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Postcolonial trauma and subjectivity in Ghassan Kanafani and Pramoedya Ananta Toer: A comparison

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Abstract: *Postcolonial literature preserves the memory of colonial suffering, yet cross-regional comparisons of how it represents trauma remain scarce. This study examines the representation of colonial trauma and postcolonial subjectivity in Ghassan Kanafani's 'Āid ilā Haifa (Returning to Haifa) and Pramoedya Ananta Toer's Cerita dari Blora (Stories from Blora), two works that document colonial experience in different geopolitical regions but are rarely compared. Using a qualitative-comparative design based on close reading, Cathy Caruth's trauma framework, and Edward Said's postcolonial framework, the study investigates how the two works depict trauma and negotiate postcolonial subjectivity. Three findings emerged. First, the characters of both works exhibit trauma through belatedness, intrusion, avoidance, hyperarousal, and aporia. Second, the formation of subjectivity prompts distinct responses: Kanafani shows the diaspora's resurgence of active agency and political consciousness, whereas Pramoedya shows the existential paralysis of the ordinary people, who remain estranged despite independence. Third, both writers use narrative to rework history and to foreground the perspective of the oppressed through counter-narrative.*

Keywords: *colonial trauma, Kanafani, postcolonial subjectivity, Pramoedya*

INTRODUCTION

Postcolonial literature records, reflects on, and reconstructs the past suffering of colonized societies. Trauma is not merely a terrible event in the past; it is a wound that was never fully processed, which produces delayed shocks and continues to haunt survivors' memories in the present. Systemic violence, colonialism, and dispossession generate collective pain and dislocation, which together constitute postcolonial trauma (Al-Masri et al., 2024; Prasantham, 2025)

Ghassan Kanafani of Palestine and Pramoedya Ananta Toer of Indonesia were writers who gave powerful expression to trauma and struggle. In *'Āid ilā Haifa* (*Returning to Haifa*), Kanafani depicts the psychological toll of the 1948 Nakba, which brought mass expulsions, alienation, and identity crises among Palestinians. He uses memory as a tool of existential resistance. Pramoedya's *Cerita dari Blora*, a short-story anthology, chronicles the hardships and pain of the people of Blora, Central Java (Toer, 2002). It contains 11 short stories about Dutch colonialism and its effects on national identity and indigenous subjectivity. Despite their different geographical contexts, both authors use narrative to respond to colonial trauma. Their literary works are active spaces of resistance that give voice to the silenced, oppose identity erasure, and reclaim agency and human dignity.

Kanafani and Pramoedya have been studied from several angles. Kanafani's portrayal of the psychological trauma of the 1948 Nakba in *Ā'id ilā Haifa* has received considerable attention. Maqsood (2025) found that exile causes physical suffering, deep

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emotional pressure, and an identity crisis, and that symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), such as flashbacks, avoidance, and emotional paralysis, appear in the novella. According to Rashed (2025), Kanafani used memory to challenge colonialism and to resist the erasure of Palestinian history. Al-Masarwah et al. (2025) discovered that silence in the work displays postcolonial trauma by representing the socio-political realities of forced displacement and a pain that cannot be put into words. Macaluso (2022) argues that trauma in the work transforms guilt-ridden victims into agents of resistance.

Pramoedya, for his part, wrote about the communal pain caused by Dutch and Japanese imperialism in Indonesia. Research on *Cerita dari Blora* highlights social injustice, gender repression, and the marginalization of the ordinary people. Hassan and Hoon (2025) examined two short stories, "*Pelarian yang Tak Dicari*" (The Unwanted Escape) and "*Kemudian Lahirlah Dia*" (Then She Was Born), and found that Pramoedya used literature to fight the crime, poverty, and injustice that undermined society. The colonial era left a deep-rooted negative impact on the mentality of indigenous people, causing a crisis of self-confidence and retaliatory actions in response to the oppressive social hierarchy. Pradani et al. (2021) examined the short story "Inem" and found colonial domination in the form of imperialist oppression, forced early marriage, sexual harassment, and physical violence. Although his works deal with anguish and revenge, Pramoedya emphasizes the spiritual and ideological perseverance of indigenous people against oppression (Hassan & Hoon, 2025)

