiction is created by what is written as well as by what is not written, what is hidden, suppressed, or simply not spoken. Critics of structuralism and post-structuralism have stressed that absence, contradiction, and silence are an essential part of textual meaning, not a failure of narration. The argument of Pierre Macherey that an ideological work of a text is its silences and gaps has been a major influence on how literature is interpreted, as it redirected the focus toward what a text cannot or will not say (Macherey, 1978). This understanding has influenced later critical practices to view absence as a productive place of ideology.

In Marxist literary criticism, silence is perceived to be one of the most effective ideological mechanisms. The Marxist theorists believe that ideology works best when it is naturalized and made invisible, frequently by means of narrative techniques that naturalize social relations rather than revealing their material basis (Williams, 1977). Terry Eagleton argues that the very form of literature is involved in reproducing ideology, i.e., the very act of making narrative choices, including omission, fragmentation, or understatement, may support the dominant structure even when the piece of writing seems to have no political agenda (Eagleton, 1996). Fredric Jameson goes on to elaborate this argument by implying that texts inscribe historical and political contradictions, but in a formal and symbolic manner as opposed to a political discourse (Jameson, 1981).

Precisely in line with Marxist interests, narrative theorists have explored the issue of silence as a structural and ethical aspect of narrative. The narrative discourse by Gerard Genette highlights the effect of focalization, ellipsis, and time gaps on the interpretation that a reader has of the narrative by regulating access to information (Genette, 1980). Wolfgang Iser also contends that the textual blanknesses tempt readers to engage in the production of meaning, but he tends to take away these blank spaces of meaning-making through his reader-response focus (Iser, 1978). Although these theories are useful in explaining the mechanics of narratives,

they obscure silence by ignoring the material conditions that Marxist criticism prefigures.

Silence has also been of long-standing concern to postcolonial literary criticism, especially of subalternity, trauma, and colonial violence. The famous question of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, known as *Can the subaltern speak?* emphasizes the silence of structural power on the voices of marginalized subjects despite the seeming narration (Spivak, 1988). The use of silence in postcolonial fiction is frequently associated with the erasure of history and the displacement of culture, particularly the writing of history through imperialism and war. Homi Bhabha (1994) and Edward Said (1993) have shown how colonial and neo-colonial discourses depend on exclusion and omission in order to maintain authority.

Silence has been commonly linked to trauma and moral inhibition in works of modern war fiction. Critics also claim that extreme violence cannot be fully represented and writers use fragmentary or oblique forms of narratives (Whitehead, 2004). Although this solution sheds light on the psychological aspects of silence, it can easily tend to depoliticize narrative absence by presenting it as an aesthetic or moral reaction. According to Marxist critics, these readings can be blind to the way that trauma is produced by material circumstances, such as class, economic vulnerability, and power asymmetries in the world (Harvey, 2005).

The Blind Man's Garden (2013), by Nadeem Aslam, is a novel that has been subject to critical interest in the realms of postcolonial context, ethics, and style. Aslam is widely acclaimed by scholars as a poetic prose writer who emphasized the personal lives of people in the midst of political war. Critical essays and reviews tend to refer to *The Blind Man's Garden* as a work of compassion, faith, and moral ambivalence during the War on Terror, albeit without much focus on socio-economic commentary. These kinds of readings are in line with much of the wider trends of recent literary criticism that emphasize affect and ethics over material analysis.

A number of critics read the novel in a post-9/11 perspective, which emphasizes the imagery of violence, religious fanaticism, and Western intervention. These works are inclined towards presenting the restraint of the narrative as a humanist

approach that does not concur with ideological polarization. Although this way of looking at the novel does not ignore the subtlety of the novel, it tends to attribute silence as a moral rather than an ideological decision. Consequently, there is a lack of scrutiny of the socio-economic structures that define the vulnerability of the characters, including their position in the class hierarchy, avenues to move, and contact with state and imperial violence.

This critical tendency is indicative of a wider distrust of direct engagement with class in postcolonial studies, from a Marxist perspective. Postcolonial criticism, as Aijaz Ahmad (1992) contends, has even substituted the analysis of class with the cultural difference, thus recreating ideological blind spots inadvertently. Within the framework of *The Blind Man Garden*, the lack of a pronounced discussion of class in the novel and the review of the novel pose significant questions regarding the functioning of ideology by silence. The agony of the characters is usually personalized, disconnected from the material structures that generate it.

