

## Trauma of 9/11 envisaged through transmedial memory in *Red Birds* and the *Blind Man's Garden*

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### **Abstract**

Narratives of trauma craft its meanings from silences and psyche of affected individuals through written notes of fiction. Pakistani fiction delves into trauma studies to explore shared experiences of massive violence and identity crisis due to colonial experiences amidst socio-political upheavals. These narratives reflect the psychological wounds borne by collective units of society. Researchers have analyzed not only horrific realities of partition but also analyzed issues of the contemporary era such as political chaos, postcoloniality and ideological racism, orientalist discourse and terrorism. The research aims to analyze the narratives of Muhammad Hanif's *Red Birds* (2018) and Nadeem Aslam's *The Blind Man's Garden* (2013) to explore the haunting realities of war on terror faced in Eastern Muslim communities after 9/11 historical event recorded in American history. The quest is to inquire a disrupted geopolitical system that is accountable to disseminate trauma due to 9/11 through transmedial memory. The fragmented storyline highlights the psychologically damaged characters as evident in war-torn linguistic output and the catastrophic dilemma that shatters an individual's defense mechanism to cope with the disaster. Transmedial memory exhibiting trauma of 9/11 attacks within the selected texts and in historical stance is examined. Findings reveal that in Pakistani literature, trauma is marked in the East due to aftermath of 9/11 and war on terror. Trauma has crossed cultural, social and national borders while demonstrating its impact on Eastern and Western borders. This grief, impacting Eastern and Western hemispheres, is represented through media representations. Thus, trauma is demonstrated through literary representations to register contextualized cultural wounds that offer a scope for therapeutic cure via resilience and reflection.

### **Keywords:**

Post 9/11 Literature, Stef Craps, Trauma, Memory, Transmedial Memory, Electronic Articles, Facebook Reviews

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## INTRODUCTION

Pakistani literature reflects a rich and thoughtful insight into sociopolitical affairs and echoes dense memories related to the history of nation-building within fictional and nonfictional spheres. During the embryonic phase of Pakistani Literature (1947-1970s), writers have explored subjects that are socially fabricated within roots of identity, such as the migration of Muslims, colonization and pains taken to decolonize, as in Ahmad Ali's *Twilight in Delhi*. In 1970s and 1980s, a literary awakening in the form of cultural and political renaissance in Pakistan is observed, as seen in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man*. The works, over the decades, have dwelt on biased religious notions, economic disparity, resistance towards military authoritarianism and gender inequity. From 1990s onwards, Pakistani literature blossomed and is enriched with works by prominent figures like Nadeem Aslam, Hanif Kureshi, Mohsin Hamid, Muhammad Hanif, Fatima Bhutto, Kamila Shamsie and Daniyal Mueenuddin. The works, during contemporary age, have explored themes of silence, displacement, cultural dislocation, alienation, war on terror, and religious extremism, as apparent in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. It has broadened its scope from histories of partition to several intricate national issues, including the marginalized working class and women's struggles amidst patriarchal oppression.

Post 9/11 Pakistani literature, in the contemporary age, is interpreted and evaluated as trauma narratives that allocate words for wounds. Within this framework, the works address trauma and its critical segments, such as social and political, generational, War on Terror trauma and trauma associated with religious extremism and childhood memories. This entails significant works such as *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, *Noor*, *Red Birds* and *The Blind Man's Garden*. Generally, trauma theory is a Western artefact, i.e., it evolved from Western theoretical assumptions. Evolving Pakistani literature shows evident traumatic constraints in the narrative strands of fiction, offering a non-Western perspective on trauma registered in the collective consciousness of the Muslim community. On the contrary, trauma literature in the West entails trauma of consecutive wars fought, demonstrating PTSD, collective trauma and shell shock among the soldiers of Western armies. Many researchers have analysed trauma using Western terminologies and applied trauma theory to Western texts, examining trauma related to World War I and World War II, Cold War, Gulf War, and Vietnam War. However, there is little effort put into examining war trauma in post 9/11 Pakistani literature canon, highlighting the terror and tremors of 9/11 and war on terror experienced by Muslims in land of Afghanistan as well as in Pakistan.

Trauma theory, in its domain, has gained significant importance in the works of Sigmund Freud, Cathy Caruth, Dominick LaCapra, Dori Laub, Judith Herman, Shoshana Felman and most recently in postcolonial studies, Stef Craps. Trauma, as stated by Freud, is "a belated response to an overwhelming event too shattering to be processed as it occurs and the traumatic memories are repressed, hidden to cognizant memory and reappear in moving ways as hallucinations, flashbacks or nightmares" (Craps 4). While focusing on Stef Craps trauma theory, it is observed that trauma, 'is slippery, dynamic and contested' as defined in his book *Trauma*, i.e. "slippery: blurring the boundaries between mind and body, memory and forgetting, and speech and silence"; "dynamic: its parameters are endlessly shifting as it moves across disciplines and institutions, cultures and ages"; "contested: its rhetoric, its origins, its symptoms, and its treatment have been subjected to controversy and debate" (Craps 4). Furthermore, Craps has argued for sensitivity towards non-Western traumas because these carry vital historical significance in the contemporary era. Trauma, therefore, posits a psychical impact on intricate human psychological patterns while witnessing a disturbing event.

