



Reclaimed History, Artistic Exile and the Subaltern Artist in Anuradha Roy's *The Earthspinner*

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ABSTRACT: This paper examines the intersections of trauma, exile, and subalternity in Anuradha Roy's *The Earthspinner*, situating the narrative within broader postcolonial debates on historical violence and marginalised memory. Drawing on trauma theory, particularly Judith Herman's and Gabriele Schwab's work on the dialectics of articulation and silence, the paper explores how Roy's fiction grapples with the paradox of narrating experiences that resist representation. Through the figure of Elango, a marginalised potter whose artistic expression becomes both a mode of resistance and a catalyst for persecution, the study interrogates the ways in which creative practices function as repositories of suppressed histories. Elango's artistic exile illuminates how the subaltern subject navigates fractured identities, inherited wounds, and systemic erasure. By reading pottery as an embodied form of testimony, the paper argues that Roy reimagines history through alternative aesthetic and affective languages, foregrounding the possibilities and limits of recovering agency within oppressive socio-political structures.

KEYWORDS: exile; history; subaltern; artist; postcolonial

Introduction: This paper critically examines the entangled legacies of colonial violence, forced migrations, and cultural dislocations that engender postcolonial trauma, with a particular focus on the subaltern subject—the oppressed, marginalised, and dispossessed. It explores how histories of domination and exile continue to shape the realities of subaltern lives, foregrounding the silenced narratives that define their traumatic legacy. In her novels, Anuradha Roy depicts characters whose lives are shaped by the complex interplay between personal and historical memory. These characters struggle to recover their fractured pasts and make sense of their experiences by weaving them into coherent narratives. However, their efforts are often hindered by the lingering effects of trauma, loss, and historical erasure. Through these portrayals, Roy not only highlights the fragile and selective nature of memory but also questions whether a stable, unified sense of self can ever truly emerge from histories marked by violence and displacement. Through her subaltern characters, Anuradha Roy interrogates the challenges of representing traumatic histories. Her novels like *An Atlas of Impossible Longing*, *The Earthspinner* and *Sleeping on Jupiter* navigate a fundamental tension: while the urge to narrate trauma is powerful and often necessary, the reliance on coherent, linear storytelling risks distorting or misrepresenting the chaotic, non-linear nature of traumatic experience. Roy's narratives foreground this contradiction—depicting trauma as both a force that demands articulation and one that resists containment within conventional narrative structures. Moreover, trauma in Roy's fiction is intricately linked to exile and displacement, severing individuals from their communities, histories, and their sense of belonging. This

dislocation renders the subaltern subject doubly marginalised—both as a bearer of unacknowledged trauma and as the ‘Other’ excluded from dominant historical narratives. Caught in this condition of dispossession, the subaltern is often trapped in a recurring cycle of trauma, where the possibilities of healing, agency, or narrative resolution become increasingly elusive. This chapter critically examines how Roy employs trauma as a narrative strategy to expose the crisis of historical representation and to engage with the ethical dilemma of voicing the silenced and the marginalised.

A Framework of Trauma, History and Exile

Judith Herman, in *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence*, asserts that “the conflict between the will to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud is the central dialectic of psychological trauma” (1). This tension lies at the heart of historical trauma, particularly when it is marked by exile and marginalisation. The traumatic experience, often too devastating to be fully conveyed through language, creates a rupture in historical continuity and identity. And yet, paradoxically, it demands articulation—through memory, narrative, or testimony—as a means of bearing witness and reclaiming agency. In this context, trauma becomes both a silenced void and a disruptive force that insists on being acknowledged. The dialectic Herman describes resonates deeply with the struggles of displaced and subaltern subjects, whose histories have been systematically erased or distorted, and whose narratives, once reclaimed, challenge dominant historiographies. Building on this, Herman further contends that “psychological trauma is an affliction of the powerless” (33), emphasising how trauma originates in moments of profound helplessness and violation. The traumatised subject, often silenced by systemic structures of oppression or displacement, is thrust into a state where agency is stripped away. This loss of control—whether through exile, political violence, or social marginalisation—becomes central to the traumatic condition. In the postcolonial context, such powerlessness is frequently compounded by historical erasure, where the voices of the oppressed are rendered invisible, and their suffering remains unacknowledged within dominant historical narratives.

