

EXAMINING GENDER REPRESENTATION THROUGH CORPUS STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF NADIA HASHIMI'S THE PEARL THAT BROKE ITS SHELL

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Abstract

The present study presents a corpus stylistic analysis of Nadia Hashimi's novel, *The Pearl that broke its shell* (2014) following Dale Spender's theoretical framework of male dominance to examine gender representation in the novel. Methodology adopted for the current study is a mixed method approach that combines quantitative and qualitative methods for analysis of the data. The study aims to identify and explore adjectives and verbs associated with male and female gender in the selected novel. The frequency and concordances of targeted lexical items were obtained from the corpus created from the text of the novel by utilizing a software Ant Conc version 4.2.0 and then these items were later analyzed qualitatively. The findings reveal that the author portrays men as oppressive, brutal and dominant and represents women as submissive, oppressed and morally self-sure. 21% of the total adjectives associated with both genders represent men as physically strong and authoritative, 19% express their ferocious characteristics, 35% of the total adjectives represent women as subdued and subjugated, although, 25% of the adjectives depict woman's strong character and sturdy nature. Moreover, there are three hundred eighty-eight (388) verbs are utilized that express the actions of both men and women. In which, 22% verbs depict the misogynistic actions of men, 32% of the total verbs characterizes women's suppression and express them as victims. However, 46% of total verbs denote women's determination. The research brings positive insights and open new paths for future researchers to understand gender representation in any specific context.

INTRODUCTION

Barry (2009) defines stylistics as "a critical approach" (p. 196) and "the scientific study of and its structures, rather than the learning of individual languages" (p. 196). Thornborrow and Wareing (1998) refers it as

"the study of style"(p.2). stylistics examines the way and style of writing through which varied meanings can be gained. Literary stylistics serves the purpose of investigating the writing style of authors on multiple

levels by taking into account the levels of language and aids in validating the proposed themes embedded in a literary text. There are different approaches through which stylistic analysis of a literary text can be executed such as style in fiction, cognitive stylistics, feministic stylistics, narrative stylistics etc. However, the current study aims to examine the literary text using corpus stylistic analysis.

The themes of gender norms, patriarchy, women's suppression and family values are widely observed in the writings of South Asian writers such as Khalid Hosseini, Elaf Shafak, Tahmina Durrani, Saba Karim Khan and many others. The current study mainly focuses on Afghan society. Such themes of gender representation, womanhood, patriarchy and women struggles are subtly crafted by Nadia Hashmi in her novels. Her most selling novel, *The pearl that broke its shell* is a fine instance of women's struggles, their troubles and fight against finding their own individual identities. Hashimi has vividly portrayed women of every age and every generation as sturdy, daring and resilient by carefully selected adjectives and verbs and their actions through her refined collection of verbs in the novel.

Nadia Hashimi (1977- present) is an American-Afghan author, who has not only crafted the best-selling novels depicting the themes of women's plights, troubles but also portrayed daring female characters of resilience, valor and their fight to uplift their status in male dominated society. She has dealt with such themes in an excellent artistic style and penned down it in stories in a deft way. She was born in New York and raised there, but being a daughter of Afghan parents who migrated to Europe and United states, she was lucky enough to revive and cherish the Afghan culture and accustomed to its cultural values and language. She has authored many novels which include, *The Pearl that broke its Shell* (2014), *When the Moon is Low* (2015), *A house without Windows* (2016) and *Sparks like Stars* (2021). All her novels portray a realist picture of innocent and grief-stricken people of Afghanistan. "Her novels cover generations and continents, taking on themes like forced migration, conflict, poverty, misogyny, colonialism, and addiction" (Seswita, 2022, p. 3).

The current study aims to analyze the gender representation in the novel, *The pearl that broke its shell*

(2014) authored by Nadia Hashimi using corpus stylistic analysis. The study seeks to analyze that how the writer's lexical choices of selecting adjectives and verbs have represented gender in the novel in an effective and elusive way.

The Pearl that Broke its Shell: Plot Summary

The debut novel, *The Pearl that broke its Shell* (2007) is written by an American-Afghan writer Nadia Hashimi. It is an intergenerational story which is set in Afghanistan representing two Afghan women Rahima and her great-great grandmother Shekiba. Though the both women belong to different centuries yet their stories and struggles are same. The plot moves back and forth and makes the reader to experience different time zones. Rahima is a thirteen-year-old teenage girl who lives in an Afghan village with her parents and sisters during the year 2007. She doesn't have any brother, while her father whom she calls *Padar Jan* is opium addicted and is incapable of fulfilling the needs of his family. So, Rahima's mother decided to transform Rahima at the age of nine years as a *Bacha posh*, an Afghan's cultural practice to allow young girls to behave and live like a boy until they attain the age of puberty. However, Rahima continues as being a *Bacha Posh* even having attained the age of adolescence. Abdul Khaliq, a warlord and elder than her father, for whom her father works as a soldier, caught sight of her and decides to take her as his fourth wife. Rahima being accustomed to the life of boy and its experiences, faces troubles in managing her life as a young wife. She was beaten fiercely by her husband and eventually decides to change her fate.

On the other hand, we come across with the story of Shekiba who lives in 1903 a century earlier ruled under monarchy. Shekiba's paternal family disowns her father who lives with his wife and children. Shekiba loses her siblings during cholera pandemic and she gets burned during her childhood which makes her half-faced. She gradually loses all his family members including his parents. She is strong and have masculine abilities to work hard and serves as a woman-guard. She becomes victim of brutalities and ultimately decides to take control of her life.

Rahima and Shekiba are connected through Rahima's aunt Khala Shaima who tells Rahima the stories of their great-great grandmother. They both

encounter harsh treatment and extreme oppression from the fundamentalist and patriarchal society, nonetheless, decide to write their Naseeb (fate) by themselves. The story elaborates the bravery, courage and transformational journey of main characters. Summarizing the novel, King (n.d) asserts that *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* is a stimulating and enchantingly-penned novel that attracts stressful equals between two lives parted by a prodigious strip of time.

The Pearl that Broke its Shell: Major Themes

The prevailing patriarchal society and fundamentalist state in Afghanistan define gender roles and restrict woman's desire for freedom and opportunities. Gender, defined by Eagly (1987) as "meanings that societies and individuals ascribe to male and female categories" (p. 4). While, gender roles, says Lipman-Blumer (1984) are set of actions which are suitable for both, men and women. Gender roles are social constructs unlike sex roles which are physiological in nature, and they "contain self-concepts, psychological traits, and family, occupational, and political roles assigned dichotomously to members of each sex" (Lipman-Blumer, 1984, p. 2). Gender representation, therefore, in Afghan society is determined according to the patriarchal norms which seems to have less or no flexibility at all for their women. In G. Goertz & A. Mazur (Eds.) Celis (2008) states "gendering representation is not only concerned with the sex of the bodies, but also focuses on the "what" of representation and examines representatives' acts and claims using a gendered lens" (pp. 71). Hashimi through her novel has portrayed an explicit picture of Afghanistan and its male-dominating principles that regulate women's lives accordingly by deliberate misappropriation of religious teachings. Hashimi (2014) accurately demonstrates that how Afghan men shaped Islamic teachings to satisfy their needs. Though, the men from such societies exploit women and consider them as unavailing, frail and mere children's bearers yet they are strong-willed, painstaking and fighters. The title of the novel itself points out the two sides of a woman. They are delicate and beautiful as a pearl and endures pains and brutalities of their men, but once they break the shell which signifies the male-controlled society, they

pursue freedom and prove themselves equally able in proportion to the men. Sumara and Taseer (2018) argue that, "this novel depicts the journey of Afghan women in the male dominating society and their struggle for survival. The novel is an edifying tale of tyranny, oppression, subalternity and domestic violence" (p. 161).

