

Holding and unholding the wound: Trauma and the feminine ethics of endurance in *Brick Lane*

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Abstract: In contemporary times, migration extends beyond its literal meaning of a change in location. It becomes a source of gender discrimination where the experiences of men and those of women differ significantly. Women endure not just the trauma of displacement but also resentment from a restrictive community abroad. This paper investigates Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003) as a literary record showing the ways in which trauma is inflicted upon migrant women and how they ultimately come out of its shackles. Drawing on trauma theory and feminist scholarship, this paper probes the insidious nature of trauma that consumes Nazneen, the protagonist of the novel. The analysis extends the discussion by showing how communal judgement and enforced domesticity fracture migrant women's identity. It traces how trauma manifests through cognitive processes like dreams and somatic experiences like a sudden collapse. Ultimately, the paper argues for a redemptive arc by discussing how *Brick Lane* portrays migrant women not as passive victims, but as resilient figures who achieve autonomy and healing through acts of resistance.

Keywords: diasporic subjectivity, migrant women, patriarchy, recovery, resistance, trauma

Introduction

The process of migration, besides being a matter of geographical relocation, is also a journey accompanied by rupture and reconstruction of the self. While trying to form a balance in the host country, experiences such as discrimination, violence, detention, or family separation cause migrants to encounter stress and trauma, which lead to a higher likelihood of developing mental health disorders, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and, in

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severe cases, suicidal behaviour (Bustamante et al. 2018, 220). These experiences, however, cannot be generalised, as migration is a gendered process where men and women experience it differently. Migrant women, compared to men, suffer more oppression, which makes their existence precarious (Kawar 2004, 73). Their bodies are subjected to constant scrutiny, and entrenched gender hierarchies intensify their marginalisation.

Writing in this context, Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003) centres on the trauma that migrant women experience. The novel shows migration as both a physical journey and a source of psychic wounds caused by confinement, exclusion and fragmented identity. In the host society, women endure the pressure of cultural scrutiny and patriarchal demands. This paper analyses *Brick Lane* as a record of how migrant women endure trauma, live with it, and search for agency in exile. A work of realist diasporic fiction, *Brick Lane* follows the life of its protagonist, Nazneen, as she moves from Gouripur in Bangladesh to Tower Hamlets in East London. Within this setting, Nazneen's experiences are shaped by familial authority, community surveillance, and intimate relationships, all of which contribute to the formation and persistence of her trauma.

The analysis draws on trauma theory, particularly Cathy Caruth's conceptualisation of trauma as a wound that resists immediate comprehension, alongside Judith Herman's model of recovery, which traces the gradual movement from helplessness toward the reconstruction of the self. Feminist trauma scholarship, especially the work of Laura Brown and Jennifer Griffiths, further informs the discussion by foregrounding the role of gender and power in shaping traumatic experience. Through close attention to Nazneen's psychological and bodily responses that are manifested in dreams, breakdowns, and moments of dissociation, the paper explores how trauma inhabits both mind and body. At the same time, it argues that *Brick Lane* resists a narrative of pure victimhood, presenting migrant women as figures capable of resistance, negotiation, and the reclamation of autonomy through small but significant acts of defiance.

Methodology and theoretical framework

This paper focuses on analysing the trauma strand in the novel *Brick Lane* by Monica Ali. Using a qualitative approach, the paper probes into the character of Nazneen to understand the everyday traumas of

migrant women, which often go unnoticed. The analysis does not, however, aim to generalise the experiences of all migrant women as traumatic. Instead, it uses Nazneen's story as a case study to explore how and why migration becomes traumatic for many migrant women.

Theoretically, this paper focuses on understanding trauma and aligns it with the feminist perspective. To ground this understanding, a critical consideration of the origins of the term 'trauma' is helpful. As Caruth (1996, 3) notes, the term 'trauma' originates from the Greek word meaning 'wound', initially designating a physical injury, but in later psychological usage, "the term trauma is understood as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind". This understanding of trauma becomes our starting point in tracing the mental wounds of the protagonist, Nazneen, who, after marrying Chanu, a man much older than her, moves to London with him, only to find her sense of self dissolving into invisibility. This psychic wounding is immediately visible in Nazneen's early experience of marriage and migration. The narrator captures her isolation with the observation:

In all her eighteen years, she could scarcely remember a moment that she had spent alone. Until she married. And came to London to sit day after day in this large box with the furniture to dust, and the muffled sound of private lives sealed away above, below and around her. (Ali 2004, 26)

Caruth (1996, 4) further suggests that trauma exceeds a simple pathology, describing it as "the story of a wound that cries out" and attempts to articulate a truth that remains partially inaccessible. This emphasis on the unarticulated dimensions of trauma helps explain Nazneen's contradictory responses to her circumstances. While she appears outwardly compliant within her marriage, she simultaneously engages in small, quiet acts of resistance like taking secret walks through London, deliberately spilling chillies into Chanu's food, and misplacing his papers.