Cathy Caruth's trauma framework and Edward Said's postcolonial theory have often been used to study both works, but the literature review shows that most studies still examine them separately within their own geopolitical/boundaries. Cross-cultural comparative studies that examine trauma in two geographically and historically distinct colonial settings are lacking: settler colonialism in Palestine, which centers on the appropriation of space, and exploitative colonialism in Indonesia, which caused structural and cultural dislocation. Wolfe (2006) argues that settler colonialism operates through a logic of elimination, namely by destroying the indigenous population and replacing it with a new settler community. This form of settler colonialism persists as a permanent system of spatial control (Wolfe, 2006), and as such aims to erase the physical presence and historical narratives of the indigenous Palestine people (Hasan, 2025; Madi, 2025). The colonialism in Indonesia depicted in literary works, on the other hand, focuses on the extraction and exploitation of resources (Wolfe, 2006), which destroyed social structures, fostered feudal obedience and caused cultural dislocation. A cross-regional comparison of '*Āid ilā Haifa* and *Cerita dari Blora* can therefore show how postcolonial subjectivity is processed and managed in fragmented colonial environments.

Based on this gap, the present study compares Kanafani's and Pramoedya's portrayals of colonial trauma and postcolonial subjectivity as instruments for processing trauma in distinct colonial locations. It addresses three questions: (1) how both texts depict colonial trauma; (2) how trauma, memory, and identity in Kanafani's and Pramoedya's works construct postcolonial subjectivity; and (3) how literary narrative resists colonialism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Edward Said's thought on postcolonial subjectivity illuminates the complexity of the historical wounds of postcolonial societies. According to Said, hegemonic imperial power has turned colonized nations into the inferior "Other," causing alienation, dislocation, and identity crises (Burney, 2012). Colonialism fragments the consciousness of colonized societies (Prasantham, 2025). Literature thus becomes a forum for the expression, negotiation, and reconstruction of trauma, enabling intervention in and active resistance to colonialism (Al-Masri et al., 2024). Through their narratives, oppressed individuals can reclaim their existence, dismantle the hegemonic discourse that silences them, and turn their haunting pain into recovery and the expression of agency (Said, 1994).

This study uses Cathy Caruth's (1996) trauma paradigm, which defines trauma as an unassimilated event that returns belatedly in the form of uncontrolled re-experiencing. To operationalize this concept for literary analysis, trauma is evaluated through five distinct indicators: three symptom clusters derived from clinical trauma literature—intrusion (flashbacks), avoidance, and hyperarousal (Herman, 2015; Levine, 2015)— alongside two core Caruthian concepts, belatedness (the delayed onset an repetitive return of trauma) and aporia (a crisis of truth, or the epistemological impossibility of straightforward narration) (Caruth, 1996). Together, these five indicators constitute the analytical synthesis of this study rather than a framework proposed by Caruth (1996).

As a comparative framework, this study recognizes that postcolonial trauma in non-Western contexts does not always align with the traditional, Holocaust-centered Western paradigm of trauma theory (Craps & Buelens, 2008; Visser, 2011). Scholars such as Craps (2010) and Visser (2015) have critiqued canonical trauma studies for its Eurocentric bias, both studies are based on single-event and focus on narrative paralysis or melancholy, which often fail to take into account the chronic structural violence in postcolonial history. The uncritical application of Western therapeutic framework, moreover, risks reducing non-Western experiences to a simplified form and overlooking local forms of recovery and resistance (Martínez-Falquina, 2015). Accordingly, the application of trauma theory requires caution and a postcolonial reorientation with regard to the historical and cultural specificities of colonialism in Palestina and Indonesia.