In this research, trauma is traced from the lens of transmedial memory. Through the discussion of the selected novels, it is elaborated that there is a cultural and generational trauma in lives of civilians due to attacks of 9/11 that is also illustrated through transmedial memory

because Hanif and Aslam, as anglophone writers, affected by the event recounted memories and through first-hand experiences transferred memories to generations through print and non-print media. This study endeavors to assess the traumatic memories of 2001 by accessing Craps' model of trauma as trauma studies and memory studies analyse the relationship between language, human behaviour and human psyche, negating the unspeakability trope of trauma.

### Statement of the problem

This study examines the role of trauma in memory studies, particularly focusing on transmedial memory. It traces the traumatic legacies through a transmedial memory, connecting these legacies with media and memory in the era of digitization.

### Research question

How does transmedial memory exhibit the trauma of 9/11 attacks within selective narratives and from history to present times?

### Significance of study

It is studied that less efforts are put into investigating how memory and trauma align together to highlight the 9/11 event and the trauma or distress in post 9/11 atmosphere with effects of war on terror as a collective memory. The quest is to research and evaluate the wounded psyche of South Asian Muslims related to the past catastrophes of 9/11, which deduces a bleak survival note through a literary representation in the form of fictional narratives. Further, the selection of Hanif's *Red Birds* and Aslam's *The Blind Man's Garden* is made to elucidate an Orientalist perspective of 9/11 that has marked the historical calendars and demurred Muslim identity. By analyzing how Hanif and Aslam describe the effect of global geopolitics on individual lives, the study critiques how political events are reflected through the lens of fiction, offering a counter-narrative to mainstream media portrayals since September 11, 2001. The paper carries significance in terms of bridging a link between trauma studies and memory studies as an interdisciplinary insight, to demonstrate trauma in individuals through memory.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

History tends to register the wound culture and traumas which reverberates legacies of atrocities and devastating outcomes of hatred and malign intentions due to racial and religious differences, marginalisation of minority cultures and communal disharmony among human civilizations. Memories have connectedness to vehement histories, engraving the deepest scars of catastrophic endings that follow from generation to generation throughout the centuries. This can be traced in various forms of literature, precisely in trauma literature. Trauma literature tends to emerge from significant events that shape the course of succeeding generations, such as the Holocaust, World Wars, and war on terror after 9/11. It is also speculative that *trauma novel* refers to "a work of fiction that represents an emotional and cognitive response to profound loss, disaster, disruption, or devastation on the individual or communal level" (Ingrida 68). A trauma novel relies on the memories deduced from an individual, i.e., either collective memories or individual memories. Nora cites trauma novels on different phases of "affective memory" (Ingrida 68). Ingrida focuses on how Vickroy reveals two well defined approaches undertaken by trauma fiction writers that is transmission of shocking retorts. It is through an empathetic approach or an informational approach, since "fictitious texts can deliver trails for reader's sympathy" (68). After reviewing writing of post 9/11 attacks, Judith Butler critiques how the American government "heightened nationalist discourse, extended surveillance mechanisms, suspended constitutional rights, and developed forms of explicit and implicit censorship" as a response to the attacks of 9/11 instead of treating the traumatic event as "an opportunity to

redefine itself as part of the global community” (Nazir 77). Walsh undertakes this genre of 9/11 literature as an exploration of “trauma, effected close bonding, xenophobia, and memory as tools to unveil the secrets of this solemn day” (Walsh 1). Arin Keeble states 9/11 novel as western artefacts that all together produce nuances and pathways of vast western experience related to 9/11. She further elaborates this genre as a readable form that allows an in-depth documented analysis of this particular conflict in a clashing terrain (Keeble 5-6). As a biased notion, these novels act as artifacts to represent what has happened in the lands of America. Aslam’s and Hanif’s narratives are deliberately selected to cast away this biased attitude and reveal the areas affected by the War on Terror. *The Blind Man’s Garden* is notoriously praised for its flawless diction, representing 9/11 trauma and the aftereffects of the war on terror on the Pakistanis. Several scholars have researched the multiple dimensions evoked after reading this fiction. Sana et al (2022) explores the ugly picture of the 9/11 incident in the lives of people from cultural and ideological systems other than that of Americans in *The Blind Man’s Garden* and *Kite Runner*. Whereas Khan (2022) aims to unfold the orientalist discourse and stereotyping while especially considering the American role model of Major Ellie in *Red Birds*. Nasir et al. (2021) interpreted *Red Birds* by analyzing the absurdity of war and the role of international aid during critical discourse analysis under Huckins’s model of CDA.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study implements a qualitative method to explore the psychological impact of war trauma in selected post-9/11 and War on Terror narratives. The objective is to navigate pathway through which trauma is explored and aligned with memory studies in contemporary literature as a representation of the collective consciousness of Afghanis and Pakistanis during War on Terror. The research is conducted through a narrative analysis of novels after extracting quotes from specific fiction as data. The data is retrieved from the novels *Red Birds* (2018) and *The Blind Man’s Garden* (2013) in order to conceptualize trauma and trauma induced through memory in the main characters.