Research Questions

The current paper addresses the following research questions;

1. How are gender roles represented in the novel "*The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*" through the author's choice of adjectives and Verbs?
2. How do cultural norms and patriarchal society influence the representation of gender in the text?

Research Objectives

The current study fulfills the following research objectives;

1. To explore representation of gender roles in the novel, "*The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*" through the author's choice of adjectives and verbs.
2. To examine the influence of cultural norms and patriarchal society in the representation of gender in the text.

Literature Review

Corpus Stylistics

A number of methods, techniques and approaches have been used to analyze literary text under the broad umbrella of stylistics as a critical approach. However, Corpus stylistics has received more admiration and acceptance in more recent years among other kinds of stylistics. Corpus stylistics, regarded as the combination of two disciplines: stylistics and corpus linguistics. Corpus stylistics, defines Crystal (1972) is a purely objective statistical practice and is guided by somewhat subjective comprehension process. Corpus stylistics adopts methods of corpus linguistics while integrating the procedures of literary stylistics. "Corpus stylistic research is typically seen as a relatively recent innovation: a continuation of previous linguistic corpus-based studies which concentrated on more conventional issues of lexical and syntactic variation

in use” (Biber, 2005, p.20). Biber (2011) believes that Corpus linguistic research is built on the study of a corpus, which is a huge and just assemblage of transcripts stored and readable in the software. Wilson (2021) defines corpus as a “collection of more than one text” (p. 29). A close examination of corpus in the light of principles of stylistics has widened the scope and significance of corpus stylistics as a new and an effective technique of looking at literary texts.

Corpus stylistics, Semino and Short (2004) argues, has been adopted as a branch of stylistics and is widely employed by various researchers in multiple fields. Biber and Conrad (1999) believe that corpus stylistics is actually an expansion of fundamental stylistics which is founded on linguistic-based grammatical and lexical choices. They further emphasize that Corpus stylistics enables researchers to analyze the linguistic features of a text thus aids to accumulate authentic and objective interpretations rather than depending only on subjective elucidations.

Based on the functions provided by corpus stylistics, it makes the process of analysis and interpretation palpable and aids in handling larger sets of data with the help of techniques applicable in corpus linguistics. A computer-aided analysis can assist the reader in identifying and following the various patterns found in the story, and it may even make the analyst aware of nuances and complexities that they might have missed otherwise. Corpus stylistics points out various patterns, frequencies, recurrences and assortment of words in the writing which represent particular theme (Sinclair, 2004). Practically, corpus linguistic techniques enable the methodical, in-depth examination of vast amounts of language data for lexical and/or grammatical patterns. They also enable the decoding of these patterns' meanings, which are again not immediately apparent because of the size of data.

Gender Representation

Literature reflects life and society; therefore, it showcases multiple issues caused by unequal treatment of gender roles between men and women. “Gender is an identity that is attached to men and women due to the socio-cultural construction of a society” (Mose, 2007, p. 236). Discrimination in gender roles and influential behavior of males against

females give birth to the gender injustice in a society, particularly the society which acts according to the patriarchal norms. In the context of South Asian Countries like Afghanistan, male gender is considered to be superior who is responsible for taking all the major decisions and initiatives, whereas female gender is restricted to the four walls and responsible for children's bearers. Similarly, numerous writers have raised their voices against gender discrimination through their literary works. “Gender issues have received the attention of writers. So, many works of literature can be found that raises gender issues” (Yulisetiani et al., 2018, p. 357).

Connecting the subject of gender representation with the context of Afghanistan, Afghan writers seem to be influenced by the voices talking about the challenges faced by women in a patriarchal society. They have portrayed women in audacious and uncustomary rules. The works of renowned writers like Maria Mehboob, Asne Seierstad, Khalid Hosseini, and Nadia Hashimi depict women as evolving, defying and modifying their gender roles irrespective of being suppressed and submissive (Imran and Hart, 2018). Mahlberg (2007) asserts that women in Afghanistan are taken as an object who can be purchased and sold as slaves and brides or in settlement of debts. Patriarchal ideology, according to Hearty (2011) considers men as physically and intellectually exceptional than women. Gender roles are assigned in such a custom that men always tend to exercise power and women are supposed to be subjugated. In this manner, patriarchy, a construct of power dynamics favors male gender over female and relishes authority.

Analysis of literary text using the method of corpus stylistics is used by various researchers and it defines and interprets literature from varied viewpoints. Wan (2022) analyzed Khalid Hosseini's novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* using corpus stylistics approach. AntConc software was operated to analyze the data to look for the lexical flow of the novel. The results described the relationship between characters and surroundings while reporting that the lexical flow in the novel was medium. The analysis also showed how the plot is structured to support the main theme of the novel.

Qayoom and Fatima (2023) conducted the corpus stylistic analysis to examine the gender representation in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by renowned Afghan novelist Khalid Hosseini. They examined that how lexical choices of the writer support male dominance over female gender. They found adjectives and verbs terms used for men and women in the text. Results showed that women are frequently abused by the men both physically and mentally.

Using AntConc, Ali et al. (2020) investigates patriarchal adjectives in the corpus of Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride*. According to them, the corpus-based analysis of adjectives aids in understanding and interpreting the text's themes as well as decoding the author's ideology. According to the corpus of *The Bride*, adjectives such as humiliated, bare, black, silent, exhausted, and weak are commonly employed for the female characters. The study also looks at the frequency of these adjectives as well as the female characters to whom these descriptors are addressed. The use of patriarchal and disparaging terms reinforces Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride*'s subject of women's oppression, sorrow, and disintegration.

Ajmal and Shoukat (2020) conducted a corpus-driven analysis of James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. The main objective of the study was to test how well this new approach work with the literary text. Imperative sentences from the novel were analyzed along with the significance of the title. Thirty most used words were noted belonging to different parts of speech were studied and their frequency was recorded. It was affirmed that corpus-driven study supported by AntConc software provides useful insights in understanding the literary texts and discovering different meanings out of these texts.

Anwar et al. (2022) conducted a comparative study of two novels *Train to Pakistan* and *The Ice Candy Man* by Khuswant Singh and Bapsi Sidhwa respectively using under corpus stylistic analysis. They studied how the male and female gender is being depicted by both authors through the use of adjectives using corpus linguistic tool AntConc (3.2.1) software. The results of the study show that 56 adjectives with frequency of 107 times are employed. Moreover, men are portrayed positively while women are represented negatively in the texts.