Extending Herman’s dialectic of trauma, Gabriele Schwab, in her essay “Writing against Memory and Forgetting” from *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma* explores the paradoxical nature of traumatic narration—the simultaneous compulsion to speak and the impossibility of fully articulating the experience. Schwab argues that trauma narratives often operate through silences, ellipses, and disruptions that mark the limits of representation. For her, the process of healing necessitates telling and witnessing, yet what is told frequently arrives in fractured, indirect forms. She introduces the concept of “haunted language,” wherein language itself becomes a site of spectral memory. Such language, she contends, “uses a gap inside speech to point to silenced history,” drawing attention to what remains unspoken through fragmentation, detour, and deformation (108). In this framework, trauma is not only embedded in what is said, but more profoundly in what cannot be said. For subjects displaced by exile or marginalised by history, their narratives often carry the weight of this unspeakability—where the very failure of language becomes a testimony to the violence endured. The traces of trauma linger in these haunted expressions, offering a mode of resistance against historical erasure.

This tension between speech and silence, between the need to testify and the limits of language, finds a parallel in the experience of exile—both geographical and psychological. To live in exile is to inhabit a liminal space marked by longing, dislocation, and estrangement. It is a condition defined by a persistent sense of nostalgia, an unfulfilled yearning for a past or a home that remains inaccessible. Edward Said, in his seminal essay “Reflections on Exile,” describes exile as “the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted” (173). He critiques the romanticised portrayals of exile in literature, asserting that they obscure the deep psychic wounds and the enduring disconnection it entails. While Said’s framing is rooted in physical dislocation, his insight can be extended to the notion of psychic exile—a condition in which the self becomes alienated not only from place but also from its own sense of identity and belonging. Here, home is not a physical location but a state of mind that can no longer be reclaimed. For many traumatised individuals, especially those on the margins of history, exile becomes both a literal and metaphorical condition: a form of internal displacement where the self remains haunted by a past that cannot be returned to, and estranged from a present that cannot offer restoration.

However, exile, while marked by dislocation and loss, also creates a critical vantage point from which to interrogate dominant narratives and socio-political structures. The experience of exile compels individuals to cling to their difference, which in turn becomes a source of insight and resistance. As Richard L. Ashley and R.B.J. Walker assert in their article *Speaking the Language of Exile*, the dissonance and struggle intrinsic to exile serve as tools for resistance, enabling exiled subjects to articulate “new, often distinct ... but always dissident ways of thinking” (263). They further argue that “ambiguity, uncertainty, and the ceaseless questioning of identity—these are resources of the exiles” (263). Thus, the very features that make exile a traumatic and destabilising condition—fractured identities, cultural estrangement, and a refusal or inability to belong—are also the conditions that allow for a reimagining of the self and the world.

Although Said discouraged labeling exile as a positive state of being, since loss is inherent in uprootedness, he suggests that exile can function as a positive force whereby an individual who has lost a particular land can begin to claim all lands and define his/her identity with respect to the international world (186). Said contends that perceiving the entire world as strange provides an individual with added perspective; he writes: “Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions” (186).

This paper engages with characters whose traumatic exiles do not merely silence or marginalise them, but instead prompt them to resist hegemonic structures and inscribe new modes of meaning. Roy’s novels dramatise the intricate relationship between trauma, exile, and the fractured self through characters like Elango (*The Earthspinner*), Jugnu (*Sleeping on Jupiter*), and Mukunda and Nirmal (*An Atlas of Impossible Longing*). Each of these subaltern figures endures a form of displacement—geographical, social, or psychic—that severs them from a stable sense of home and belonging. Their experiences echo Said’s notion of an “unhealable rift,” where exile is not merely a matter of geography but a persistent condition of alienation. Yet, within these narratives of loss and marginalisation, Roy also crafts a space for resistance and narrative reclamation. These characters, in different ways, attempt to rewrite their own histories, seeking meaning and continuity in fragmented pasts. Roy thus offers a narrative agency to those cast out as the ‘Other,’ enabling them to articulate their trauma and assert their presence within a world that has tried to silence or erase them. Through this, Roy not only critiques structures of power and exclusion but also reimagines the subaltern subject as capable of memory, voice, and transformation.