An analysis of archival material is conducted which is present in the form of electronic format as e-articles. To exhibit trauma through transmedial lens, e-articles are analyzed as secondary sources. The method of triangulation is adopted to relate the fictions with realities related to before and after 9/11 incident. It is further seen that these fictions relate to real documentation as cited in the discussion.

This research does not involve any human participants. Additionally, the study limits itself to the analysis of two novels and the interpretation of tales and perspectives of 9/11 trauma survivors.

## Theoretical framework

The printing press faced a decline as an ancient mnemotechnic because a broader audience gained access to written material, outsourcing their memory work. As an alternative, *transmedial memory* explores the roles of certain technologies and apparatuses that enable transmission of memory that is “triggered and shaped by mediating objects such as photographs, home videos, souvenirs, oral stories and written documents” (“Memory on the Move” 18). It is claimed that the holocaust in American historical consciousness cannot be well explained without a historical record or broadcast of 1978 TV mini-series *Holocaust*, Video Archive of Holocaust Testimonies, as videotaped in accounts of survivors, and the Holocaust Memorial Museum. Similarly, the 9/11 attacks have assumed a shape in the form of storytelling, documentaries, footage, films, and an annual day, the Day of Remembrance, which strengthens the fact that these attacks led the US army to invade Afghanistan and thrust forth its hegemonic control in Iraq. Further, social media is now termed a *new memory ecology* and *digital memory*

*ecology* and is utilized as a tool to address and relieve trauma. New meanings are deduced through creative fictional narratives and the projection of trauma through transmedial memory, its illustration, storage, and transmission of memory have been scoring targets in this age.

Memory, as suggested by Craps, does not exist as a property of separate human brains but as occurring in social communication, shaped by political scopes, tallied by different cultural traditions, and enabled by various media technologies (“Memory on the Move” 24). According to debates, memory studies extend the field of humanities and social sciences, thus evolving into various disciplines such as history, sociology, philosophy, psychology, and literary studies. This study will set sail to explore the mobility of memory in the chosen fictional narratives by settling the traumatizing reagents with memory studies. For Craps, such a commemorative model and the intersection of other distinct commemorative models may enable a forge of somatic empathy among communities beyond national and cultural hierarchical boundaries. Such notions are important in a geopolitical scenario of the contemporary state where “manifold transnational concerns, ranging from terrorism to global financial crisis, the threat to climate change, increasing numbers of migrants, stateless persons and refugees are occasioned by social, political, economic or environmental precarity” (“Memory on the Move” 6).

Accordingly, validating the critiques of Craps, Bond, Moses and Tomsy, the “global trauma economy” has a lot to do with cultural, political, economic, and discursive memorative practices in the globalized era. Memory is operated in cultural and social practices, and one cannot deny the possibility of socio-cultural enclosure when a community comes to terms with the past. Due to this reason, memory is structured to elevate the pains of history and the abrogation of claims to sanctify will be sufficient to mobilize the forces of war ... other lives ... not even qualify as sorrowful” (“Memory on the Move” 6). Lastly, Craps’ critical engagement with theorists, scholars and psychologists and internal critique while establishing his theoretical assumptions are instances of a testament to trauma theory that is paramount to identifying the sufferings and exploitation of individuals and communities by bringing it closer to wider public consciousness. It does not purport to the status quo or academic alibi of a region; rather, it serves to bridge the gap of unvoiced latter experiences of oppressed, denied populations and psychologically displaced people. He argues against “imperial hubris” and proposes the bridge of trauma theory as a possible inclination towards inquiry among others (Craps 145). Furthermore, as a Eurocentric bias, an attempt forward, just as this study proposes, trauma theory towards non – western *Other* seems to be pernicious for the Western traditions set by the members and sufferers of trauma and is termed as ‘one-sided focus on trauma’ (“Beyond Eurocentrism” 47) which is ethically addressed and rather termed as non-voyeuristic for non – western community; particularly the Afghanis and Pakistanis who not only faced trauma due to war on terror but also faced traumas linked with “the burden of famine, joblessness, legal exclusion, and differential experience to viciousness and demises” (Butler 25). Thus, based on these theoretical assumptions laid by Stef Craps, the present study will evaluate and interpret the novels *Red Birds* and *the Blind Man’s Garden*