The studies stated above show that many gender-based investigations in corpus stylistics have already been conducted. The current study varies from previous studies in that the novel, *The Pearl that broke its shell* has yet to be analyzed utilizing Dale Spender's theoretical considerations, and its corpus has not been employed as a tool for stylistic analysis. Therefore, the present study aims to analyze this novel using corpus stylistic approach to examine the gender representation in the text through author's lexical choices of adjectives and verbs.

Research Methodology

The current research is a mixed method approach, an amalgamation of quantitative and qualitative data in nature. Creswell et al (2003) defines it a "a mixed method study involves the collection or analysis of both quantitative and/or qualitative data in a single study in which the data are collected concurrently or sequentially, are given a priority, and involve the integration of the data at one or more stages in the process of research" (p. 212). Though the study is based on corpus analysis, the qualitative part is fundamental in the current paper and the study is descriptive in nature. According to Goa (2009) descriptive study aims at finding useful information. With the effective application of corpora, empirical language analysis for obtaining explicit conclusions can be undertaken. The plain text of the novel, *The Pearl that broke its Shell* is employed as its corpora for the current study and software AntConc version 4.2.0 (Anthony, 2007) was used to analyze and interpret the lexical items from the text. First, the novel was obtained in PDF version and then converted into plain text. However, before analyzing text through AntConc, it was processed through TagAnt version 2.0.5 to get the adjectives and verbs tagged. All the adjectives employed in the book were tagged as JJ and Verbs as VBN. Once the lexical items were identified, it was uploaded in the software AntConc to create its corpora. The corpora consist of total 140593-word tokens and 8500-word types. The study aims to analyze the author's choice of adjectives and verbs to represent gender depiction in the story. Only those lexical items were taken for analysis which characterize the gender roles as defined by the patriarchal society and depict how women face

adversities and restrictions. Two functions of the software i.e., Concordance lines also known as keyword in context (KWIC) and word lists were used for analysis. Concordance tool provides variety of lexical items like adjectives and verbs and Word list highlights the frequency of each word appearing through concordance tool.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of Dale Spender’s Male Dominance, is selected for the present study to address the proposed research questions. Dale Spender (1980) recognizes power with a patriarchal order and her theory stresses on the acknowledged patriarchal affiliation between men and women. Dale Spender’s study identifies the relationship of language and gender and the theory stresses that females are being ruled over by the males through their words and language usage. Both genders employ different words in language to interact with each other because of the society’s hierarchical inequality of power and authority. Variation in the use of language is always prominent between males and females. Dale Spender in her book *Man-Made language* (1980), states that our language usage is prejudiced against women and it determines our social life. She states that specific words are used to represent gender in our society like professional and significant for males, while attractive and domestic for females. Sunderland (2004) asserts that prejudiced language regarding gender, sexuality and the female’s depiction shows male dominance. The present study, therefore, adopts Dale Spender’s Male Dominance theory to investigate how the author uses different lexical items to enumerate gender depiction and their roles in a patriarchal system such as in Afghan society.

Data Analysis and Discussion

The novel offers a transformational journey of women and shifts in their roles from being oppressed and weak to becoming strong and self-reliant. The significance of the present study is evident through the title of the novel *The Pearl that broke its shell* since it points out the women’s change in their roles from being affectionate, beautiful and innocent to becoming strong by breaking the shell symbolizing the patriarchy and societal norms which are evident in contexts like Afghanistan. The current study is based on the analysis of two lexical items; adjectives and verbs to explore the gender representation in the narrative.

Adjectives Representing Male and Female Gender

The quantitative analysis shows that there are three hundred forty (340) adjectives with respect to male and female gender representation in the novel, out of which 40% adjectives represent the male gender and 60% adjectives define female gender. 21% of male associated adjectives depicts men as authoritarian whereas 19% adjectives represent them as violent. Moreover, women are depicted as subdued and unyielding by 35% and 25% respectively.

Adjectives Characterizing Men as Authoritarian and Strong

Hashimi (2014) has employed various adjectives which are associated with male gender characterizing them as authoritarian and sturdy. The novel primarily revolves around portraying men’s authoritative power in culturally and socially male-dominated society, where men’s strong body and financial status allow them to exercise their power and give them opportunity to have what they wish for. The adjectives *warlord, strong and able-bodied* imply the strength and powerful status and warrior nature of a male.

Table 1- Adjectives for men showing them as authoritarian and strong

Adjectives	Frequency
Strong	25
Warlord	16
Powerful	12
Clever	7

Burly man	3
Callused	2
Honorable	1
Rugged looking-man	1
Successful	2
Able-bodied	1
Larger	1
Total	71

Abdul Khalique, who is an honorable warlord of Kabul and is in his fifties asks for Rahima’s hand for himself who is just thirteen years old girl as his fourth wife and her elder sisters for his cousins. “Turning me into a boy hadn’t protected me at all. In fact, it had put me right in front of this *warlord* who now demanded my hand in marriage (Chapter 18).” Rahima’s father, her uncles and grandfather don’t resist against this offer and accept it without the consent of the girls. However, the girls are too young to get marry the men who are of thrice of their ages

and going to marry for the third and fourth time. Her family’s men consider it to be the best opportunity because Abdul Khalique is an honorable and strong fighter and have much accumulated wealth. “They are *strong* men, *able-bodied*, and will provide well for your girls, who are now young women and should not be kept idle at home (Chapter 16).” Here, Rahima, her mother and her aunt Khala Shaima seem helpless and think that deciding wedding affairs is a sole duty of the men of the family and their destiny is decided by them.

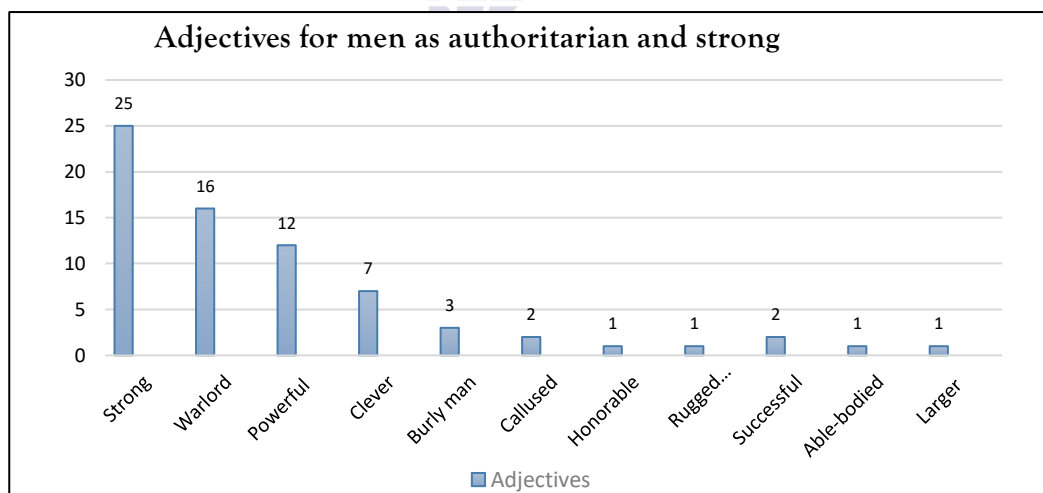


Figure 1

Men in the text are portrayed intensely commanding and controlling who control the women not only in verbal terms but physically. Women are not allowed to speak a word against them and cannot share their predicaments caused by their husbands even with their fellow women. “He’s a *powerful man* and don’t be part of any loose talk about him. Do you understand me? (Chapter 16)”. Not only women but

men too are kept hushed of any talk against the influential male of the society. The targeted lexical items and the language of the novel demonstrate that the male is dominant figure in Afghanistan who control the suppressed and subjugated female characters and force them to act according to their directives. Women are sexually assaulted by their men whose physical strength and coarse body is intolerable

and detested. As Rahima states, “I hated the feeling of it. I hated his breath, his whiskers, his *callused* feet (chapter 24)”, advocates her abhorrence for her husband but at the same time she fears to express it before anyone because the consequences she has to bear later.

