

A Review Of Post-9/11 Fiction: Reflecting A New Era In Global Literature



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Abstract: *This paper focuses on discourses and themes from fiction produced by major authors in American, Global, Western and Pakistani literature in the aftermath of 9/11. The paper examines if the unprecedented attacks on the Twin Towers on September 11, transformed the global geo-political scenario; it also, gave birth to a new genre i.e., post-9/11 literature. The study presents a critical review of post-9/11 approaches, cultural representations, and reflections in English fiction and how this incident moulded and confounded the relationship between various religious and national identities in present-day world history. The study analyzes the western discourse's fixing of Muslims and Islam as the embodiment of violence and terrorism and a counter-narrative to the neo-imperialistic discourse of misrepresentation of Muslims by the diasporic literati generally from the South Asian region and specifically from Pakistan. Pakistani novelists through their works respond to the complex challenges faced by Muslims, who are stereotyped, marginalized, and suspected in the light of new identity construct on the basis of race, religion, and ethnicity in the wake of 9/11 developments. Hence, Pakistani works present a nuanced perception of the complexities of the post-9/11 politics and the far-reaching repercussions on a global level. Notable authors' works reflect the victims' experiences of pain, loss, guilt, trauma, complexities of emotional, cultural and political repercussions, fragmentation in society, uncertain chaotic situations, confusion and disorientation experienced by characters at large in the aftermath of 9/11.*

Keywords: Post-9/11, identities, neo-imperialistic, diasporic, stereotype, marginalization

Introduction

In this paper, the focus is on discourses, and themes from fiction produced by major authors in American/Global/Western and Pakistani literature in the aftermath of 9/11. American post-9/11 fiction by authors such as Don DeLillo, Ken Kalfus, Amy Waldman, and John Updike, and the counteracting standpoints of global writers such as J. M. Coetzee, Orhan Pamuk, Laila Halaby, and then Pakistani novelists' post-9/11 fiction, are reviewed and examined. According to Kristiaan Versluys,

post-9/11 fiction "fall under four categories: the novel of recuperation, the novel of first-hand witnessing, the great New York novel, and the novel of the outsider" (65). Aroosa Kanwal sets up two main categories for the analysis of post-9/11 fiction: "a major genre of "post-9/11 fiction" and a sub-genre that retrospectively serves as "prologues to post-9/11 fiction" (7). Thus, one can argue that the unprecedented attacks on the world superpower and the fall of the twin towers on September 11, on the one hand, transformed the global geo-political

scenario; on the other, it gave birth to a new genre i.e., post-9/11 literature.

The tragic event marks a turning point in world history that profoundly impacted various facets of society, including literature. The literary intelligentsia did not remain silent and rendered their viewpoint in writings and expressions and thus a new discourse ensues in literature in the form of fiction, drama, poetry, and rhetorical discussions in the wake of 9/11. Seyedeh Robabeh Zabihzadeh *et al* observe that in terms of genre, mostly, initial literary responses to the 9/11 incident emerged in the form of “essays, brief personal reminiscences and poetry” with the main intention being to capture the events and respond to them emotionally. Nevertheless, long memoirs and novels have appeared over the years with more nuanced approaches to the tragedy (50). In an interview with Amy Waldman in 2011, the interviewer Eve Gerber apprises, “I read that, according to Bowker’s Books in Print database, more than 150 works of fiction and nearly 1,500 works of non-fiction have been written that draw their subject matter from 9/11” (n.p.). Shouket Tilwani and M. Keezhatta argue that a number of books written about the 9/11 event, specifically, underscore the life of Muslims and their socio-cultural suppression in all walks of life, thereby alluding to an implied domination, bringing much worse consequences in the shape of identity crises, othering and Islamophobia than the post-colonial aftermath (340).

This paper critically reviews post-9/11 approaches, cultural representations, and reflections in English fiction and how this incident has moulded and confounded the relationship between various religious and national identities in present-day world history. Particularly after the attacks, many Muslim Americans felt excluded and dismissed from the collective representation of grief in America. Lori Peek indicates the same issue:

The collective grief that Americans experienced was widely viewed as legitimate, normal, expected, and something to be taken seriously. Muslim Americans found themselves outside the bounded territory that separated the ‘legitimate sufferers’ from others after 9/11. [.