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Memory is restored, regained, recalled, and repaired in one another form via different forms of media and technologies. In the contemporary evolution of memory studies, the “storage and transmission of memory (including childhood memories) ... are triggered and shaped by mediating objects such as photographs, home videos, souvenirs, oral stories and written documents” (“Memory on the Move”). Similarly, the wider horrific influences of disasters such as the Holocaust and 9/11 are traced through the transmedial memory as these mediating objects and technological gadgets such as television, smartphones, computers, and the internet act as catalysing agents in projecting the trauma of 9/11. This chapter traces the

trauma of 9/11 through transmedial memory in *Red Birds and The Blind Man's Garden*, along with real documentation of 9/11 as it is represented and illustrated in written documentation, including e-articles that are related to military actions taken against terrorism and non-fictional essays. Furthermore, this chapter examines the trauma of 9/11 that has crossed the borders over multiple decades through a comparative analysis of US and Pakistan forewords given in e-articles.

For Craps, quoting Maurice Halbwachs, “memory is indivisible from the social framework and linguistic framework that constitute it” (“Memory on the Move” 13). The social framework is indisputably the representation of historical consciousness that is anthropocentric. The linguistic framework puts forth an insight into the language of affected. Craps states that nowadays, memory studies research on the role of technologies to make the storage and transmission of memory possible. Transmedial memoryscape is not linked with a single medium; rather, it is the plurimedial networking of memory, which is dynamic and fluid (“Memory on the Move” 14). It offers an alternative way to have a critical gaze at the disastrous 9/11 event. The selected fictions are an Eastern memory of 9/11. It is observed that quite a few instances are widely discussed to relate the barbaric and audacious characteristics of antagonists and protagonists. Though these instances are few, they are clues to track the interaction of different media that transfer content from one medium to another. Before a critical analysis of the selected fiction, it is necessary to observe the functions of “‘ancient mnemotechnics’ and ‘new memory ecology’” (“Memory on the Move” 14). The printing press has helped many novice researchers analyze memory at work and how it has cast a spell on ancient mnemotechnics, such as print media, fictional and nonfictional works, articles, newspapers, etc. The widespread of authentic material encompasses the use of photographs and oral stories descending from ancestors. Other media also create an outlook on different cultural differences between Eastern and Western communities, such as through the speed of digitized social media, which Hoskins calls the “‘new memory ecology’ or ‘new memory’” (“Memory on the Move” 14). Craps et al. agree with Hoskins's views as written in *Medisation of Memory* as follows Media affect formation and reformation of shared or social memory in the contemporary age and the consequential reassessment of the nature and the very value of remembering (and forgetting), subject to technologies of and the discourses disseminated by the mass and other media. (“Memory on the Move” 14)

Whereas the personal recounts of haunted or pleasant memories in the form of scrapbooks, personal diaries, and written monologues are limited to personal consumption. Eventually, exposure to personal ambivalent events has evolved in a new world of *medisation*, and such memories “are increasingly embedded in the mediascape” (“Memory on the Move” 15). Such a *medisation of memory* has gained immense importance in the world of IT and technological advancement known as “omnimedial network” and it has simultaneously absorbed the human agency (“Memory on the Move” 15). This has enabled impoverished mobility of memory and sets forth the concept that our lives are rapidly digitized with all forms of existence, that is, “marked by regressions, hesitation, tensions and other hiccups that media memory studies must attend to” (“Memory on the Move” 15).

The essays like “Connected Memory: How Facebook Takes Charge of Your Past” by Jose van Dijck, “Embodiment of Memory: Toward an Existential Approach to the Culture of Connectivity” by Amand Lagerkvist, and “Metaphorical Memories of the Medieval Crusade after 9/11” by Brian Johnsrud are an embodiment of novice interest of researchers of memory studies who connect memory with the past and project them through digitized medium in a digital era. While digitalizing the memories and associating them with the present (either traumatic or pleasant ones), certain social platforms now have the “ability to construe and exploit rather than merely enable connections between users”; for example, the Facebook timeline has familiarised

a new dominant role to remember and seek ways to vent out anguished or relished feelings or how we see ourselves as individual and collective identity (“Memory on the Move” 16). According to Craps et al., Dijck’s idea behind memory being “transmediated into byproducts of algorithms that serves as connectivity engines ‘highlights the peer-to-peer communication in the digitized world’” (“Memory on the Move” 16). Such online social interaction (which Dijck calls automated connectivity) constructs data generation that can be either of traumatic events such as 9/11, or a resistance towards male chauvinism as Facebook accounts during the fourth wave of feminism.