Adjectives Characterizing Men as Violent and Ferocious

There are various adjectives employed by Hashimi (2014) in the novel that describes men as violent and barbaric in most of places in the text.

Table 2- Adjectives for men as ferocious and barbaric

Adjectives	Frequency
Angry	26
Worse	15
Wild	5
Loud	5
Rage	3
Stern	2
Vicious	1
Defending	2
Man of violence	1
Bullheaded	1
Terrible	1
Foulest	1
Heavy-handed	1
Total	64

The novel is a tale of men’s violent and cruel acts against women regardless of any age and situation. Rahima encounters brutal and fierce handling of her husband Abdul Khaliq who makes her answerable for the death of their son Jahangir. Knowing that she is a mother and her pain is no less than anyone else and perhaps she is the only one who suffers a heartache on her son’s death, Abdul Khaliq beats

her ferociously. His anger is evident through his actions. “He was *angry* still. His fingers gripped my arm so tight I thought my bones might snap. (Chapter 61)”. The male gender is represented as pitiless and angry who doesn’t think once before taking life of a woman even of the one who is not responsible for the damage incurred on man.

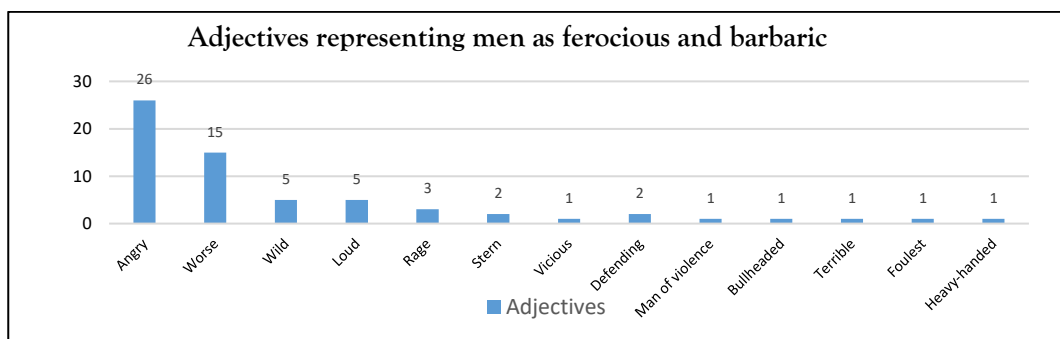


Figure 2

Rahima fears to take act against the wishes of not only her husband but of her father too who have confined their wives in the four walls of a house to bear the baby boys. Her father doesn't consider her mother Raisa any valuable and important in decision making. Thus, marries his three daughters forcefully without the consent of his wife and commands her to, "Bring her out!" My father's voice was *cold* and *loud* as he tried to assert control (Chapter 21)". His loud voice represents male's dominance and control. Rahima has experienced his husband furious and wild nature thus restricts herself to behave against his set values. "He must have been *wild* with *rage*. My husband was a *man of violence* (Chapter 63)". Halima's discourses reveal before the reader that she desires for an escape however feels threatened by his husband who is a man of violence. Women who initiate to get freedom from the torment and tortures of their men often

encounters severe punishment as evident from the text, "Another woman had escaped a *heavy-handed* husband, a husband who was having an affair with her younger sister (Chapter 69)", her husband sliced off her ear because he was a man of clumsy nature and quarrelsome. Hashimi's (2014) careful choice and extensive use of adjectives skillfully draws the picture of a typical vehement, cruel and vicious character of Afghanistan's men.

Adjectives Describing Women as Subdued and Downtrodden

The qualitative data analysis shows that the adjectives associated with female gender depict them as subdued and demoralized. Women are active recipient of psychological and physical violence done by the men.

Table 3- Adjectives describing women as subdued and downtrodden

Adjectives	Frequency
Nervous	55
Weak	20
Frightened	11
Bruised	9
Fearful	6
Scared	6
Insignificant	3
Speechless	2
Vulnerable	1
Battered	1
Unclean	1
Insolent	1
Counsel of asses	1
Bothersome	1
Humiliated	1
Total	119

The male characters in the novel subjugate women in every possible way and women become prey of severe anguish, humiliation and embracement. Male in Afghanistan are culturally promoted to showcase their toxic masculinity and they achieve it through repeated violence.

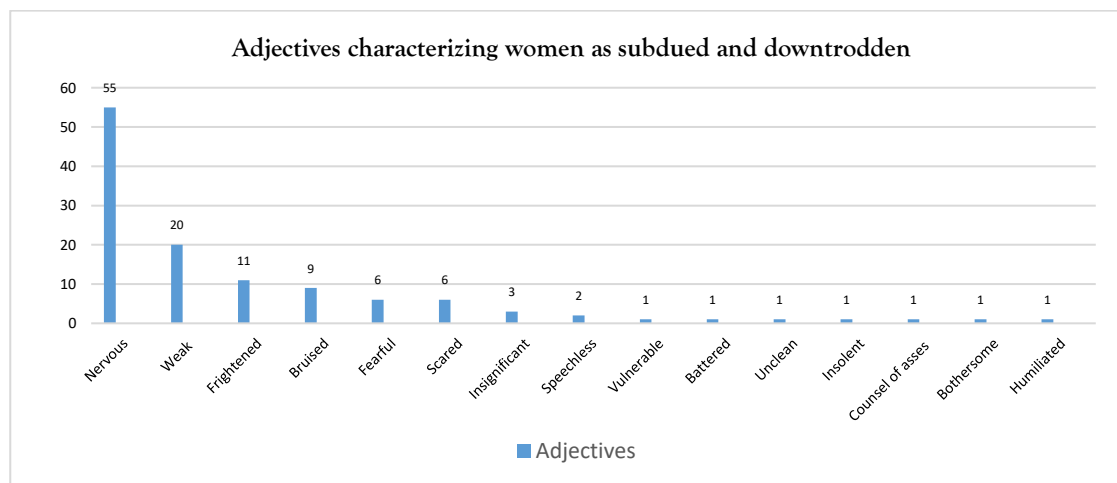


Figure 3

Adjectives like weak and vulnerable depict that women in such setting accept the violence as a norm. Most of the women characters do not resist because they consider it as being disobedient. Sexually assaulting a woman is the worst form of cruelty. Men want to be sexually satisfied without the consent of their wives. Rahima experiences the same torment because Abdul Khalique commands her to fulfil her wifely duties without her consensus which makes her invaluable and demoralized. Rahima utters her feelings in the words, “I was *humiliated*. I stood before him, *weak* and *vulnerable*, my arms doing their best to cover as much as they could” (Chapter 23). Female characters remain submissive, reliant on men and obedient since they consider it as paying respect to their men. There is a strong relationship between language and social constructs of gender, identity and duties. The language of the text treats man and woman differently. Women are represented as weak and oppressed and are treated as an object or commodity to be sold and bought against balancing their debts or taken as bride and slaves. Women’s physical strength defines their worth regardless of their beauty. Shekiba, the great-great grandmother of Rahima was traded for performing rigid and hard