.] Their grief was dismissed as illegitimate; one could say it was invalidated. As a consequence, their suffering remained largely invisible to the rest of America. (178)

Moreover, the western discourse after 9/11 fixed Muslims and Islam as the embodiment of violence and terrorism which Abdul Rashid *et al* describe in these words:

Since the incident of 9/11, the identity of Muslims underwent serious challenges of misrepresentation by the discursively constructed discourse of terrorism against Islam and the Muslims. [. .] Muslims in the western discourse have been represented as a nation that loves violence instead of peace. Quran has been misrepresented as a text, which urges its followers to violence. (68)

Thus, Muslim writers felt the urge to unveil the truth about Muslims and Islam, as Asma Zahoor accentuates: “the 9/11 incident pinned down the ‘truth’ as a main word in motivating the Muslim narratives. Writers and editors suddenly felt the compulsion to be more factual and insightful of the real conditions circling being ‘Muslim’ or Islam, in general” (53). And with their factual narrative “Muslim writers became less foreign and people become more familiar with their works” (Zahoor 54). Hence, according to Zahoor, “[m]ore new generation immigrant writers are shaping the way their Muslim identity is retold through their artistic craft” (54).

This study limits its investigation to the evolution of post-9/11 fiction and how the American and global novelists depicted and are depicting the direct and indirect after-effects of the tragic event on the lives of people around the globe. Zainab Fadhil notes: “The 9/11 American catastrophe, with its fluctuated results, has turned into a veritable dig of crude material for inventive writers, both inside and outside the United States” (107). The novelists cannot remain silent to describe the unprecedented repercussions of the tragic event, as Alizeh Kohari in a BBC News report, asserts: “The 9/11 attacks shook the world and the way we think about it. It makes sense for novelists to feature it in their works” (n.p.). M. Tufail Chandio claims that “Post-9/11 fiction emerged as a genre to

represent the strained circumstances ensued in the wake of the attacks” (2). So, in response to the complexity of the post-9/11 world, a new wave of post-9/11 fiction has emerged, and the genre has evolved continually since its emergence, and thus “with the passage of time fiction commenced to respond and thus a fresh new genre of Post-9/11 Fiction came in the limelight” (Chandio 10). Reflecting the transforming global landscape, post-9/11 fiction renders a unique lens through which the writers examine the cultural, social, economic, political, religious and psychological repercussions of the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent ‘war on terror’. Sonia Baelo-Allué notes, “9/11 fiction shows that the most popular novels among academics deal with domestic, psychic trauma, and are mostly unconcerned with the broader global context and the political consequences of the events” (167).

Moreover, Post-9/11 fiction predominantly portrays the psychological and emotional aftermath of the terrorist attacks, and authors illustrate the trauma, anguish, and loss endured by individuals and communities within and beyond the borders of America. The fiction depicts the traumatized sufferers and shattered psyches of the victims whose lives are affected directly and indirectly by the 9/11 attacks. After the collapse of the towers, initially, “a book that shot to the top of the bestseller list was *The Lovely Bones* by Alice Sebold [narrated from heaven by a murdered child] - signifying, perhaps, a general fascination with trauma” (Kohari n.p.).

Additionally, in a world that has changed since September 11, post-9/11 fiction addresses the issues of race, religion, and identity. The attacks raised issues of terrorism and Islam to the fore of global discourse, fostering Islamophobic reactions, hatred and prejudice against Muslim communities in the western world. Post-9/11 fiction merging real-life events, records, and testaments to construct a sense of legitimacy and closeness, often blurs the boundaries between fiction and reality. Hence, reflecting the complexities of a changed world and the deep impact of the fall of the twin towers on literature and society, post-9/11 fiction offers a lens with

which to capture political, social, cultural, psychological, and emotional implications of political issues like identity crisis, racial profiling, traumatic memories, and human sufferings around the globe. Thus, post-9/11 fiction reflects holistic global perspectives, representing voices from different regions, nations, and cultures i.e., from the United States, South Asia and the rest of the world, which appends depth and richness to the genre. The paper, henceforth, presents a review of the fiction written around the globe in the aftermath of 9/11.

Post-9/11 American Fiction

In the wake of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and the fall of the Twin Towers, a post-9/11 American fiction (a genre of literature emerges) wherein authors such as Don DeLillo, Ken Kalfus, Amy Waldman, John Updike and others grapple with the complexities of emotional, cultural and political repercussions of the seminal event on the changing American society. [Pankaj Mishra](#) states: “On September 11, terrorists from the Middle East who destroyed American immunity to large-scale violence and chaos also forced many American novelists to reconsider the value of their work and its relation to the history of the present” (4). The novelists portray the psychological and emotional impacts of the attacks on people and communities indicating that the study of trauma and its effects has been a prominent theme in post-9/11 American fiction. In the face of devastating tragedy and its aftermath, characters in these novels represent the victims’ experiences of pain, loss, guilt complex and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and portray how trauma undulates through relationships and substantially impacts an individual's perspective.

