Communal Trauma, History, and Memory in Toni Morrison and Shahnaz Bashir's Fiction

Fayaz Ahmad Kumar

Area Study Centre for Africa, North and South America
Quaid-i-Azam University
Islamabad, Pakistan
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Communal Trauma, History, and Memory in Toni Morrison and Shahnaz Bashir's Fiction

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Fayaz Ahmad Kumar

Supervised by
Dr. Ayesha Siddiqa

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AREA STUDY CENTRE FOR AFRICA, NORTH AND SOUTH AMERICA
QUAID-I-AZAM UNIVERSITY, ISLAMABAD

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Student Name: **Fayaz Ahmad Kumar**   Signature: _____

Examination Committee:

   a) External Examiner 1:
      Dr. Wajid Hussain   Signature _____
      Associate Professor
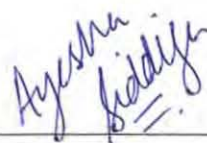   Department of Social Sciences
      SZABIST, Islamabad

   b) External Examiner 2:
      Dr. Amer Akhtar   Signature _____
      Associate Professor
      Department of English
      Foundation University, Rawalpindi

Supervisor:

      Dr. Ayesha Siddiqa   Signature _____

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To all the oppressed people of the world!

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Contents

Abstract

This thesis is a comparative study of the selected African American and Kashmiri fiction from the perspective of trauma literary studies. The thesis explores the interrelation between history, memory, and trauma as depicted in the selected works of Toni Morrison and Shahnaz Bashir. Drawing on literary trauma theories of Cathy Caruth (1995, 1996, 2013), Laurie Vickroy (2002, 2015), and Ted Morrissey (2021) the study analyzes Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) and *Home* (2012) and Bashir's *The Half Mother* (2014) and *Scattered Souls* (2016) to explore the individual and cultural facets of trauma emanating from their respective socio-historical contexts and their impact on the characters' psyches. Drawing on Caruth, the study analyzes the selected texts as representative trauma narratives that bear witness to the unspeakable traumatic past of African Americans and Kashmiris and its impact on the lives and identities of individuals and communities. Caruth's theorization of trauma is correlated with Vickroy's model that emphasizes the socio-cultural milieu of literary texts to comprehend traumatic histories. Vickroy's theorization of the specialized aesthetics of trauma is further combined with Morrissey's approach of "trauma-based literary analysis" to analyze the specific literary devices employed by Morrison and Bashir to depict the psychic trauma of individuals and communities that may otherwise be unrepresentable in ordinary language. The thesis argues that Morrison and Bashir use specific aesthetic techniques to represent the psychic trauma of marginalized subjects, which is linked to the collective trauma of their communities through a blend of memory and history, thus giving access to the inaccessible and silenced histories of African Americans and Kashmiris. Although the relationship between trauma, history, and memory has been the subject of various studies, this thesis is unique in bringing

together trauma fiction from African American and Kashmiri contexts, which have

not been the subject of a comparative study before. Besides, by incorporating

trauma fiction from a context in the Global South i.e., Kashmir, the study hopes to

broaden the scope of literary trauma studies beyond its West-centric focus.

Keywords: Trauma, history, memory, fiction, community, African American, Kashmiri.

Chapter One

Introduction

Trauma has become a paradigm because it has been turned into a
repertoire of compelling stories about the enigmas of identity,
memory and selfhood.
—Roger Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question*

I told you the truth…. Memory's truth, because memory
has its own special kind. It selects, eliminates, alters,
exaggerates, minimizes, glorifies and vilifies also;
but in the end it creates its own reality; it is a heterogeneous but
usually coherent version of events; and no sane human being ever
trusts someone else's version more than his own.
—Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*

Memory (the deliberate act of remembering) is a form of wiled
creation. It is not an effort to find out the way it really was—that is
research. The point is to dwell on the way it appeared and why it
appeared in that particular way.
Memory is for me always fresh, in spite of the fact that object being
remembered is done and past.
—Toni Morrison, "Memory, Creation, and Writing"

Literary trauma studies is an emergent field which examines how literature

engages with the individual and cultural facets of trauma and interprets the

impact of traumatic events such as the Holocaust, slavery, genocides,

migration, nuclear trauma, 9/11, Covid-19 pandemic, and, more recently,

climate catastrophes. For literary trauma studies, a fundamental enquiry is the

correlation between culture and trauma. While psychology focuses on the

psychic traces left on the individual by a traumatic incident, the field of

trauma literary studies is interested in the cultural discourse and its modes of

giving meaning to a certain form of catastrophe in which individuals

encounter and deal with their traumatic experiences. In contemporary times,

"the desire among various cultural groups to represent or to make visible specific historical instances of trauma has given rise to numerous important works of contemporary fiction" (Whitehead 3). Literary trauma studies focuses on this fiction to explore historical catastrophes and their impact on individuals as well as communities; it is interested in how literature explores the interplay between the personal and the cultural in narrating particular experiences of trauma.

Keeping in view the intersection of trauma theory and literary texts, this dissertation draws on the theoretical works of Cathy Caruth (1995, 1996, 2013), Laurie Vickroy (2002, 2015), and Ted Morrissey (2021) to examine the interrelation between communal trauma, history, and memory as depicted in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) and *Home* (2012), and Shahnaz Bashir's *The Half Mother* (2014) and *Scattered Souls* (2016). Using Caruthean strand of trauma literary theory, that maneuvers psychoanalytic approaches and draws on the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) to define trauma, this study reads fictional texts of Morrison and Bashir to see how they bear witness to trauma and grant "a paradoxical mode of access to extreme events and experiences" (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 34) (slavery, oppression, discrimination, war neurosis, etc.) that defy understanding and representation in ordinary language. Hence utilizing Cruthean theory, this research seeks to reconcile the textual and historicist approaches to study selected literary texts and bridges the apparent gap between the two. Further, using Vickroy's approach of trauma, the study

analyzes the textual strategies (fragmentation, hallucinations, non-linear plots, flashbacks, time shifts, etc.) utilized by Morrison and Bashir to represent the traumatic experiences. Vickroyan theory helps shed light on how these literary techniques assist the authors to represent the rhythms, processes, and ambiguities of psychic experiences within textual structures. Combining these two theorizations with Morrissey's take on cultural trauma, this study investigates the effects of trauma culture (that develops from corresponding social circumstances) on the fictional works of Morrison and Bashir that use techniques specific to trauma literature. Blending all three approaches, the study further probes the relationship between the individual and communal trauma. Situating the selected novels in this conceptual-critical framework, the study argues that Toni Morrison and Shahnaz Bashir thematize individual and communal traumas of their respective communities through the use of specialized aesthetic techniques, which provide an alternative perspective on the troubled histories of African Americans and Kashmiris.

One of the most celebrated African American authors, Toni Morrison published her first novel *The Bluest Eye* in 1970, which was followed by a number of famous works over the subsequent years including *Sula* (1973), *Song of Solomon* (1977), *Tar Baby* (1981), *Beloved* (1987), *Jazz* (1992), *Paradise* (1997), *Love* (2003), *A Mercy* (2008), *Home* (2012), and several works of nonfiction. Morrison received scores of awards for her fiction including the Pulitzer Prize for *Beloved* in 1988. In 1993, Morrison was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature for her unmatching contribution to the

field. The second author that this thesis focuses on is comparatively less

known, i.e., Shahnaz Bashir. Bashir hails from the valley of Indian Occupied

Kashmir (IOK). His critically acclaimed novel *The Half Mother* was published

in 2015. It is the first ever novel by a Kashmiri author that has been translated

in several languages. Bashir later published his short story collection, *Scattered*

Souls in 2016. He has won numerous awards for his fictional works including

Tata Lit Award (2017) and Talent of the Year Award (2017). Although based

in two different geographical and cultural backgrounds, Morrison's and

Bashir's selected texts nevertheless foreground the issues of communal trauma,

history, and memory to commemorate the trans-generational and trans-

historical trauma of their respective communities. African Americans and

Kashmiris are both marginalized groups whose discourses are obscured at the

periphery of mainstream national discourses; however, the literary narratives of

Morrison and Bashir serve as a mode of fictive testimonies that seek to

articulate the inarticulate and bring the marginalized discourses to the center.

The histories of the disempowered people usually disappear or are muted in the

dominant historical as well as trauma discourses because both mainstream historical

narratives and West-centric trauma theories privilege the Western experience and

generalize the cultural differences and historico-political complexities related to the

effects of traumatic experience. This study, therefore, challenges these assumptions;

through analyzing the trauma fiction of Morrison and Bashir, the thesis posits that,

despite similarities, the struggles of trauma victims differ based on their socio-historical

contexts. Morrison thematizes African American slavery in *Beloved* and addresses the

racial discrimination faced by her community during and after Vietnam War in *Home* while two of Bashir's texts *The Half Mother* and *Scaterred Souls* are set in the Kashmir valley and focus on the violence shaping the history of the region during the 1980s and 1990s. Although both authors highlight context-specific conflicts that vary strikingly in nature and consequences but their texts share a predominant concern with how intense political circumstances invade everyday life and become entangled with other forms of violence. Hence, instead of generalizations based on West-centric notions of trauma theory, it is important to take into account the catastrophic histories of the respective communities while analyzing their fictional representations of trauma. Morrison's and Bashir's fiction arises from "corresponding social conditions" (Morrissey 12), and the memories of characters match the incidents marked with historical trauma. Therefore, it is important to study these texts on their own terms.

1.1 Thesis Statement

Communal trauma instigated by the corresponding social milieu impacts selected African American and Kashmiri fiction that uses specialized aesthetic techniques to represent the psychic experience of individuals as well as groups and consequently grants access to the extreme event that cannot be represented in ordinary language. By reimagining and rewriting the unspeakable traumatic experiences of their respective marganilized communities, Toni Morrison and Shahnaz Bashir intertwine history and memory to remember and access the otherwise inaccessible past.

1.2 Statement of Purpose

This study reads fictional works of Toni Morrison and Shahnaz Bashir to understand how these texts bear witness to the trauma of their communities and resultantly give access to the silenced histories. Although there is a huge body of work available on Morrison, especially from the perspective of trauma studies, there is very limited work available on Bashir, in particular, or the Kashmiri context, in general, from the perspective of trauma studies. This is also in line with the west-centrism of trauma studies whose focus has largely been on the experiences of trauma in the Global South. Therefore, this thesis seeks to explore literary works from a context in the Global South, i.e., Kashmir in comparison with another marginalized group in the U.S. in order to understand if the articulations of trauma in the former align with the west-centric model of trauma studies, or if they provide a different understanding of trauma. The thesis hopes to broaden the scope of West-centric trauma literary studies by incorporating a social and historical context from the Global South i.e., Kashmir.

1.3 Research Objectives

- engage in a comparative analysis of the selected African American and Kashmiri trauma fiction from the perspective of literary trauma studies
- analyze the relationship between individual and communal trauma, history, and memory in the selected works of Toni Morrison and Shahnaz Bashir
- broaden the scope of trauma literary studies by incorporating a social and historical context from the Global South i.e., Kashmir

1.3 Research Questions

1. How do Toni Morrison and Shahnaz Bashir narrativize the unspeakable traumatic memories and access the inaccessible in order to explore the inter-connectedness of communal trauma and memory to archive history from a marginalized standpoint?

2. In what ways is the trauma of the individual characters in the selected novels linked to the collective trauma of their communities?

3. What specific aesthetic techniques do Toni Morrison and Shahnaz Bashir employ to represent the trauma of their characters?

1.4 Study Gap

This study has identified three gaps in the available literature on trauma literary studies, which it seeks to address. First, while there is a huge body of work available on both Morrison's individual novels and her entire oeuvre, there is relatively little work available on Bashir's fiction; therefore, this study fills the gap by providing a detailed study of Bashir's selected works from the perspective of literary trauma studies. It is important to study Bashir's trauma fiction alongside that of Morrison as it represents the trauma of the Kashmiri people that has profound parallels with that of the African Americans. By juxtaposing Bashir's trauma fiction to that of Morrison's, this study's comparative lens broadens the scope of trauma studies Secondly, while scholars have worked on Morrison's and Bashir's works individually, there is no comparative study on these two authors or the two sociohistorical contexts that they come from, and this forms the unique domain of this study.I seek to analyze how both authors belonging to marginalized communities represent trauma, and how the trauma of the individual

characters represents the trauma of their communities as well. Morrison and Bashir belong to different geographical, historical, linguistic, cultural, and political contexts; however, their fictional narratives equally emphasize the formidable and insistent influence of communal traumas and the unrelenting need of trauma victims to make sense of and come to terms with their tormenting past. The unifying factor between the two authors' fictional narratives is their focus on resistance, resilience, and testimony. Finally, trauma literary studies, in general, and Cathy Caruth's work, in particular, focuses largely on the historical trauma of the Western subjects (especially Nazi genocide of the European Jews) and rarely ventures beyond the boundaries of Europe and the U.S. This study addresses that gap by incorporating trauma fiction from the Global South, in particular, from the Kashmiri context to test the applicability of her theoretical constructions and to extend the field of trauma literary studies.

Though hailing from two very different social, cultural, and historical backgrounds, both Toni Morrison and Shahnaz Bashir belong to marginalized communities and have sought to inscribe the personal and the collective traumas of their communities in their fictional works. Both writers highlight the inequality and exclusion that is experienced by their communities on account of their racial, ethnic, and religious identities, among others. Their fictional works reflect the psychic traumas caused by slavery, racial marginalization, and political disenfranchisement. Both the authors frame their respective communities in terms of their marginal or disadvantaged positions, but while doing so, their fictional works also serve as culturally constructed spaces for the articulation and transmission of communal traumas.

African American and Kashmiris have experienced slavery, persecution, oppression, and disenfranchisement so the respective traumas of individuals in these communities intersect with the communal traumas. Morrison's and Bashir's selected works reflect the traumas of African Americans and Kashmiris as groups because in groups "every sentiment and act is contagious" (Morrissey 43). Stroked by a culture of constant news of atrocities experienced by their people, Morrison's and Bashir's narratives engage the readers and expose them to the experience of trauma at a personal as well as a communal level. Both Morrison and Bashir use and adapt specialized aesthetic techniques to represent the psychic neurosis of their communities. As Vickroy puts it: "These stylistic innovations have reflected our understanding of consciousness as well as our capacity to imagine the human psyche in all its facets, and have proved effective in approximating for readers the psychic defenses that pose obstacles to narrating and recovering from trauma" (*Trauma and Survival* xi). Hence, this study examines the linguistic modalities employed by Morrison and Bashir to reflect the psychic neurosis of their fictional characters.

1.5 Research Methodology

This study is qualitative in nature, and is largely grounded in the philosophical, conjectural, and methodological understanding of the ways that people view, experience, and make meaning of their lives (Ravitch and Carl 40). This qualitative, interpretive, analytical, and descriptive study is interested in comprehending, describing, and analyzing the trauma fiction of Toni

Morrison and Shahnaz Bashir. The focus is on the "contextualized ways, the complex processes, meanings, and understandings that people have and make within their experiences, contexts, and milieu" (Ravitch and Carl 43). The study probes the meaning and meaning making, which involves a profound comprehension of how people make sense of their lives and experiences, as well as how the meanings people make of/in their lives are socially and individually constructed within and directly in relation to social and communal structures.

For the purpose of analyzing the selected literary texts, this thesis has developed a conceptual framework based on the works of Cathy Caruth, Laurie Vickroy, and Ted Morrisey in combination with the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder (DSM-V). DSM-V is used as a scale to identify characters in the selected texts as traumatized. However, simply identifying traumatic symptoms is not adequate; therefore, the sociohistorical context of the two communities i.e., African American and Kashmiri, is also taken into account. For this purpose, literary trauma theories of Cathy Caruth and Laurie Vickroy are used. Caruthean strand of literary trauma theory that maneuvers psychoanalytic approaches and draws on DSM to define trauma, is used to understand how the selected texts bear witness to trauma and grant "a paradoxical mode of access to extreme events and experiences" (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 34) (slavery, oppression, discrimination, war neurosis, etc.) that defy understanding and representation in ordinary language. Caruth's theoretical postulates are also employed to identify the dissociative and

troublesome nature of character's psychic neurosis (that only returns belatedly) and how it disintegrates the psyche of the individual as well as the community. This concept of trauma is combined with Vickroy's understanding of the relationship between the individual and communal trauma as represented in the selected texts. Vickroy's work is also used as part of the conceptual framework as it helps in understanding how the selected authors use specific narrative and aesthetic techniques to represent traumatic experiences in literary works. These conceptual postulates of Caruth and Vickroy are used in combination with Ted Morrissey's notion of "trauma-based literary analysis" to study the selected fictional works as trauma narratives.