duties while her face is described as insignificant and was always ignored because of her burnt face as evident from these lines, “Impressive. Well, no matter. For our purposes, her face is *insignificant. Insignificant?*” (chapter 09). The portrayal of Shekiba as a suitable object exposes gender objectification. Moreover, women like Murwarid who stand against men and put efforts to be rescued are often beaten brutally which is apparent from their physical bruised body parts. “Murwarid was only fifteen years old, she said, and had come to the shelter two weeks ago, *bruised* and desperate” (Chapter 50). Adjectives analysis portrays that women are characterized as impudent such as evident in the line when Shekiba’s grandmother calls her mother, “*Insolent* and *lazy!* Just like your mother!”

Adjectives Depicting Women as Sturdy and Enduring

Adjectives associated with female gender in the text depict female characters as formidable and enduring one as well. Language and discourse of chief female characters like Rahima and Shekiba point out at their strength and enduring nature.

Table-4 Adjectives Depicting women as Sturdy and Enduring

Adjectives	Frequency
Able	
Wild	46
Woman-man	10

Capable	6
Trouble	4
Thoughtful	4
Able-bodied	4
Callused	3
Pesky	2
Strong-backed	1
Laborious	1
Woman-guard	1
Stoic	1
literate	1
Strength of a mule	1
Total	86

On one hand woman characters are characterized as subjugated whereas on the other hand the adjectives associated with women prove their endurance capabilities and resilient nature. They have dual roles owing to their being obedient and passive wives. They comply all the commands and misogynistic directives of their husbands and fathers which demand considerable courage and persistency. Women are assigned those errands which require them to develop masculine courage and might. Therefore, they develop rough and hardened physical features because in Afghanistan, women are considered no greater than animals. The fact is apparent in the text in the lines, “She had the *strength of a mule* and the

face of one too (Chapter 06)”, when Shekiba was thought to be an animal, “Shekiba’s features grew coarser; her palms and soles were thick and *callused* (Chapter 02)”, thus she has developed rough and uneven features owing to the duties and obligations assigned to her. Rahima and Shekiba lived as Bacha Posh and woman-guard respectively to perform the duties which are primarily reserved for male gender. However, their temporary identities couldn’t protect them from falling prey of hardships. Their sturdy temperament is evident in these lines, “This was something to which Shekiba, the *woman-man*, had given a great deal of thought (Chapter 56)”.

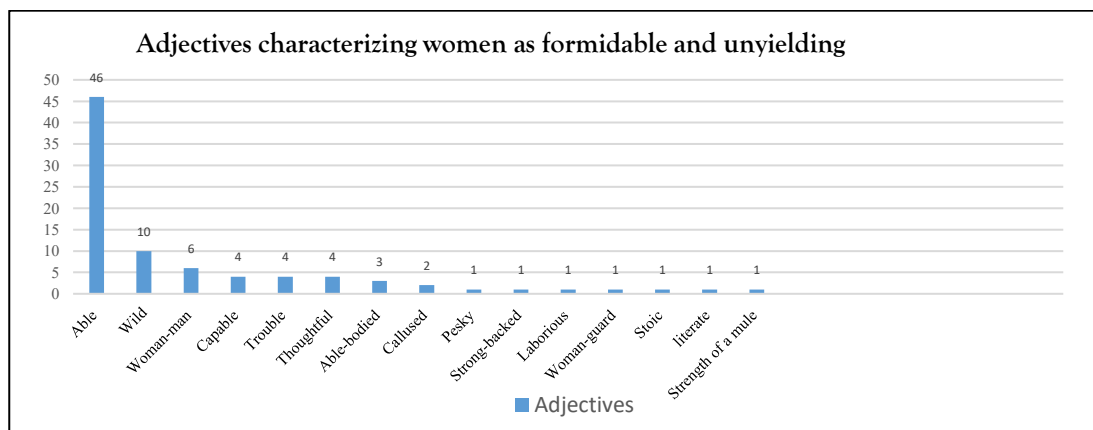


Figure 4

Nevertheless, these hardships and restrictions make them able and warrior which ultimately push them to initiate a fight and rejecting the fate as it is told to them. Hashimi (2014) has employed powerful adjectives which tend to be very encouraging for women to revisit their gender roles. This is pointed out in the text in following lines through adjectives like *literate*, *wild* and *able*. “It was only because I was *literate* that I was *able* to join Badriya in Kabul.” (Chapter 61). “Just don’t say anything to Rahima about this. She’s *wild* enough as it is.” (Chapter 45). It was only because I could hold a pen with purpose that I was *able* to be her assistant.” (Chapter 69). Adjectives employed by the author in these lines carefully determine that women possess the power to alter their destiny (*Naseeb*) by the qualities and strength they develop while being suppressed and subjugated.

Verbs Representing Male and Female Gender

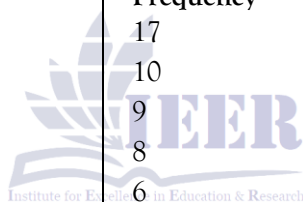
The quantitative analysis shows that there are three hundred eighty-eight (388) verbs are employed with respect to male and female gender representation in the novel, out of which 22% represent the male coercion, 32% adjectives define female gender as being oppressed while 46% of verbs depicts women’s strength and their desire to get an escape from the tyranny of patriarchal norms.

Verbs Depicting Men’s Malicious Actions

The qualitative data analysis reveals that author’s choice of verbs depicts that men’s actions are spiteful and responsible for tormenting and bullying the women. Verbs signifies various actions of male gender which target the women’s lives and compel them to live according to men’s desires.

Table-5 Verbs depicting Men’s spiteful and nasty actions

Verbs	Frequency
Killed	17
Instructed	10
Yelled	9
Summoned	8
Pulled off	6
Forced	5
Dragged	4
Beaten	4
thundered	4
Broken	3
Slapped	2
Grabbed	2
Permitted	2
Sliced off	2
Abused	2
Compelled	1
Raped	1
Disassemble	1
Blindfolded	1
Total	84



Verbs express the physical actions of a person. Hashimi (2014) uses specific verbs in connection with men’s actions. The verbs like *slapped*, *disassemble*, *grabbed* and *killed* point out men’s ferocious acts against women. The novel is set in a society which is dominated by patriarchal norms and such societies violent and toxic actions of male gender are accepted as normal and celebrated as a mark of manliness and

bravery. This is evident in the text from the following lines, “She didn’t stop until my father *slapped* her across the face.” (Chapter 21). Rahima’s father slapped her aunt before all the guests to restore his manliness. The language and verbs utilized in the story subjugates the women characters. They undergo the severe punishments and physical torture.