In a transformed world, another prominent theme in post-9/11 American fiction and discourse is the exploration of identity, the complexities of racism, ‘us’ and ‘othering’, religiosity, and the subsequent escalated tension and discriminatory attitudes against minority communities, specifically Muslims. Humaira Riaz contends that “[d]enouncement of Islam and Muslims appear important means to

reproduce and rationalize racism as an expression of extended anti-Islam prejudice in modern fabrication in these texts” (V). Instead of contemplating the risks of moral binarism and globalized power structures, [Elena Ortells Montón](#) argues that “most 9/11 fiction has circumscribed itself to interpreting these horrendous occurrences in terms of particular traumas, attempting to transform the painful events into ‘narrative memories’ of individual suffering” (18). The following lines present a brief critical analysis of the painful incident and subsequent human sufferings as depicted in eminent American fiction.

DeLillo’s *Falling Man*

In *Falling Man*, Don DeLillo uses the perspectives of a small ensemble of characters in order to examine the immediate and long-lasting effects of the 9/11 attacks in the shape of isolation, loss, estrangement and grief. Juan David Gómez argues that in the novel, “the background of 9/11, the foreground of enervated and disoriented characters, and the story of one of the terrorists is supposed to coalesce and comment on the larger impact of the attacks” (153). The overwhelming impact of the terrorist attacks, as stated by Laila Ahamad, “changed New York literally and conceptually, Americans struggled to reshape the manner in which they viewed New York and America” (19). *Falling Man*’s portrayal of the effects of 9/11 on the domestic sphere, and the fictional experiences of characters, the tense beginning of the text, and repeated narration of similar occurrences, written and rewritten, according to Jesse Kavadlo “becomes analogous to the repeated footage of the planes destroying the towers on television, and the way in which the trauma victim relives his pain endlessly” (48). DeLillo “confines himself to recording the emotional and existential struggles of 9/11 survivors” (Mishra 5). Neither romantic nor emotional, the reason for the sexual relationship between the main characters in *Falling Man* can be ascribed to the occurrences caused by 9/11, as Arin Keeble notes that 9/11 was stalked by this named ‘terror sex’ and describes it as “the idea that New York, gripped by collective trauma, was experiencing heightened sexual activity through

a desperate need for human contact and intimacy in the immediate aftermath of the attacks” (358). As 9/11 marks a paradigm shift in worldwide geopolitics, David Brauner compares it to the Holocaust which became the defining incident of the twentieth century, like, “[i]n *Falling Man*, too, DeLillo at times represents reactions to the trauma of 9/11 that echo those experienced by Holocaust survivors, real and fictional” (75).

In addition, *Falling Man* infers to the supremacy of American narratives, as Joseph M. Conte delineates that “[c]onsidering 9/11 as a turn in narrative plot, DeLillo contends that at the millennium the world narrative belonged to ‘the power of American culture to penetrate every wall, home, life, and mind’” (565). Further, the shock of the incident was undoubtedly greater for authors who had been entrenched deep in what DeLillo in *Falling Man* calls the “narcissistic heart of the west” (Mishra 5). One key theme of the narrative is resistance to the cultural domination of Western media, “especially for fundamentalist Islam, which is one crux of the story” (Conte 565). Debopriya Banerjee notes, “DeLillo’s passing acknowledgement of the lurking presence of the Other within one’s self is nothing more than an effervescent moment of literary poignancy” (53). *Falling Man*, Mubarak Altwaiji states, also represents “the state’s attitude towards issues of Arab Muslims, terrorism, Islam and mechanisms of fighting terrorism” (64). However, Humaira Riaz argues “DeLillo does not portray Muslim characters as mouthpieces to expose Islamic faith and Muslims as threat. Rather he describes American characters as victims of 9/11 who are completely under stress after witnessing the horrific sights” (186). The novel reflects “the national major issue of countering terrorism which lies in the depth of the people’s psyche and becomes the most popular subject matter in this category of American fiction” (Altwaiji 69).