The essay, “Metaphorical Memories of the Medieval Crusades after 9/11”, dissects transmedial mode of memories of 9/11 and post 9/11 in media ecology. This involves a direct reference to the 9/11 historical event and war on terror in Afghanistan and Iraq. Through Johnsrud, Craps et al. have eventually analysed the condemnation of widespread and marginalised perspectives in academia, that is, however, foretold through digital media. With historical authenticity, Craps et al. have established the view that a wide population of America have twisted the historical authority with a self-claimed historical recognition with the help of digital media. This chapter, therefore, as pertinent to the texts under study, refers to the experiences of both Americans and Afghans during the time period of war on terror.

The selected novels are discussed under the lens of trauma theory by Craps, but the trauma induced in the veins of Pakistanis and Afghans can be traced not only via print media but also in digitized form. The novel directly narrates the use of electronic gadgets to escape the atrocities of the war and bombardments, and television footage to intensify trauma after visualizing torturous actions. There is a forced reference to NAT GEO and Capital Talk that has referred to actual happenings in Afghanistan. The backdrop of writing such eye-opening novels is, nevertheless, a reply to US President George W Bush's proclamation Americans do not yet have the distance of history. But our responsibility to history is already clear: to answer these attacks and rid the world of evil (Johnsrud 195).

Therefore, the novels are a distant fictional narrative recounting as a response to the above statement. The *responsibility to history* analyses the factors that have triggered the attacks and equitable reactions. Both Hanif and Aslam have sought to quantify the number of attacks during the War on Terror with a non-linear plot and events that led forth terror and trauma not only in the lives of sufferers but also among fellow citizens as readers and visual witnesses.

### **Analysis of *Red Birds* through Transmedial Memory**

Hanif’s *Red Birds* builds a narrative strand of transmedial memoryscape and propagates trauma in one unified plot, i.e., the kidnapping of Bro Ali, who is caught as a witness and tally person of US-based shelling in Afghanistan. He is found to be the one sending signals through transistors to dislocate Mirage flying in his desert to bombard already shelled areas or UN camps to banish locals from the world. The US Government has tracked the electronic gadget being used by Bro Ali, and he is forced to leave his Mother Dear, Father Dear, his only brother Momo, and his pet dog Mutt. He is handed over to the US Army, residing in the hangar as “who can say no to a son”, and to Americans. The whole plot is woven around this abduction that creates a void and traumatic influence in the lives of his loved ones. Further, the NGOs' reports made by Flowerbody on traumatic upheavals among the locals are a critique of Western trauma industry. Momo’s oral stories illustrate his lifetime experience, and Mutt’s memory strands immerse the readers in the thought process of minority cultures. This single-handed investigation against the locals lead to a tragedy that yields multifarious dimensions in the cultural and national interests of the US government in the desert: Afghanistan. Their interests in extracting oil and confiscating

electronic advancements from the locals leave behind traces of the tragic demise of local cultural and national identity. Tragically, Johnsrud's use of the metaphor of the crusades after 9/11 has symbolically referred to crusade-related films, documentaries, novels (fiction), nonfiction essays, and television shows that have proliferated after war on terror. For Eastern scholars, 9/11 attacks were carried out by *Jihadists or Mujahideen*, whereas these attacks for Western Supremacists, such as Tyerman, were planned by 8-10 hijackers and non-academics from the Al-Qaeda clan. The war on terror is a Crusade to end the 'clash of civilizations' on a humanitarian basis (Johnsrud 195). Consequently, this war and the attacks are conceived as a new crusade- a social and cultural memorial strand as a crusade of medieval times that linger and is ready to be relieved in the dissected of hemispheres that is East and West (Johnsrud 197). Therefore, terms *history, culture, and memory* are interrelated.