Drawing on Caruth's observation that trauma "may provide the very link between cultures" (*Explorations in Memory* 11) and Laurie Vickroy's argument that trauma texts "struggle to give voice to those silenced by oppression and [....] represent the traumatic effects of subjugation in the way their protagonists carry both personal and collective histories" (*Trauma and Survival* xv), this dissertation interrogates the relationship between trauma, history and memory in the works of Morrison and Bashir in a comparative context. Both the selected authors' oeuvre fictionalizes trauma by narrating the historical catastrophes of the sufferings of their indigenous communities.

Caruth uses the image of the wound that cries out and addresses the reader in an attempt to tell a reality or truth that is otherwise unavailable, to indicate that trauma can only be understood through literary or symbolic language. Likewise, this study investigates Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and

Home, and Shahnaz Bashir's *The Half Mother* and *Scattered Souls* to show how these texts work against a collective amnesia by representing traumatic experiences and their impact on individuals and communities. Using Caruthian trauma theory, this study also brings to fore the traumatic history of the African American and Kashmiri communities. Vickroy's postulates assist in exploring how these selected fictional narratives represent trauma—that response to events so overwhelmingly intense that normal responses become impaired. Finally, Ted Morrissey's theorization of trauma contextualizes literary works in the corresponding trauma cultures and helps study the relationship between individual and communal trauma that is reflected through use of literary techniques. While Caruth and Vickroy's works serve as the overall framework of the study, Morrisey's work, in particular, provides an approach for reading these texts as representative trauma narratives.

Morrissey's approach of "trauma-based literary analysis" seeks to identify characteristics of a fictional work that suggest that the author experienced either personal or communal trauma or both. The narrative displays it through the use of specific stylistic traits to represent the psychic neurosis and resultantly gives access to traumatic history. Morrissey traces the link between the author's lived traumatic experience and the production of the 'trauma text'. For him, trauma texts are a result of both individual and communal trauma. He proposes an approach of reading/analyzing a fictional text that is rooted in the author's traumatic experience. Using Morrissey's approach Toni Morrison's and Shahnaz Bashir's fictional works can be read as

fertile territories for literary trauma theory because the selected fictional texts of both the authors display evidence of individual and communal trauma as well as the use of fictional techniques characteristic of trauma literature.

Based on the works of Caruth and other literary trauma theorists, Morrissey's approach identifies four characteristics of trauma texts: i. intertextuality; ii. repetition, iii. a dispersed or fragmented narrative voice, and iv. a search for specific language (Morrissey 90). Drawing on Morrissey's approach, the study examines the causes that make authors narrate trauma stories and how these texts serve as representative trauma narratives. This is done by exploring the communal histories of African Americans and Kashmiris since, for Morrissey, literature develops from the relevant social context. Morrissey's hypothesis that cultural trauma affects the literary productions of a society is probed through an analysis of Morrison's and Bashir's fictional works. In other words, Morrissey's approach is interested in exploring the production and reception of trauma literature vis-à-vis its social and historical context.

Employing Morrissey's approach, the study analyzes the connection between the traumatic lived experiences of Toni Morrison and Shahnaz Bashir and the trauma narratives that they have produced. Caruth and Vickroy's work helps analyze the relationship between the individual and collective traumas of the African American and Kashmiri communities and their relationship to the histories of the two groups. Finally, all three theories provide frameworks for understanding how the selected trauma texts mimic the characteristics of

trauma through the use of specialized narrative and aesthetic techniques to represent the trauma of their characters.

1.6 Significance of the Study

West-centric trauma theory focuses on the experiences of trauma in the Euro/American contexts, which largely ignores the experiences of psychic trauma in the Global South i.e., Kashmir. This not only marginalizes the experiences of non-western communities, but also limits the notion of trauma to the western subjects by imagining that only Euro/American traumatic experiences count as pain. The focus of conventional trauma theory has been critiqued because of its West-centric concentration that is largely constructed around the horrors of the Holocaust and more recently 9/11, and the issues primarily surrounding Euro/American concerns. It has traditionally marginalized non-Western contexts where majority of the world's population resides. The conventional canon of trauma studies has ignored this significant chunk of population whose traumas are further aggravated by their sociopolitical conditions such as poverty, exclusion, deprivation, and disease. Since majority of physical and mental health studies focus on the Global North and disregard the realities, milieus and needs of the victims and survivors of the Global South i.e., Kashmir, more research needs to be conducted on the Global South to better understand and represent their experience of trauma. This study is thus significant because it makes use of literary trauma theory through a comparative analysis of two different texts and contexts: one is non-White, and the other is both non-White and non-Western, that is, African American and Kashmiri communities respectively.

The study further endeavors to analyze the fictional depiction of the traumas of two marginalized communities residing in two different parts of the world. While African Americans have gained some prominence in the mainstream discourse, the narratives of Kashmiris are still sidelined and often muted. Furthermore, although African Americans have made significant gains in terms of rights and equity, persistent issues like police brutality, unequal voting rights, racial inequities, and lack of access to resources have given rise to contemporary movements such as Black Lives Matter, Fair Fight, and Color of Change. These movements remind us that the struggle for social justice and civil rights remains as relevant and urgent today as it was in the 1950s and 1960s U.S. While some may think that the Civil Rights Movement is part of the distant past, the killings of young Black men and women such as Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Philando Castile, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery over the last decade have resulted in renewed attention and sparked outcries over the continued injustices and violence that Black Americans still face in the U.S. Likewise, Kashmiris' relentless struggle against oppression, torture, and persecution continues while the world has turned a blind eye to it.

1.7 Delimitation of the Study

This study focuses specifically on two fictional works by Toni Morrison and two by Shahnaz Bashir, i.e., *Beloved* (1987) and *Home* (2012) and *The Half Mother* (2014) and *Scattered Souls* (2016) respectively. The selection of the fictional texts was made on the basis of their representative nature of the two communities' transgenerational and

transhistorical trauma. Also, protagonists in these texts are trauma victims whose individual trauma is linked to communal trauma. Both Morrison and Bashir memorialize their communal traumas through fiction and display the traumatic experiences of the characters through the use of fictional techniques.

1.8 Historical Background

In order to analyze the literary works of the selected authors, it is important to understand the historical contexts in which they were produced because both Morrison's and Bashir's writings are impacted by the lived realities of their geocultural locales of the U.S and Kashmir. Indeed, the ethnic, racial, social, political, and cultural settings of these texts have a deep impact on the production of meaning and the depiction of trauma. Therefore, the following section provides an overview of the African American historical context and the Kashmiri historical context in order to situate the study within this background.

1.8.1 African American History: A Brief Overview

The history of the African Americans in the U.S. is both contested and controversial because a nation like the U.S. that got independence with the postulation that "all men are created equal" (Foner 187) has a long and unequivocal history of enslaving another group. African American presence in the U.S. dates back to the August of 1619 (Boyer 8), when a group of twenty-to-thirty Africans were brought from Africa to the British colony of Virginia by the English pirates. By that time, the English settlers had hardly spent twelve years in Jamestown and the Puritans had only lived at Plymouth for one year.

These Africans were seized from a Portuguese slave ship that had forcibly captured them from Angola (Hannah-Jones 74). Despite their skin color, these Africans had distinct identities because they belonged to "diverse backgrounds, nationalities, religions and languages" (Rico 2), that were lost once they reached the U.S. as chattel slaves. Once this trade started, millions of people were "forced across ocean in hulls of ships and then redefined as property" (Hannah-Jones 23). Today, African Americans are one of the largest ethnic groups in the U.S., but the history of discrimination against this group in numerous institutions and structures in the U.S. dates centuries back.

When the Africans reached the New World, initially they "blended into a larger population of unfree laborers, including white indentured servants, who worked for a contracted period of time for employers who paid their passage to America" (Boyer 8). The lives of these initial Africans were very similar to any other unfree person residing on the American land. The first black people to arrive in mainland North America were enslaved but "they established families, professed Christianity, and employed the law with great facility. They traveled widely and enjoyed access to the great ports and from there the larger Atlantic world" (Berlin 53). The initial Africans in the American colonies were often "treated the same way as European indentured servants. They performed the same jobs, received equal punishments, and usually had the same opportunities to earn or buy their freedom, although frequently their terms of indenture were longer than those of whites" (Sharp & Schomp 3). However, with time the condition of blacks in the United States deteriorated, and the

successors were not nearly as fortunate. While white European indentured

servants served for the prescribed period of time and were later set free to join

the labor market, African indentured servants were held as slaves after their

service period ended (Berlin 53).

When the European colonizers reached America, they did not intend to

rely on African slaves as the major workforce, but "the incessant demand for

workers spurred by the spread of tobacco cultivation eventually led

Chesapeake planters to turn to the transatlantic trade in slaves" (Foner 57).

Soon they realized that the Africans were more advantageous as slaves because

they could not escape slavery and were easily caught due to their skin color.

Other than this, the blacks had developed immunity against the diseases

brought by the European colonizers, which the Native Indians had not (who

were the first choice of forced labor). As the demand for black slaves

increased, the transportation of slaves from Africa to America took shape of an

industry. Throughout the eighteenth century, the British Empire generated

maximum revenue through the Atlantic slave trade. The transatlantic slave

trade, also called the triangular trade or the Middle Passage, lasted from the

sixteenth to the nineteenth century. It was so called because it engaged in a

three-way trade across the Atlantic; the trade ships used in this business carried

"British manufactured goods to Africa and the colonies, colonial products

including tobacco, indigo, sugar, and rice to Europe, and slaves from Africa to

the New World. (Foner 122). The trade initiated the largest forced migration in

the history of the world in which more than "12.5 million Africans were

kidnapped from their homes and brought in chains across the Atlantic Ocean"
(Hannah-Jones 74). Since the price of slaves in the New World was "twenty to
thirty times the price in Africa", slaves of every age and gender were
"crammed aboard vessels as tightly as possible to maximize profits" (Foner
123). Hence the Middle Passage was a vicious journey and a horrific
experience for the ill-fated passengers as the slave ships were overcrowded,
and the sanitary conditions were deplorable. Because of the unhygienic
conditions on the slave ships "one of every three blacks transported oversees
died" (Zinn 29). It is estimated that "almost two million did not survive the
grueling journey" (Hannah-Jones 74). Depending on the weather conditions,
the trip could take from weeks to months, and the captives had to remain
chained on the decks. They were under constant threat of numerous dangers
including epidemics; attacks by pirates; and physical, psychological, and
sexual abuse by their captors. Not all the passengers reached American lands
because "diseases like measles and smallpox spread rapidly, and about one
slave in eight perished before reaching the New World" (Foner 124). The
captives were not always unlucky though; sometimes they conjointly revolted
against the captors and took over the ships, but those who reached the
Americas became part of the organized slave labor at plantations.As the slave
trade flourished gradually, "three distinct slave systems were well entrenched
in Britain's mainland colonies: tobacco-based plantation slavery in the
Chesapeake; rice-based plantation slavery in South Carolina and Georgia; and
nonplantation slavery in New England and the Middle Colonies" (Foner 125).

The oldest and the most populous slave system was in Chesapeake where almost two hundred and seventy thousand slaves resided in 1770; it was almost half of the region's population (Foner 125). The economic interests of the slaveholders were not only related to the race of their labor but also to the gender. With the passage of time, when the white indentured servants decreased in number and the blacks outnumbered them, the rules of the plantations became more and more ruthless. African slaves were "confined to the plantations" (Berlin 61); they were not allowed to either leave the workplace or have family lives. The demands of the planters increased with time and slaves were required to work "more days and longer hours, under closer supervision and with greater regimentation" (Berlin 61). The African slaves were subjected to "incessant toil, brutal punishment, and the constant fear" (Foner 400). African slaves were given no rights or legal protection, so they were more advantageous to their owner. They could not claim the protections of English common law.

The "peculiar institution" (Foner 400) of slavery in the Southern States of the U.S. flourished because of the social fabric that perpetuated oppression and sustained subjugation. The socio-cultural environment of the American Southern slave-holding states considered "imported blacks as slaves" (Zinn 25). Slaveholders strengthened and reinvigorated their control through "comprehensive slave codes in which they vested themselves with near-complete sovereignty over their slaves, often extending to an absolute right over the slave's life" (Berlin 10). These widespread slave codes backed the

system of slavery in the U.S. from 1640s to 1860s. With every passing year, the state of African slaves deteriorated and towards the time of American Revolution (1776), slavery came to be associated with blackness, and each slave holding state had its own laws to perpetuate and institutionalize the system. The slave codes legalized slavery and defined it as a "perpetual condition, transmitted through the mother (thereby including the offspring of white masters and female slaves" (Boyer 8). These codes were consolidated by the House of Burgesses in 1705, and all the previous legislation was complied to give more power to the planters. These codes explained that the African slaves were the property of their owner "completely subject to the will of their masters" (Foner 61). It was permissible through law to buy, sell, or lease a slave. The relationship between a slave and a master provided a model for each relationship and indirectly impacted the whole social fabric (Berlin 9). Slave-owners used numerous disciplining tactics to maintain order on the plantations and also to make their slaves work productively. There was hardly any slave who had not witnessed or experienced whipping or other brutal punishments at plantations. Josian Henson, an escaped slave noted in his autobiography that "he could never erase from his memory the traumatic experience of seeing his father brutally whipped for striking a white man" (qtd. in Foner 408). The family system of blacks in the slave societies was almost dysfunctional because the slave families were constantly under the threat of being separated and broken.

Slavery was fundamental to the economy of American South; hence, laws were made to preserve this institution and protect the 'rights' of slave owners. After the American Revolution, when the U.S. Constitution was drafted in 1789, slavery was the most controversial issue. Although the word "slavery" was never used by the creators of the Constitution, the document, nevertheless, gave slave owners disproportionate political power by augmenting the congressional representation and the Electoral College votes to the slave holding states. However, with the passage of time and shifts in the economy, this institutional slave culture was abolished gradually starting from the Northern states and going down to the South. Some slave owners from upper South freed their slaves as early as mid-1800s; others were bought and freed by charitable and philanthropist groups. Some planters strengthened their control over slaves by patronizing them by extending "favors in return for loyalty and labor" (Berlin 63). The import of slaves from Africa was banned by the U.S. congress in 1808 but smuggling was common thereafter. So, in reality, the number of African slaves kept increasing. Slavery was common in small farms as well as in huge plantations, and it is interesting to note that nearly half of Virginia's white families owned at least one slave during this era. The slave system impacted not only the economy of the slave societies but also all other relationships that were determined by this system.

The "Africanization of the labor force" (Berlin 56) in the American South marked the main difference between the economic interests of the Southern and Northern states. However, at the time of the American Revolution, slavery

was an established and accepted institution in the U.S. It was fundamental to the social and economic structure of almost every state from Maryland southward (Foner 221). Slaves residing on the plantations had no idea of the geography of the land, and all they knew was to follow the North Star to gain freedom. The way to freedom was not easy as the slaves had to escape not only their owners but also the patrolling on their way, and the color of their skin made them easily visible in the public space. Despite all these difficulties, the number of fugitive slaves mounted up to one thousand per year. The Fugitive Slave Acts (1793 and 1850) gave limitless power to white owners where the "law allowed special federal commissioners to determine the fate of alleged fugitives without benefit of a jury or trial or even testimony by the accused individual" (Foner 474). If caught, the fugitive slaves were treated ruthlessly, and their fate was worse than those in slavery. These slaves mostly belonged to the states of upper South that neighbored the North.

The term freedom is fundamental to American society and political culture because "from the beginning, the idea of American exceptionalism—the belief that the United States has a special mission to serve as a refuge from tyranny, a symbol of freedom, and a model for the rest of the world" (Foner 188), has been part of American socio-political rhetoric. This claim may be true for white Americans, but the racial and ethnic minorities of the country have always contested it. The socio-political discourse during the revolutionary period juxtaposing freedom to slavery only focused on the personal and political rights of free white men. Black slaves were never mentioned in this

discourse because "slaveowning and slave trading were accepted routines of colonial life" (Foner 220). The fundamental rights i.e., "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" (Hannah-Jones 77) excluded one-fifth of the existing population. However, the environment of freedom and the founding fathers' discourse on liberty and freedom had given a weapon to these black slaves that "could be used against their own bondage" (Foner 221). The founding fathers of American Revolution propagated freedom as a natural and God-gifted right, so the blacks later on used this rhetoric to their benefit.

Revolutionary period was a time of upheaval and change that seemed to challenge the already established institution of slavery. Post the revolution, different states prohibited further importation of slaves from Africa, and the institution of slavery seemed to be in decline. During these revolutionary times, numerous slaveholders emancipated their slaves who moved out of the plantations and established free black communities, but this act created a rift between the American South and North. Gradually, it became visible that the "abolition of slavery in the North drew a line across the new nation, creating the dangerous division between free and slave states" (Foner 227). This debate over the issue of slavery and the stratification of the society on the basis of color became a source of contest in the American society right from the beginning. Many of the founding fathers had divided opinions on slavery.