Amy Waldman’s *The Submission*

The narration begins with a jury deciding on a memorial for the victims of a catastrophic terrorist assault in Manhattan, and they are shocked to learn that the anonymous architect is an American Muslim - named Mohammad Khan and his selection, [Sudipta Datta](#) states, “rocks a

divided and threatened country” (n.p.). *The Submission*, according to Suhaan Kiran Mehta, “explores the fallout of a Muslim architect winning a competition for designing a memorial for 9/11 victims” (30). Baelo-Allué asserts *The Submission* combines “the global and the local, the numbing of psychological trauma with the polyphony of cultural trauma. It is anchored in both the domestic and the personal, but it also acknowledges globalization and how it impacts all different types of identities” (169). The novel distinctly categorized among illustrations of literature enthused by the cataclysm, “portrays the lives of Americans and non-Americans and people following different religions such as Jews, Christians and Muslims, reminding the reader that what happened has universal dimensions” (201-02), remarks Betül Ateşçi Koçak. The book uncovers how “9/11 affected the collective unconsciousness of the Americans. They took this incident as a wound never to be recovered thus leading the American nation into the state of Islamophobia” (Khushi & Rashid 97). *The Submission* indicates a disadvantageous position of Muslims in America as victims of Islamophobia, alienation and violence against them (Khushi & Rashid 97). The novel implies loss of sense of civil rights against Muslims in America, Khushi & Rashid uphold that “Waldman in spite of being an American writer challenges the American stance against Muslims and asserts the re-examination of the American sense of community cohesion and integration policies for Muslims” (97). Zabihzadeh *et al* believe that “*The Submission* deals with the trauma of 9/11 and the PTSD that the characters suffered from over the years after the occurrence of the event” (51).

Ken Kalfus’s *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country*

A Disorder Peculiar to the Country, with its incisive and biting satire of American life during the Bush presidency, establishes Ken Kalfus as one of the most daring and gifted contemporary writers. In the novel, Katherina Dodou notes, that “satire is made the operating principle for examining the changes that 9/11 wrought in American civic life” (1). The novel, Eman Saud

Thannoon maintains, “is written as a parody against the bad circumstances post-9/11 attacks, reflecting the politics of the United States within the era of terrorism and aftermaths” (66). According to Sylvia Brownrigg, the plot of *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country* reveals that “ISLAMIC jihadists may hate Americans, but that hatred pales in comparison with what some husbands and wives feel for each other in the throes of divorce. Such is the promisingly dark premise of Ken Kalfus’s new novel, which begins in New York on the morning of Sept. 11, 2001” (31). Kalfus chronicles the ghastly divorce of two New Yorkers who work as professionals and have two young children. The narrative sets the familial conflicts against the backdrop “of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, the war in Afghanistan and the invasion of Iraq” (Brownrigg 31). The spiteful divorce of the two central characters unfolds “the satirical representation of the collapsing Twin Towers: increased governmental control, ethnic profiling and the encroachment of civil rights; anthrax mailings; the FBI’s relentless chasing after perpetrators; the unpredictability of the stock market; the War on Terror; and the wars against Afghanistan and Iraq” (Dodou 1). Mishra argues that “Kalfus has no interest in trying to recreate a pre-9/11 ‘innocence’. Rather, he wishes to explore what it means to be an American in a world shaped by American cultural, financial and military institutions” (6).

John Updike’s *Terrorist*

Terrorist, according to Mita Banerjee “is the story of a young Arab American, who is persuaded by his local imam to commit a terrorist attack” (15). After the 9/11 events in New York, Humaira Riaz states, America’s perception of Islam has undoubtedly worsened. Updike’s novel *Terrorist* provides a precise illustration of how American authors tend to view Islam as a monolithic, evil religion (149). Peter Herman observes that Updike accused of racial profiling, tells “us that terrorism is the violence of an Other; it is illegitimate violence perpetrated from an illegitimate position” (691-92), and Updike conceives “*Terrorist* as both an exploration of the roots of Islamic terrorism and as a critique of post-9/11 discourse” (699-700).

Updike implies that we “may once more have become enamored with the hues of whiteness; and we may be enamored with the hues of (true) whiteness because all other hues have become suspect” (Banerjee 16), and thus “Arab Americans are being denaturalized; and they are denaturalized through a calling into question of their whiteness” (Banerjee 17). Likewise, Maryam Salehnia asserts that “Updike focuses on the Orientalist and Neo-Orientalist binary opposition of ‘the Self’/ ‘the Other’, represented by Jack and Ahmad, in order to demonstrate and justify the claimed superiority of the ‘the West’ (or ‘Israel’ here) over ‘the Orient’” (484). Updike conforms to “the transforming world; a world which had headed for division, the division between the West and the East” (Salehnia 486).