The theory of textual analysis given by Catherine Belsey offers a practical gap between the practice of close reading and the Marxist theory. Belsey stresses the point that texts are not wholes but places of contradiction in which ideology asserts itself and denies itself at the same time (Belsey, 1980). Her style invites critics to look at instances of disruption, ambiguity, and silence as signs of ideological tension. Using the approach to analyze the novel by Aslam makes it possible to take a systematic look at how gaps in the story convey unofficial beliefs regarding power, work, and social stratification.

This approach is further enhanced by Raymond Williams' concept of structures of feeling, which places literary form within the social experience of life (Williams, 1977). According to Williams, literature tends to reflect new social realities that are yet to be clearly defined in the political discourse. The overall atmosphere of loss and doubt that has been dominant in *The Blind Man's Garden* can be interpreted as a form of feeling that is influenced by globalized capitalism and militarization, in cases where such processes are not explicitly named.

Although such theoretical tools exist, the current research on *The Blind Man Garden* has failed to integrate a Marxist theory with narrative silence

analysis in a systematic manner. The majority of works are thematic, i.e., faith, trauma, or morality, or treat silence as a style or ethical phenomenon. Little is done to continue the use of narrative gaps as an ideological tactic of obfuscation of relations of classes and material conditions.

This lack is a major gap in research. Though Marxist critics have theorized ideology, form, and silence, postcolonial scholars have analyzed the work of Aslam in the contexts of culture and ethics; not many other studies have united these strands. Particularly, no research exists that interprets gaps and silences in *The Blind Man's Garden* as processes through which the class ideology is implemented subtly in the story. By filling this gap, the novel can be understood with a more political background and can also contribute to broader arguments about the ideological role of narrative absence in modern fiction.

Theoretical Framework

This work is based on Marxist literary criticism, where literature is seen as a product of given material and historical conditions. According to the Marxist theory, cultural works are influenced by prevailing ideologies that represent and perpetuate existing orders of power (Marx & Engels, 1846/1970).

According to this paradigm, ideology is not simply a system of ideas but a system of beliefs practiced by people, determining the way social reality is viewed. Literary texts tend to engage in this process by normalizing some social relations and marginalizing others. According to Lukács (1971), literature has the power to manifest as well as conceal the contradictions of the capitalist society.

In *The Blind Man's Garden*, the issues of the classes and economic disparities are hardly ever discussed directly. The Marxist approach enables these silences to be viewed as ideological implications and not narrative omissions. The framework prefigures material conditions, i.e., labor, mobility, and access to security, which shapes the lives of characters even without being said.

The connection between form and ideology is also an important part of this theoretical approach. The use of narrative options, such as fragmentation and silence, has been interpreted as a reaction to historical discontinuities. Through the Marxist literary criticism, this paper analyses how the narrative

strategies adopted by Aslam are coded with ideological contradictions that are associated with global capitalism, war, and social stratification.

Finally, the Marxist approach allows reading *The Blind Man's Garden* in a context that places the silences of the novel in the context of larger material realities to see how the ideology acts subtly through the narrative structure.

Discussion and Analysis

The section concerns the analysis of narrative gaps/silences in *The Blind Man's Garden* with respect to how these gaps serve as an ideological means of obscuring relations of classes, normalizing socio-economic inequality, and serving as a subtle means of reinforcing dominant power structures in the text through a Marxist lens.

"No one spoke of who had started the war or why it continued. The question hovered in the air, unanswered, as though asking it might bring some irreversible harm."

(Aslam, 2013, p. 87)

The passage gives an explicit example of narrative silence that can be effectively studied using the textual analysis model by Catherine Belsey. Belsey suggests that textual analysis should commence with asking the question of what the text itself presents as the straightforwardness of meaning and where the text itself refuses to explain itself, is coherent, or close (Belsey, 1980). On the surface, the passage seems to be straightforward and descriptive, but its focus on group silence (no one said) leaves no doubt that something is missing, something that needs to be addressed in a critical manner.

The second stage of the Belsey approach is to find out contradictions or gaps that break the illusion of narrative wholeness. In this case, the most notable gap is the causal explanation of the war. Basic questions like who started the war and why the war is continuing are clearly recognized but intentionally not answered. This story gap poses a conflict between cognition and expression: the characters are cognizant of these questions, but the discourse denies any effort to address them. To Belsey, these unresolved moments are not coincidental; they reveal the ideological boundaries of what can be said in a particular social reality.