The rift between the founding fathers in favor of slave trade or against it ended with the influence of the latter. The member states feared the disunion of the Southern states in case of the prohibition of slavery or the Atlantic slave

trade. One major reason for not incorporating anti-slavery clauses into the constitution was the personal interest of the founding fathers of America. They seemed insensitive towards the fact that plantations were run by the labor of black slaves, and the concept of slavery was now related to race and colour of the skin. The American independence further created a favorable environment for white residents of the country but "for slaves, there was no free air in America" (Foner 251). The initial failure of the founding fathers in including the Bill of Rights in the constitution also resulted from the presence of slavery.

Post-Revolution U.S was a civic society, formed on the basis of shared political, socio-cultural ideals such as "liberty, equality, and democracy" (Foner 261), but this ideology was not equally applicable to all the residents of the country. Founding fathers who were against slavery continued working for the black population. Likewise, Northern statesmen "worked for abolition and some helped to establish schools for black children" (Foner 265), but a considerable number of Americans continued to believe "blacks as permanently deficient in the qualities that made freedom possible – the capacity for self-control, reason, and devotion to the larger community" (Foner 266). These were not the ideals of a commoner but of one of America's founding father, Thomas Jefferson, who articulated them in *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785). Jefferson's book gave a detailed analysis of the nature of a good society that justified white supremacy and contended that whites and blacks could not coexist in a civic society. The spirit of the age impacted the minds of its inhabitants and created stir in the black folks that resulted in

numerous rebellions. These rebellious slaves were a product of their time as they made use of the language of freedom and liberty forged during the American Revolution.

Despite the revolution, slavery and subjugation persisted; even free blacks suffered discrimination, and some were even "subjected to occasional violent assaults by white mobs" (Foner 336). This tussle between the whites and blacks continued until the Civil War which is a monumental event in American history that sorely divided the North and the South. Although the anti-slavery founding fathers expected that the institution might gradually die out, but it rapidly increased in the following years. As the young republic expanded westward so did the institution of slavery, and the number of Black slaves continued to increase and reached up to four million by 1860s (Foner 381). On the other hand, anti-slavery campaigns continued to assert influence and some "militant movements" even demanded "immediate abolition of slavery and the incorporation of the blacks as equal citizens of the republic" (Foner 382). These anti-slavery movements brought the issue of slavery to the center of the national agenda, and by the 1840s, the clash between free and slave states became a core issue in the U.S.

The American Civil War (1861-1865) was fought between the Northern (the Union) and the Southern (Confederacy) states of the U.S. The major source of contention between the rival states was the expansion of slavery to the American West. This political and economic controversy was brought to the limelight with anti-slavery president Abraham Lincoln's victory in 1860.

As a result of his victory, seven Southern slaveholding states seceded in early

1861 and formed Confederacy. This act led to war between the Unionists and

Confederates during 1861 and 1862 and ended with Lincoln's Emancipation

Proclamation in 1863. Although Lincoln is remembered as a great president

who ended slavery, but mainstream historical narratives tend to forget that the

president initially suggested that the only solution to the problem was that after

"abolishing an enslavement that had lasted for centuries," African Americans

should "leave the country they helped to build" (Hannah-Jones 117). However,

the Black Americans did not accept Lincoln's offer and decided not to remain

in the U.S. After the Civil War, the congress took several years to ratify the

Fourteenth Amendment in 1868 that ensured "citizenship to Black Americans"

(Hannah-Jones 124). It is evoked as the most momentous amendment to U.S.

constitution.

Figure 1

 Slave holding and anti-slavery states during the American Civil War

Map 1 The United States in 1860: slave states and free states
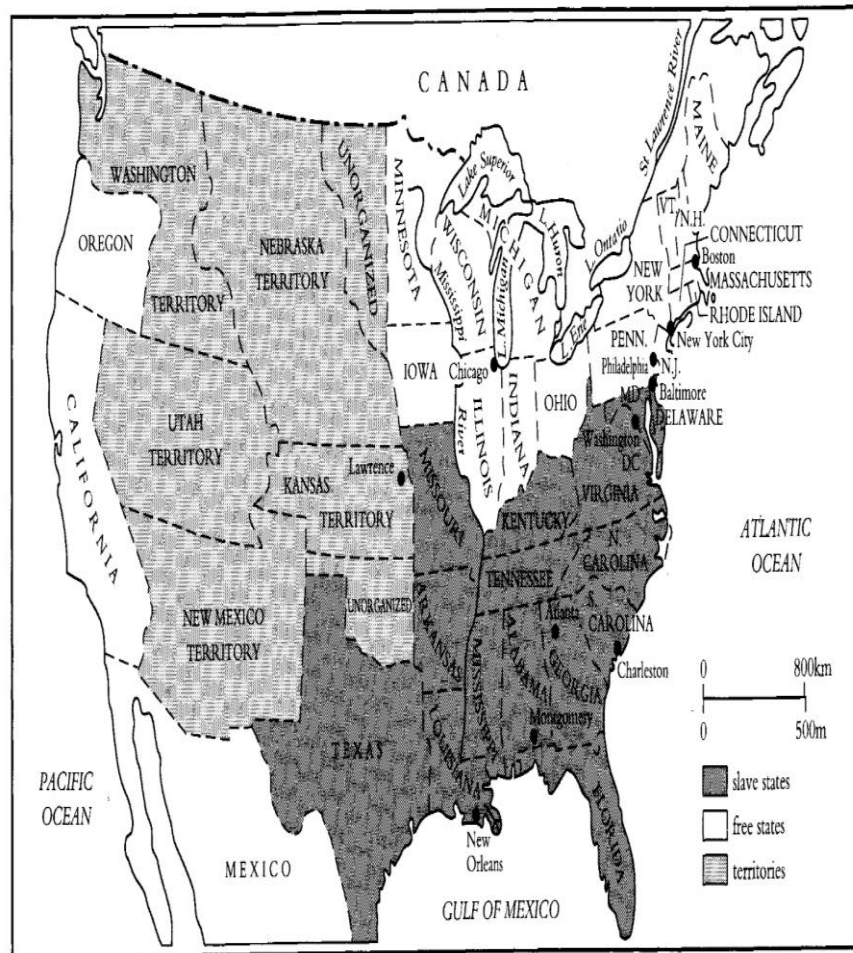
Source: Reid, B. Holden. *The Origins of American Civil War*. 1993.

The era following the American Civil War is labeled as the era of Reconstruction in the U.S history. It was a time of intense political and social conflicts. This era had some benefits for Blacks as they were given the right to vote in 1867. During the brief period of Reconstruction, former slaves "zealously engaged with the democratic process" (Hannah-Jones 122). Laws were made to incorporate blacks into the mainstream society as equal citizens.

In 1870, through the Fifteenth Amendment, black men were finally granted the right to vote. Reconstruction also gave some political rights to blacks, however, the following years brought deterioration of black conditions as the "rights guaranteed to the former slaves were violated" (Foner 385). Black abolitionists continued to resist the hegemonic white tactics and "rejected the nation's pretensions as a land of liberty" (Foner 442). During the Reconstruction era, the whole social fabric of the American society changed, and the former slaves whose only idea of freedom was related to owning land, demanded that they should be given land in lieu of their unpaid labor. This period gave Blacks some political rights but the rights in the socio-cultural domain and inclusion in the mainstream society still seemed distant. The Southern states continued to discriminate against blacks and "drafted laws that on paper appeared color-blind, but that were actually designed to end black voting" (Foner 651). White supremacists tried to present disenfranchisement of blacks as a purifying act. Hence, while legally equal, blacks were segregated and discriminated against in reality. Some states even passed laws "mandating racial segregation in every aspect of southern life, from schools to hospitals, waiting rooms, toilets, and cemeteries" (Foner 653). The doctrine of "separate but equal" (Foner 653) practiced in the Southern states treated blacks not as equal but as inferior or sometime as nonexistent. African Americans were expected to comply to the system unquestioning but if they queried, they were lynched or murdered by mobs of violent Whites (Foner 654).

Lynching was a common phenomenon in the Southern life; sometimes it was done secretly at night, but at other times it was advertised in advance so that more and more people could take part in it. During the height of racial terror in the U.S., black Americans were not merely murdered in mob attacks and lynchings but also castrated, burned alive, and dismembered, with their body parts displayed in storefronts and strewn across lawns in black neighborhoods. This violence was meant to frighten and control blacks, but perhaps just as importantly, it served as a psychological balm for white supremacy (Hannah-Jones 135). The color line dividing blacks from whites remained visible till very late in the history of the country. It seemed as if "progressive intellectuals, social scientists, labor reformers, and suffrage advocates displayed a remarkable indifference to black condition" (Foner 747). Blacks continued to face racial prejudice in America, however, their resistance did not stop.

During the 1920s, there was "an upsurge of self-consciousness among black Americans, especially in the North's urban ghettos" (Foner 796). As more and more blacks migrated to the urban centers of New York and Chicago, black population increased and concentrated in the Harlem area of New York. It was later on termed as "black mecca for migrants from South and immigrants from West Indies" (Foner 796). The immigrants from the American south were primarily uneducated farm workers, but the immigrants from West Indies were well-educated, white-collar professionals who were appalled by the level of discrimination they faced in the U.S. Harlem proved to

be a place that encouraged black artists to flourish in a free environment. It contained "a vibrant black cultural community that established links with New York's artistic mainstream" (Foner 797). The Harlem renaissance was a cultural revival for all art forms that were purely considered black.

This black migration to the Northern suburbs changed the American demography and increased racial exclusion. The continued racial discrimination even in the North revived the struggle for racial justice during the Civil Rights Movement. African Americans started contesting the institutionalized segregation of Blacks in all domains of social life. Brown vs. Board of Education (1954) was a landmark case in this context that ended segregation in the public schools (Foner 930) and gave further momentum to the Civil Rights Movement. The movement was, indeed, a primarily peaceful socio-political campaign that lasted from 1954 to 1968 and fought to abolish racial segregation in the U.S. society. The efforts of the campaigners i.e., Martin Luther King, Malcom X., among others, were fruitful and "in 1964, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act which prohibited racial discrimination in employment, institutions like hospitals and schools, and privately owned public accommodations such as restaurants, hotels and theaters" (Foner 989). This was a landmark act in the history of the United States because it explicitly prohibited discrimination. Although the struggle of Black Americans legally ended with getting equal rights in the country, but the subtle discrimination and subjugation continues to be part of American social fabric and African

Americans are resisting against it till date as is obvious in the case of the Black Lives Matter movement.

The overview of African American history in the U.S demonstrates how this community has been subjected to marginalization and oppression; however, the same community has significantly shaped the American society and culture. While mainstream narratives of American history did not give space to the traumatic history of African Americans until recently, African American art and literature have depicted this experience in their artistic productions. Indeed, in the 1970s onwards, African American literature has consciously engaged with that history through "representations of enslavement and liberation of their ancestors" (Haenhel & Ulz 29). In this regard, Toni Morrison's selected texts i.e., *Beloved* and *Home* are paradigmatic trauma texts that memorialize the psychic trauma of African Americans and are embedded in the communal traumatic history.

1.8.2 The Kashmir Conflict: A Brief Historical Overview

Like Toni Morrison, Shahnaz Bashir's fictional works also memorialize the communal traumas of the Kashmiri community. Therefore, before analyzing his fictional works, it is important to understand the history of the Kashmir conflict. The Kashmir conflict is not a contemporaneous issue as its roots can be traced back to the historical past of the valley. Under the Treaty of Amritsar, Kashmir was sold to the Hindu Dogra ruler, Gulab Singh by the British in 1846. The territory included "Jammu, Ladakh, Baltistan and numerous hill states, through which flowed the river Indus and the tributaries

to the east" (Schofield 12). According to Alastiar Lamb, the "theoretical background to the Kashmir dispute" (2) lies in the predominant Muslim population's and the Hindu ruler's clash of interests. Sumantra Bose considers Kashmir dispute a "by-product of partition" (10). At the time of Partition in 1947, Kashmir, being one of the princely states in the subcontinent, faced the consequences of its status. It had a choice to either join India or Pakistan or remain free (Peer 12). Despite the ruler's "legal right" of choice, there was a popular assumption that in case of the difference of faith of the ruler and his subjects, the ruler would respect the wishes of the majority (Roy 68). The Muslim rulers of Hyderabad and Junagadh, for example, made the choice of acceding to India because of the majority Hindu population (Ali 15). Correspondingly, Kashmir was expected to accede to Pakistan given its majority Muslim population despite being ruled by a Hindu ruler, Hari Singh. However, unlike the other states, Kashmir was also unique in being "geographically contagious to both India and the future Pakistan" (Schofield 19) as well as in being a state that was "a collection of territories which had been assembled by the State's founder" (Lamb 11). Therefore, the geographical location of the valley made it crucial for both the countries:

> First, J&K was contagious to both Pakistan and India. Its contiguity to
> Pakistan—with western Punjab and the North-West Frontier Province
> (NWFP)—was markedly more extensive than to India (eastern Punjab).
> The princely state's external links in trade, transport and commerce
> were also predominantly with areas to the west that became part of

Pakistan. For example, the otherwise remote Kashmir Valley's lifeline

the 'Jhelum Road' (so known after the Jhelum, a major regional river)

that ran from Srinagar, the capital of the Kashmir Valley, to

Rawalpindi, an old city which is adjacent to Islamabad, Pakistan's

custom-built capital. There were also ties of culture and kinship

because a sizeable population of Kashmiri origin, descendants of

nineteenth-century migrants from the princely state, lived in western

Punjab. Nonetheless, the fact remained that the princely state had

borders with both Pakistan and India. (Bose 15-16)

Had the State of Jammu & Kashmir been situated almost anywhere else in the

Subcontinent, and had it embraced a lesser area, Indo-Pakistani argument over

its future might not have been conducted with particular intensity. The State,

however, lay not only adjacent to both India and Pakistan but also was a key

frontier region which gave access to Central Asia, a part of the world which

had, for more than a century, attracted the attention of British strategists whose

attitudes were to a great degree inherited by their successors. The State,

moreover, was large, embracing over 80,000 square miles (comparable in

magnitude to the current United Kingdom), and title to such an extensive (and

physically pleasing) territory, therefore, was not to be abandoned lightly (Lamb

3).

Figure 2

Disputed Territory of the State of Jammu and Kashmir

Source: Lamb, Alastair. *Birth of a Tragedy: Kashmir 1947*. 1994.

The geopolitical significance of the valley increased the rift between the

two newly freed countries and led to a standstill situation in the case of

Kashmir. The political leaders of the time, especially the leading political

figure, Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah wanted Kashmir to be independent.

Immediately after Partition, while the political elites of Kashmir i.e., Maharaja

Hari Singh (Gulab Singh's great-grandson) and Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah

took time in contemplating the future of the valley, the tribesmen from

Pakistan's Northern province "forc[ed] their hands" (Peer 12) in the matter and

attacked Kashmir with the religious zeal of freeing their Muslim brothers from

the hands of the Hindu Dogra rule. The actual "trouble broke out in Kashmir

over 25-27 October 1947. The CRO's first reaction to the still-disputed

sequence of tribal invasion, Kashmir's accession, and the airlift of Indian

troops was that "powerful forces in India, which bitterly resented partition,

were determined to bring about the collapse of Pakistan" (Ankit 44). According

to Alastair Lamb:

> At about 9' o clock on the morning of 27 October 1947 units of Indian
>
> Army started landing at Srinagar airfield. Thus began what many still
>
> today remember as Kashmir's Black Day, the formal commencement of
>
> the Indo-Pakistani Kashmir dispute which, despite the involvement of
>
> the United Nations as would-be mediator, has now persisted
>
> unresolved. (14)

Due to the indecisiveness of the Kashmiri leaders, the state remained

'independent' for two months, till the Pakistani tribesmen invaded in October.

As soon as the valley was invaded, the political leaders "finally agreed to join

India" (Schofield 12). This decision was detested by Pakistan because of the

Muslim majority in the valley. This dispute was the root cause of the first war

between India and Pakistan that was "halted in 1949 by a ceasefire supervised

by the recently founded United Nations" (Schofield 12). The ceasefire was

enacted on the condition that India would conduct plebiscite in Kashmir but

despite constant pressure by the Pakistani and Kashmiri leaders, India failed to

do so. Indeed, "bereft of mineral wealth, locked within inhospitable terrain, but

professed by all to be a singularly beautiful place, the Valley has, in the course

of twentieth century, emerged as a bone of contention for three nationalisms,

Indian, Pakistani, and aspirant Kashmiri" (Kabir 1). While Jahanara mentions

Kashmiris as the source of one of the nationalisms in this conflict, Kabir brings

them to the center of her argument by pointing out that they are equal

stakeholders in the issue. Though given less importance in the dominant

discourses of India and Pakistan, Kashmiris have started raising indigenous

voices that highlight their perspective and standpoint.