The Subaltern and Suppressed Voices and History

To delve deeper into the consequences of trauma, exile, and historical erasure, it is essential to shift from a thematic perspective towards an embodied experience of the subaltern. In Anuradha Roy’s fiction, characters such as Elango in *The Earthspinner* represent more than marginalised individuals; they emerge as living archives of suppressed histories. Drawing upon Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s seminal question—“*Can the Subaltern Speak?*”—Elango’s narrative confronts the persistent silencing of those relegated to the peripheries of power. The marginalisation of the character of Elango and the systemic erasure of his identity exemplify how structures of power manipulate historical narratives to render the subaltern invisible. Yet, within this violent elimination lies a deeper inquiry: can history be reimagined through alternative forms of expression—through art, memory, and acts of resistance that defy dominant epistemologies? This question finds resonance in the figure of Elango, a marginalised potter and artist who emerges as a potent site of struggle between creative expression and socio-political repression. This paper shall critically analyse the artistic exile of the subaltern artist Elango. It shall aim to situate how Elango through his pottery endeavours to reclaim history and identity of the potter community of Kummarapet. The paper will examine how trauma and otherness are negotiated through the symbolic language of art, exploring how artistic creation can become both an act of resistance and a reason for exile in a world that fears difference.

Elango’s story in *The Earthspinner* represents a profound engagement with ancestral memory and cultural heritage through the act of pottery-making, which emerges as a powerful mode of postcolonial agency. Born into a lineage of potters who migrated from Tamil Nadu centuries ago and settled in Kummarapet, Elango embodies the persistence of subaltern artistic traditions amid the erosion of collective identities and socio-economic transformations. As the narrator recalls,

My father had seen Elango around when he was a boy helping his grandfather, who sold pots door to door. He came from a line of potters, earth-caked, sweat-stained, until his father forsook the

unforgiving family trade for education and a clerical job... But [Elango] knew all his life he wanted to be a potter like his grandfather” (6).

This passage situates Elango not merely as a craftsman but as a conscious inheritor of a fading cultural vocation. Despite the pull of modernity and education that led his father away from pottery, Elango’s commitment to the art form signals a deliberate reclaiming of subaltern histories that have been marginalised within dominant narratives of progress and urbanisation. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s concept of the subaltern as “the politically dispossessed and historically silenced” (45) resonates here, as Elango’s artistic vocation becomes a form of “speaking” through material culture where dominant historical discourses have failed. The annual tradition of creating grand clay horses, once central to the collective identity of Kummaraipettai’s potter community, further underscores the intertwining of art, memory, and ritual in the subaltern world. Roy writes,

Every year his grandfather and the other potters of their village had made a giant clay horse... It was a divine horse, dedicated to the sons of Shiva, protector of the village... Remnants of those long-ago horses stood in the compound of one of the old temples even today... The potters who had made them were dead or gone and those that came after did not know how to make them” (12).

This ritualistic crafting of the clay horse functions as a tangible archive of communal belief and collective worship, a material history that transcends oral or written records often inaccessible to subaltern groups. Homi K. Bhabha’s notion of “the postcolonial ‘third space’” (67) can be applied here, where Elango’s art negotiates and transforms the inherited cultural traditions within a contested, liminal space—resisting erasure by re-appropriating history through creative practice.

The decline of this tradition parallels the erasure of subaltern cultural markers within the socio-political landscape, reflecting the fraught processes of modernisation, communal fragmentation, and religious intolerance. As Frantz Fanon argues, colonisation disrupts “native cultural traditions” and replaces them with alien narratives that marginalise indigenous identities (163). Elango’s revival of the terracotta horse therefore functions as an act of cultural resistance against these forces of obliteration.

Against this backdrop, Elango’s decision to revive and reimagine the terracotta horse as a personal and political act of love and artistry takes on profound significance. His vision to create “a horse like those, but also not like them... their wedding horse, a steed for a man to seat his bride upon and sweep her away into a gold-and-red sunset... The horse grew grander with every imagining. The word would spread. People would come from other places to see the work of this brilliant potter whom nobody had thought to notice until now” (36), symbolises the subaltern artist’s aspiration to assert his creative agency and rewrite the historical narrative imposed upon him. By reinterpreting the traditional clay horse, Elango not only preserves his ancestral legacy but also challenges communal boundaries, asserting a new identity that blends heritage with personal passion. This aligns with Ranajit Guha’s argument that subaltern histories, while often occluded, persist through “alternative archives” and cultural productions that resist hegemonic historiography (79).