The theory of trauma helps explain why Nazneen's unconscious so often revisits her sister, Hasina, left behind in Bangladesh, and her mother, who died young. As Caruth (1996, 3–4, 11, 59) notes, Freud understood trauma not as a wound that could simply heal, but as an overwhelming breach in the mind's experience of time and self, one that remains inaccessible to consciousness until it forces itself back in the form of nightmares, flashbacks, and repetitive intrusions. This revisiting of the past is embodied in Nazneen's recurrent dreams of Hasina and her mother, which show how her mind retraces what is

hard to express. Furthermore, trauma is frequently somatic alongside being psychological. Women are especially prone to manifesting trauma through bodily symptoms, reporting physical pain, exhaustion, and other somatic complaints more frequently than men (Banner 2016, 52). Nazneen's sudden bodily collapses and faintness can thus be read as the physical inscription of her trauma, her body expressing what her voice cannot articulate.

While Caruth gives a powerful way to understand trauma, her work does not look closely at how it affects women in particular. She does not place trauma within a feminist view or consider how patriarchy shapes women's experiences of suffering. To read *Brick Lane* through a feminist lens, it becomes necessary to turn to scholars such as Laura Brown and Jennifer Griffiths, who foreground the gendered nature of trauma.

Trauma theory is framed in a way that risks universalising experience while erasing the specifically gendered contexts in which women encounter psychic wounds. Traditional definitions of trauma as an event "outside the range of human experience" are shaped by male, dominant class experiences—war, natural disasters, violent accidents—while excluding the private, everyday, and repetitive traumas that structure women's lives, such as silencing, domestic subjugation, and personal violence (Brown 1991, 119–22). A feminist perspective, therefore, insists on recognising these insidious but normalised traumas as central to women's psychic suffering.

Building on this, Griffiths (2018, 181–84) shows that feminist thinkers link trauma to power. In her view, trauma is not only a private wound but also a tool through which dominance is maintained over women, reducing them to second-class citizens. Recovery, then, is more than just healing the mind; it is also an act of speaking out and resisting the social rules that demand women's compliance and silence. Situating *Brick Lane* within this feminist approach allows us to read Nazneen's rebellions not as isolated acts of survival but as ways of challenging the structures that seek to define and contain her.

Drawing on Judith Herman's work, this paper looks at the possibility of recovery from trauma. It assesses the three-stage model of recovery as proposed by Herman, which includes establishing a safe zone, remembering and mourning by talking about the trauma, and reconstructing the self. This framework allows for the possibility of redemption and explains Nazneen's evolution from a dependent and traumatised migrant to an independent and liberated woman.

The gendered genesis of trauma

From the very beginning of Nazneen's life, a shadow of trauma follows her. She arrives prematurely, much to her father's disappointment, at the birth of a girl. Her fatalist mother refuses any medical help for the baby and leaves Nazneen to divine will. This primal act of neglect and abandonment becomes Nazneen's first psychic wound, foreshadowing the gendered oppression that would shape her existence ahead. The mantra impressed upon her —“What could not be changed must be borne. And, since nothing could be changed, everything had to be borne” (Ali 2004, 18)—becomes the template through which she endures the traumas of her later life. Nazneen's physical and mental development is shadowed from the beginning by this act of being “left to her fate” by her own family (Nasrin 2020, 86). Trauma here is not only an individual wound but also a structural one, rooted in patriarchal devaluation and maternal abandonment, which continues to reverberate throughout Nazneen's story. Read through Brown's (1991, 119–22) feminist lens, Nazneen's abandonment exemplifies how everyday normalised acts of neglect toward women and girls must also be recognised as trauma, even if they fall outside the dominant male-defined categories of catastrophic events.