The dispute between India and Pakistan worsened after the Indian

Army's intervention and has bitterly persisted since then. While the United

Nations intervened and "endorsed a plebiscite" for the Kashmiris' right for

self-determination (Peer 13), the plebiscite was never carried out; indeed,

Kashmir's accession to India had dire consequences. At first, India promised to

ensure a relatively autonomous Kashmir, but it was later on withheld (Peer 13).

The issue is still unresolved and is visible in not only the official discourses of

India and Pakistan but also in their maps:

> The official Indian map subsumes without comment or qualification the
>
> entirety of pre-1948 Jammu and Kashmir, the visual equivalent of the
>
> oft-echoed claim, "Kashmir is an integral part of India." Likewise,
>
> Pakistan's stand on Kashmir—that is represented the "unfinished
>
> business" of 1947—is geographically rendered by its official map
>
> being, literally, without an eastern edge. (Kabir 8)

The ceasefire stopped the war between the two newly freed states in 1948, but it could not give the desired results to the people of Kashmir. Kashmiri leaders of the era assumed that they would be able to get the status of self-governance but when Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah was imprisoned, he alluded to the possibility of an independent Kashmir. Sheikh Abdullah remained jailed for approximately twenty years. Upon his release, he succumbed to Indian offers and in return was given power. The following few years were peaceful, but the situation deteriorated in 1987 after Sheikh Abdullah's demise. The Indian government "rigged" the elections and used violence to terrorize "opposition candidates and ... their supporters" (Peer 13). Post-election violence led to resistance and defiance. It was crushed and in turn led to an armed struggle that continues till today. Scholars have termed Indian control over Jammu and Kashmir as "a terminal colonial situation" (Lamb 322; Bennett and Nicholas). Despite being a colony of the British Empire, India nevertheless ended up colonizing Kashmiris after the British exit. While this legacy of colonialism continues with all its atrocities until today, Kashmiri resistance against the Indian domination also continues like the African American struggle against while supremacy.

The freedom struggle in Kashmir has evolved over a period of time. The decade of the 90s was an era of confrontation between Kashmiri fighters and the Indian forces. The struggle took a new form in the next decade though. Arundhati Roy in her essay "The Only Thing Kashmiris Want" (2011) hints at the transition of the Kashmiris' mode of resistance in the decade of 2000.

Unlike the uprising of the 90s, the next decade is marked by "a new phase" of "sustained mass uprising", which was a "nightmare" for India. Though India claims victory in crushing the violent uprising through extreme force, it is in fact replaced by nonviolent protest of the masses in Kashmir (Roy 28). Unlike the armed strugglers, "young stone-throwers took to the streets" to register resistance through mass uprising (Roy 29). The generation that grew up in the 90s witnessed severe clashes between Kashmiri fighters and Indian forces resulting in a prolonged violence. Therefore, they chose to exercise "the power of mass protest and above all the dignity of being able to straighten their shoulders and speak for themselves, represent themselves" (Roy 30). This mass protest of being able to challenge and dispel the elusive fabrications crafted around the identity of those who challenged Indian rule in Kashmir (Roy 30) is a purely Kashmiri phenomenon.

While "the armed struggle abated between 2004 and 2007," it "yielded a new phase of nonviolent resistance". Kashmiris used "Graffiti, songs, comic strips, prose and poetry ... as mediums of dissent ... and marched through the streets ... across Kashmir" (Roy 50). While these people chose nonviolent mass protest like the African American Civil Rights Movement, they nevertheless met violence at the hands of the Indian State. In highlighting the monstrous reality of "distinction in method and power ... between the stone pelters and the armed soldiers," Chatterji quotes a Kashmiri victim of torture who is asked why he throws stones at the perpetrators. He answers by asking why no one understands that throwing stones is nothing compared to the Indian Army

burning down the houses of Kashmiris: "How is it wrong to resist one's

bondage?" (Chatterji 48-52).

Chatterji underlines the same incongruence in method that is highlighted

by Mirza Waheed. Waheed refers to the response of Kashmiris to the

martyrdom of Burhan Wani, a freedom fighter in 2016 in arguing that the

protest of Kashmiris against his martyrdom is emblematic of a renewed energy

of resentment and resistance against the oppression of the Indian army. People

took to streets in Kashmir to show support for the cause of martyrdom and met

violence. Waheed is critical of the use of pellet guns against the street

protestors, turning scores of Kashmiris blind forever (Waheed, n.p.). Despite

the popular uprising and the demand for freedom, the narrative put forth by the

Indian government claims Kashmir to be an integral part of India. They pose

that the aspirations demanding freedom are marginal despite the fact that the

popular Kashmiri sentiment is otherwise. India keeps claiming that it is

introducing confidence-building measures to win the hearts of Kashmiris and

make them part of the national stream. But it keeps continuing its demeaning

tactics to suppress and oppress the Kashmiris through brute violence. More

recently, on August 5, 2019, India abrogated Article 370 of the Indian

constitution that had given Jammu & Kashmir the special status of a state;

since the abrogation of the Article, Kashmir has been made part of the union.

This momentous event in the history of the valley was both preceded and

followed by a series of socio-political upheavals, and is going to further

compromise Kashmiri right of self-determination.

While African American literary history is rich with historical accounts of trauma, Kashmiri writers have more recently started representing the silenced history of the Kashmiris in their artistic productions. Shahnaz Bashir is among those writers whose selected works represent and memorialize the communal traumas of the Kashmiri community. The above accounts of the traumatic histories of African Americans and Kashmiris provides the necessary background in which this study is situated. This overview of the oppressive histories of African Americans and Kashmiris helps situate the trauma narratives of Toni Morrison and Shahnaz Bashir in the troubled histories of their communities. Both the authors seem to draw inspiration for their trauma fiction from the respective histories. The selected fictional works tell stories of traumatic after-effects of communal traumas. Both authors create traumatized characters who need to come to terms with racial and political oppression. Through a comparative study of trauma fiction from two diverse contexts, this study seeks to forge new connections across cultural, ethnic, religious or national boundaries in the context of trauma literary studies.

Although African American literary writers have been noted in the American literary canon since the times of Harlem but the Kashmiri authors writing in English have made their growing presence felt in global arena only in recent years. Toni Morrison's and Shahnaz Bashir's fictional texts represent the traumatic effects of African American and Kashmiri communities on account of their experiences of social, cultural, racial, and political marginalization. The selected fictional texts demonstrate the effects of extreme

violence on the collective psyche and imagination of Africa Americans and Kashmiris. Morrison's and Bashir's fictional portrayals of the traumatic experiences are modes of testimony that seek to articulate the inarticulable oppressive histories. The testimonial fiction of Morrison and Bashir bears witness in literary form to the catastrophic events of the African American and the Kashmiri past.

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter has introduced the study by presenting the background of the study in which the traumatic histories of African Americans and Kashmiris are contextualized to see the impact of slavery, oppression, disenfranchisement, and suppression on their literary productions. The second chapter reviews the available literature on literary studies of trauma fiction as well as the selected fictional works to highlight the research gap. Keeping in view the research gap identified in the literature review, chapter three provides the conceptual framework for this study that draws on the works of Cathy Caruth, Laurie Vickory, and Ted Morissey.

The critical analysis of the selected fictional works is divided into three chapters, i.e., chapter four, five, and six. Each chapter analyzes the selected novels from one significant theoretical perspective. Chapter four focuses on the fictional texts of Toni Morrison and Shahnaz Bashir to explain how these texts represent the traumatic histories of their communities. Chapter five analyzes how individual trauma of the characters is linked to the collective traumas of African American and Kashmiri communities as depicted in the selected texts.

Chapter six analyzes the special aesthetic techniques used by the authors to represent traumas. The analysis chapters implement the conceptual-methodological plan to analyze the representation of communal trauma, history, and memory in the four selected fictional works. The last chapter concludes the study by commenting on its comparative aspect and the insights gained. It also provides directions for future studies.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

> Torture consists of acts that magnify the way in which pain
> destroys a person's world, self, and voice.

> —Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain*

> The essence of the trauma is precisely that it is too horrible to
> be remembered, to be integrated into our symbolic universe. All we
> have to do is to mark repeatedly the trauma as such.

> —Slavoj Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do*

The central aim of this dissertation is to examine communal trauma, history, and memory as represented in the selected fictional works of Toni Morrison and Shahnaz Bashir. The study explores how the selected works are centered on memorizing, replicating, and inscribing the traumatic pasts of African Americans and Kashmiris. Despite their markedly dissimilar geocultural contexts, the fictional texts of Morrison and Bashir demonstrate entanglements of systemic and individual violence that gradually intrudes ordinary life. Both authors weave polyphonic stories within stories about their communities and cultures in an attempt to represent cultural trauma and draw a "meaningful connection of this past to the current situation in which the memory is retrieved" (Neumann 336). These works bear witness to the sociopolitical and racial repression and record the traumatic effects of slavery, racism, socio-political oppression, and subjugation on individuals and communities. The study further focuses on the psychological and social dynamics that influence an individual's comprehension of a traumatic experience, and how these traumatic experiences shape and are shaped by language. The thesis argues that Morrison's and Bashir's selected trauma fiction depicts individual and collective trauma of their communities through the use of specific

aesthetic techniques, which give access to the inaccessible histories of African American and Kashmiri communities.

In order to support the above arguments, the study uses Caruthean model of literary trauma theory that suggests that traumatic incident challenges the limits of language, fragments the psyche, and even damages the meaning. This traditional model indicates that traumatic experience is incomprehensible, so it remains unrepresentable, thus the defining feature of this model is the assumed unspeakability of trauma. This model of trauma is employed to explore the traumatic events that impact the lives and identities of characters in the text. It further helps create a link between the individual and collective experience. For the purpose of this research, the conceptual postulates of Caruth are used in combination with Laurie Vickory's notion of trauma that contextualizes trauma within its psychological, literary, and cultural milieu to elucidate the relationship of trauma to social oppression. Vickroyan model of trauma emphasizes fictional works' socio-cultural milieu to broaden the comprehension of the correlation amongst objectification, repression, and discrimination. Additionally, she emphasizes the significance of aesthetic devices employed by fiction writers to replicate psychic neurosis of trauma victims. Both theorists demonstrate how literary trauma theory can help us understand the artistic depiction of ostracized subjects through specific narrative techniques in the politically conscious fiction of Morrison and Bashir. The study combines these two models of trauma with Ted Morrissey's approach of "trauma-based literary analysis" to examine the interrelation between communal trauma, history, and memory as depicted in the selected texts. Together, the three sources help elucidate the selected works as trauma texts that fictionalize traumatic incident or memories of the

incidents that haunt the protagonists but resist representation in ordinary language. Therefore, the authors use specialized aesthetic techniques to represent the psychic neurosis of the characters. In the process of analyzing the fictional texts the socio-cultural positionality of the literary authors as well as their relation to trauma cultures helps elucidate the production of trauma texts and the relation of individual trauma to communal trauma, thereby providing access to the otherwise inaccessible histories of the two marginalized groups.

This chapter provides an overview of the scholarship in literary trauma studies as well as the literature available on the selected trauma fiction in order to identify the gap in the field that this thesis addresses. The body of critical work available on Toni Morrison is vast and extensive; however, as far as Shahnaz Bashir is concerned, so far no work of any considerable degree has been produced on his writings except for newspaper reviews and a few research articles mainly written by local academicians. In the field of literary trauma studies, in particular, Toni Morrison's work has not been compared to that of any fiction writer from South Asia. Therefore, a thematic review of the literature on the selected literary works will help identify the study gap. In what follows, I will contextualize my study through a brief account of Freudian psychoanalytic trauma theory; review the scholarship available on literary trauma studies; review scholarly literature on the representation of trauma in literature; provide an overview of the literature available on Toni Morrison from the perspective of literary trauma studies; and review the literature available on both Morrison's and Bashir's works in general in order to identify the gap that this study addresses.

2.1 Historical and Theoretical Foundations of Trauma Theory

The field of literary trauma studies burgeoned during the 1990s and heavily relied on Freudian psychoanalytic theory to develop a model that imagined trauma as an intense experience, which challenges the boundaries of language and breaches meaning. The initial assumptions of the field were that trauma was an unrepresentable suffering that "challenges limits of language, fragments the psyche, and even ruptures meaning" (Balaev, *The Nature of Trauma* 368). These initial suppositions continue to impact the field of trauma studies even today. During the nineteenth century, many researchers investigated the psychoanalytic theories regarding the origin and the effects of trauma; prominent names in the list are Joseph Breuer, Pierre Janet, Jean-Martin Charcot, Hermann Oppenheim, Abram Kardiner, and Morton Prince. However, Freud is the most important amongst all these.

In his early work, Freud maintained that traumatic hysteria progresses from suppressed experience of sexual assault and emphasized that the event is never neurotic in its original happening but the traumatic effects emerge in its remembrance. He argued that the original event continues to perpetrate harm, and the traumatic event is only comprehended after a "latency period of deferred action" that he terms *Nachträglichkeit*. Freud claimed that a contemporary event in the life of the victim brings to surface an apparently repressed memory. He also underscored that the past traumatic event can only be grasped in this process of remembering. Thus, the repressed feelings inflict psychological pain in the act of remembrance. Freud terms this traumatic remembrance as "pathogenic reminiscences" (*Psychological Works* 40) and explains it in combination with the act of remembering things concealed within the unconscious that instigate

splitting of the ego or dissociation. Describing the act of dissociation, Freud writes, "the splitting of the consciousness which is so striking in the well-known classical cases under the form of 'double conscience' is present to a rudimentary degree in every hysteria, and that a tendency to such dissociation, with it the emergence of abnormal states of consciousness … is the basic phenomenon of this neurosis" (*Psychological Works* 9). According to Freud, hysteria involves dissociation; it is a defense mechanism that arises from repression. This dissociation or breach instigated in the psyche as a result of trauma continued to be the focus of attention for Freud throughout his career. The concept of latency period between the event and its pathological effects, along with the idea that trauma fragments the psyche and can cause dissociation, are principles that Freud revised later in his career, but these beliefs still influence the contemporary definition of trauma for literary critics.

Freud expanded and adapted his work on defense mechanisms in his subsequent works that primarily focused on war neurosis of the World War I veterans. He explained the concept of traumatic repetition in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) by noting that the traumatic occurrences instigate conflict in the ego that "split off" its unity but later return in dreams (35). Freud described human mind as an organism that comprises numerous layers; the outer layer has a "protective shield" that guards against the harmful external stimuli. When the victim runs into danger suddenly and faces "fright", this situation coupled with external stimuli causes neurosis (Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure* 32-36). For Freud, anxiety acts as a defense mechanism against this sudden neurosis, but sudden fright does not cause anxiety and has no defense shield; as a result, the outer

protective layer is ruptured (Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure* 33). In other words, Freud imagines trauma as an external harmful agent that shocks the unprepared victim.

Freud further explained that once the traumatic incident has been experienced, the mind of the victim compulsively repeats it with the hope of mastering the unpleasant feelings (Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure* 19). For him, the dreams of the victim are significant because the traumatized patient's unconscious mind tries to "master the stimulus retrospectively, by developing the anxiety whose omission was the cause of the traumatic neurosis" (Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure* 37). Freud notes that the patient "cannot remember the whole of what is repressed in him," and the fragment he/she has forgotten can be "precisely the essential part of it". As a result, the patient is "obliged to repeat the repressed material as a contemporary event instead of … *remembering* it as something belonging to the past" (Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure* 18). This narrative of the traumatic incident is crucial for recovery and, according to Freud, since the patient does not remember the actual event so the reproduction through dreams is crucial (Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure* 19). Hence, the narrative recall of the traumatic incident and its integration into the normal memory are important concerns of Freud's conceptualization of trauma.

Freud's notion of traumatic neurosis explains trauma as an experience that is repeated compulsively and divides the victim's psyche. According to Freud, this act of division impacts the victim's memory and resultantly stirs the narrative production of the past. These early definitions of trauma during the initial phase of literary trauma studies in the 1990s linked this field of study to the concepts of memory and identity. The concept of relatedness of trauma with narrative and memory was later probed in detail in literary studies of trauma. This study is concerned with the representation of trauma in

literature so in this literature review I will focus more on developments in the field of literary trauma studies as opposed to the clinical and psychiatric genealogy of trauma.

2.2. Literary Trauma Studies

Although literary trauma studies as a distinct field, has its own discrete but related and interdependent genealogy, it nevertheless owes its origins to Freud's thoughts. The literary trauma studies of the 1990s primarily draws upon Freudian psychoanalytic model of trauma and the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder (DSM) to comprehend the post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in both literary and cultural studies. The field further burgeoned with the works of Cathy Caruth, Geoferry Hartman, Kali Tal, and Shoshana Felman. All these first wavers belonged to the Yale school of deconstruction. They used the Freudian model of trauma and emphasized the fundamental contradiction between language and representability. The argument that a traumatic incident disrupts an individual's psyche and avoids linguistic representability was at the heart of their theoretical positions. All these theorists focused on representation of trauma in literature and the role of history and memory in it.