### **Analysis of *The Blind Man's Garden* through Transmedial Memory**

Aslam's *The Blind Man's Garden* entails multiple instances where technological gadgets are used for communication purposes, exploitation of torture and video tapings. Mikal and Jeo, after embarking on their journey to Peshawar, have connected their familial bonds and revive their memories of togetherness through cellular and corded phones. Jeo's fragile letters, diaries, and written material are forms of recounting personal traumatic memories. These are forms of transmedial memory. Aslam has also jotted down examples of tortures where people are murdered, amputated, harassed, throats slit, tortured via electric shocks, splashes of icy chilly water, and are tied and beaten in dark cells. These tortures are explored and reoriented in this novel by the author to equip the nation with first-hand knowledge and secure national history and sacrifices. One horrific instance of tragedy that has lured the consciousness of the reader is when Mikal witnesses the fear of being videotaped by the passing satellite during the throat-slitting of an innocent civilian. Mikal's index finger is amputated because of the fear of getting shot by this brave man who, as the readers can judge, has come into the deadliest territory to save the innocent civilians of Afghanistan. Thus, both literary representations illustrate the "memory's creative versatility" that enables the readers to experience the torment of the past (Johnsrud 199). Through these fictions, trauma has been recalled in the minds of the readers pertinent to the impacts of war on terror. The memories of 9/11 and tormented livelihood has been projected in a fictional container which is perceived as globally envisioned series of violence and mass destruction.

### **Analysis of non-fictional works and representations:**

Historically, the metaphor *Crusade* is derived from the speech of US President Bush that this Crusade, this War on Terrorism will take time to eradicate the evil and protect freedom that is for "Muslim states and organizations a medieval form of living a life filled with tyranny and intolerance" (Johnsrud 200). The series of beheadings of Muslims, the suicide bombings, and the bomb shelling is a "somewhat sadistic, dark and medieval vision" of the future for Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld (Johnsrud 201). It is indeed grim for the East that US military defence and action is quoted as a metaphor - medieval. Further, Rumsfeld's inquiries into the 9/11 attacks put forth his enmity against the East as "tactical and they must be met with new medieval sensibilities of our own". He further delivers, "our military must be more mobile, its communication infrastructure more adaptable and flexible" (Johnsrud 202). US Lieutenant General William G. Boydin in 2003 has conveyed in the Church about the War on Terror as a "holy war against Satan in Iraq and Afghanistan" (Johnsrud 202). The American military has called themselves "'Christian Crusaders' and 'Pork Eating Crusaders'" whose mission is to eradicate the Muslims and the religion Islam from the planet as both spread terrorism and is a threat marked on the globe (Johnsrud 202). Major Ellie in *Red Birds* reflects such stances taken by the US army

and US government. This thought process is not bound to the military and Government in action since 9/11. Literature and films have also crafted metaphorical resemblances and actual clippings of medieval crusades.

On the contrary, in Islamic diction, as Sayyid Qutts narrated, “Crusades is a term used when a war is being fought as a result of an offence that includes ‘political and economic hegemony against Islam by those who call themselves or are in the Christian tradition” (Johnsrud 204) whereas Riley Smith contradicts this narration by providing the facts that such crusades are not registered in print media until 1980 and oral history is bound to be in printed form. Here, it is stressed that Eastern cultural and religious identities are found to be contradictory in Western academia.

Robert Spenser’s (a typical anti-Islamic author) *The Political Incorrect Guide to Islam (and the Crusades)* – New York Best Seller and Stark’s *God’s Battalion The Case for Crusades* both are indicative of the fact that there is a religious and national clash between Islam and Christianity by debating on the historical continuity of possible debates based on the cultural knowledge and historical consciousness of Eastern and Western ideology. Spenser’s website ‘Jihad Watch’ and his works, such as *Complete Idiot’s Guide*, and *For Dummies* are few books that demonstrate “xenophobic, anti-Islamic, anti-terrorist and racist beliefs that contradict with the contemporary literary writers by calling Muslims as *Jihad terrorists*” (Johnsrud 200). This portrays a dual picture of Islamic nations and Islam as a religion. These works, ironically, illustrates the fought crusades with a detailed note of participation and anticipation of Muslims along with anti-Muslim group. The works abhor the Muslim nation and dwell on the fact: “Today’s Jihad terrorists have the same motives and goals as the foes of the Crusades” (Johnsrud 210). Other than Spense and Stark, Huntington’s *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* also debated the clash between Eastern and Western civilizations, bearing 9/11 trauma in mind and the extensive adaptability of Western ideology by Eastern civilization; that is conceptually not true and against the integrity of Muslim Ummah.