Nazneen's first psychic wound begins with her birth, and later deepens through the experience of migration. Married to Chanu at the fragile age of eighteen, she is uprooted from her familiar world in Bangladesh and placed within the unfamiliar landscape of London's Tower Hamlets. Her migration to London comes as an outcome of patriarchal decision-making, where her father decides upon the marriage without considering her opinion. Migration here operates within a gendered framework, where men are positioned as active subjects while women are reduced to passive objects whose lives are directed by others. Nazneen, after migrating, finds herself alone in a small apartment, cut off from the familiar culture she grew up in and from the community ties that once gave her a sense of belonging. The narrator captures her condition with stark clarity: “She looked and she saw that she was trapped inside this body, inside this room, inside this flat, inside this concrete slab of entombed humanity” (Ali 2004, 78). Migration here becomes a wound that unsettles her identity and compounds her earlier experience of abandonment. The invisibility and silence she faces in London test her endurance, forcing her to bear the

unbearable. In this new setting, her psychic pain deepens due to loneliness, showing that trauma is not only about the first wound but also about how it returns and repeats itself (Caruth 1996, 4). In Nazneen's story, migration reactivates her earlier wounds and reinforces a cycle of emotional vulnerability that is distinctly gendered. Both her husband, Chanu, and her illicit lover, Karim, describe Nazneen as "unspoiled" (Ali 2004, 25) or "the real thing" (Ibid, 387), reducing her identity to a narrow idea of traditional femininity. For them, a woman's worth lies in her passivity and domestic usefulness. As Chanu remarks, "What's more, she is a good worker. Cleaning and cooking and all that" (Ibid, 25). Such remarks reflect how patriarchal cultures render women's identity static, valuing them only as compliant caretakers rather than evolving individuals. Many South Asian women, especially those who have limited education and are poor, are deprived of a real sense of identity and independence. Their existence revolves around their household duties and conventional social expectations (Akter and Popy 2025, 85).

This burden grows heavier when a woman also becomes a migrant. In diasporic communities, women are often turned into symbols of cultural authenticity and judged for how they dress, speak, or behave. Das Dasgupta states:

The main casualty of our communities' efforts to reformulate homogeneous 'authenticity' are women. In their efforts to immortalize the traditional 'culture', South Asians have placed an inordinate burden on community women. (Das Dasgupta 1998, 5)

Nazneen's suffering cannot be read only as a matter of personal distress but as a trauma constructed by cultural and communal expectations. Her identity as a migrant woman is disciplined by the demand to remain unspoiled, modest, and the custodian of tradition—roles imposed upon her by her husband, her lover, and the wider diasporic community. In this sense, her trauma reflects what Wertheimer and Casper described as the framing of trauma:

Not only as a condition of broken bodies and shattered minds, but also and primarily as a cultural object. ...a product of history and politics subject to reinterpretation, contestation, and intervention. (Wertheimer and Casper 2016, 3)

Nazneen's psychic wounds are therefore inseparable from the political and cultural history of migration and patriarchy that defines her life, making her trauma both individual and collective.

Furthermore, the disciplining of Nazneen's ambitions demonstrates how trauma is extended through patriarchal authority within the migrant household. When she expresses her wish to attend college and learn English, Chanu responds, "You're going to be a mother. ...Will that not keep you busy enough?" (Ali 2004, 79) His dismissal reduces her existence to the role of reproduction, denying her any scope for self-advancement and revealing how migrant women's aspirations to assimilate are frequently curtailed under the guise of duty. Later, his remark "Why should you go out? ...I will look like a fool." (Ibid, 47) shows how her freedom, even to move, is subject to a man's permission. His tendency to regulate Nazneen's behaviour stems from his desire to preserve Bangladeshi customs, and, for him, his wife becomes a cultural object rather than a person. He restricts Nazneen from socialising on her own terms, leading to a gradual erosion of her sense of self. Under such conditions, Nazneen's trauma is intensified not only by her dislocation but also because of the mechanisms of patriarchy that regulate a woman's autonomy and confine her to domesticity. As Gerasimos Kakoliris (2025, 61) argues, gender identity is produced through the reiteration of acts that dictate what a man or a woman is permitted to do. Nazneen's submission thus reflects the performative nature of gender, where behaviour, choice, and even aspirations are scripted by social norms rather than personal will.

Griffiths (2018, 181) observes that trauma can act as a tool of dominance that is maintained through hierarchies where men are given precedence over women and women are thrust into being recognised as secondary to men. This gendered subordination, where trauma is systematically produced and reproduced to sustain patriarchy, can be understood as a part of the wider structure of gendered subordination, which explains the passivity and silencing of women like Nazneen.

The most pervasive post-traumatic disorders are not those of men in war but of women in civilian life, where violence is a routine part of their domestic existence. The cultural sanctity of privacy conceals these conditions, and attempts to speak out often invite ridicule. This enforced silence, born of fear and shame, permits continuing exploitation, showing how patriarchal control thrives in the very sphere that is imagined as intimate and protective (Herman 1992, 28).