Anne Whitehead in her book *Trauma Fiction* (2004) establishes that "[t]he rise of trauma theory has provided novelists with new ways of conceptualizing trauma and has shifted attention away from the question of what is remembered of the past to how and why it is remembered" (3). Whitehead argues that the literary authors of the twentieth century have primarily focused on the use of specialized language in their trauma narratives to mimic the symptoms of trauma. She explains that the pervasive yearning of "various cultural groups to represent or make visible specific historical instances of trauma has given rise to numerous important works of contemporary fiction" (3).

Whitehead points out that the incorporation of cultural trauma into fiction has changed the very nature and form of it. She notes that the authors of trauma fiction have realized that the "impact of trauma can only be adequately represented by mimicking its forms and symptoms, so that temporality and chronology collapse, and narratives are characterized by repetition and indirection" (3). The encounter of literature with trauma has resulted in the genre of trauma fiction, and psychoanalytic and psychiatric notions of trauma have influenced more and more contemporary authors; similarly, interest of literary critics has increased in trauma fiction.

Trauma can be so petrifying or inexpressible in ordinary vocabularies that it can only be articulated circuitously, and literature, because of its use of symbolic language can, therefore, adequately express trauma. The field also investigates the influence of personal trauma on the creative writing process. The fictional characters of trauma narratives represent communal conflicts and wounds; consequently, their individual traumas become "historical marker to unspeakable experience" (Vickroy, *Trauma and Survival* xiii). These narratives are especially important because writing about personal trauma, or journaling, has been shown to have therapeutic effects on individuals and communities. This relevance of trauma to the lives of ordinary people is perhaps the reason for the growing interest of researchers in the field of trauma studies.

For literary trauma studies, a crucial question concerns the relationship between culture and trauma (Kurtz 8). While psychology has focused on the psychic traces left on the individual by a traumatic event, approaches focusing on literature are interested in the cultural and social dimensions of trauma. This means paying attention to various processes of cultural mediation, especially the cultural discourse on how a particular

culture gives meaning to a particular form of violence (Kaplan 87). Culture also has a significant role in how an individual experiences and deals with trauma. Traumatic experiences are also given different meanings in different cultural contexts. Sociocultural approaches to the study of trauma have highlighted that catastrophic events give rise to cultural traumas that affect a whole community and may lead to the need to reassess and re-narrate collective identities. Literary trauma studies has often focused on historical catastrophes and explored their impact on both individuals and communities (Craps and Bond 173). Like cultural memory studies, it has frequently been interested in how literature explores the interplay between the personal and the cultural in narrating the particular experience of trauma. But the academic debates in the field of trauma studies have not been linear; indeed, practitioners of the field have been constantly involved in complex, at times converging/diverging methodological debates.

It is not only the genealogy of the concept of trauma that poses problems for the practitioners of the field, but also certain overarching ideas related to the field, for instance, the individual, cultural, and collective aspects of trauma. Canonical works such Cathy Caruth's edited collection *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995), her monograph *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996), Dominick LaCapra's *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma* (1994), Kali Tal's *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* (1996), Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub's *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (1992) relate the psychoanalytic concepts of trauma as it "intersects with literature, literary theory, historiography, and contemporary culture" (Berger 569). Since the early 1990s, these seminal writings have dominated the field of trauma studies. The impact of

these works became twofold because of the impact of the "ethical turn affecting the humanities" (Craps and Bond 45).

The term "trauma theory" first appeared in critical discourse with the publication of Cathy Caruth's works such as *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995) and *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996). These works explore how a traumatic incident impacts the human mind, and how it resurfaces in the mind to replay in words what the mind had experienced in the past. She argues that what returns to haunt the victims in narratives of trauma "is not only the reality of the event but also the reality of the way its violence has not yet been fully known" (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 6). Caruth's approach emphasizes belatedness as constitutive of the temporal structure of trauma. In her work, she not only poses these questions but also provides answers. Relying on Freudian psychoanalysis and DSM, Caruth starts off by defining the term trauma as "an overwhelming experience" that is related to an event of sudden or catastrophic nature, adding that the response on the part of the individual, who is going through it, is usually in the form of a "delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena" (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 11). She identifies trauma as an experience which remains "unclaimed" to cognitive knowledge and literal language but attempts to tell the reader of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available. For Caruth, trauma, therefore, signifies both the impossibility of representation and the possibility of accessing a non-symbolic, unmediated authenticity, "reality or truth", the truth of the subject. Caruth rejects the idea that posttraumatic disorder is a neurotic illness, stemming from the internal psyche alone; she instead proposes that it results from an external event: "The traumatized carry an impossible history within them,

or they become themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot entirely posses" (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 5). This formulation enabled critics to read cultural texts for the techniques they use to convey the temporality of traumatic memory, returning characters to the scene of the past events and in the process overwhelming and fragmenting the unity of character, plot, and event.

Caruth, as a foundational theorist in the field of literary trauma studies extensively contributed to its development. In her work, she posits that the victim finds the incident overwhelming because s/he was not ready for this unusual experience. In other words, the victim was not prepared to go through the feeling of pain, a phenomenon that according to LaCapra (*Writing History* 50), is named by Freud as *Angstbereitschaft* (19). Caruth goes on to explain that since the traumatic incident is beyond usual human experience, it cannot be grasped in its actuality by the victims, adding that the victim needs time to comprehend and then relate what actually happened that s/he witnessed. This reaction which comes in the form of flashbacks of the incident haunting the victims is defined as Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PSTD). She broadly defines the term saying that there is no one-line definition of PTSD; however, there is a general consensus on the fact that the victim exhibits a response to a traumatic event which s/he has gone through and that response is usually delayed this response is in the form of dreams, hallucinations, thoughts about the event, inclination towards or avoidance of the factors which cause the remembrance of that event, and/or a general numbness during or after the flashback of the event (Caruth, *Trauma Explorations* 4).

Like Caruth, Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub also established a new category for understanding testimonial aspects of literature, and read it as a work of fiction that is

witness to an otherwise unrepresentable traumatic event. What made trauma such an essential concept for these critics is that they perceived a close interrelation between wounds and words; trauma and literature; and even trauma and language. In their book *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History* (1992), the Yale literary critics Shoshana Felman and psychoanalyst Dori Laub examine the nature and function of memory and the act of witnessing. Laub's therapeutic approach starts with the premise that making sense of a traumatic experience in narrative terms is a process of making a painful, distressing experience partly communicable and comprehensible by relating it to something. Such a process of relating can be necessary for survival as Laub suggests: "The survivors did not only need to survive so that they could tell their stories; they also needed to tell their stories in order to survive" (63). In their joint work, Felman and Laub insist that literature carries an important ethical obligation to provide testimony (xvii). They generally relate these ideas to the act of reading and writing, specifically in the context of Holocaust. This book relates literary expression to visual expression, artistic to autobiographical and psychoanalytic to historical. Felman and Laub argue that literary authors use history as a significant point of reference. They reach out to something real but beyond expression, with their concern for preservation "of the shock of the unintelligible in face of the attempt at its interpretation [….] that is, of reality itself in the midst of our own efforts at interpreting it and through the necessary process of its textualization" (xx).

Cathy Caruth and Shoshana Felman's strand of trauma theory has been most influential in literary trauma studies. Both Caruth and Felman were students of Paul de Man at Yale University. Not only do their vocabulary and idiom manifest a clear affinity

with deconstruction, both Caruth's and Felman's works contain extensive discussion of de Man's poststructuralist philosophy of language. Drawing on de Man, Caruth emphasizes the performative dimension of language in how it "does more than it knows" and how a horrifying event can function as "a deathlike break" that disrupts the language of representation and cannot be known but only felt (Caruth, *Explorations in Memory* 87, 90). Caruth's model denotes that an extreme event ruptures psyche and is unrepresentable. Unspeakability is the defining feature of this model of trauma theory. Joining the Freudian idea with poststructuralism, Caruth's and Felman's foundational works have made belatedness a basic tenet of literary trauma theory; due to its structure of "inherent latency" the traumatic event is not experienced as it occurs" (Caruth, *Explorations in Memor*y 8), but returns to haunt the subject of experience through "repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviors stemming from the event" (Caruth, *Explorations in Memory* 4). For these poststructuralist trauma theorists, trauma is fundamentally unrepresentable, unsayable, and unspeakable—it eludes language, knowledge, and narrative as systems of representation.

Other practitioners in the field of literary trauma studies have also made significant contributions. Historian Dominick LaCapra is amongst the scholars who integrate trauma studies with poststructuralist philosophy. His elaboration of the psychoanalytic concepts of "acting out" and "working through" proved invaluable in discussions of the different ways in which critics extended to readings of literature. LaCapra's work probes the connection between historiographical, cultural, and personal identity formation in the repercussion of the historical trauma of the Holocaust. In his study, LaCapra examines the modes in which a traumatic event such as Holocaust

relentlessly disrupts the correlation between memory and representation. It is the "performative engagement with trauma," LaCapra maintains, that allows the "posttraumatic writing" to convey to reader a "feel" for the terrifying experiences it contains (*History, Literature, Critical Theory* 137). His writings relate the principles of psychoanalytic theory to historiography and, in doing so, he also suggests the coping mechanisms (acting out, working through) for the victims.

LaCapra evaluates the Holocaust testimonies as post-traumatic testimonial art. He emphasizes that these fictional works depict the trauma of the victims that they had been experiencing since the last decade of the 1900s. For LaCapra, the representation of trauma is not an easy task because the writer can feel connected to the victim; however, this portrayal is still safer than the actual experience of trauma. LaCapra adds that the act of chronicling the trauma of another person is no less than suffering the trauma directly because in the act of writing the author also goes through the different stages of trauma. In his book *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (2001), he investigates the traumatic aspects of a major historical event such as the Holocaust. In a series of interconnected essays, he tries to explore how theoretical and literary works attempt to come to terms with trauma by recording the testimonies of trauma.

Furthering the argument, Judith Herman, another important trauma theorist, explains: "unlike commonplace misfortunes . . . [t]raumatic events generally involve threats to life or bodily integrity, or a close personal encounter with violence and death" (34). Herman examines how trauma jeopardizes our way of life and controls the human psyche. Herman is amongst the first scholars who stressed that the diagnostic model of trauma (in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder,* DSM-III, 1980),

which defined post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in terms of exposure to "a psychologically distressing event that is outside the range of usual human experience", privileges the male experience of exceptional, violent events. In doing so, it assumes that violence, oppression, and harassment are not part of one's everyday experience. She explains that traumatic experiences can impact different people differently; a person may be completely terrified or experience some internal shift. In other words, a traumatic event or traumatic stressor produces an excess of external stimuli and a corresponding excess of excitation in brain. Herman's theorization closely aligns with Caruthean model in the former's argument that when the individual is attacked, the brain is not able to fully assimilate or process the event, and responds through various mechanisms such as psychological numbing or shutting down of normal emotional responses. Some theorists also claim that in situations of extreme stress, dissociation takes place; in such a situation, the victim splits off part of his/herself from the experience, which results in the production of multiple personalities. Clinicians diagnose it as multiple personality disorder and explain that it always indicates an earlier trauma that is not remembered by the patient.

This is the point where trauma theory takes a new turn and starts to engage in the debate concerning the relation of trauma to memory. The prime reason of this new turn in the field was the increasing cases involving sexual abuse during the 1980s. Judith Herman firmly believes in the theory of dissociation. Her ideas are also related (though not identical) to the concept of repressed memory or traumatic amnesia. According to this view, the more horrific and prolonged the trauma, the more the subject has a tendency to dissociate and therefore have no conscious memory of the traumatic event. Thus, a child

or even an adolescent who is subjected to repeated sexual abuse by a family member may very well not remember it until he or she enters into therapy as an adult; at that point, the patient may recover memories in a gradual process, sometimes with the help of hypnosis. The patient can only move towards the final recovery once the repressed trauma is fully remembered. Once the patient remembers the trauma only then he/ she starts dealing with it, and the process of healing starts. Herman partially derives her theory from Freud, but she disagrees with his views. Mainly, she has borrowed Freudian notion of repressed memories that are dependent on the unconscious.

Another significant author, researcher, and psychiatrist Bessel van der Kolk also focused on the nature of traumatic memory in his studies. His books *Post-traumatic Disorder* (1984), *Psychological Trauma* (1987), and *Traumatic Stress* (1996) are monumental contribution to the field of trauma studies. Kolk focuses on the impact of trauma on different people, especially according to their developmental stage. He has extensively worked on the complex range of psychological and biological effects of trauma on humans. He termed this concept as "Developmental Trauma Disorder". Kolk's studies focus on the nature of traumatic memories, and he distinguishes traumatic memories from ordinary memories. He argues that traumatic memories are difficult to comprehend because the grief triggers PTSD that cannot be approximated easily. Kolk defines traumatic memories as unusual in nature and characterized by "fragmentary and intense sensations and affects, often with little or no verbal narrative content" (Kolk et al., *Exploring the Nature of Traumatic Memory* 9). Kolk has continuously worked on the nature of traumatic memories and how they process.

To mediate the bridge between trauma studies and literature, literary analysts such as Laurie Vickroy, Deborah Horvitz, and Anne Whitehead have made major contributions. They can be seen in diverging their study of trauma theory from the conventional medical discourse and exploring the plurality of trauma studies. Kirby Farrell calls it "post-traumatic culture" in which "the concept of trauma expands beyond its clinical definition, becoming a cultural trope that has met many difficult needs" (14). Literary critics intensely scrutinize texts on trauma in order to fulfill diverse objectives ranging from the extensive study of the purpose behind writing such narratives to the myriad genres in which the subject of trauma is in a core position. An example of this can be gleaned from Laurie Vickroy's *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction* (2002), where she asserts that "trauma narratives" are in actuality "fictional narratives that help readers to access traumatic experience" (1). According to Vickroy, trauma fiction can be seen as an individualistic form of retaliation by the people to the past century's cataclysmic incidents including the aftereffects of war, industrialization, impoverishment, colonialism, rape, and abuse, consequentially leading to the severe disruption of the psyche of the people (x). Vickroy propounds that "trauma fiction emerges out of postmodernist fiction and shares its tendency to bring conventional narrative techniques to their limit" (82). Absence is a central feature in the selected fictional works where the narrative alludes to a traumatic event by means of textual lacunae, gaps, or silences. Indirection in these works is also significant where the text focuses on an unrelated event that indirectly refers to the traumatic incident. Repetition makes the reader feel as if the text is circling back to the traumatic event. Writers of trauma narrative also use the technique of splitting of the narrative voice.

Vickroy reveals the complexities of supremacy and the correlation amongst society's demands and the individual's wellbeing. Anne Whitehead stipulates that "trauma studies work against medical reductionism by exhorting practitioners to attend to a voice which is not fully known or knowable, and to bear witness" (8). Furthermore, Whitehead concentrates on fiction about war trauma particularly the Holocaust and the post-Holocaust narratives. Numerous critics are of the opinion that trauma fiction can be associated to the present state of culture. They contend that the post-modern era can be observed as a compelling force behind varying trauma narratives. Consequently, these critics have characterized the recurrent aspects of trauma narratives. Trauma narratives are involved in imparting the trauma of their fictional characters on to the readers while at the same time indicating the causes and outcomes of cultural abuse. In short, authors writing about trauma serve the purpose of transmitting psychological, social, cultural, and historical comprehension to the world (Vickroy, *Trauma and Survival* x). With acknowledgment of the importance of mental health, trauma studies have gained momentum in both literary and medical domains. Likewise, with the recognition of the significance of freedom in modern times, there is also acknowledgement of the necessity for a more insightful enquiry of the subtleties of repression and subjugation. Literary trauma theory is extremely helpful in this regard because it helps to elucidate the condition of the traumatized victims and also the narrative strategies employed in the politically conscious fiction.

Literary artists of the twentieth century have often used these traumatic events (historical and present-day) as subject matter for their fictional works. Though "suffering and resilience have long been recognized, it was chiefly in the 20th century, particularly

from the 1940s on, that disasters became a focus for mental health, and psychological

research began to inform how they were understood in terms of stressors of trauma, loss,

and dislocation" (Figley 210). In addition, the development of psychotherapy provided a

way to elicit and understand the unconscious mind: "Narratives about trauma flourished

particularly in the 1980s and 1990s with increased public awareness of trauma and

trauma theory" (Vickroy, *Trauma and Survival* 2). In other words, trauma can be so

terrifying or indescribable in ordinary terms, that it can be expressed only indirectly. The

artists, with their use of symbolic, disguised, or nonverbal language, can, therefore,

express some very powerful images of trauma. Writers from across the word have used

trauma as the central concern of their fiction.