Non-American Global Post-9/11 Fiction

Notable authors from beyond the USA. such as J. M. Coetzee, Laila Halaby and Orhan Pamuk among others, couldn’t remain silent about the far-reaching consequences of the 9/11. Their works reflect the repercussions of the event on individual lives, societies, religious and cultural institutions, and the changing world.

J. M. Coetzee *Elizabeth Costello* and *Diary of a Bad Year*

Referring to the implied representation of 9/11 in Coetzee’s works, Kohari asserts that “Teju Cole, author of *Open City*, says his 9/11 novel is *Elizabeth Costello* by J M Coetzee - although it has nothing to do with 9/11 at all” (n.p.). Dolores Collellmir states that in Coetzee’s “*Diary of a Bad Year*, shame is especially associated with the citizens of the countries that attacked Iraq and subscribed to Guantanamo Bay. Coetzee denounces the situation of those men in orange suits, shackled and hooded, shuffling about like zombies behind the barbed wire of Guantanamo Bay” (48). Further, Coetzee approaches the problems of the modern world and the fundamentals of human existence from an ethical standpoint in *Diary of a Bad Year* (Collellmir 50). Kinga Jęczmińska is of the opinion that *Diary of a Bad Year* is an unorthodox book that exploits its tripartite structure to call into question the authority of a

singular perspective. One may say that the novel presents a pessimistic view of the main protagonist on social, political, ethical, and scientific issues in the contemporary world (85) after 9/11.

Laila Halaby’s *Once in a Promised Land*

Laila Halaby, born in Beirut to an American mother and a Jordanian father, has lived most of her life in Arizona. Pauline Homsí Vinson notes that “Laila Halaby’s novel, *Once in a Promised Land*, is a story about what it is like to be Arab in America after the devastating attacks of 9/11. It is also a moving tale of lost hope and stunted potential” (n.p.). Also, *Once in a Promised Land* “explores how individual identities and communal liaisons are formed and how multiethnic encounters clash against the background of 9/11” (Montón 20). Halaby structuring the narrative around the cliché of “the binary of tradition and modernity”, illustrates the dynamic hostility between an American who represents modernity and a Jordanian who embodies tradition (Montón 21). Articulating the narrative of the “transnational diasporic subjects”, Halaby “draws on myth and folklore in an effort to forge innovative discursive spaces in which to discuss the effects of unfair racial profiling and cultural stereotyping and challenge the hegemonic dualistic construction of us versus them” (Montón 21). The novel portrays Americans as xenophobic characters filled with doubt and blinded by stereotyping (Fadhil 107). Halaby paints a somewhat gloomy image of what it was like to be Arab in America after September 11th. Her characters seem to careen towards destruction while seemingly having little control over their inner or outward lives (Vinson n.p.). Ulrike Tancke observes that *Once in a Promised Land* portrays characters touched by 9/11 events and their ultimate traumatic experiences, as Halaby critically comments on and rewrites the contemporary cognizance of trauma. The novel acknowledges “the material reality of genuine trauma, and reveals how ubiquitous catchphrases such as ‘9/11’ potentially conceal the unpredictably traumatizing potentials of everyday violence and guilt” (75).

Orhan Pamuk's *Snow*

An article written in *The Guardian* by [Sam Jordison](#), contends that in *Snow* Orhan Pamuk, a Turkish novelist, explores “the Westernised intellectual’s worldview coming to terms with the poorest, most forgotten and perhaps most ignored part of the country. The most angry part, too” (n.p.) Specifically, the novel’s handling of fundamentalism is so fascinating that it still has the same potent resonance as it did in 2004. Due to this empathy future generations will be able “to read *Snow* in 2028, 2038, or 2048 and recognize it as a reflection of their own issues. At root, it is about other people - and so, it is about us, too” (Jordison n.p.). David Coury notes that *Snow* “deals with the relationship between the East and West, and with modernity, truth and narration, and, ultimately, cultural identity” (342). Sibel Erol states that “Pamuk uses East and West as provisional terms for understanding and representing his real topic of investigation, which is the relationship between similarity and difference” (403). In addition, once referring to the 9/11 attacks, even the secular middle-class Turks in Istanbul as a reaction, tell Orhan Pamuk “that the terrorists had done the ‘right thing’” (Mishra 5). Pamuk, in response to his compatriots’ heartless reaction to 9/11, says that an ordinary non-western citizen is now more aware than ever “of how insubstantial is his share of the world’s wealth; he knows that he lives under conditions that are much harsher and more devastating than those of a ‘westerner’ and that he is condemned to a much shorter life” (Mishra 5).