Karim similarly works within a patriarchal structure to exacerbate Nazneen's trauma. The trauma associated here also stems from Nazneen's guilt of being involved in an illicit relationship. Nazneen's relationship with Karim, often read as a break from the restrictions of her marriage, does not ultimately free her from systems of domination. Instead, it situates her within another pattern of control, where her emotional and bodily choices remain constrained. During a moment of physical weakness —“sick” and “shaking”—she does not seek intimacy, yet acquiesces when Karim instructs her to “get undressed” (Ali 2004, 290). This episode highlights the power dynamics of an apparently transgressive relationship that ultimately turns coercive. For women like Nazneen, trauma is not tied to a single structure of oppression, but is perpetuated through repeated cycles of gendered control. The wound is not public, like war, but private, secret, lodged in the realm of intimacy, precisely the kind of experience that Brown urges us to acknowledge when she writes:

A feminist analysis calls us to look beyond the public and male experiences of trauma to the private, secret experiences that women encounter in the interpersonal realm and at the hands of those we love and depend upon. (Brown 1991, 122)

Mrs Islam, an authoritative older migrant woman, also contributes to the conditions that produce psychological distress among migrant women. She exerts her panoptic presence over all women in her community. She keeps a vigilant eye on everyone, asserting control by extracting personal information and using it as a weapon through gossip. The narrator says, “Mrs Islam knew everything about everybody. She had been in London for nearly thirty years and if you were a Bangladeshi here, what could you keep secret from her?” (Ali 2004, 30) This remark reflects the omniscient presence of Mrs Islam within the community. By knowing everything about everybody, she exerts control by making secrecy impossible, thus amplifying the vulnerability of women around her. For migrant women like Nazneen, this panoptic gaze translates into a form of psychological trauma, as even the most intimate details of their lives could be weaponised through gossip or public shaming.

Jorina, another Bangladeshi migrant woman living in Tower Hamlets, begins working because her husband's wages are insufficient to support the family. Her necessity is cast by Mrs Islam as cultural betrayal. She claims, “Mixing with all sorts: Turkish, English, Jewish.

All sorts...if you mix with all these people...you have to give up your culture to accept theirs” (Ibid, 31). Here, she constructs cultural purity as fragile and makes it women’s responsibility to guard it. Any step away from what is considered normal is seen as betrayal, creating a sense of fear that makes women monitor their own behaviour. Mrs Islam’s remark that Jorina has “brought shame on them all” (Ibid, 99), for working outside the home, reveals how women are always held responsible, even when their actions are motivated by need. Here, rather than overt violence, it is the mechanism of rumours, exclusion, and shame that is used to inflict trauma. These incidents show how migrant women bear the burden of a double-edged sword. They are expected to survive in a foreign land, assimilate according to its needs, and at the same time carry the weight of cultural preservation. Shame and fear, often confused with obligation, govern their lives.

Dreams and the bodily manifestation of trauma

Trauma does not end when the event causing it ends. It resurfaces through nightmares, flashbacks, and hallucinations (Kumari and Banerjee 2024, 123). Traumatic dreams, unlike neurotic ones, return the event literally rather than symbolically, showing the mind’s inability to give it meaning. Caruth (1996, 59–63) notes that Freud saw this compulsive repetition as the core of trauma, later theorised as the death drive. Modern trauma theory confirms that such dreams and flashbacks are themselves retraumatising, disrupting the brain and sometimes driving survivors to despair even after safety. Thus, the traumatic dream exemplifies how trauma inscribes itself through destructive cycles of repetition rather than healing memory. For many migrants, dreams become a way in which the trauma of exile replays itself, trapping the mind in memories, dislocation, and distance. In *Brick Lane*, Nazneen’s dreams often carry her back to Gouripur, where she finds herself with her mother or sister. These dreams hold her to the past, making it harder for her to assimilate.

In one such nightmare, she sees Hasina “in the garment factory, ironing collars in place...ironing her own hand...ironing her face” (Ali 2004, 117). The violent imagery embodies trauma’s literal return. Nazneen’s fear for her sister’s exploitation emerges as self-destruction, where labour effaces body and identity. The nightmare reflects how trauma and displacement collapse care, guilt, and helplessness into haunting repetitions that Nazneen cannot escape.