All the above trauma theorists have contributed significantly to the field of

literary trauma studies. While this thesis mainly draws on Cathy Caruth's and Laurie

Vickroy's theoretical contributions to trauma literary studies, it is also informed by

general developments in the field. A number of literary trauma studies have been

conducted using the works of Caruth, Felman, Herman, Vickroy, and others. However,

this study, in particular, departs from similar studies on trauma fiction conducted in this

area as it is a comparative study that takes into account a South Asian context as well.

Generally, Westcentric trauma studies highlight the experiences of trauma in the

Euro/American contexts, which overlooks the experiences of trauma in the Global South

i.e., Kashmir. Besides marginalizing the non-western communities, this approach also

restricts the notion of trauma to the western subjects by implying that only

Euro/American traumatic experiences count as suffering. By focusing on Kashmiri

trauma fiction alongside African American, the current study endeavors to highlight the

trauma experienced by members of the two marginalized communities residing in two different parts of the world; it thus "prioritizes the telling of stories from today's margins and tries to de-center the North", concomitantly challenging "the perphiralization of the South" (Demir 56).

2.3 Literature Review: Toni Morrison

Toni Morrison, the first African American woman Nobel laureate, is an internationally acclaimed African American author. Her fictional oeuvre comprises of children's books, essay collections as well as eleven novels. Her novels have inspired volumes of critical scholarship over the past three decades. The critical approaches to her novels outpace many of her contemporaries, as she has secured canonical status in the field of literary studies. The critical approaches to her works include "feminist, Marxist, deconstructionist, Lacanian, New Historicist, and semiotic analyses" (Lee and Heinert 1). The central concerns of all this wide range of criticism is Morrison's engagement with the African American history and her focus on developing a specific African American literary tradition. Scholars of her work have explored the unrelenting and unflinching representation of racial issues in her fictional works. Her fictional works explore African American identity in the U.S, especially through projecting the experiences of black women. As an African American author, her fictional and nonfictional works further the racial discourse.

Jill Matus in the book *Toni Morrison*, characterizes Morrison's novels as literary witnesses to the racial trauma African Americans have suffered. Matus further points out that trauma theory has rarely explored racism as trauma. Matus notes that Morrison herself described *Beloved* as a "suitable memorial" (30) to slaves, for there is no fitting

decorative or architectural memorial. The novel as memorial is a kind of testimony, specifically, a literary testimony, that, at first glance, calls to mind testimony presented in a courtroom. The official historical accounts fail to document the horrors and brutalities this race had to face in the Unites States of America, but Morrison as a literary artist gives voice to her wretched ancestral souls. The ghost of Sethe's daughter is not only a symbol of her deceased daughter Beloved but also symbolically represents the "60 million and more who were obliterated by the institution of slavery" (Dadhich 19).

Her novels have also been extensively analyzed for the use of the technique of Magical Realism and the representation of the history of African Americans especially from women's perspective. Though Morrison herself has "resisted the label of magical realist as disturbingly hegemonic" (Faris 179) as she believes that her novels represent her African American folklore. Critics of Morrison's work point out that her feminism is "group-centered than self-centered, more cultural than political" (O'Reilly 24). Resultantly, Morrisonean feminism represents African American cultural values. There are also New Historical and Cultural Materialist studies of Morrison's works. Critics of Morrison point out that search for "home" is a significant aspect of Morrisonean fiction.

An incredible amount of research has been conducted on Toni Morrison's fiction in general and especially on the selected works i.e., *Beloved* and *Home.* Considering the amount of scholarship produced by Morrison scholars, Elizabeth Anne Beaulieu observes, "a virtual industry of *Beloved* (and, by extension, Morrisonian) scholarship has evolved" (59). Morrisonian scholars have produced a heterogeneous body of work on her fiction that uses numerous theoretical lenses. Though the body of critical work available on Morrison is huge but it is not possible to review all the available works so for the sake

of this study I will delimit my review to trauma studies on Morrison and works published on *Beloved* and *Home.*

Toni Morrison's most acclaimed novel *Beloved* (1987) won Pulitzer Prize in 1988. The time period of the novel's publication is very significant because at that time there was little debate on the issue of slavery, especially in the U.S. But through her fictional work, Morrison has highlighted the condition of her people in the U.S. Morrison describes her novel as a monument of slavery that will bring back the memory of slavery to the collective conscious of her nation (Eyerman 58). Commenting on the body of literature produced on *Beloved,* Charles W. Scheel asserts:

> A work of shocking evocations and stunning poetry, Toni Morrison's *Beloved* has become a must on American literary reading list, in spite of its bewildering complexity. It has been read as pertaining to various sub-genres: trauma-literature, feminist literature, slave narratives, post-colonialism, post-modernism, the fantastic, the Gothic, the grotesque, the sublime, the beautiful, magical realism, the mystery novel etc. (69)

Almost all of Morrison's oeuvre starting from her most celebrated novel *Beloved* (Montgomery 2) deals with here African American ancestry and reiterates the author's communal identity. Her African American characters "either embrace or deny the white culture's right to dominion over them" (Conway 1). Some of her characters get influenced by the dominant white culture, but others try to assert individuality and autonomy. The most important aspect of her novels is the racial discrimination on the

basis of color of skin. Critics, like Alice Hall, have identified the destructive impact of the beauty industry as the central concern of Morrison's fictional works (3).

In *Whiteness and Trauma: The Mother-Daughter Knot in the Fiction of Jean Rays; Jamaica Kincaid and Toni Morrison* (2004), Victoria Burrows analyzes the fictional works of the three selected authors with a special focus on the theme of mother-daughter relation. She examines the cultural trauma of African Americans and the theorization of whiteness in the predominant white society. She argues that Morrison's novels pay special attention to family relations in the African American context, with intricate focus on the relationship of a mother to her children. In the novel *Beloved,* Morrison portrays Sethe as a mother who is overly attached to her children and is never ready to separate them from her. The narrative unfolds gradually so a reader only finds out later on that "multiple dimensions of slavery have shaped Sethe's attitude towards her children" (Wyatt 20). Andrea O'Reilly analyzes Morrison's theory of motherhood in *Toni Morrison and Motherhood: A Politics of the Heart* and explains that for Morrison, motherhood is primarily an act of resistance and her work "enables black women to challenge the controlling images of black motherhood" (3). Morrison's black women, especially mothers are resilient as they fight against the oppressing powers and achieve autonomy for their own selves and for their community. Linda Wagner-Martin in her book *Toni Morrison and the Maternal: From The Bluest Eye to God Help the Child* (2019) extensively analyzes Morrison's focus on African American family structures and cultures. She further probes the strong African American mother of her fiction.

Vicent Cucarella Ramón in the book *Sacred Femininity and the Politics of Affect in African American Women's Fiction* maintains that the literary representations of

African American women, including those by Morrison, do not only present them as strong but also as sacred. The feminist novels of Morrison "connect the sacredness that has played a pivotal part in the appraisal of the subjectivity of African American women ever since they first set foot in the United States" (24). The book analyzes fictional works of three women authors' works to analyze the representation of revered femininity in the novels that put aesthetics and ethics of African American women at the center of the narrative. The same sacred feminine characters that are described as holy and benevolent are sometimes described as "characters who do not truly love themselves in the context of their racial and personal history" (Ostrom and Macey 250).

Morrison's *Beloved* has been extensively studied as a text representing African American racial history and trauma. Critics of her novel point out that she explores the cultural roots of black Americans in slavery. Morrison highlights the "white supremacist ideology and essentialist discursive repertoires that defined the African-American slave as the racial Other" (Bouson 131). This racial discrimination and marginalization cause mental as well as physical trauma of the characters. The novel as a representative trauma text reconstructs "history in order to attain self-discovery and reconstruct new realities, subjectivities and identities" (Younes 38). The idea of racial othering and reconstruction of black history is explored in many other novels of Morrison.

The other selected fictional text of Morrison is her tenth novel *Home* (2012). The text emerged at a time when the author had already received acclaim, so this particular novel got unprecedented critical and scholarly attention. The novel is "set in the early fifties in a segregated American society" (Andrés 3). Like all other fictional works of Morrison, this novel also invokes the author's African American identity. Morrison plays

the role of a historiographer by portraying the silent sides of history and bridging the gap

between the emergent middle-class white American view of the U.S. and that of the

blacks. The text has been read from numerous different perspectives. The novel offers "a

fictionalized account of how colonial discourse—which is synonymous with white

supremacy—enforces its power and always tries to mold the colonized subject to that

he/she can be easily exploited" (Andrés 3). The debate of trauma texts' relation to the

postcolonial theory especially from the perspective of Morrison's *Home* is furthered by

Irene Visser in her article "Entanglements of Trauma: Relationality and Toni Morrison's

Home. Visser employs the theoretical framework of Ella Shohat's notion of relationality

to analyze the text. In her analysis, Visser invokes ideas such as "slavery and colonialism;

orality and psychotherapy; trauma in generic, ethical, and political contexts; as well as

intratextuality or self-refrentiality" (2) of Morrison's works. She further probes the issues

of race, memory and home in Morrison's oeuvre.

      Wyatt argues that *Home* is about the dominant discriminatory discourses that

cause lifelong traumas for people. The protagonist, Cee is subjected to humiliation and

exploitation. Cee's story "evokes a long history of the medical establishment's use and

abuse of black bodies in the name of scientific advancement" (Wyatt 143). Likewise,

Frank the young Korean War veteran is traumatized because of his memories of war as

well as his childhood experiences. Manuela López Ramírez in his article "The Shell-

Shocked Veteran in Toni Morrison's *Sula* and *Home*" argues that the author "depicts the

madness of the homecoming war veteran, whose symptoms and their consequences

impair his life. Through the return of her traumatized African American soldiers, she

explores the tensions of a racially-prejudiced America and the dire consequences for the

black community and self" (129). The character of Frank reflects the multiple traumas of African Americans. The narrative hovers between Frank's childhood and present memories and the narrator explains his traumas during different phases of his life.

Home as a metaphorical concept in the text also plays a pivotal role. Not only the socio-cultural context of the U.S. but also the cold environment of Frank and Cee's home in Georgia emphasizes this theme. Visser in *Fairy Tale and Trauma* notes that the text constantly draws a "contrast between the cold and loveless home" (5). This is symbolically true at both individual and collective levels. On the individual level, Frank and Cee's house is "loveless and cold" but the collective attitude of the dominant society towards black people is also similar. The author creates analogy between the U.S. and the home of the protagonist and then towards the end of the text contrasts Frank and Cee's home to "the warm and welcoming home offered by women in Lotus" (Visser, *Fairy Tale and Trauma* 5). Similarly, Dobb argues that *Home* employs the "metaphors of space and place to think through the intellectual and aesthetic preoccupations" (1). In these metaphorically diverse spaces, Frank and Cee increasingly feel the need of home that is fulfilled by the women of Lotus. Women are the central concern in most of Morrison's texts, and this is true in the case of *Home*, too. The text interweaves the "disturbing and dark narratives of childhood abuse, war trauma, and racial discrimination" (Visser, *Fairy Tale and Trauma* 148). Morrison represents the ongoing struggle of the African American race in the American society.

Jill Matus comments on the background of Morrison's work that is concerned with history, re-construction of identity, race, and memory in the name of a process of reclamation of the past. Matus examines the depiction of trauma and its effects on slaves,

and highlights Morrison's engagement with black aesthetics in the service of a cultural recuperation. She investigates the way in which Morrison's novels function as a form of cultural memory and how, in their engagement with the African American past, they testify to historical trauma. Matus reads Morrison's novels as demonstration of African American collective trauma. She reads the protagonists of her novels as characters that are unable to fantasize and have lost their "spontaneity and individuality" (Matus 30). She comments that as a defense mechanism, these victims of trauma seal off emotions as a response to trauma and as a result it seems as if they are "bearing a freight of history" (Matus 30). This is especially true for Morrison's women protagonists i.e., Sethe, Pecola, Joe, Violet, Frank, and Cee who are traumatized and manifest symptoms of psychosis instigated because of racial stigma. Almost all of Morrison's oeuvre displays elements of trauma and provides psychological insight into it.

The body of critical works on Morrison's fiction is extensive and her works have been analyzed in isolation as well as in comparison with other fictional works; however, so far, her work has not been compared to any Kashmiri author, not least from the perspective of trauma literary studies. The Morrissonean studies utilizing the first wave of trauma studies have regarded her fictional texts as "paradigmatic trauma texts," especially her novel *Beloved* has been the center of attention in trauma studies. More recent studies have focused on the other texts of Morrison from the perspective of trauma studies. Other than this, the fictional works of Morrison have extensively been compared to the works of authors of African American and European American descent but no work of any considerable significance or length is available on a comparative analysis of her work with a Kashmiri author in general or from the

perspective of trauma studies. Therefore, this thesis addresses this gap by providing a comparative analysis of Morrison's and Bashir's selected trauma fiction in order to understand how these authors follow different yet similar approaches to documenting the historical traumas of their communities.

2.4 Literature Review: Shahnaz Bashir

Media and news industry have always been robust in exposing the violence and discrimination taking place in the Indian Occupied Kashmir for decades; however, with the passage of time, literary authors of the region also started documenting their protest by inscribing the sufferings and traumas of their community in literature. The oppression faced by the Kashmiri people prompts Kashmiri writers to "tell the painful past from the suppressed people's perspective, which are otherwise not recorded in the nationalist narratives" (Chishti & Saxena 6997). These writers record the story of "the region that belies its complexity in terms of its history, politics, competing claims, traumatic memories, divided populations, lack of justice, denial of rights, loss of homes, and cycles of extremism, corruption, and occupation" (Kaul & Zia 47). Especially the Anglophone literature from the indigenous and diasporic Kashmiri authors has given the world an insiders' view of life in the valley. Based on a long history of victimization in Kashmir, the indigenous authors have represented the traumas of their community in their writings. Commenting on the politico-historical content of the Kashmiri writers, Rabiya Aamir comments: "Many modern Kashmiri writers … offer an interruption to the continued vilification, rejection, and exclusion of voices raised for describing the plight of Kashmiris. This expression of resistance against the oppressors has surfaced in many contemporary writings vis-à-vis Kashmir" (84). The strategic location as well as the

contested political status of the valley inspires the native authors to incorporate the socio-political issues into their writings. These contemporary authors critique the Indian government and military's oppressive rule of the valley and highlight the problems of the common Kashmiris.

Kashmir has been a disputed territory since the Partition of the Indian Subcontinent in 1947 but the skirmish between the Kashmiri freedom fighters and the Indian government started surfacing during the 1990s. This time can be considered "the most horrendous in Kashmir when insurgency was at its peak. The sufferings and brutalities evoked literary writings where the indigenous writers tell the painful past from the suppressed people's perspective, which are otherwise not recorded in the national narratives" (Chisti & Saxena 6997). Shahnaz Bashir is one such writer who has written about the on-ground realities and problems of his society. His writings are significant especially because the author makes his homeland the central concern of his fictional works. However, compared to Toni Morrison, Shahnaz Bashir is a much less known author. Correspondingly, his work has also not been a subject of extensive study. There is not much critical work available on the literary works of Bashir. Therefore, this literature review will be based on the available research articles and short essays about his work.

In an interview, Bashir is quoted in the headline saying, "I prefer writing to affect my relationship with life at large" ("I prefer writing"). He very skillfully combines realism in plot with a skillful use of idiom and diction. Bashir's narrative is written "against the backdrop of the Kafkaesue world of occupied Kashmir" (Hanif & Ahmed 123). Bashir's first novel *The Half Mother* "mainly deals with the life of its central protagonist, Haleema who is a mouthpiece of infinite miseries and misfortunes that the

people living in the turmoil-riddled Kashmir valley" (Raina 1). Haleema is an ordinary female character from the trauma-hit valley that can be any woman in Kashmir. The novel presents a struggling mother's "grief for her disappeared son and her everyday struggle to find him" (Zeenat and Karmarkar 122). Bashir's fictional works focus on the females of Indian Occupied Kashmir to demonstrate the "relationship between socio-cultural factors and women in midst of armed conflict" (Marshline 76). In any armed conflict amongst rivaling groups the most vulnerable group are the women, and Bashir very skillfully evokes this idea in both his fictional works where he tells how Kashmiri women have become "half mothers" and at times half wives. Bashir intermingles his depiction of the women with "socio-cultural milieu of the nineties" (Raina 1) and this mélange helps him vividly portray the atrocities of his people.