Elango’s dream of the burning terracotta horse serves as both an ancestral command and a prophetic vision. In his dream myth and memory coalesce, giving shape to a symbolic creature that emerges from the deepest strata of cultural history and personal longing. The fire-horse, as he sees it, “was in flames. It roamed beneath the ocean breathing fire and when it shook its mane the flames coloured the waves red... He shut his eyes again to see better his burning horse and understand what it could mean” (34). This dream sequence reflects what Joseph Campbell terms “mythic imagination,” where symbols and archetypes emerge not as fantasies but as deeply encoded truths passed down through collective consciousness (143). The horse, seen here not merely as an artistic subject but as an entity arising from a “place deep inside him where memories and stories lay waiting like a rich seam of clay,” underscores the notion of transgenerational memory—a form of memory embedded in bodily and cultural practices that survives through ritual, art, and storytelling. Postcolonial thinkers like Edward Said and Stuart Hall have long argued that reclaiming cultural identity in the aftermath of colonisation often requires a turn toward submerged or mythologised histories. Hall insists that cultural identity is not fixed but formed through “positioning” within history, myth, and narrative (90). Elango’s visionary dream of the horse becomes such a reconnection to an artistic and spiritual heritage disrupted by communal disintegration and cultural marginalisation.

Reclaiming Identity through Myth, Art and Narrative

The allusion to myth within the narrative is both expansive and layered. Elango recalls his old teacher Murthy's lessons on the fiery mare from Hindu cosmology, a mythic force linked to Shiva's destructive passions:

To calm him and to save the earth, the gods placed his fires in a mare's mouth, then took the mare to the ocean. Under the water the mare burns quietly still... waiting for doomsday, when it will be released during the final deluge. (58)

This powerful intertext collapses time, fusing ancient myth with modern metaphor. The mare becomes a symbol of suppressed passion, artistic energy, and social transgression—waiting to erupt. The fire-horse, then, is not just Elango's muse but his embodied revolt, his response to what Spivak calls “epistemic violence”—the disfiguring of subaltern knowledge and cultural production (19). By invoking both Vedic myth and Homeric legend—Shiva's fire-mare and the Trojan horse—Roy constructs Elango as a “potter trapped in an epic of his own,” a subaltern artist crafting a symbol of resistance in clay. In the act of imagining and shaping the horse, Elango enacts what Diana Taylor refers to as “repertoire,” a method of transmitting cultural memory through embodied, performative practice rather than written text (3). The terracotta horse—useless in utilitarian terms yet deeply significant—is a resurrection of collective memory, an assertion of subaltern artistry that defies the logic of commodification and religious orthodoxy:

It was the first thing he had ever made that served no utilitarian purpose... He was becoming aware of a new hunger in him... for it to bring him the recognition he now felt more confidently was his due. (113)

Here, Elango's desire for recognition is not vanity but the assertion of what Bhabha might call the right to narrate, a claim to history and identity through artistic production. In this light, the terracotta horse functions as a counter-archive—a site where cultural memory, erotic longing, and political resistance converge. Ultimately, Elango's dream and its artistic manifestation revive not only a dying artistic tradition but also a mode of storytelling and mythmaking that the postcolonial condition desperately needs. His fire-horse is a channel between past and present, between dream and ritual, between subaltern silence and creative speech. It is, in essence, an act of historical repair.

However, this artistic reclamation also precipitates conflict and exile, as the terracotta horse becomes a site of communal tension and violence. The destruction of Elango's sculpture is not simply an act of vandalism but a symbolic erasure of subaltern histories and identities that threaten hegemonic social orders. Elango's subsequent exile thus reflects the precarious position of subaltern artists who, through their work, contest dominant narratives and face marginalisation or punishment. As Bhabha observes, cultural production in the postcolonial context is fraught with ambivalence, simultaneously “the site of enunciation and disavowal” where the subaltern subject's agency is both asserted and suppressed (94).

As Abdullah Al-Dabbagh observes in *The Poetics of Exile and Identity*, the experience of exile, though marked by loss and dislocation, offers a transformative space for artistic creation. He writes that the journey of exile, with all its painful ruptures, often becomes “what the poet needs to trigger his creativity” (6). This defamiliarisation of the world—a hallmark of the exilic experience—enables artists to see with new eyes, to write and create from the fractures of memory and belonging. Al-Dabbagh notes that this is not a modern phenomenon, but one that stretches from the medieval period to “the multicultural writers of our own globalist era” (6). The poet or artist, dislodged from the security of home, is often propelled into new spatial and imaginative territories that expand the possibilities of meaning-making. The character of Elango offers a vivid literary embodiment of Al-Dabbagh's proposition – a Hindu potter whose love for a Muslim woman and whose art challenge socio-political boundaries. Elango's forced departure, though born out of marginalisation, evolves into a phase of extraordinary creative growth. As the narrator remarks, “Someone from the French embassy had seen his terracotta animals at an exhibition in Delhi, which resulted in a trip to France for a festival. After that he had done a workshop in Sweden, teaching potters how to make his kind of sculptures, and now he was in Britain.” (184). This artistic journey—punctuated by transnational travel and cultural encounters—suggests that Elango's exile becomes the very site where his artistry matures and gains international recognition.