METHOD

This qualitative-comparative study relies on close reading for analysis. In line with the principles of qualitative data analysis, research on meaning-making, representation, and subjectivity in literary texts cannot be reduced to quantitative data (Miles et al., 2014). The primary data come from the 2015 edition of Kanafani's novella '*Āid ilā Haifa* and the 2002 edition of Pramoedya's short-story anthology *Cerita dari Blora*. To facilitate the research, the author, as the research instrument, translated the text from the original language into English. Books and research articles related to the topic serve as secondary data. The data consist of textual units, namely quotations, narrated events, and character descriptions, that represent trauma and postcolonial subjectivity.

Before collecting and analyzing the data, the researcher read both literary works to understand their narrative structure, events, and fictional elements. The researcher then documented the data on trauma and postcolonial subjectivity and reread the texts to ensure the validity and relevance of the data. After this validation, the researcher examined and connected the textual evidence in both works through systematic stages: identifying colonial trauma using Caruth's framework, a theory developed in the context of Holocaust trauma and Western culture and therefore requiring critical application; analyzing narrative representation; and analyzing the construction of postcolonial subjectivity in each text through Said's postcolonial perspective. A detailed intertextual comparison then examined how Kanafani and Pramoedya expressed and mediated historical trauma in distinct colonial contexts, following comparative literary research practice by Susan Bassnet (1993). Finally, the researcher wrote up the findings as an article, presenting selected data in the Results and Discussion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The analysis identified five main manifestations of trauma in both texts: belatedness, intrusion, avoidance, hyperarousal, and aporia, as shown in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. *Trauma Representation in Kanafani's* ʻĀid ilā Haifa

No.	Quote and source	Trauma type	Explanation
1	"He already knew, so why did he ask?" He told him to go, then avoided talking about it for twenty years until the past exploded like a volcano. (Kanafani, 2015, p. 9)	Belatedness	For 20 years in exile, the couple never talked about Khaldun, the child they had left behind. The event was too sudden and poorly comprehended. Both avoided the disaster, but its emotional consequences struck 20 years later.
2	"No, his memory did not return little by little." A stone wall collapsed and piled memories on top of each other on his head. (Kanafani, 2015, p. 5)	Intrusion	When Said S. entered Haifa, his mental barriers collapsed. Massive, uncontrollable memories of the trauma flooded his mind.
3	"That is just an illusion, Safiyya! Never believe this mournful voice." (Kanafani, 2015, p. 23)	Avoidance	Said S. tried to avoid the shock psychologically and physically by asking his wife to cancel the trip. Because the return reopens old wounds and causes agony, denial functions as protection.
4	"And now he is in Al-Halisa, hearing the sound of his car's wheels moving as usual." (Kanafani, 2015, p. 21)	Hyperarousal (excessive vigilance)	Said S.'s nervous system reacts to spatial and auditory stimulation (returning to Al-Halisa, hearing the wheels) with intense restlessness and a pounding heart.
5	"Said jumped back, surprised and injured, then felt dizzy. Is it happening?" (Kanafani, 2015, p. 74)	Aporia (crisis of truth)	Said S.'s reasoning collapsed when he learned that their biological son, Khaldun, had become an enemy soldier. This compounded pain causes an existential standstill in which he cannot distinguish reality from a nightmare.

A similar pattern is also found in the works of Pramoedya Ananta Toer, although the trauma represented is rooted in the context of exploitative colonialism in Indonesia, not settler colonialism as in Kanafani's case. The five forms of trauma— belatedness, intrusion, avoidance, hyperarousal, and aporia —are consistently found in the characters of the anthology *Cerita dari Blora*, as presented in Table 2. Thus, the comparison of these two tables shows that the structure of trauma manifestations is cross-colonial context, even though the sources and forms of causes differ historically and geopolitically.