Nazneen's nightmare of Gouripur, in which her mother plaits her hair before accusing her of killing her son, shows what Caruth (1996, 3–4) calls trauma's belated knowledge, an experience "too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor". Although Raqib, Nazneen's son, dies from illness, Nazneen cannot let go of the feeling that she is to blame. The fault, in her belief, is that she trusted doctors rather than letting fate handle things, as her mother had always taught her. This guilt resurfaces in her dream when Amma's voice accuses her aloud, saying, "Say it out loud, I killed my son" (Ali 2004, 434). Breathlessness and guilt are mixed in the dream as it presses against her chest. It reveals how her grief is connected to both the death of her child and the fatalism she was raised with. The dream turns into a place where her loss and her exile meet again, circling back like a wound that would not heal. Cormack (2006, 716) argues that when Nazneen sees her mother in dreams or visions, the novel briefly departs from everyday realism. These apparitions give the text a gothic or uncanny quality, as if the realist surface is being disturbed. But importantly, the novel does not fully abandon realism; the dreamlike or ghostly scene scratches its surface without breaking it.

Beyond the subconscious process of dreaming, trauma also manifests itself through physical symptoms. Women's embodiment of trauma may not only be discursive but also literal, with women more likely to report somatic symptoms (Banner 2016, 52). This aligns with Herman's (1992, 86) views that trauma is carried not just in memory but in the body, surfacing through nervous exhaustion, fainting, and psychosomatic distress. Nazneen's sudden collapse dramatises this process. Sleepless, restless, and plagued by indistinct clamouring thoughts, she moves compulsively through household tasks, as if trying to master their turmoil through repetitive bodily action. Her vomiting over the freshly washed clothes externalises the way psychic horror forces itself into the body, echoing Herman's (Ibid, 86) insight that survivors "perceive their bodies as having turned against them". The hallucinatory presence of Amma, with her admonitions to "endure" (Ali 2004, 325), further underscores the intergenerational weight of female suffering that Nazneen literally carries in her body.

Her collapse onto the kitchen floor, "eyes open and unseeing" (Ibid), belongs to the repertoire of psycho-physiological responses to overwhelming trauma: fainting, dissociation, and physical shutdown.

For days, she “clung to her collapse” (Ibid, 326), descending into a state that can be described as a dead space beyond the body, where sensations fragment like a smashed mirror.

This episode is not just a narrative flashpoint, but it also reveals trauma’s dual nature as both psychic and somatic. When Nazneen cannot fully understand or express inner conflict, her body reacts, carrying what she cannot put into words.

Recovery and resistance in the aftermath of trauma

Oftentimes, trauma arrives so suddenly that a person cannot fully understand it or respond to it. While trauma has many effects, there is also the possibility of resistance that grows alongside it. The trauma associated with migration can gradually build resilience and reshape identity, creating space for a better life (Lijtmaer 2022, 306). For Nazneen, migration also gradually becomes a marker of agency, allowing for adaptability. Through her, we witness how healing follows trauma. To understand this better, we examine Herman’s (1992, 155–156) work, which explains the process of recovery from a psychic wound. Her model unfolds in three stages. The first stage is safety, where the survivor must feel safe in their own body, in the place they live, and with the people around them. The second stage is remembrance and mourning, which helps the survivor realise that the trauma is a part of life, not a definition of it. The final stage is reconnection, which involves building healthy networks around oneself. Nazneen, in her journey towards resistance, moves through all these stages and emerges with greater confidence.

The first stage of Nazneen’s recovery begins when she leaves her apartment without informing Chanu and wanders the streets of London with no clear direction or aim. She manages to find her way back home, making her feel independent after years of depending on others. What could have been a moment of fear becomes one of awakening as the narrator says, “Anything is possible. She wanted to shout it” (Ali 2004, 64). This marks her growing control over her surroundings and her own body, allowing her to feel a sense of safety for the first time. Khan and Umar-Ud-Din (2025, 691) note that when the sense of safety returns, the person can gradually face and accept the memories that were once too painful to handle.

Similarly, she keeps building a sense of safety through her sewing work, which makes her independent, both financially and emotionally. The money she earns lets her make her own choices. She helps Hasina

and supports Karim financially. These small decisions show her growing safety and control, and remind us that healing often happens through quiet, everyday acts rather than dramatic rebellion.