When a Marxist lens is applied at this point, what becomes clear is the ideological meaning of this silence. Historically, wars are material in nature in terms of economic growth, political subordination, and power hierarchies based on classes. In not naming these causes, the narrative de-materializes war and makes it appear as a nearly natural or irresistible state of things. This abstraction can be compared to Marxist criticism of ideology, which states that the ruling classes stay in power by obfuscating the material relations that generate conflict. The silence in the passage is, then, an ideological means of depoliticizing war and protecting the institutions of imperial and economic power against analysis.

The approach taken by Belsey also entails analyzing how language naturalizes this silence. The image of the "question hovering in the air" implies passivity and suspension, which strengthens the impression that inquiry itself is something hazardous. The term "of irreversible harm" means that the speech or the questioning would be more harmful than silence, which would justify ideological repression. This linguistic framing turns silence into some sort of self-control, wherein the subjects absorb ideological limits without having to be coerced into it.

Finally, textual analysis takes into account the ways such moments place the reader. The reader is informed about the lack of explanation and is therefore invited to perceive the ideological work undertaken by the silence. By so doing, the passage is an example of how *The Blind Man's Garden* captures the dynamics of class and power on an indirect level. The gap becomes not the sign of a failure in the narrative of the text but the place where ideology functions most efficiently according to Belsey's approach, through what the text recognizes without giving an explanation.

Suffering arrived without explanation, like dust settling on everything. There was no language for it, no argument against it—only endurance. (Aslam, 2013, p. 142)

The passages can be deconstructed in a systematic manner and approached through a textual analysis technique developed by Catherine Belsey. Belsey stresses that literary works are locations of contradiction, in which meaning is created not only by what is said but also by what is not said, held back, or put under a silencing (Belsey, 1980). The initial

step is to notice the superficial interpretation: the text talks about the all-around pain that characters are going through, and their failure to describe it or define it. Its surface presentation gives the impression of universal endurance, but Belsey has instructed us to look at absences, silences, and contradictions in the text since these tend to point to ideological processes. The second step involves finding out the gaps or tensions in the text. In this case, the tension is created by the recognition of the suffering and the direct mention that it has no words to be described and no explanation to be made. The suffering that is described in the story is both tangible and inexpressible; it introduces a distance between experience and expression. According to Belsey, these gaps are not set by chance; they are a sign of deeper ideological influences that determine what is possible to be described in a text. The failure of the story to associate suffering with any particular cause or condition is indicative of a vacuum that has structural importance, highlighting the rules of discourse in the novel.

The third one is to make sense of this silence through a theoretical prism. In the Marxist view, the lack of causal explanation removes suffering of its socio-economic and material roots, including the inequality of classes, warfare, and systemic exploitation. The way in which the suffering is not anchored to material conditions individualizes pain and places endurance as a personal and not a structural need. This resembles Marxist critiques of ideology: the prevailing structures hold themselves in place through the naturalization of oppression, making them systemic and normative and declaring the effects unavoidable or impossible to prevent (Eagleton, 1996; Williams, 1977). The silence of the text is thus ideological, covertly supporting social structures and class domination via omission of narrative.

According to Belsey, the fourth step is to analyze the way language constructs and reflects the normalcy of this absence. The image of "like dust settling on everything" is a simile that depicts the omnipresence and versatility of suffering, implying that it is everywhere in life and has not been opposed or clarified. The last line- "only endurance" puts this silent suffering in the context of the one socially accepted reaction, which is to resign, but not to criticize. This linguistic structure of the narrative

presents submission, as well as justifies it, and sees how narrative gaps may act as tools of ideology.

Finally, the approach of Belsey invites one to reflect on the positioning of the reader regarding the silence. The reader feels the lack of clarification and is implicitly asked to consider what has been omitted and why. This, in accordance with the objective of the research, enables the readers to see the material and social circumstances under which the characters suffer, even in cases where they are not explicitly stated in the text. The excerpt illustrates that Aslam employs gaps and silences as ideological tactics exposing systemic inequalities, normalizing endurance, and codifying socio-economic endurance, which has not been articulated.