Table 2. *Trauma Representation in Pramoedya's* Cerita dari Blora

No.	Quote and source	Trauma type	Explanation
1	"The country's independence arrived with grandeur, like a hero winning in an ancient tale." "But over time, it stealthily crept into the thicket of life's hardships." *Dia Yang Menyerah* (She Who Surrendered) (Toer, 2002, p. 237)	Belatedness	The society could not comprehend its suffering at the time of independence. Hunger, poverty, and the instability of the revolution brought postcolonial agony and trauma to light.
2	"I know, you are afraid of your own actions. The violin reminds you of the long-haired Puncak boy you saw playing it at night. The young man was shot on the roadside." *Anak Haram* (Illegitimate Child) (Toer, 2002, p. 203)	Intrusion (flashback)	The sound of the violin breaks down the mental defenses of Ahyat's father. The memory of capturing and executing a young man during the revolution haunts him with uncontrollable guilt.
3	"His eyes were always wild with his own fear. Sometimes he was startled. And when gunfire, mortar fire, or cannon fire was heard from the city, he would crouch behind anything he thought could protect him." *Hidup yang Tak Diharapkan* (An Unexpected Life) (Toer, 2002, p. 123)	Hyperarousal (excessive vigilance)	The never-ending war and the pursuit by various military factions have trapped the nervous systems of survivors such as Kajan in a state of extreme alertness, anxiety, and constant anticipation of threat.
4	"All attention was focused on the motionless figure in its place." Kajan remained mute. *Hidup yang Tak Diharapkan* (An Unexpected Life) (Toer, 2002, p. 125)	Avoidance	As a defense against extreme terror—the threat of arrest and execution by the Dutch army—Kajan's nervous system dulled all his emotional and physical responses. He froze, fell silent, and isolated himself from his surroundings.
5	"Life returned to normal, before the bloodshed began, when the word 'war' was only used in dictionaries and fairy tales. And now, alongside trade and everyday life, there also things that will never return: bodies that have died, the beauty of the mind marred by revenge" *Dia yang Menyerah* (She Who Surrendered) (Toer, 2002, p. 298)	Aporia (crisis of truth)	Survivors face the bitter truth that the past and peace can never be whole again because the trauma was caused by violence perpetrated by their own nation, which produces an existential crisis.

In addition, the construction of postcolonial subjectivity in the two works elicits different responses. In '*Āid ilā Haifa*, subjectivity emerges as active agency. Where the confrontation with traumatic displacement transforms loss into historical reclamation rather than fatalistic despair. Accordingly, in *Cerita dari Blora*, subjectivity is marked by existential paralysis, reflecting how post-independence socio-political fragmentation leaves marginalized figures trapped in ongoing mental exhaustion.

Discussion

Kanafani's Trauma Representation

According to Frantz Fanon and Homi K. Bhabha (as cited in Prasantham, 2025), colonial domination causes systemic dehumanization, alienation, and identity crises that produce deep cultural trauma for colonized societies. Previous studies reveal that the trauma of Said S. and Safiyya leads to psychological immobility and an existential crisis because of the displacement of space and history (Al-Masarwah et al., 2025; Macaluso, 2022; Maqsood, 2025).

According to Caruth (1996), trauma narratives often emerge as delayed-onset experiences: the impact of a dark event is not fully realized when it occurs but returns forcefully in the future (Debnath, 2025; Maqsood, 2025). This is evident when Said S. and Safiyya return to Haifa 20 years after they became refugees in the 1948 Nakba.

Said S. and Safiyya also show avoidance and silence as responses to the traumatic memory. Said S. refuses to go to Haifa as a form of self-defense, to keep the wounds of the past from tearing apart his consciousness again. For 20 years after the Nakba, the couple consciously suppressed their memory of the baby Khaldun, who was left behind in Haifa, and only alluded to it.