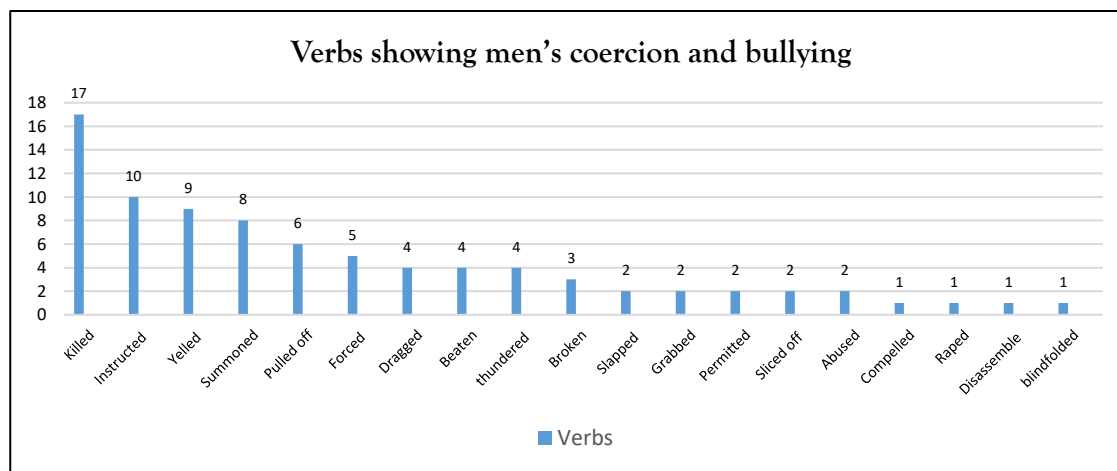


Figure 5

Torturing women and compelling them to act in accordance with their husbands’ commands is trivial and widely appreciated as presented in the text in these lines, “He was trying to take me apart, to *disassemble* the pieces that were hardly holding together as it was” and “He’d *thundered* into the room and *grabbed* me by the neck so hard I couldn’t breathe.” (Chapter 50). These verbs illustrate men’s influencing acts which don’t permit women to chase after their wishes and retaining their basic rights. Rahima was battered by Abdul Khalique when she mistakenly switched on television.

Another instance from the text makes the readers informed about men’s vehement acts when a girl whose husband tortures her offer her before other men, tries to run away. She fails to run caught by her husband who sliced off her ear and broke his nose and finally killed her. The verbs in the following lines from the text, “Her husband had *abused* her in every way possible. She had tried to run away once before but he caught her and *sliced off* one ear, *dragging* her home by the other” and ““My sister was *killed* by her

husband” (Chapter 50), vibrantly inform the reader about the men’s brutalities and wrongdoings. These words undermine women’s liberty and expresses dominated masculine authority and influence.

Verbs articulating women’s subjugation and confinement

Hashimi’s (2014) careful choice of verbs demonstrate that women are subjugated and confined. Men treat them as per their wishes. The novel presents a society in which sons are preferred over daughters and girls are considered burden and object for fulfilling sexual desire.

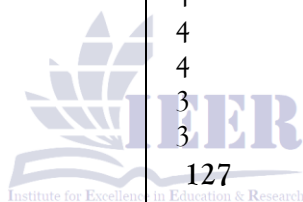
In this novel the author’s choice of verbs associated with women significantly show their inferiority. Verbs like begged, ached, screamed, crawled etc. point out the helplessness of women in a male dominating society. A society in which man is considered superior and he is allowed to do whatever favors him, regardless of what is wrong or right. Men act as a superior class who make women a puppet and accept the physical and psychological ferocity as a norm. This

is very prominent from these lines in the text, “He snatched again and jerked my head up. My scalp *screamed*. When I saw locks of hair on the floor around me. I tried to pull away, *begged* him to stop, but he was barely there. I *crawled* to the door, then

pulled myself to stand by the chair” (Chapter 61). It is shown from the textual evidence that men’s vicious actions are satisfied by beating women mercilessly and women have to remain quiet because in such contexts raising a voice against their men is regarded as disobedience.

Table-6 Verbs articulating women’s subjugation and confinement

Verbs	Frequency
Cried	20
Scream	18
Regret	14
Tightened	12
Punished	9
Burned	7
Trembling	7
Crawled	6
Drained	5
Begged	5
Yelped	6
Dreaded	4
Stumbled	4
Ached	4
Yanked	3
Haunted	3
Total	127



Women often tremble to echo their voices so they opt to keep their mouth sealed. “My sisters looked at me, already crying. Shahla was *trembling*” (Chapter 18). Men keeps their women confined in the four walls of a house under strict surveillance and it is their obligation to perform strict domestic duties without

any excuse. The instance is presented from this textual line. My back *ached* at night, partly from carrying Jahangir for nine months and partly from being bent over to wash clothes and scrub floors most days” (Chapter 35). Their health and physical fitness remained unnoticed.

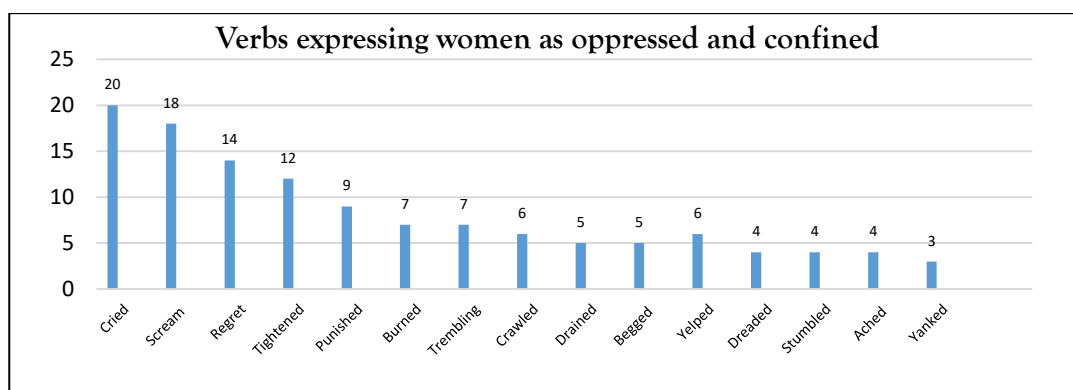


Figure 6

Verbs depicting women’s strength and will power

As earlier stated in the beginning of data analysis section that this is a story of transformation of women’s life and getting rid of their gender roles which are assigned to them without their agreement.

Various verbs and discourses of protagonist female characters inform the readers that women take risks and efforts to change their life. They develop strength and courage to meet the difficulties and glitches of life.