Kashmiris are living under the illegal occupation of the Indian forces for the past seventy-three years. Especially the troubled situation escalated during the 1990s. "Ebbig and flowing, the Kashmiri independence struggle has claimed over 100,000 lives since the mass uprising in 1989" (Hakeem 57) and Bashir has utilized these details in his fictional works. During this decade the individual and collective sufferings of the Kashmiris were on rise, Bashir's narrative gives a detailed account of the anti- India insurgency in the Jammu and Kashmir through the characters of Mujahedeen. Commenting on the changing situation during 1990s Bashir notes that before this decade the news were basically about distant places that were unknown to the Kashmiris, but during this decade the news were about the statistics of the Kashmiris who either disappeared or died each day. *The Half Mother* is a saga that narrates the story of these disappeared Kashmiris. Kashmiris during the decade of 90s lost not only the armed rebels

and their leader but also the common people. The situation deteriorated gradually and "Once a paradise on the Earth, and a place of wonder for Aungrez (Kashmiri word for British), it now started to collapse as Indian forces emerged on its soil" (Bashir 146). The life of the ordinary Kashmiris was disturbed, and they were constantly treated inhumanly and humiliated by the Indian Armed forces. Failure of the elections in 1987 had worse consequences and "for two years, there was political unrest in the valley between political parties, National Conference and Congress" (Rather & Shirivastva 14). The situation created unrest in the valley and the same sense of loss was reflected in the fictional works of Bashir.

The anthology of essays *A Desolation Called Peace: Voices from Kashmir* (2019) comments on the accession of Kashmir to the Indian Union in 1947. This collection of essay gives a thorough insight into the political objectives of the Kashmiris. This is a noteworthy book as it is written and edited by the indigenous Kashmiris who explore the desire of their own people through different time periods. Shahnaz Bashir has also contributed an essay entitled "A Childhood to Insurgency" to this anthology. His ethnographic essay is set in the momentous time period of 1980s when the political situation of the valley started to transform. Bashir presents the interior ambivalence of the Kashmiris to the reader and explicates how gradually situation became complicated. This was precisely the time period when the political condition of the valley changed and armed insurgency commenced. More than mass media, common public narrated accounts of unidentified corpses and mass graves and other similar human rights violations. Other than these soul breaking incidents, humiliation of common people by the army men was a common sight of the era (Raina 3). Shahnaz Bashir's first novel *The Half Mother* is also

an account of the same time period when a mother lost her son. Haleema, the protagonist of Bashir's first novel, symbolically represents all those Kashmiri mothers "whose son disappeared in the custody of security forces since the armed rebellion started against the Indian rule" (Pandit 320). She is a representative character that symbolically represents the females who lose their male members of family. When the fathers, husbands and sons disappear "daughters, wives, and mothers are left behind either in their excruciating lifelong search for loved ones or mourning their deaths" (Zeenat and Karmakar 123). The protagonist is a Kashmiri mother who loses her son and is left alone in this world but has the courage to investigate the issue.

Bilal Ahmad Dar in his article "*The Half Mother* as a Chronicle of Pain and Trauma of Kashmiri Women" analyzes the protagonist Haleema as a representation of Kashmiri women whom he considers the most vulnerable group of Kashmiris. Dar argues that the author has depicted the Kashmiri women's condition in the text who are the "epicenter of military atrocity and violence" (45). Dar's article analyzes Bashir's novel from the standpoint of violations of human rights, especially in the case of women. These women endure abductions and killing of their fathers, husbands, and sons and as a result experience "trauma and ceaseless suffering" (45). Dar analyzes Haleema's trauma at multiple levels, as an orphan, as a divorcee, and ultimately as a 'half mother'. She is half mother because she does not know whether her son is dead or alive. An Indian Army official, Major Manoj Kushwaha, abducts her son, Imran Joo. The young man is abducted only on the basis of false accusation and "mere suspicion" (46). Throughout the course of the narrative Bashir focuses on Haleema's sufferings.

In the article "Hope and Mental Trauma of Haleema in Shahnaz Bashir's *The Half Mother*", Keerthana M. probes the notion of "war and its impact on the normal life of ordinary people" (1915). M. Keerthana explains Haleema's physical and psychological trauma as a result of the loss of her son. The researcher quotes the opening lines of the text where Haleema talks about hope in every grim situation. The article takes Haleema's voice as illustrative of "mothers who live in Kashmir losing their dear ones because of military oppression" (1916). Usha Jain and Faroze Chopan in their article "Psychic Trauma of a Bereaved Mother: A Study of Shahnaz Bashir's *The Half Mother*" explains how the author describes the "psychological condition of the people of valley, based on his own experience and memories" (157). The author explores the character of Haleema as schizophrenic based on her trauma.

Nadeem Jahangir Bhat in his article "The Untold Story of Kashmir: Shahnaz Bashir's *The Half Mother"* examines the text as representing an untold story of the valley. This article focuses on different incidents in the text and highlights how Bashir "gives voice to the victimized and the oppressed" (166). Bhat takes the story of the novel as an untold story that is narrated by an indigenous writer. He asserts that the novel is not only the story of a grieving mother, but he claims that it also "chronicles the history of Kashmir during the peak hours of turbulence in the 1990s" (Bhat 167). Like many other authors from Kashmir, Shahnaz Bashir conveys his anger through both his fictional and non-fictional works. Indeed, the author may have fictionalized the actual events to portray "the reality of Kashmir" (Rather & Shirivastva 14). Both the literary and non-literary works of Bashir emphasize the issues of his native land. In an essay titled "A Crackdown in Natipora" Bashir elaborates the details of an army crackdown at his

hometown during the 1990s. He explains his mental condition as a young man when the imam of his local mosque announced that all men from the area had to come out and attend the identification parade: "The voice of the announcer … befuddling … made everyone groggily ask each other certain things. Where were the men going to be assembled for the identification parade? What was the cut-off age of boys to stay back with women at home" (Bashir, "Of Occupation and Resistance" 36).

Samia Hanif and Munawar Iqbal Ahmad in their article "Half Widows and Half Mothers: Traumatic Voices of Women from the Literary Narratives of Jammu and Kashmir" use La Capra's theorization to analyze Shahnaz Bashir's *The Half Mother*. Hanif and Ahmad have used La Capra's notions of "acting out" and "working through" to analyze the trauma of the Kashmiri women and their strategies of coping with it. They also investigate the concept of "double trauma" in their work. They contend that Kashmiri women are "doubly marginalized, owing to the hostile system and being left alone to survive without husbands and sons" (124). The center of their argument remains the abducted male members of Kashmiri families who disappear suddenly, and their families never know whether they are dead or alive. The authors label the women of these abducted men as "half mothers and half widows" (Hanif and Ahmad 124). They argue that Kashmiri women experience trauma but do not lose hope and always end up triumphant. The study describes Haleema as a "strong woman who never loses hope in search of her missing son" (125). They conclude that Haleema is a resilient Kashmiri woman who learns to cope with her trauma and carries the hope of meeting her beloved son till the end of the text.

In the article "Axis of Resistance: A Study of Despair, Melancholy, and Disheartedness in Shahnaz Bashir's Novel *The Half Mother*" Gazi Tareq Muzamil argues that the text "satirizes the political and bureaucratic system, India's tyranny and the Military oppression in Kashmir" (327). Muzamil takes the story as a resistance narrative that is written in the backdrop of Kashmir's struggle for political autonomy. He creates a direct link between the fictional stories of Bashir and the "current state of affairs" in the Indian Occupied Kashmir. Jan Mohamad Pandit in his article "Chronicle of Pain: *The Half Mother* Through Resistance Discourse" probes a similar idea. Pandit elucidates the central theme of Bashir's text as resistance discourse that is a protest against the discriminatory treatment of Kashmiris at the hands of Indian Army.

Bashir's novel also has extensive references to the contemporary issues in the history of the region. Nighat Fatima in her book *Art and the Nationa: Selected Literary Essay* reads Bashir's fiction as historical novels and notes: "The characters and events within the story bear resemblance to the actual historical record of suffering under occupation in Kashmir" (76). Fatima clarifies that the novel describes the everyday life of the Kashmiris during the 1990s when a common person learnt to face the loss of loved ones and come to terms with these horrific events. She emphasizes that the fictional characters and situations should be "viewed in the context of the real historical period" (78). Her standpoint compares the real to the imagined to understand the indigenous fictional response to the real world problems. Ifshana Wahid in her article "Unhealed Wounds: The Inscription of Trauma in Basharat Peer's *Curfewed Nights* and Shahnaz Bashir's *The Half Mother*" explains how Peer and Bashir describe the "sufferings, pain,

trauma, and other psychological disorders in Kashmiri people" (6). Wahid argues that both the authors depict the condition of their people through their fiction.

Shahnaz Bashir's short story collection *Scattered Souls* (2016) has attracted the attention of some researchers from both sides of the border; however, not much work has been done on it either. In his research article titled "Indigenous Semiotics in 'The Transistor' by Shahnaz Bashir: Application of Roland Barthes' Codes to Kashmiri Narrative" Mazhar Abass et al. have analyzed the story "The Transistor*"* using Barthes's semiotic codes. The authors have examined the text to show that "Kashmiri indigenousness as presented through signs and symbols when interpreted as indigenous semiotics show the specific Kashmiri resistance, conflictual cultural practices, and indigenous sovereignty under paracolonialism" (565). The authors demonstrate how Bashir uses language to show resistance and assert his indigenous identity. Bashir asserts his Kashmiri identity explicitly, and his reader does not have to read between the lines to understand the meaning of the text.

In the article "The Lost Home: Perception of Homeland in Kashmiri Muslims' and Kashmiri Hindu Pandits Narratives" Bhavya Srivastava argues that the three short-story sequence (i.e., "Ex-Militant," "Psychosis," and "Theft") is an important sequel in the text that demonstrates the changing sociopolitical realities of the Kashmiris. The stories show that in modern-day Kashmir, notions about freedom are changing drastically "[f]rom fighting for their right to live freely in their homeland to an adverse situation where the rich milk out profits while the disadvantaged live with trauma, poverty, violence and hopelessness" (Srivastava 55). The researcher further notes that through different stories about the "most militarized place of the world", Bashir depicts the worse

sociocultural practices in the valley. He explains that in the short story "Country Capital," the teachers try to impart half knowledge to the student only to avoid outrage from any of the dominant powers, be it the Kashmiri militants, the Indian Army, or the Indian government.

Women in the Indian Occupied Kashmir have suffered the most as a result of the political dispute; therefore, fiction writers from the Valley have also highlighted the condition of women in their works. Bashir's narratives are also strewn with stories of Kashmiri women who lose their husbands, sons, fathers, honour, and sometimes even life. Asma Jeelani Chishti and Shweta Saxena in their article "Conflict and Women in Jammu and Kashmir: A Study of Selected Short Stories From Shahnaz Bashir's *Scattered Souls*" also highlight the feminist perspectives of Bashir's writing. They contend that the author has proclaimed the marginalized people's discourse that is "otherwise not recorded in the nationalist narratives (58). The article explains the plight of Kashmiri women and establishes that they have "undergone severe trauma" (58) because of persistent political oppression in the valley.

Review of the critical work available on Bashir's fiction demonstrates that his work is an insightful commentary on the violence, exile, and dispossession that has wrecked the lives of ordinary Kashmiris since 1947. He compellingly deliberates on the gradual loss of the Kashmiris' belongingness in the last few decades that eventually curtailed their sense of individual and collective identities. While there is some work done on Shahnaz Bashir's fiction including some from the perspective of trauma studies, there is no extensive, book-length work available on Bashir's fiction, especially from the perspective of literary trauma studies, which this thesis hopes to contribute.

In this chapter, I have reviewed the existing scholarly works related to trauma literary theory as well as literature on Toni Morrison's and Shahnaz Bashir's selected fiction in order to contextualize my study. This dissertation furthers this body of work by providing a more detailed analysis of the relationship of trauma and social oppression as depicted in the selected works of Morrison and Bashir. Review of the available literature demonstrates that Morrison's fiction has been extensively studied not only individually but also in comparison to other writers and works; however, Bashir's fiction has scarcely been analyzed. Especially a critical analysis of the magnitude of this research has not been done on Bashir's fiction, especially using the lens of trauma literary theory. Likewise, Bashir's work has not been studied in comparison to any other trauma fiction. Therefore, this study addresses this gap through a comparative analysis of Morrison's and Bashir's fiction in the context of literary trauma studies to explore the representation of the individual and collective traumas of their respective communities.

Secondly, a review of the available literature in literary trauma studies shows that trauma studies have mostly focused on the Western experiences of trauma and in this debate, the experiences originating in the Global South i.e., Kashmir, have usually been ignored. Indeed, at times, the field runs the risk of homogenizing diverse experiences of different communities and their complex embeddedness in personal and collective histories. However, by focusing on the experiences of the communities that are marginalized, this study brings the issues of the ostracized communities to the center. Other than this, current study departs from the classical model of the theorization of trauma that homogenizes traumatic experiences, and aspires to dehierarchize the Eurocentric approach to trauma by critically reflecting on the pitfalls of universalization.

This study tries to probe the notion of trauma beyond a single uniform perspective to demonstrate the relevance of time, place, and culture to the understanding and manifestation of trauma.

Finally, an important outcome of this literature review is the extensive body of literature available in the field that identifies that traumatic incident disrupt the communal identity and the individuals feel disoriented. But a sense of solidarity can also be achieved through the experience of suffering because people belonging to the same social group are related to one another, so their individual traumas are related to the communal traumas. This unity of traumatic experience serves as an identity-solidifying source. Both Morrison and Bashir reflect on the individual as well as the communal traumas of their communities; therefore, an in-depth analysis of their fictional texts can further clarify this relationship between trauma and communal solidarity. This adheres to the notion that communal trauma is intertwined with the idea of communal solidarity.

Chapter Three

Conceptual Framework

> MACBETH: Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased,
> Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
> Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
> And with some sweet oblivious antidote
> Cleanse the fraught bosom of that perilous stuff
> Which weighs upon the heart?
> DOCTOR: Therein the patient
> Must minister to himself.
>
> —William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*

This thesis studies the selected works of Toni Morrison and Shahnaz Bashir through the lens of Cathy Caruth's and Laurie Vickroy's respective theorizations of trauma alongside Ted Morrisey's approach of "trauma-based literary analysis". The study focuses on the narrative representation of the impact of trauma on the characters' psyche; the relationship between individual and collective trauma; and the interrelation of communal trauma, history, and memory as depicted in these texts. The study argues that Toni Morrison's and Shahnaz Bashir's trauma novels foreground their communal traumas through the use of specialized aesthetic techniques, which resultantly gives access to the troubled histories of African Americans and Kashmiris. This chapter provides the conceptual framework of the study, which is divided into four parts. The first part provides a historical overview of the evolution of trauma theory to situate my framework within the broader field. The second part provides a brief overview of Cathy Caruth's trauma theory and elaborates on the key ideas and terms that this thesis takes from her work. The third part provides a brief overview of Laurie Vickroy's trauma theory and elaborates on the major ideas and terms this thesis draws on. The fourth part provides a brief overview of Ted Morrisey's approach of "trauma-based literary analysis"

and elaborates how this thesis uses that approach as part of the framework. The last part

justifies the framework by illustrating how and why the theoretical works of Caruth,

Vickroy, and Morrisey provide the most suitable framework for this study.

3.1 Historical Overview of the Evolution of Trauma Theory

While the origins of literary trauma studies can be traced back to the works of

Yale school trauma theorists in the 1990s, the history of the concept in psychiatry dates

back to much earlier time. The word "trauma" comes from the Greek word *traumatizo*

that means "wound". It can be comprehended as "a piercing of the skin, a breaking of the

bodily envelope" (Garland 9). Trauma as a medical term refers to a serious bodily injury

or shock from an accident or external act of violence. When the term was adopted in

psychoanalysis, it was designed to retain both connotations: of sudden, violent shock

from an external source and of injury (in this case emotional injury) caused by the jolt

(Margailt 125). Hence with time the term's meaning mutated from bodily injury to

psychological damage.

The official start of trauma studies in the field of psychology can arguably be

traced back to the 1860s when railway accidents began to be considered as possible

agents of trauma. In particular, the expanding railway system in the 1830s onwards

brought with it injuries and deaths across Europe and America, resulting in psychological

trauma of the victims. Sometimes, even if there was no physical injury, doctors noted

altered behavior of the survivors of such crashes, as they were unable to work or socially

function normally. The railway accidents in Britain and Europe changed the focus of

trauma studies by "repositioning trauma from a physical wound to a psychological

injury" (Craps and Bond 17). On the other hand, in case of physical injuries, the victims

would be healed of their wounds but would still display signs of unusual psychological symptoms. According to the surgeon John Erichsen (1866), trauma related to railway accidents highlighted a condition referred to as "Railway spine" (Spier and Harrington 28). Erichsen's study suggested that the traumatized victims of railway accidents suffered from spinal damage, which, in the absence of X-rays, could not be directly observed. Thus, the notion of railway spine originated with injuries to the spine of the victims; however, they also suffered from a disintegration of their mental state, which remained unaccounted. A few years later, a leading German neurologist, Hermann Oppenheim (1889), named this phenomenon "traumatic neurosis", which he understood as involving neurological damage. All these approaches explained mental phenomena in terms of underlying organic, physical injury, but, after heated debates on the topic by scientists and scholars across Europe, during the nineteenth century, trauma started to be seen increasingly as a form of mental distress (Figley 455).