Hyperarousal is evident in Said S. and Safiyya whenever their re-encounter with the space of their past in Haifa stimulates them, especially when they pass through the Al-Halisa area and hear the sound of car wheels, which forcibly reminds them of the tragedy of the 1948 exodus (Al-Masarwah et al., 2025). These symptoms are manifestations of unresolved psychological wounds, in which the nervous system responds to past threats with physical reactions—a racing heart that makes it difficult to breathe and clouds rational thought (Al-Masarwah et al., 2025; Macaluso, 2022)—and with uncontrollable emotional responses, such as Safiyya's continual crying upon entering Al-Halisa. This heightened state continues when they face Dov/Khaldun directly. Said S. struggles to maintain his rationality amid inner pain, overflowing anger, and unbearable frustration at seeing his son in an enemy soldier's uniform (Maqsood, 2025), while Safiyya endures the traumatic stimulation with inner panic and heartbreaking silence.

Aporia, the shattering of reality, occurs when survivors cannot integrate a dark event into a coherent, logical understanding. Said S.'s discovery that Khaldun, the baby left behind in Haifa, has become Dov, a Jewish soldier (Maqsood, 2025), triggers extreme emotional paralysis (Rashed, 2025).

Pramoedya's Trauma Representation

In *Cerita dari Blora,* Pramoedya portrays the suffering of the ordinary people, which is rooted in colonial trauma. Although the triggers for this trauma were

predominantly intra-Indonesia conflict—such as the turmoil of the revolutionary war, betrayals amongst fellow freedom fighters, and post-independence violence—these conflicts nevertheless remain deeply rooted in the colonial trauma inflicted by the Dutch and the Japanese (Hassan & Hoon, 2025). Drawing on Frantz Fanon's theoretical framework regarding systemic dehumanisation and the internalisation of colonial oppression (as cited in Prasantham, 2025), the violence instilled by the colonisers does not simply disappear with their departure, but rather reproduces itself within the post-colonial sphere in the form of internal aggression, socio-political fragmentation and the alienation of the ordinary people. Accordingly, the mass suffering, dislocation, and existential paralysis experienced by the common people in Pramoedya's narratives are the structural and psyghological legacy of internalized colonial violence.

In the story *"Dia yang Menyerah"* (She Who Surrendered), Pramoedya represents belatedness by describing the euphoria of independence as something that "arrived with grandeur" (Toer, 2002, p. 237), although the suffering is realized only later, when independence "stealthily crept into the thicket of life's hardships" (Toer, 2002, p. 237).

Postcolonial trauma also causes flashbacks, because the memory of war violence never fades (Caruth, 1996). In the short story *"Anak Haram"* (Illegitimate Child), the sound of a violin breaks down the father's mental defenses and turns into a psychological terror.

In *"Hidup yang Tak Diharapkan*" (An Unexpected Life), the character Kajan lives under constant pursuit by the Dutch army and evades capture and execution through mental paralysis, sullen silence, and nerves like chalk (Azaria et al., 2025).

The next symptom of trauma takes the form of hyperarousal. The never-ending state of war traps the nervous systems of ordinary people in extreme alertness and destructive anxiety, as depicted in the character Kajan, whose eyes are always wild with fear. When he hears rifle, mortar, or cannon fire from the city, Kajan panics reactively, crouching behind anything he thinks could be a shelter while crying, even though he is already in a safe place. Kajan's mental paralysis is closely related to the concept of PTSD, particularly its hyperarousal symptoms, in which the sufferer's body remains trapped in survival mode (Maqsood, 2025). His spontaneous reaction of crouching and crying at the sound of gunfire aligns with Levine's (2015) explanation of the trauma response in body and brain: terror that exceeds the limits of sanity forces the nervous system to activate "procedural memory" unconsciously, triggering the fight-or-flight response. Kajan's experience resembles the hypervigilance of Said S.: the nervous systems of both react excessively to spatial and auditory stimuli that remind them of past traumatic events.