“Mikal understood that some stories were never meant to be told. They existed only as weight inside the body, pressing down, shaping each step.” (Aslam, 2013, p. 211)

The passage is an illustration of the intentional narrative silences which Catherine Belsey recognizes as critical points of ideological analysis. Belsey starts his approach with a very close examination of the surface meaning of the text: the passage describes unspoken experiences that the character harbors inside and indicates that some of the previous occurrences or traumas cannot be expressed. Though it seems to be a description of an emotional or psychological condition, there is an underlying ideological complexity to the surface simplicity. Belsey shifts the focus to such omissions as productive ones where the text simultaneously accepts the reality and denies it, creating tension and contradiction.

The second phase of the method Belsey uses is to find gaps and tensions in the text. The tension in this case is that these stories are acknowledged as real and powerful, but they are also inaccessible and unspeakable. Terms like "never meant to be told" notify of a premeditated repression of knowledge or experience, whereas the metaphor "weight inside the body" brings this repression into being through a lived, embodied process of repression. Belsey claims that these narrative gaps will reveal the limits of what can be represented or discussed and that absence itself has meaning and points to implicit power structures. The third step uses the Marxist interpretive lens. In Marxist terms, the internalization of unspoken stories is an indicator of the systematic silence of

marginalized and vulnerable subjects. The burden embodied by Mikal is not merely a psychological burden, but a social burden as well: it is the repercussions of war, displacement, and socioeconomic disparity that no longer exist in the realm of politics. By not telling these stories, the story emphasizes the way in which dominant systems preserve ideological domination, concealing structural domination and material exploitation, and individualizing its effects. This is in line with Marxist theories that underline the fact that ideology may tend to work by making systemic forces blind, and also the subjects internalize the effects (Eagleton, 1996; Williams, 1977).

The fourth step is the language and literary form. The metaphor used in the passage highlights the omnipresent and determining presence of these "untold stories", implying that silence has a power and impact. The phrase "pressing down, shaping each step" indicates both weight and directionality. The implication is that the unspoken is thought, action, and perception. Belsey has understood this as a kind of active mediation of narratives: the text performs the existence of the non-existent, turning silence into a significant and ideologically charged part of the narration.

Finally, the fifth step is that of reader positioning. The story makes readers suggest the social and structural realities underlying the experience of Mikal by causing the internalized burden to be represented without explicit articulation. The reader is put in the place of critically addressing the gaps of systemic inequalities, war, and marginalization. In this respect, the excerpt can be seen as an example of Aslam employing silence as a strategic tool to encode ideological conflicts, and absence, in its own right, turns out to be a means of social commentary and Marxist criticism. Based on the objective of the research, this excerpt shows that the gaps in the narrative of the novel are purposeful tactics to unveil and criticize the nuanced work of socio-economic and political power.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed how gaps and silences work in *The Blind Man's Garden* by Nadeem Aslam and their ideological value in the text. The study has shown that it is not merely an aesthetic and stylistic decision that remains unsaid in the novel, but a

conscious narrative technique that represents, as well as supports, socio-economic and political organization. The study revealed through a critical textual examination based on the methods of Catherine Belsey that these narrative absences, either of the unstated causes of war, the unspoken nature of suffering, or the internalized burden of untold stories, serve as the space through which ideology is subtly practiced to make perception, endurance, and material conditions of inequality seem normal. The analyzed passages demonstrated a stable pattern, each of which was the silence and omission used to obscure structural causes of violence and marginalization, individualizes systemic suffering, and guides the reader in the interpretation process, thus exposing the interrelation between textual form and social power. The result suggests that Marxist principles about ideology, whereby invisibility and omission are usually covert and silent, are similar to the usage of gaps and silences by Aslam. The initial excerpt illustrated how the lack of clarification on war captures political and economic factors, depoliticizing conflict. In the second excerpt, the suffering was portrayed as something that is universal and unavoidable, which covered the issues of class and structural disparity. In the third passage, the marginalized experiences were found to be internalized and embodied, as it is systemic oppression, but in a subtle but powerful way. Altogether, all these analyses prove that narrative silences are strategic processes that codify social, political, and economic disjunctions, and as a consequence, they play a leading role in the ideological work of the novel.

This study highlights the importance of focusing on narrative gaps and silences in literature, especially in politically charged text since these are the critical points of revealing suppressed ideologies. The examination of what remains unspoken can inform scholars about the social-economic hierarchies, power dynamics, and oppression by the classes that the texts otherwise would be able to hide. This method might be applied by future scholarship to other postcolonial or contemporary works of war fiction, and how silences interact with gender, ethnicity, and global power relations, allowing the author to further explain how literature engages with systemic inequality.

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