Post-9/11 Pakistani Fiction of Resistance: A Literary Response to Stereotyping and to the Global ‘War on Terror’

As a significant literary genre, post-9/11 Pakistani fiction reflects the socio-political mayhem, cultural vagaries, and complex realities faced by the Pakistani diaspora and people both at home and abroad in the wake of the September 11 attacks and the United States inception of the ‘war on terror’, and the invasion of Afghanistan. This literature depicts the multifaceted difficulties encountered by Pakistanis in the years following 9/11, including problems with identity, politics, religion, war,

and globalization. The diasporic literati generally from the South Asian region and specifically from Pakistan, showing resistance, raise their voices in writings as a counter-narrative to the neo-imperialistic discourse of misrepresentation of Muslims on the basis of colour, race, ethnicity, and religious identities. Waqar Azeem is of the view that “Pakistani-American fiction introduces a double narrative to resist the imperial narrative of realism. Post-9/11 Pakistani-American fiction advances a ‘double consciousness’ not as an essential condition of the diasporic life but as a strategy to cope with the sovereign violence the protagonists suffer for being brown or Muslims, or for resembling Arabs” (82). Pakistani expatriates in the West and USA faced racial and religious harassment both on the streets and by their governments; Aamir Shehzad argues that “[l]ife in America after the terrorist attack on WTC became hard for Pakistanis; they were constantly put on scrutiny for being allegedly associated with terrorism” (14). Hence, Pakistanis stereotyped for their religious and ethnic identities - their subsequent victimization, harassment, and discrimination - are represented in the post-9/11 Pakistani fiction by the globally acclaimed diasporic writers from Pakistan. Cara Cilano argues that “the appropriation by Pakistani writers of various spy fiction conventions insistently tracks how the formulaic and popular nature of post-9/11 American espionage thrillers forwards and reinforces ‘appropriate’ affective responses, often linked to domestic sites and relations, to ‘terrorism.’” (2). In addition, Kanwal points out, “Indubitably, fiction based on the “war on terror” has been undergoing a constant process of evolution over the last decade, and it is important to document the way that Pakistani writers are ‘writing back’ to these dominant Western discourses in order to redress the relative marginalisation of Muslims in the West” (1-2). Thus, Pakistani fiction poses significant questions about assimilation, association, and pursuit of identity of Muslims, in the post-9/11 western world. Among the foremost Pakistani diasporic authors Mohsin Hamid, Kamila Shamsie, Nadeem Aslam, Muhammad Hanif, Shaila Abdullah and H. M. Naqvi are worth mentioning for their globally

acclaimed literary works.

Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist & Exit West*

The Reluctant Fundamentalist by Mohsin Hamid relates the tale of Changez, a Pakistani young man residing in the United States who goes through an identity crisis in the wake of 9/11. The novel portrays the emotional conflict of Changez, split between his Pakistani origin and his acquired American identity, wherein, Mohsin refers to the social and mental struggles experienced by Pakistanis in the post-9/11 America, when racism and Islamophobia are rampant. Amani Salmeen observes that “[t]he first half of the title connotes a state of hesitation and resistance and the second half connotes an extreme reaction, though not purely religious, which represents his state of mind in the novel” (32). Changez’s dramatic monologue represent Muslims’ voices, which he believes have been ignored when it comes to the 9/11 attacks (Salmeen 32). Successfully assimilated Changez “feels disillusioned in America because of racial and ethnic discrimination in spite of the fact that before 9/11 his identity had been transformed into American identity” (Shehzad 60). Suzy Woltmann argues that “the novel articulates a particularly gendered vision of spatial, social, and political (im)mobility through the narrator’s desires, especially as demonstrated through his romantic interest, and masculine anxieties expressed through his response to American imperialism” (1). The novel portrays the sociopolitical and identity crisis of Pakistani emigrants in the pre and post-9/11 scenarios (Shehzad 60). Sajed Hosseini and Ehsan Baghaei declare that the 9/11 traumatic event “has a long-term devastating impact on Changez’s subjectivity as well as a collective negative consequence for Pakistan’s new generation of intellectual immigrants” (132). According to Pei-Chen Liao, “Hamid’s novel, like Kunzru’s *Transmission* and Ali’s *Brick Lane*, depicts a paranoid world post 9/11 and grapples with the problem of unhomely dwelling in displacement” (123). Hashim Khan *et al* assert that among a vast array of post-9/11 fiction, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* boldly reflects “the literary, social, religious, military,

political and cultural rhetoric of American government, media, and society, and hence, stands out as a part of counter-narrative literature” (134).