### Facebook Reviews on 9/11

Electronically, social media and internet have secured memories related to 9/11 and War on Terror trauma. In September 2011, Mark Zuckerberg’s Facebook “signalled a transformation of social networking into connective memory tool” (Dijck 151). Zuckerberg calls the Facebook timeline an interface of one’s life on a solo electronic sheet. Craps et al. agree with the fact that Facebook has created “‘an intricate knot of self-expression, recollection, and self-promotion’, ‘an online persona’, ‘source of connectedness between individuals’ and later ‘a tool for storytelling and narrative self- presentation’” (Dijck 151). As a transmedial source of commemorative connectedness, this search engine has gradually promoted public and personal updates of memories related to the past that are categorized as social memory and a collective experience of a group. Van Dijck calls this strategy “‘life-mining, identifying, analysing, coding and projecting social events’” on databases. This data then becomes a “‘social memory’ and ‘connective memory’” (Dijck 153). Other social mediums include Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Google Plus, which connect the past with the present and lives into narratives. As a primer, Facebook has the potential to engage and communicate feelings on a massive scale, and by bridging the aperture between East and West. By tracing the connected memories of the past of 9/11, researchers can reveal the trauma lurking in the 20th-century millennium. Craps, as an editor, highlights Andrew Hoshkins, a British media scholar, precise statement as contemporary memory is thoroughly imbued by a technological unconscious schema where there appears an evolution of technology with memory. Memory is progressively and dynamically organized via unified digital practice and the connections of technological networks... the rapidly growing

digital workshop of memory not only works in a continuity but also is a unique shaper of a novice and unique mediatized age of memory (Dijck 166).

Contrary to Eastern viewpoint of 9/11, the following are a few pages present on Facebook that have registered the actual incident, their shared opinion of the 9/11 attacks and memories of trauma they faced in the United States of America:

1. Remembering 9/11
2. We will never forget. Remember 9/11
3. ABC News
4. 7 News/ 9/11

### **Real Evidence from e-articles Registering 9/11 Trauma**

Lastly, the e-articles are handful resources to register 9/11 trauma and remedial actions taken by the Pakistani Government in 2025, with their earliest possible aid to Afghanistan for innocent civilians. The first e-article under study is published on March 4, 2025, and is entitled “Terror in Pakistan emanates from Afghan Soil”. Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry, the Chief Military and Director General of ISPR have taken their vows to dismantle terrorists' networking to secure the safety and freedom of the Pakistani nation. He has further elaborated on the concerns of the army chief who firmly knew about “the facilitation and unrestrained activities of proscribed organizations” active in Afghanistan. Aslam has developed this plot within *The Blind Man’s Garden*. The military actions against terrorism condemn suicide bombing, massive killing of citizens, and interference with Afghans from the Pak-Afghan border. In 2021, the mission to eradicate terrorist groups was at its peak. ISPR Chief states Pakistan has been engaging with the Afghan temporary government for the past two years, directly asking them to prevent their soil from being used for terrorism.

Undeterred and firm in faith, the Pakistan military agency has consistently emphasized banishing the traitors and punishing the criminals for their heinous crimes. It is reported that this year 59,775 successful intelligence-based operations (IBOs) are carried out against the terrorist groups while young boys and girls are used against the state, and 383 officers and personnel are martyred.

The second e-article under study entitled “Afghan Taliban target several points in Pakistan in retaliation for air strikes: Afghan Defense Ministry”, is published in Business Recorder on December 28, 2024. Akin to details, last year, the Pakistani military has bombarded terrorist’s hideouts through aerial bombardment. Afghan authorities have retaliated and targeted Islamic militants in Islamabad. This e-article further informs the readers about the attacks from the Afghan soil as illegitimately planned.

Another e-article entitled “Pakistan air strikes killed 46 in Afghanistan: Taliban claims” is published in December 2024. The casualties included mostly women and children; two to three houses are burnt, with 8 people killed. The strike clearly illustrated the rage and aggression of Taliban authorities. As the military updated, one Pakistani soldier is martyred during the search operation. However, after a greater loss, both countries have agreed on having a bilateral relationship to strengthen trade and economic ties. The latest e-article on “Islamic State Group claims suicide bombing of Afghan Bank” has further escalated tension between the two states. The prevailing violence again lingers on the soil of Afghanistan, killing 5 Taliban government employees while the time of collecting their salaries. ISI marked the dead ones as “Taliban militia”.

A contrary picture of 9/11 attacks and trauma induced due to this event is highlighted in BBC news. BBC news update, “Afghan conflict: US and Taliban sign deal to end 18-year war” is published in Feb 2020, that states a negotiation between Afghanistan and Pakistan as a “long and hard journey” and “time to bring our people back home” as stated by Donald Trump.

According to the article, Taliban have put their efforts into signing an agreement to end the war, as Trump has promised to finish the war with immediate actions. More US military officials have died during this operation. In August 2021, the e-article “Taliban are back – what next for Afghanistan” is aired when the Taliban became victorious after 20 years of war. Killing 3,000 people in the 9/11 attacks, US officials and military agencies have identified that the attacks are led by Al-Qaeda and Osama Bin Laden (1996). It further states that US – Taliban pacts to resolve the conflict did not prove to be fruitful as Afghan civilians and forces were continuously targeted and assassinated. The following timeline intensively signals the rapid actions that are taken by the US military immediately after 9/11

