

Silencing in Urdu Resistance Literature: A Postcolonial Study of the Short Fiction Written between 1977 and 1988

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Abstract : Literary responses to various forms of local and international oppressions can be found in all major Pakistani languages and their academic study is crucial to understand the local creative and critical mind. However, most of them have not yet received as much of scholarly attention as has the Anglophone Pakistani literature of this kind. One of the reasons for this indifference is that resistance literature is usually mistaken as incidental work produced in haste and thus not a serious subject or high art worthy of being considered critically. Literary criticism in the English language did not include this Urdu resistance literature because most of it has not yet been translated into English, and scholars proficient in Urdu and producing critical works in English have contented themselves to the critique of a few prominent writers of Urdu, for instance, Faiz Ahmad Faiz and Saadat Hassan Manto. While there is no denying the fact that they hold a significant position in Pakistani literature, the tradition of resistance is in no way limited to them. Bringing to the limelight other resistant voices from Urdu fiction, this qualitative research employs Barbara Harlow's framework of postcolonial resistance literature to explore the strategy of silencing as used in twenty three short stories written between the military regime of Zia ul Haq (1977-1988) in Pakistan. The study shows that the writers of these Urdu short stories have not only recorded various tools of silencing employed by the oppressors but also represented various kinds of silences that were observed in the society. Moreover, they have also depicted how this silencing was dealt with by the writers and intellectual of the time. Thus, in the light of the analysis, it can be safely said that Urdu resistance literature notices, recounts, and theorizes silencing and silences within the local sociopolitical condition.

Keywords : resistance literature, Urdu short fiction, Zia ul Haq, postcolonialism

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