Exit West provides compelling descriptions of the effects of the western imperialistic approaches and ‘war on terror’ on individuals and communities in an unnamed third-world country and the subsequent struggle for existence and self-esteem amid subjugation and violence. *Exit West*, according to Paul Veyret, “is about transforming the precarity of migrant lives into a utopia of displacement. It is an allegorical fiction about the abolition of borders and nation-states” (112).

Nadeem Aslam’s *The Blind’s Man Garden & The Wasted Vigil*

War and politics are important subjects in *The Blind Man’s Garden* written after September 11, 2001, as Nadeem Aslam illustrates how Pakistan and its people are affected by the United States-led ‘war on terror’. The writer unveils the sufferings of Pakistani people who live along the Afghan border as the direct affectees, as well as the indirect overall political, socio-economic and psychological influences of the ‘war on terror’ on Pakistani society. *The Blind Man’s Garden* provides vivid accounts of the impact of western imperialism and the “war on terror” on people and communities in a third-world country, as well as the subsequent struggle for survival and self-worth amid oppression and brutality.

In *Wasted Vigil*, according to Sobia Kiran, Nadeem Aslam extends the tragic resonance of the 9/11 incident across the world, breaking the barriers of trauma and loss created by the disaster. He connects the separate and divided worlds of “us” and “them,” and traces the origins of the incident by making readers see how the victims and perpetrators have alternated roles to further the vested interests of the political power players (257). In an effort to identify the underlying causes of terrorism, Aslam questions the role of political power players in creating, supporting and funding the terrorists, which ultimately led to the tragedy that they are crying over (Kiran 257). Kanwal observes that Aslam

dramatizes the potential conflict between secular and Islamic perspectives on “first- and second-generation immigrants, as well as between East and West, by accentuating the religious fervour of his characters. This clash represents a paradigm shift from an Orientalist epistemology to a terrorist ontology” (17). Further, the *Wasted Vigil* portrays the devastation of Afghanistan due to Russian invasion, American intervention, the creation of the Taliban and the post-9/11 ‘war on terror’ (Kiran 257).

Muhammad Hanif’s *Red Birds*

To provide the reader with a clear picture of the dismal realities of modern warfare, Azka Durrani notes that in *Red Birds*, Muhammad Hanif “uses fictional characters but non-fiction global ideologies, wars and countries (like Afghanistan, United States) and institutions (like United Nations, Red Crescent, USAID)” (81). *Red Birds* illustrates how the people in war-torn areas like the Middle East or Afghanistan “react to their plight usually in the form of retaliatory attacks on US soldiers which is portrayed in the western media as a terrorist attack” (Durrani 81). Hanif makes fun of the so-called ‘human security’ as envisaged by the neoliberal transnational security paradigm and highlights the corruption of UN aid and international organizations’ inadequate management of post-conflict regions. Moreover, Durrani states that Hanif “explores and explains the persistent dilemmas of post-war economic and social conditions, satirizing a complex web of interdependent entities of war” (83). *Red Birds*, Sukanya Saha states, “is a savage, irreverent satire telling important truths about the absurdity of war and impossibility of peace” (4). In addition, Asim Karim asserts that *Red Birds* “explicitly counters American imperialism in the Middle East and elsewhere. [. . .] The anti-colonial perspective of the novel portrays the war as a humanitarian disaster, a capitalist enterprise designed to exploit indigenous resources for imperial profit” (747).

Kamila Shamsie’s *Home Fire* & *Burnt Shadows*

Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire* is an emotive examination of the impact of Islamophobia, and

racial discrimination on a British-Pakistani family and the subsequent unparalleled sufferings of the characters. Shamsie reveals the tension between politics and religion, the emotional, social endeavours of Muslims living in the post-9/11 world, and the inner conflicts experienced by those who are torn between adherence to their faith and their desire for assimilation in western societies.

Shamsie’s novel *Burnt Shadows*, Asma Zahoor notes, “begins with a prologue with the depiction of post-9/11 world where an unnamed man – naked, chained and terrified prisoner is ready to be transported to Guantanamo Bay who is at a loss of his wits to wonder “How did it come to this?”” (18). So, “9/11 and the resultant War on Terror all constitute the background of her epic novel *Burnt Shadows*” (Zahoor 65). Shamsie’s main accomplishment is uncovering the hegemonic plans that form the foundation of all power structures and are responsible for major human catastrophes like the atomic bombing and the development of prison camps like Guantanamo Bay (Zahoor 55). Mehta argues that “in *Burnt Shadows* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, key characters that begin by engaging with otherness mostly out of self-interest or in the service of power end up forging relationships within the global South that antagonize empires” (40). Adriana Kiczowski points out that “Shamsie attempts to understand and explain the phenomenon of global terrorism by searching for the historical roots of the conflict, and by trying to show its consequences in a globalized space where spacial-temporal borders have disappeared” (126).