11 September 2001-	attacks on the World Trade Centre, the Pentagon and the field of Pennsylvania
7 October 2001-	first air strikes on the soil of Afghanistan
13 November 2001-	The Downfall of Kabul
26 January 2004-	The rise of the New Constitution in America
7 December 2004-	Presidency of Hamid Karzai
May 2006-	UK troops positioned in Helmand
17 Feb 2009-	Barack Obama’s in power
2 May 2011-	The assassination of Osama bin Laden
23 April 2013-	The tragic demise of mullah Omar
28 December 2014-	NATO terminates combat operations
2015-	Reinvigoration of Taliban
25 January 2019-	The announcement of the Death Toll
29 Feb 2020-	UN pact with Taliban
13 April 2021-	The final withdrawal
16 August 2021-	Taliban resurgence

To conclude, mediating memories in contemporary times has become a trend of this century. The role prescribed to digital and non-digital media has given a vent to anguished and penetrating feelings of Americans and non-Westerners related to the attacks. Not only this, but the traumatic phases they faced during and after these attacks are discussed through fictional representation and non-fiction. The Western outlook of 9/11 attacks is also discussed. On the contrary, South Asian writers, like Aslam and Hanif, have touched the sensitive core of the Muslim Ummah through imagery and description of physical and psychological torture related to the war on terror. The chapter, therefore, has investigated the transmedial turnover in memory studies affected by trauma.

## CONCLUSION

This comprehensive research traces how literature has resonated with the larger conflicts behind a devastating event, which in turn resulted in shaping the world with binaries of marginalized and dominant groups, people of color and Whites, Us and Them, and the resurgence of humanity in American imagination versus the War on Terror with the terrorizing agencies. There is a corpus of Western literature largely dealing with the conflict between trauma and political authoritative indulgence toward building a harmonious state, but it is hardly found that Eastern literature can do justice to the allegations of the West in the wake of such binaries. Therefore, *Red Birds* and *The Blind Man’s Garden* are selected to do this justice. These texts have not only critiqued the Western interventions but also voiced the pains and mourning of laymen during the War on Terror.

The research not only discusses how technologies and gadgets are used by people of color but also elaborates findings and histories related to the true event of 9/11 that are supported by e-articles and e-interviews of the US president. It is observed that the terrorizing agencies are brought forth for trial by the Pakistani army and American coups during war on terror. As examined in the research, the civilians are dying untimely deaths, and discrimination of rights among fellow citizens is observed due to the ongoing war. Jeo, Mikal and Bro Ali are examples of such victims. The impact of war is dreadful, as pessimism and nihilism lurked as a backdrop of these novels.

It is proposed that trauma can be recovered and offers resilience, as it is read that by the end of the novels as in *Red Birds*, communal harmony is figured out with a unification of a family of four and Mother Dear praised Allah Almighty with His blessed names. On the other hand, in *The Blind Man's Garden*, the widow of Jeo, Naheed marries Mikal and reappears while making chapattis for her family and son. The plights through which the characters passed and evolved cannot be forgotten, but there is a promise. Violence seeps into memories, and memories in turn shape the world. Aslam's and Hanif's characters are more than a picture of political conflict; they embody a bond of love, faith, and communal feelings. As shaped by political scars, both novels shadow a long war conflict that is stained by blood that descends to deepen the memory. Aslam portrays how the legacy of extremism is passed down to generations with a longing for redemption. Hanif mirrors the psychical disorientation through his bitter satire. His characters depict the themes of existentialism, alienation, and displacement. Through these narratives, it is stressed that colonial oppression and racial conflicts are witnessed across cultural boundaries. Trauma lingers in generations, memories and ruins. These works seem to suggest that, amidst hopelessness, there is still a ray of hope, the meaning of life, and connections with humanity, as nationalism lies at the center of any state.

The previous research conducted on Western fiction and nonfiction has a clear gaze on Western sensibility about selective traumatic events, including the World Wars, and the 9/11 attacks. It is investigated that there is no research found where the integration of memory studies and trauma studies is found to be implemented on Pakistani novels. There is research on the selected fiction but none of them argue on the traumatizing agents in the lives of Muslim Ummah and in relation to Stef Craps' proposed trauma theory. Their plights can be traced in Palestinian literature as well, where massive genocide is narrated as witnessed. The research can offer its applicable dimensions for Palestinian literature as well.

This research, therefore, opens an interdisciplinary pathway for researchers across the globe, as Pakistani fiction can also be evaluated under trauma theory. The insights from the present study can be explored in multifarious aspects while strengthening a deeper understanding of cultural and media studies. This study has the potential to refer to future research and contribute to trauma studies, as trauma theory proposes “an essential apparatus for understanding ‘the real world’ and even has potential for changing it for the better” (“Beyond Eurocentrism: Trauma theory in Global Age” 101).

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