

Call Me Woman¹: Women as Agents of Violence

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The notion that women are inherently inclined towards peace and non-violence has been problematized by feminist interventions mainly in gender and security studies. Yet, “women as agents of violence” pose an apparent challenge to feminism which as a discourse foregrounds an egalitarian and humane agenda. This ethically ambivalent category however, also enables a space to recast women from the popular imaging as *victim* to *perpetrator* of violence. Recent feminist studies have called for the need to locate women’s agency in violence in a broader spectrum. This paper takes a similar stance in analyzing narratives *of* and *about* women, to explore women’s sense of agency as perpetrators of violence. It will do so by critically engaging with a range of literary and non-literary texts from authors of different cultural/social/political locations: Nihal De Silva’s *The Road from Elephant Pass*, Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior* and Bharathi Mukerjee’s *Wife*. The paper hopes to further demonstrate the need to make critical interventions in the performative spaces accorded to women in the popular imagination as militants, suicide bombers, and agents of other forms of physical and psychological violence.

Key words: *Violence, Women agents, Interventions*

¹ My burrowing of title from revolutionary Ellen Kuzwayo’s autobiography (*Call Me Woman*, Aunt Lute Press:USA, 1995) is coincidental, and not deliberate. My interest lies with the defiant tone underlying the title which however, also ironically recalls the foregrounding of gendered subject “woman” which implicitly generalizes and seeks to obliterate individual women’s agency.