The violence perpetrated by one's own nation ultimately destroys the moral order of society and triggers a deadlock of meaning (aporia), an existential condition in which survivors lose their rational footing on the historical reality they have experienced. The character Sri in *"Dia yang Menyerah"* (She Who Surrendered) experiences profound bitterness: after the storm of war and revolution has passed, what remains in peacetime is only "bodies that have died, the beauty of the mind marred by revenge" (Toer, 2002, p. 298). Survivors are forced to suppress the reality that their humanity has been permanently marred and hollowed out by the betrayal, anarchy, and violence of their fellow countrymen. The humanitarian crisis resulting from this internal repression also resembles the discourse on the trauma of the 1965 tragedy. Karim et al.

(2025) emphasize that the state and fellow citizens, who should protect, instead act as perpetrators of hegemonic violence against their own people, creating suffering from forced exile and intergenerational trauma that penetrates domestic spaces. Sri also experienced this systemic violence: she had to leave elementary school at the age of 12 because of her family's circumstances—her father prioritized political activities, her brother prioritized his job, and she became responsible for her four younger siblings after their mother passed away.

Comparison of Postcolonial Subjectivity

In '*Āid ilā Haifa*, Kanafani captures the subjectivity of a diaspora born from the tragedy of forced expulsion (the 1948 Nakba). Colonialism does not only seize land physically; it also creates profound cultural and psychological alienation, forcing colonized subjects into a state of perpetual estrangement (Prasantham, 2025). The peak of this identity crisis is manifested in the character Khaldun (Dov), a Palestinian child who was left behind and then raised with Zionist military ideology. Dov represents a complex and fragmented mix of identities, living in the shadow of existential confusion about where and how he should belong (Rashed, 2025). Although colonization attempts to strip the subject of history, Kanafani does not allow his characters to be destroyed in passivity; through the journey back to Haifa, he transforms the memory of trauma from mere victimhood into an instrument of resistance (Madi, 2025). The subjectivity of the Palestinian characters is ultimately built on a new political consciousness that rejects the dogma of biological lineage and replaces it with an ideological commitment to actively resisting the erasure of their identity (Rashed, 2025).

In *Cerita dari Blora*, by contrast, Pramoedya constructs the subjectivity of the ordinary people, particularly women, who are trapped in colonial and feudal systems in their own homeland. Unlike the trauma of cross-border refugees in Kanafani's work, Pramoedya's characters experience a double colonization: they are oppressed by the foreign colonial system and, at the same time, destroyed by the patriarchal traditions of indigenous men. Characters such as Inem and Siti are represented as powerless objects of possession whose bodies become fields of exploitation and physical violence (Amri, 2020). Because of extreme poverty and the alternating anarchy of various armed factions during the transition to independence, this postcolonial subjectivity often manifests as mental paralysis or an absolute sense of powerlessness (Muwaffaq, 2018). Nevertheless, Pramoedya still shows bursts of agency. His ordinary female characters try to resist domination—like Siti, who chooses to escape from her abusive husband in search of freedom—but, tragically, the resistance and voices of these marginalized groups ultimately go unheard, which highlights the strong power hierarchies that the common people cannot penetrate (Amri, 2020).

Resistance and Subjectivity in Narrative

Both Kanafani and Pramoedya use suffering to "write back" (Ashcroft et al., 2003), to power and to create a counter-discourse. Said (1994) emphasizes that the power to narrate is central to the relationship between culture and imperialism.

In '*Āid ilā Haifa*, the subjectivity of Said S. and Safiyya is unstable, forcibly constructed by the trauma of expulsion, alienation, and the loss of their right of

residence and of their child. This trauma silenced them for 20 years, but Kanafani's narrative combats that silence by bringing the past back.