Table-7 Verbs depicting women’s strength and will power

Verbs	Frequency
Wanted	78
Decided	38
Escape	34
Argued	11
Convince	4
Complained	3
Snip	3
Spat	2
Dragged	2
Grunted	1
scoffed	1
Total	177

Having faced brutal circumstances around them, Rahima and Shekiba decide to write their own destiny. They plan to find an escape and escaping from the situations in which they are stuck is just a

nightmare. However, their will power and strong desire for freedom push them to take life threatening steps. They don’t step back and brashly initiate plans to find an escape.

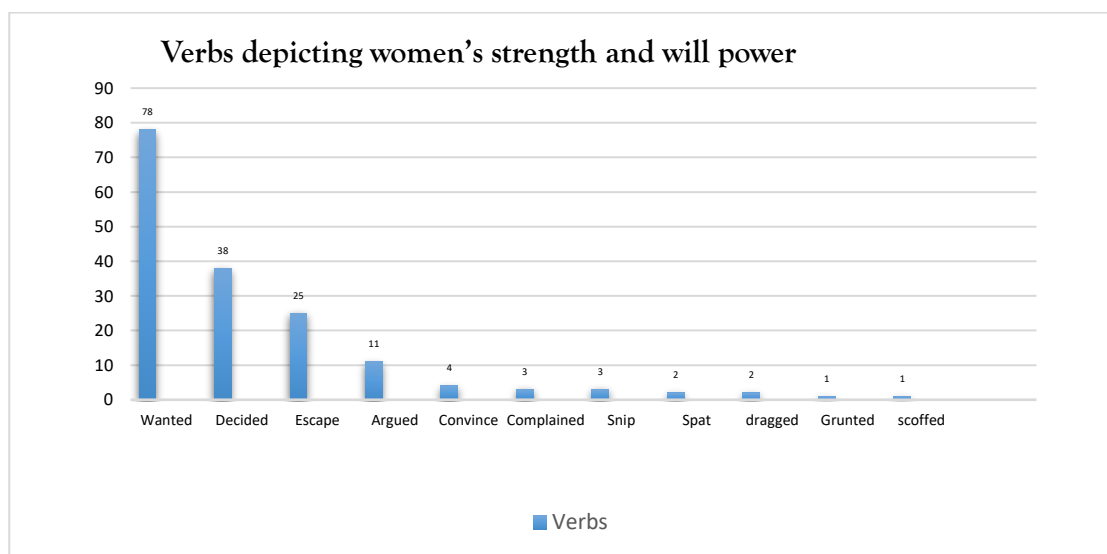
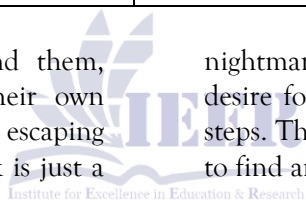


Figure 08

Their courage is apparent from the actions which are expressed from the verbs given in these lines, “An

escape. I need to find an *escape*” (Chapter 62), “*Snip, snip, snip*. It was badly uneven but better than what

Abdul Khaliq had done” (Chapter 67) and “She *wanted* to take the deed to the local hakim but she didn’t know if Azizullah would allow such an act” (Chapter 15). Halima snips her hairs and transform her identity into a boy where as Shekiba put efforts to claim for her piece of land. Both have shown their resilience knowing that such actions might risk their life. But their search for their identity is evident from these verbs. Brutal and harsh handling ingrain detest and abhorrence into them so their actions depict often become loathing towards the characters who influence their life. This antipathy is seen in these lines when Shekiba spat at her grandmother while leaving the house and Khala Shaima no more pay respect to so called religious men, “She lifted her burqa from her face and *spat* at her grandmother’s wrinkled feet” (Chapter 09) and “They also brought Haji-sahib, a mullah. Khala Shaima *scoffed* at the mention of his name” (Chapter 21). Shekiba’s will power and courage is worth noticing when she all alone buries her father body after his death by dragging him on a piece of cloth and digging land to intomb him. “She *dragged* her father’s body back to the house on a large cloth” (Chapter 2). Hashimi’s (2014) choice of verbs and language has vividly portrayed these women’s journey from being enslave to acquiring the freedom. All it needed courage, resilience and persistency which the author has expressed through apt selection of verbs.

Conclusion

The above corpus stylistic analysis of Hashimi’s novel, *The pearl that broke its shell* confirms Dale Spender’s theoretical framework of Male dominance. The study brings forth the carefully selected lexical items; adjectives and verbs to express the women’s subjugation and the men’s violence and oppressive treatment with the women in a particular Islamic fundamentalist society. The corpus of the text was processed through AntConc (4.2.0) software which brings adjectives and verbs on the surface. The fundings revealed that the author employs various adjectives and verbs which qualify the male and female gender representation and advocate their corresponding roles in a patriarchal society. In the light of above findings, it is revealed that Men in such

contexts as defined in the novel are more controlling, influential and demanding. Adjectives associated with male gender are divided into two categories. The adjectives placed in the first category reveals that men are powerful and exert control (Table-1) through violent means and their vicious and brutal temperament is marked by the adjectives listed in second category (Table-2). However, women according to the fundings are oppressed and subjugated (Table-3), however, they bear their hardships stoically with persistent strength. Their sturdy characteristics are evident from judiciously selected adjectives (Table-4) by the author.

Actions related with each gender are presented through verbs. These verbs characterize men’s oppressive acts (Table-5) because in the context of Afghanistan men hold control of everything including decision regarding women’s destiny. Their actions are more drastic, painful and hard towards women. On the other hand, women’s actions (Table-6) prove them weak, vulnerable and in a severe painful condition. Nevertheless, language and discourses of female characters reveal that they detest vicious activities of men and always try to find an escape by strengthening themselves psychologically. Women’s actions (Table-7) disclose their strong characteristics at many instances in the novel.

Therefore, it is concluded that author’s cautious selection of adjectives and verbs addresses the gender representation and gender issues in a comprehensive style. The significance of the current study rests in the extracted large bank of adjectives and verbs which will help teachers and students of literature to understand the concept of gender representation and characters with the help of linguistic and lexical items in a strict patriarchal context such as Afghanistan. Furthermore, it will establish a bridge between literature and corpus stylistics to understand themes and various other characteristics embedded in the literary texts thus opening innovative paths for future researchers.