H. M. Naqvi’s *Home Boy*

In *Home Boy*, H. M. Naqvi portrays the challenges confronted by Pakistani young Muslims living in the west that result from the shifting dynamics of identity in a post-9/11 world. The work highlights how fanaticism, terrorism, and the misrepresentation of Islam in western media, and America’s imperialistic policies have affected the Pakistani diaspora and people both at home and abroad. According to Shouket Tilwani and M. Keezhatta, Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and Naqvi's *Home Boy* are categorized in a distinct zone in the post

9/11 fiction, and both texts accentuate “the psychological issues of protagonists engrossed in the tales that comprised a blend of diaspora, marginalization, fundamentalism, and insider-outsider syndrome, where the protagonists are seen struggling between ‘us’ and ‘them’ dichotomy, while they equally struggle with yet another binary principle of ‘Self’ and ‘Other’” (338).

Shaila Abdullah’s *Saffron Dreams*

Saffron Dreams by Shaila Abdullah portrays a Pakistani young widow who strives for her identity and existence in the post- 9/11 America. Before the September 11 attacks, she lives a contented life with her husband in New York. However, abruptly all her happiness collapses with the collapse of the twin towers in which her husband Faizan dies (Shehzad 142). The novel reflects the post 9/11 America and the tribulations confronted by Muslim immigrants. Abdullah also traces the issues of identity transformation – racial, gender and religious in the text (Shehzad 145). Azeem observes that she faces “immense discrimination for her apparent Muslim identity

because her identity is defined by the dominant discourse of the War on Terror” (80) and the powerful western media. Sadia Nazeer & James J. Connolly remark that establishing a unique identity for her protagonist, Abdullah “defies homogeneous identity categories of both native and host cultures” (65). In addition, Abdullah “explores in her fiction the ethnic and national differences between South Asian and American settings. *Saffron Dreams* is focused on themes such as gender, ethnicity, religion, patriotism, and nostalgia” (Nazeer & Connolly 66).

In conclusion, the post-9/11 literature with its dichotomous nature brings forth the voices of western and eastern literati, wherein, the former with imperialistic and orientalist mindsets misrepresent and portray the latter ‘other’ as potential terrorists. So, in his analysis, Richard Gray contends that “most fiction set in the context of 9/11 presents the insider view of the tragedy focusing only on the United State perspective, treating it only as an American tragedy” (83). American literature, like colonial

texts before them, on the basis of religious identities, terms Muslims as ‘other’. Qamar Khushi and Abdul Rashid argue that 9/11 substantially “affected the west-east relations into obvious binary opposites of us and them. This situation has given rise to a new discourse called Islamophobia - causing Islam to be viewed as a source of intolerance and terrorism, one whose proponents are out to destroy Western values” (97). In addition, M. Chandio and M. Sangi assert that “to the general xenophobia, Islamophobia and anti-Muslim public discourse, post-9/11 fiction produced by American and European writers also stigmatized and demonized Islam and Muslims” (37).

However, to rebut this Islamophobic wave, the outgroup Muslims produced a body of post-9/11 fiction, which presented the other side of the coin, contrary to the media, authorities, public debate, and the literature produced by the ingroup American authors that stereotyped Muslims as evil indispensable (Chandio IV). Specifically, the fiction produced by Pakistani authors divulges the challenges confronted by Muslim characters who are suspected, stereotyped, and marginalized in a post-9/11 world. These works underline the negative effects of xenophobia and Islamophobia on people and communities and pose significant queries about identity, belonging, and the pursuit of meaning in the wake of 9/11. Furthermore, post-9/11 Pakistani fiction, criticizing America’s imperialistic policies, surveillance, and the denial of civil rights on the pretext of national security, connotes the shifting political milieu in the aftermath of 9/11. These works also infer the impacts and consequences of the ‘war on terror’ and the United States’ imperialistic military interventions, specifically in the regions of South Asia and the Middle East. Hence, Pakistani works present a nuanced perception of the complexities of the post-9/11 politics and the far-reaching repercussions on a global level. These works reflect fragmentation in society, uncertain chaotic situations, confusion and disorientation experienced by characters at large in the aftermath of 9/11.

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