The physical displacement is also mirrored by an internal transformation. In London, Elango conducts large-scale sculptural workshops with students and archaeologists: “He was a whirling dervish, swooping from one student to another, directing the preparation of the clay inside and supervising the construction of a special gas-fired kiln outside” (76). His artistic risk-taking continues even in exile, as he anxiously prepares a monumental clay horse that will be the centrepiece of a gallery garden. The narrator records his apprehensions as he confides, “If this goes wrong, I’m finished... I’ll need more than a horse to run away on” (77). These private utterances reveal how exile is not only a site of achievement but also one of fragility—where success is constantly negotiated under the shadow of precarity. Yet it is in this liminal space—away from home, yet not fully belonging to the host land—that Elango rediscovers creative agency. Sara, who works alongside him during a five-day stint in London, reflects on this renewed sense of purpose: “When Elango wanted to talk, I took notes. When he had to work, I rolled up my sleeves, put on an apron, and plunged my hands into the clay” (80). These collaborative moments reinforce how exile enables not only artistic introspection but also community building in new forms. The gallery itself becomes a microcosm of Elango’s altered identity. His interactions with international students, suppliers, and technicians suggest a shift of identity—a change from the rigidities of caste and community back home to the more fluid, though still challenging, artistic circles abroad.

Despite the visible success, Elango’s memories of the early years of exile remain bitter. He recounts his time in Delhi with Zohra—isolated, uncertain, and dependent on a friend’s charity—an emotional and financial low point that lingers in his memory. Yet, as Al-Dabbagh suggests, it is precisely this journey through alienation that leads to Elango’s artistic vision. Elango himself acknowledges that the difficult years have given way to renewal: “He was an instructor at a studio in Delhi; he had started exhibiting his work again. He taught, and he made his giant urns and animals, which Zohra carved with words in Urdu... They were always the same words: Ride your wild runaway mind / All the way to heaven” (155). In this moment, exile transforms into something akin to poetic transcendence. The terracotta horse—once a symbol of cultural dissent—now becomes a vehicle for the imagination, a wild, untamed force galloping towards artistic liberation.

Artistic Erasure and the Role of Memory

Another noteworthy figure in the novel *The Earthspinner* is Zohra’s grandfather, Usman Alam, the blind calligrapher who embodies a poignant interweaving of memory, loss, and artistic perseverance that complements Elango’s potter’s craft. Though his eyesight has failed, Alam’s fingers remain attuned to the contours and surfaces of the horse Elango shapes, bringing to it a concrete form that transcends mere vision. As the text narrates, Alam “ran his fingers over the legs of the horse,” listening with his hands, striving to translate the fluidity of his calligraphy onto a new, unfamiliar medium of clay rather than paper, which he once knew intimately (34). This shift from ink to clay is itself a metaphor for the difficulty of articulating history and identity in a fragmented postcolonial context, where traditional modes of expression must adapt or risk erasure.

The calligrapher’s struggle to inscribe Urdu words onto the damp surface—the “speaking horse”—underscores a tension between the familiar and the new, the remembered and the threatened: “The tool did not want to work with him... He ran his fingers over the letters... and knew at once that they were crude, the work of an amateur” (38). Yet, despite this imperfection, the act of carving becomes an act of resistance against loss—not only the loss of sight but the loss of cultural memory and linguistic heritage. Alam’s journey to the archive to revisit the *Baburnama* and reclaim his connection to the past, even as his vision deteriorates, echoes what Leela Gandhi calls the “ethics of witnessing” in postcolonial memory practices—where to remember is also to bear responsibility for the unrepresentable wounds of history (14).

This embodiment of memory through tangible inscription resonates with Cathy Caruth’s formulation of trauma as an experience that “returns to haunt” the present in unassimilable forms, often demanding alternative modes of witnessing and expression beyond traditional narrative (4). Alam’s hands, moving “without hesitation over the surface of the horse,” as if transferring the certainty of sight to touch, create a “speaking” object that both preserves and communicates trauma (42). The horse, inscribed with calligraphy, is thus transformed into a living archive, a vessel of “silenced histories” that defy easy assimilation or erasure.