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Appendix

The screenshot shows the AntConc interface with a search query for 'woman-man'. The results table is as follows:

File	Left Context	Hit	Right Context
1 The pearl that ...	blocked by the greens and they were unaware of the	woman-man	guard at their side, eavesdropping and flirting. "So
2 The pearl that ...	busy picking each other apart to pay attention to the	woman-man	guard with the melted face. Shekib no longer
3 The pearl that ...	standing there?" Shekiba's feet unfroze and she followed the	woman-man	into the room. There were three women sitting
4 The pearl that ...	you miss it?" This was something to which Shekiba, the	woman-man,	had given a great deal of thought. "It
5 The pearl that ...	something that told him she was more than just a	woman-man,	more than just a harem guard. Was that
6 The pearl that ...	a woman laugh so loudly, even if it was a	woman-man."	Did the frogs shake you up? Well, little

The screenshot shows the AntConc interface with a search query for 'callused'. The results table is as follows:

File	Left Context	Hit	Right Context
1 The pearl that ...	features grew coarser; her palms and soles were thick and	callused.	Every day, Ismail's back hunched more, his eyes
2 The pearl that ...	feeling of it. I hated his breath, his whiskers, his	callused	feet. But there would be no escape. He called
3 The pearl that ...	the books he kept. She would follow along as his	callused	finger traced the words. Her brothers occasionally brought home
4 The pearl that ...	of their eyes. She moved nimbly through the rows, her	callused	fingers weaving between the stems and yanking with just

AntConc

File Edit Settings Help

Target Corpus
Name: temp
Files: 1
Tokens: 140593

The pearl that broke its shell.txt

KWIC Plot File View Cluster N-Gram Collocate Word Keyword Wordcloud

Total Hits: 8 Page Size 100 hits 1 to 6 of 6 hits

File	Left Context	Hit	Right Context
1 The pearl that ...	wrong, a sin. She didn't stop until my father	slapped	her across the face. She reeled backward. Our guests
2 The pearl that ...	portentous face and took a nervous step back. Kaka Zalmi	slapped	her face with a mighty backhand. Even the deadened
3 The pearl that ...	behind in the washroom by accident again. Madar-jan had	slapped	her once for being so indecent. Still, she had
4 The pearl that ...	from the other side, slid across the seat, turned and	slapped	my face so hard I fell against the car
5 The pearl that ...	displeased. When I reached her she wasted no time and	slapped	my face. "What are you doing yelling and running
6 The pearl that ...	frustration got the best of him. He ranted, berated and	slapped.	He threw things, twice breaking windowpanes. The cost of

Search Query Words Case Regex Results Set All hits Context Size 10 token(s)

slapped Start Adv Search

Sort Options Sort to right Sort 1 1R Sort 2 2R Sort 3 3R Order by freq

Progress 100%

AntConc

File Edit Settings Help

Target Corpus
Name: temp
Files: 1
Tokens: 140593

The pearl that broke its shell.txt

KWIC Plot File View Cluster N-Gram Collocate Word Keyword Wordcloud

Total Hits: 4 Page Size 100 hits 1 to 4 of 4 hits

File	Left Context	Hit	Right Context
1 The pearl that ...	thigh loudly. "No, she is not for marriage. She is	able-bodied	and does the work of a man. Sometimes
2 The pearl that ...	t outgrown the possibility of marriage. I am young yet,	able-bodied	and strong. I hope the others have told
3 The pearl that ...	had always been father and son. Shekiba proved to be	able-bodied,	affirming her father's confidence in her ability
4 The pearl that ...	to take one of your daughters. They are strong men,	able-bodied,	and will provide well for your girls, who

Search Query Words Case Regex Results Set All hits Context Size 10 token(s)

able bodied Start Adv Search

Sort Options Sort to right Sort 1 1R Sort 2 2R Sort 3 3R Order by freq

Progress 100%

AntConc

File Edit Settings Help

Target Corpus
Name: temp
Files: 1
Tokens: 140593

The pearl that broke its shell.txt

KWIC Plot File View Cluster N-Gram Collocate Word Keyword Wordcloud

Total Hits: 27 Page Size 100 hits 1 to 25 of 25 hits

File	Left Context	Hit	Right Context
1 The pearl that ...	she said sounded familiar. You see that? Munwarid found her	escape.	I could hear Khala Shaima say. Why haven't
2 The pearl that ...	away, I knew I had to make a decision. An	escape.	I need to find an escape. I'd been
3 The pearl that ...	all the places I had read about." That was her	escape.	I realized. Where her body couldn't take her,
4 The pearl that ...	Listen, girls, when things are rough, people look for an	escape.	A way out. Sometimes it's hard to find
5 The pearl that ...	than she could have imagined. Somehow she had found an	escape	from a much worse naseeb. But something in Shekiba
6 The pearl that ...	Insolent and lazy! Just like your mother!" There was no	escape	from this woman. Shekiba eased herself to a sitting
7 The pearl that ...	his whiskers, his callused feet. But there would be no	escape.	He called for me when he pleased and made
8 The pearl that ...	with him. Jahangir was my salvation—his face became my	escape.	He gave me reason to rise in the morning
9 The pearl that ...	make a decision. An escape. I need to find an	escape.	I'd been to the cemetery where Jahangir was
10 The pearl that ...	where Ms. Franklin waited nervously to help me make my	escape.	I'm sorry, Khala-jan. I'm sorry I
11 The pearl that ...	folding and refolding a tablecloth. If she could manage to	escape	before company made it into the room, even better.
12 The pearl that ...	The ghost wanted to fight back, to run away and	escape,	but the men had meat on their bones. They
13 The pearl that ...	abuse. As Khala Shaima said, everyone needed a way to	escape.	CHAPTER 28 SHEKIB OVER THE NEXT FEW WEEKS, and with
14 The pearl that ...	as Khala Shaima had so often said, everyone needs an	escape.	CHAPTER 58 SHEKIBA SHEKIBA AND GULNAZ KEPT HOUSE TOGETHER and
15 The pearl that ...	pushed too far, kicked too hard, and there's no	escape	for them. Maybe she thought this was her only

Search Query Words Case Regex Results Set All hits Context Size 10 token(s)

escape Start Adv Search

Sort Options Sort to right Sort 1 1R Sort 2 2R Sort 3 3R Order by freq

Progress 100%

AntConc

File Edit Settings Help

Target Corpus
Name: temp
Files: 1
Tokens: 140593

The pearl that broke its shell.txt

KWIC Plot File View Cluster N-Gram Collocate Word Keyword Wordcloud

Total Hits: 10 Page Size 100 hits 1 to 10 of 10 hits

File	Left Context	Hit	Right Context
1 The pearl that ...	jarred him. He grew frustrated and drifted back to the	warlord.	Abdul Khaliq, he had fought under. Warlords were Afghanistan'
2 The pearl that ...	me on as a fourth wife, but he was a	warlord	and this was common practice for anyone, so she
3 The pearl that ...	who seemed to have any was Abdul Khaliq Khan, the	warlord.	He and his militia were able to gain control
4 The pearl that ...	peasant from the streets. It's Abdul Khaliq Khan, the	warlord.	His bodyguards sat in our living room with machine
5 The pearl that ...	had been killed. It was the Taliban. It was a	warlord.	It was the Americans. I didn't know what
6 The pearl that ...	our guests," he said, and went outside to meet the	warlord.	Madar-jan heard us and stood in the kitchen
7 The pearl that ...	school and enjoy the privileges that came with being a	warlord'	s son. And his father loved him in a
8 The pearl that ...	to fight back—and to defend his honor as a	warlord.	There were weeks of explosions, crying, burying, and then
9 The pearl that ...	their voices low and their comments brief. My husband, the	warlord,	was not one to express or show emotion, but
10 The pearl that ...	fact, it had put me right in front of this	warlord	who now demanded my hand in marriage. Barely a

Search Query Words Case Regex Results Set All hits Context Size 10 token(s)

warlord Start Adv Search

Sort Options Sort to right Sort 1 1R Sort 2 2R Sort 3 3R Order by freq

Progress 100%