The second stage of recovery, as Herman describes, is remembrance and mourning. She writes that “the descent into mourning is at once the most necessary and the most dreaded task of this stage of recovery” (Herman 1992, 188). This phase finds a clear presence in Nazneen’s journey of awakening, where long-buried memories and feelings begin to rise, forcing her to face the confusion inside her that reflects the disorder around her. The narrator notes,

When the dreams would not let her go, would not let her go back under, she began to come out of her delirium. ...She took in the disorder of the bedroom, trays and plates stacked on the dressing table, clothes hanging over the wardrobe door, tissues, books and newspapers coating the floor... (Ali 2004, 326–27)

Nazneen’s return from delirium here is not just about the body healing; it is the moment she starts to move through grief towards self-recognition. By confronting the chaos around her, she begins to recognise and negotiate with her trauma. For Herman, this stage is the real work of mourning, where the survivor gradually regains a sense of balance.

In the final stage of recovery, which Herman (1992, 197) calls reconnection, the survivor begins to face her own experience of victimisation and the mark it has left on her life. With this recognition comes a gradual effort to weave the past into a new sense of self and to use it as ground for growth. At this point, the survivor works to reclaim the power, set boundaries that protect her from further harm, and rebuild relationships based on trust and respect. Small acts of defiance throughout the novel set Nazneen up for this moment, when she can finally take back her life and return to the world with a more stable sense of who she is. This change is indicated by her refusal to rely on Karim or Chanu. She liberates herself from the systems that formerly influenced her life by rejecting both emotional reliance and patriarchal control. When she tells Karim, “I wasn’t me and you weren’t you. From the very beginning to the very end, we didn’t see things. What we did—we made each other up” (Ali 2004, 456–57), it becomes a moment of clarity, a recognition that illusion has given way to reality. Further, when Chanu announces that the family will return to Bangladesh, Nazneen has already transformed from the hesitant young

bride she once was, and she asserts, “I can’t go with you” (Ibid, 480). Her words are not an act of defiance but a firm declaration of choice.

Gradually, Nazneen’s recovery grows beyond the personal and becomes a shared experience. Alongside Razia, another migrant from Bangladesh, she turns sewing into both a livelihood and a bond of friendship. This shared work reflects what Herman (1992, 155) describes as the survivor’s “reconnection with ordinary life”, where healing takes shape through community, creativity, and purposeful action. Financial independence releases Nazneen from the shackles of patriarchal control, and she gains the space where she can live on her own terms. Her growing confidence is evident in moments where she skates in a sari and dances to Western music, gestures that signify a state of balance and contentment (Ali 2004, 491–94). By the end of the novel, her life is no longer governed by control or obedience but by choice, reflecting Herman’s idea of recovery as the restoration of autonomy, connection and inner calm. True recovery, then, lies in reclaiming one’s agency rather than remaining bound to the wounds of the past (Schwab 2010, 105).

Conclusion

In *Brick Lane*, Ali explores a space of partial understanding and delayed awareness. Through Nazneen’s journey from oppression to emancipation, the novel presents trauma as both hidden and slowly uncovered, before it starts healing. The story becomes a psychoanalytic witnessing, where what has been repressed finds its way back through dreams, memories, and bodily pain until it can finally be faced and reshaped.

We see trauma becoming a trap that confines people and limits their agency. At the same time, we also witness how healing begins when traumatic memories are acknowledged. Much of Nazneen’s life is marked by the repetition of haunting memories of her mother and son, and also by the separation from her sister. Her days unfold in cycles of endurance, reflecting the way trauma confines survivors within familiar patterns of pain. However, Nazneen releases herself from the captivity of her mind. She begins to confront her memories and accepts her past as a part of her life rather than allowing it to rule her entirely.

The novel *Brick Lane* follows a typical story pattern often found in fiction, a redemptive arc, where the main character goes through suffering but ultimately finds healing or freedom. This pattern can make the story feel more hopeful or resolved than real life usually is,

since real experiences of trauma or migration rarely end so neatly. However, the novel, as a genre, is uniquely capable of revealing the truth of personal, everyday life and of how people actually think, feel, and act. It is a genre that comes closest to representing reality. The novel explores the daily realities of ordinary people. To conclude, this analysis shows that *Brick Lane* moves beyond the boundaries of fiction and becomes a realistic psychological map of trauma and recovery. Ali uses the details of daily life to reveal how migrant women are traumatised by both patriarchy and communal expectations. These wounds are often carried in silence and hidden within routine. Even within these limits, women find ways to endure. The strength of *Brick Lane* lies in its portrayal of trauma not as dramatic, but lived often through repetitive patterns. Nazneen's transformation allows Ali to recast the narrative as one of resilience, showing that healing involves living beyond pain rather than suppressing it.

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