Shoshana Felman's insight on the relationship between trauma and testimony can be invoked here, as Alam's act of carving becomes a form of testimony that confronts communal violence and exile. Felman argues that trauma "disrupts the linearity of narrative" and requires "new languages of expression" (38). Alam's "crude," hesitant letters carved into clay articulate precisely such a disruption challenging dominant histories that marginalize subaltern voices and experiences. Finally, the inscription's content itself carries a subtle, subversive wisdom. The carved words instruct the rider to "put the bit in its mouth, / The saddle on its back, / Your foot in the stirrup, / And ride your wild runaway mind / All the way to heaven" (48). These lines invoke the spiritual and intellectual freedom to harness and journey with one's inner turmoil and memory. They gesture toward the transformative power of art and storytelling in reclaiming agency amid trauma and exile.

Thus, through Usman Alam, *The Earthspinner* intricately portrays the embodied struggle of artistic creation as a means of preserving memory, asserting identity, and resisting cultural erasure. His calligraphy on Elango's horse becomes a vital symbolic intervention in the narrative's exploration of trauma and the possibility of subaltern remembrance. In this sense, Elango's pottery transcends craft to become a postcolonial site of resistance—a material practice that reclaims silenced histories, revives communal memory, and challenges exclusionary politics. His story exemplifies how subaltern artists engage with their legacies and contexts to produce new cultural imaginaries, even at the cost of exile and dispossession.

Conclusion: Anuradha Roy's *The Earthspinner*, through the figure of Elango and his subaltern artistry, offers a deeply layered exploration of history, trauma, exile, and otherness that challenges and reconfigures dominant postcolonial narratives. Roy's portrayal aligns with Leela Gandhi's conception of postcoloniality as a space of "radical hospitality" and ethical responsiveness, where the "other's wound" demands recognition and opens avenues for "alternative ethical relations" beyond hegemonic histories (37). Elango's pottery—rooted in ancestral memory yet transformed through personal vision—becomes an ethical and political act that engages with this postcolonial responsibility. His creative reclamation serves as a counter-memory that refuses the erasures wrought by colonial modernity and communal violence.

Roy's narrative of artistic exile and symbolic destruction resonates strongly with Shoshana Felman's theorisation of trauma as a "crisis of witnessing," where the traumatic event shatters conventional modes of representation, calling for new narrative forms that acknowledge "the wound in the consciousness of the witness" (24). Elango's terracotta horse, as a material and mythical archive, functions as a site of such witnessing—an embodied testimony to subaltern histories and cultural rupture. Felman's insistence that "testimony demands a listener" (24) underscores the precariousness of Elango's artistic voice in a social milieu that seeks to silence subaltern expression. The violent response to his work and his subsequent exile thus exemplify the ambivalence of trauma narration, where recognition and suppression coexist.

Furthermore, Cathy Caruth's foundational argument that trauma entails an experience "that is not fully known in the moment of occurrence" but returns "to haunt the survivor later on" (4) illuminates the intergenerational and mythic dimensions of Elango's story. The burning terracotta horse in Elango's dreams embodies this "return of the repressed," where personal and collective histories converge in symbolic form. Caruth's notion that trauma "cannot be assimilated fully at the moment it occurs" but requires "a repetitive engagement with the wound" (11) parallels Elango's iterative process of artistic creation and reimagining, which becomes a form of delayed but necessary historical reckoning. Roy's embedding of mythic archetypes and cultural memory thus enable a mode of storytelling that both preserves and transforms traumatic legacies.

By weaving together these theoretical frameworks, Roy's handling of history and trauma transcends mere narrative recuperation to enact what Leela Gandhi describes as "a politics of friendship and repair" that resists the epistemic violence of colonial and communal erasures (5). The terracotta horse emerges not only as a "counter-archive" (121) but also as a testament to the ethical and political potential of subaltern art to "speak" in spaces where silence once prevailed (Spivak). Roy's novel thereby affirms that trauma and exile, while marking sites of rupture and loss, also engender modes of creative resilience and recompense through which subaltern identities assert their historical and cultural presence.

In this light, Elango's exile and the destruction of his art become emblematic of the complex dialectic of visibility and erasure that defines postcolonial subjectivity. Roy's nuanced portrayal encapsulates the tensions between trauma's destructive force and the enduring human capacity for symbolic reconstruction, positioning

subaltern artistry as a vital medium for historical repair, memory transmission, and political resistance. Such a vision significantly enriches postcolonial literary discourse by foregrounding the embodied, material, and mythic registers through which history and trauma are both inherited and transformed.

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