Unlike Kanafani, Pramoedya presents a narrative of national subjectivity shaped by a historical awareness of the betrayal of his own nation's revolution. The characters in his works are not exiled from their homeland; rather, they become exiles and are alienated in their own birthplace, experiencing severe trauma because of structural oppression, poverty, and violence that continue even after independence is celebrated. The trauma that emerges in *Cerita dari Blora* constructs the subjectivity of the Blora community as layered and overlapping: they are forced to become prisoners of history, continuously hunted and killed by the Dutch colonizers, the Japanese, and armed factions of their own nation. When independence was officially declared, the material reality of common people like Sri's family did not change; they were too exhausted and drained, and they were forced to confront their own inner reckoning amid the remnants of war trauma (Toer, 2002). Through this narrative, Pramoedya articulates a re-representation (Burney, 2012) that testifies that true independence has not yet occurred and that postcolonial national subjectivity at that time was merely existential paralysis.

Although Kanafani's and Pramoedya's characters have different historical backgrounds, both writers use trauma as the foundation of identity formation. Their characters' identities are constantly shaped, tested, and changed by traumatic memories that intrude on the present without warning.

Resistance Against Colonialism Through Narrative

The narrative in both works serves as a genuine form of resistance against colonialism rather than merely a fictional story. For Kanafani, remembering is not only a matter of mourning a dark past but also an act of resistance, so that the history of the Palestinian people is not erased by the colonizers. His Palestinian characters predominantly use their sharp memories of their homes and lands to reject historical reconstructions that claim the land was once empty and uninhabited. Through memories that are continuously retold and passed down, the identity and rights of the Palestinian people remain alive and cannot be erased (Rashed, 2025). In Indonesia, Pramoedya uses history to challenge the long-standing colonial narrative, often writing history from the perspective of the neglected common people. In his view, telling the truth about the past, including the hidden oppression of the colonizers, is the best way to awaken national consciousness, because the truth of fiction is the truth of history itself (Hassan & Hoon, 2025).

Resistance to colonialism through literary works takes three main forms. First, resistance through repetition: Kanafani continuously evokes flashbacks of his characters' suffering, such as the Nakba of 1948, so that the memory of that pain does not fade and continues to trigger the spirit of resistance (Rashed, 2025), while Pramoedya consistently reiterates the narrative of the oppression and trauma of the poor from one colonial period to the next in order to assert that structural suffering is a fact (Hassan & Hoon, 2025). Second, alternative history writing: the works of both authors act as counter-narratives. When the colonizer's version of history marginalizes the role of the colonized, Kanafani and Pramoedya jointly dismantle that claim by rewriting history to place the oppressed at the center of the story (Azaria et al., 2025;

Prasantham, 2025). Third, the affirmation of the colonized subject's perspective: both writers give voice to those who have long been silenced. Kanafani raises the perspective of the native Palestinian people to counter the story dominated by external colonizers, while Pramoedya captures the lives of the *wong cilik* (ordinary people) and other marginalized groups so that they have a platform to voice their suffering and resist oppression.

CONCLUSION

In both texts, historical trauma manifests in five similar forms—belatedness, intrusion, avoidance, hyperarousal, and aporia—but it elicits different subjective responses. Kanafani's diaspora subjects awaken to active agency and political consciousness, whereas Pramoedya's *Cerita dari Blora* elicits a postcolonial subjectivity marked by existential paralysis resulting from internalized and reproduced structural violence. Theoretically, this study integrates Cathy Caruth's trauma theory and Edward Said's postcolonial discourse to fill the gap in cross-cultural comparative research, and it shows that postcolonial subjectivity is negotiated differently in each colonial space. Practically, it reaffirms the role of literature as a space for working through trauma and resisting colonial narratives.

While offering rich comparative insights, this study is limited to narratives anchored in mid-20th century context. Future studies could extend this comparative framework to Kanafani and Pramoedya's broader corpora—such as *Rijāl fī ash-Shams* and *Tetralogi Buru*—to trace the diachronic evolution of postcolonial trauma. Additionally, scholars could explore the intersectionality of double colonization regarding subaltern women, or analyze postcolonial ecocritism concerning spatial dispossession.

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