Although railway accidents can be referred to as the beginning of the discourse on trauma, the comprehension of the origin of the concept of trauma can never be complete without mentioning psychoanalysts such as the works of Jean Martin Charcot, Sigmund Freud, and Pierre Janet. Doctors during the 1880s observed the appearance of unusual behavior predominantly in women without any identifiable reason, which they regarded as hysteria. The French physician Jean-Martin Charcot, primarily chanced upon the connection between trauma and mental diseases during his work with traumatized women. After Charcot, his student Pierre Janet (1907) furthered this particular avenue of research by examining how the attitude and psyche of the patients under investigation were affected by the trauma they experienced. Later Freud (1961) contributed his ideas

and furthered the field of trauma inquiry. Although, Charcot attributed hysteria to hereditary causes and supported the dominant neurophysiological paradigm of hereditary. He associated cases of traumatic neurosis with physical accidents (Charcot 30). Throughout his work at the Salpetriere hospital, Charcot's investigation was focused on the treatment of women afflicted with hysteria.

Charcot worked in the field quite extensively, but it was actually his student Pierre Janet who is credited with discovering the key features of psychological trauma. In his thesis, *L'automatisme Psychologique* (1889), Janet proposed an intricate model of the psyche. His notion of trauma preceded Freudian model. Both Janet and Freud were students at the Salpêtrière. Freud identified the symptoms of hysteria as sudden paralysis, memory loss, double-personality, alimentation disturbance, speech problems, etc. *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* 274). Before Freud began his studies on trauma, other physicians were also involved in research related to trauma, so the mention of Freud's contribution to this field remains incomplete without first referring to his predecessors. Building upon his predecessor's work, Freud concluded that the symptoms of his patients such as convulsions, unexpected paralysis, loss of sensory stimulus, amnesia etc. were psychological in nature rather than physiological.

3.1.1. Trauma Theory and Freudian Psychoanalysis

Freudian psychoanalysis is a significant step in the history of trauma theory as the roots of trauma theory date back to Freud's work in the last decade of the nineteenth century. At the Paris hospital La Salpêtrière, French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot listed a comprehensive taxonomy of the symptoms of trauma, but the modern definition of the term was given in the work of Charcot's student Sigmund Freud (Figley 591). Ruth

Leys considers Freud "a founding figure in the history of the conceptualization of trauma" (18). His contribution in the field of trauma studies is foundational as contemporary trauma studies heavily rely on Freud's theorization to develop a model for trauma that imagines trauma as an extreme experience which challenges the limits of language and even ruptures meaning altogether.

Freud's contribution to the field is especially significant because he shifted the focus of trauma studies from the public to the private realm. He argued that the symptoms of hysteria in women are a direct consequence of psychological trauma. He asserted that the victims of trauma have a repressed memory that "serves as a nucleus around which other ideas of similar content might be grouped even when they themselves have not been repressed" (Gelfand and Kerr 119). In his discussion of hysteria, Freud argued that women who experience molestation at a young age, their trauma surfaces at a later stage during puberty. He noted: "We must point out that we consider it essential for the explanation of hysterical phenomena to assume the presence of a dissociation—a splitting of the content of consciousness … the regular and essential content of a (recurrent) hysterical attack is the recurrence of a psychical state which the patient has experienced earlier" (Freud, *The Psychical Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomenon* 30). In Freud's comprehension of the term, "hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences … that traumatic experience is constantly forcing itself upon the patient and this is proof of the strength of the experience: the patient is, as one might say, fixated on his trauma" (Freud, *Studies on Hysteria* 55). He asserted that something becomes traumatic because it is dissociated and remains outside conscious awareness.

For Freud, "the symptoms of hysteria could only be understood if they were traced back to experiences that had a traumatic effect, particularly early experiences of sexual 'seduction' or assault" (Leys 20). Freud notes: "We invariably find that a memory is repressed which has only become a trauma by *deferred action"* (Freud, *Project for a Scientific Psychology* 38). Numerous researchers of trauma have used Freud's idea of "delayed reaction" (Peraica 126). Freud used the term *Nachträglichkeit* in Part II of his book *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (1950). The book was published posthumously and is important in Freud's oeuvre. Here, he notes: "we invariably find that a memory is repressed which has only become a trauma by *deferred action"* (358). Freudean notion of deferred action refers to a repressed traumatic memory that mutates into trauma and resurfaces later.

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* Freud defines trauma as "a consequence of an extensive breach being made in the protective shield against stimuli…. The essence of the shock as being the direct damage to the molecular structure or even to the histological structure of the elements of the nervous system" (25). Freud asserted that an effect that is created by the memory of an unpleasant incident is simply unavailable when the incident takes place in actuality, adding that the memory of the traumatic event arouses an effect with a completely new understanding of the incident that has taken place in the past. He explains that the victim of a traumatic episode comprehends the traumatic effects of the incident only after some time has passed. In most of Freud's writings between 1892 and 1896, he argued that the subconscious contains affectively charged events encoded in an altered state of consciousness (Freud, "Moses" 146), and the belated remembrance of the traumatic incident haunts the victim.

Freud divides the traumatic experience into two parts: the first consists of the earlier part (during childhood) when the traumatic experience has no meaning but has sexual content, however, the later part (during puberty) has no sexual content but is full of sexual meaning. According to Freud, the latency of the feeling causes the real intensity of trauma. He emphasizes "the role of a post-traumatic 'incubation', or latency period of psychic elaboration, in ways that made the traumatic experience irreducible to the idea of a purely physiological causal sequence" (Leys 19). He named this delay as "belatedness". Freud contends that memory disturbances and reenactments seen in hysteria are not the results of a failure to integrate new data into existing meaning schemes, but rather they stem from the active repression of conflict-laden sexual and aggressive ideas and impulses, centering around the Oedipal crisis at age five (Freud, "Moses" 58). Although he tried, Freud was never able to reconcile his notions about repressed infantile sexuality with actual trauma.

Freud revisited his ideas with the passage of time and modified his conceptualization, especially after observing the traumatic conditions and phobias of the soldiers of the First World War. After analyzing the condition of these war survivors, he noticed that all of the soldiers who were experiencing traumatic conditions had not faced the same circumstances. On the contrary, some of them had not physically taken part in the battle. During this phase, focus of the theory of trauma became increasingly psychological. It came to be seen as a form of lasting injury to the mind caused by a shocking event that tended to avoid recall and representation. Trauma could now be acknowledged as a real condition even if no physical or bodily causes could be identified.

These findings helped Freud in concluding that in order to experience traumatic flashbacks, confronting the original traumatic incident was not a requisite.

Freud along with other psychoanalysts encountered the traumatic incidents of World War I that made them consider the impact of psychological stressors on the victim. Freud did not integrate his observations of the war neuroses with his earlier findings; rather, he developed two separate models of trauma: the "unbearable situation" model and the "unacceptable impulse" model. He proposed that "the compulsion to repeat is a function of repression itself…therefore…the keeping away from consciousness is the main characteristic of hysterical repression" (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 18). He also added that as a result of this repressed experience, "the patient is obliged to repeat the repressed material as a contemporary experience, instead of … remembering it as something belonging to the past" (Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 18). He added "the traumatic neuroses give a clear indication that a fixation to the traumatic incident lies at their root. These patients regularly repeat the traumatic neuroses in their dreams, where … we find that the attack conforms to a complete transplanting of the patient into the traumatic situation. It is as if the patient has not finished with the traumatic situation" (Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 369).

To sum up, Freud's conception of trauma explains it in terms of a consequence of an external stressor that devastates normal functioning of the mind and breaks down the protective shell of the normal psyche thus leaving the mind susceptible to neurosis. Freud's explorations of the roots of hysteria and sexual trauma changed the course of the history of trauma theory from the external to the internal realm.

3.1.2 Shell Shock, War Neurosis, and Trauma Studies

Shortly after World War I and again following World War II, a few other researchers also identified a severely disabling condition occurring after combat exposure, which involved symptoms such as startle reactions, sleep disturbances, dizziness, and blackout (Davis and Meretoja 18). According to the *Encyclopedia of Trauma*:

> The terms *shell shock, traumatic war neurosis, combat fatigue,* and
> *irritable heart* were used to describe a condition similar to what is now
> recognized as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). At that time,
> psychoanalytic theory predominated and, in an attempt to determine the
> etiology of the condition, inquiries were made into the veteran's
> premilitary home life and adjustment, assuming personality problems
> were merely exacerbated by combat. (Figley 724)

The survivors of the First and Second World War were noted to have traumatic symptoms, however, these signs were not given much attention, and the disorder was formally recognized during the Vietnam War and was termed "Post-Vietnam Syndrome" (Davis and Meretoja 16). Earlier not much attention was paid to the phenomena because "[m]ilitary therapists faced conflict between their obligations to soldiers and to the war effort, and the emphasis was on sending men back into combat. Military authorities in World War II resumed efforts to discourage and suppress reports of war trauma, with no pension given to soldiers discharged for war neurosis as well as attempts by psychiatrists to blame poor parenting and emotional instability for those suffering war neurosis" (Healy 96-97). However, practitioners of the field started paying attention to the

phenomena because the Vietnam veterans provided glimpses of the lasting detrimental effects of untreated psychological combat injuries. During the 1970s, the political situation in the U.S. prompted the war veterans to voice their grievances and highlight their traumatic experiences on battleground to bring the attention of the authorities to the traumatic stress of soldiers. The studies conducted on these soldiers especially contributed to and furthered the field of trauma studies.

These traumatized veterans of the two World Wars and the Vietnam War played a major role in intriguing the psychiatrists to further probe the concept and find the causes of psychological trauma in soldiers. *The Report of Findings from the National Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Study* discovered that "over the course of their lives, more than half … of male theater veterans and nearly half … of female theater veterans have experienced clinically significant stress-reaction symptoms. This represents about 1.7 million veterans of the Vietnam War" (qtd. in Tal 272). The nature of the Vietnam War and how it was carried out and received by civilians contributed to elevating stress in soldiers and other personnel in such a way that the aftermath could not be ignored.

The Vietnam War was a milestone event in the history of trauma studies as it contributed towards the growing awareness of traumatic stress and its profound impact on individuals. Studies conducted on the Vietnam War veterans played a pivotal role in convincing the physicians and psychiatrists to officially recognize the effects of trauma. As a result, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) was incorporated in the psychiatric handbook *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM).

3.1.3 Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

The official recognition of the PTSD by the American Psychiatric Association in 1980 was another major landmark in the history of the concept of trauma. Although terms such as shell shock, traumatic war neurosis, combat fatigue, and irritable heart were used to describe survivors of combat trauma during World War I and World War II, however, a diagnostic category did not become "official" until the publication of the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-I) in 1952. The association publishes material relevant to mental health and revises it regularly. DSM is a taxonomic and investigative tool devised by the *American Psychiatric Association* that is used for psychiatric diagnosis internationally. It defines trauma as an acute stress reaction that remits within a short amount of time. If the symptoms do not remit, it is assumed that an underlying character disorder is present and requires appropriate diagnosis. This framework continued until the publication of DSM-II in 1968. This was for the first time after Freud that a psychiatric diagnostic system recognized the possible existence of an environmentally determined psychiatric disorder. Before this, only Freud had described psychological problems with regard to the victim's experiences and emotions (Healy 105-106). This manual proposed a classification of mental disorders that was supposed to provide common language and standard criteria for mental health professionals. This colossal leap in the field not only recognized the concept of trauma officially and formally but also replaced the terms used up until then such as shellshock, delayed stress syndrome, combat stress, traumatic neurosis, etc. The term posttraumatic stress disorder was accepted as referenced in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Third Edition* (DSM-II) (1968).

However, the symptoms and conditions mentioned in DSM-II were not final because the conditions of the victims and their reactions kept on changing. In particular, the Vietnam War considerably impacted the recognition of psychological trauma. The soldiers were returning with symptoms that were dissimilar to the symptoms mentioned in DSM-II. The conditions were so diverse that some psychiatrists assumed that the traumatized soldiers were already disturbed before they went to war. However, with the publication of DSM-III in 1980, PTSD was recognized, identifying soldiers' combat experience as the referent for the disturbances. This version of DSM "contained a glossary of descriptions of the diagnostic categories and was the first official manual of mental disorders to focus on clinical use" ("DSM History"). DSM is regularly revised and expanded by the association to enlist the symptoms of mental disorders and their classifications.

Before the formalization of PTSD, stress and anxiety reactions from traumatic events were treated according to the specific anxiety symptom, but with the recognition and acceptance of the PTSD came the development of treatments specific to the symptom cluster, and many approaches used to treat other anxiety disorders were imported and altered to heal the patients. The most recent version DSM-V was published in May 2013 according to which "Post Traumatic stress disorder may include flashbacks that have hallucinatory quality, and hyper vigilance may reach paranoid proportions. But a traumatic event and characteristic symptom features relating to reliving or reacting to the event are required to make the diagnosis" (Shaffer and Castellanos 104). DSM-V defines and elaborates the anxiety disorders generally but within these it exclusively explains the differential diagnosis for PTSD: "In posttraumatic stress disorder (PSTD), the central

symptoms concern intrusions about, and avoidance of, memories associated with the

traumatic event itself, whereas in separation anxiety disorder, the worries and avoidance

concern the well-being of attachment figures and separation from them" (Shaffer and

Castellanos 194). The manual further gives a list of diagnostic criteria and investigative

features to identify posttraumatic stress disorder in both adults and children. The arrival

of PSTD has increased the understanding of the concept of trauma that "has come to

pervade the understanding of subjectivity and experience in the advanced industrial

world" (Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question* 79). The manual enlists the symptoms for

children and adults separately. In this study, we are primarily concerned with trauma

experienced by adults, therefore, I will only include the diagnostic list proposed for

adults. The list of diagnostic features is utilized by psychiatrists around the world for

diagnosis and healing of posttraumatic stress disorder patients. For my research this list is

especially useful because it helps me in identifying the traumatic fictional characters. For

convenience of the reader DSM-V has been attached in the appendix.

3.2 Literary Trauma Studies

Literary trauma studies as a separate field in the humanities has its own genealogy

that is also interlinked with the history of trauma studies in general. As the history of the

field demonstrates, the study of trauma was initiated in the fields of medicine and

psychology, but over the past few years, this field has expanded its sphere by becoming

relevant to literary and cultural studies. Trauma has now incorporated numerous

disciplines in its domain and increasingly exhibits sociological and cultural concerns.

Literary trauma studies deem literature as an extensive method to approach traumatic

experiences as it engages in portraying the damaged psyche of people through the means

of figurative language. Literature portrays "the conflict between the will to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud" (Herman 1). Even if the language employed in literature is not figurative, it still offers a medium through which to address such concerns. Thus, trauma theory provides mediums through which to discuss the distortions in mind, body, and language with the assistance of literature. It allows a study of such events in order to provide victims with approaches such as the witnessing and the ensuing discussion to deal with their trauma. It is questionable as to how writing about traumatic experiences in literature compensates for the horror endured and the possibility of a closure that may follow. This is what trauma theory tends to investigate as it examines how victims overcome their pain and allow language to posit or question, even if in a dissociative manner, the trials and tribulations they have incurred.

3.3 Cathy Caruth's Literary Trauma Theory

Cathy Caruth and other Yale School Trauma theorists such as Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub advanced the concept of literary trauma theory that drew on the Freudian model of traumatic memory. In Freud's writings, trauma is comprehended as a wound perpetrated not upon body but upon the mind. He explains that the traumatic experience does not fully assimilate at the time of occurrence and returns to simultaneously defy and demand witness. Caruth's canonical works in the field of literary trauma studies are probably the most important works. Indeed, one may assert that the field of trauma studies in literary criticism gained significant attention in 1996 with the publication of Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History.* The working definition of trauma, which supports this study, is taken from the work of Cathy Caruth on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). She defines trauma as "an overwhelming

experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the events occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena" (*Unclaimed* experience 24). Caruthean definition utilizes both Freudian model and DSM to further the argument by explaining that trauma is a mental wound that cries out and addresses the reader in an attempt to tell the reality of an incident that is otherwise unavailable (*Unclaimed Experience* 61). Caruth's approach emphasizes belatedness as constitutive of the temporal structure of trauma; for her trauma is characterized by a delayed response to a catastrophic event that cannot be comprehended at the time of happening. She argues that for the survivor, the traumatic event returns "insistently and against their will" (*Explorations in Memory* 14). She emphasizes the intrinsic latency of trauma according to which, the survivors of a traumatic occurrence will experience the flashbacks of the traumatic incident that they experienced after a gap of some time. Caruth expounds that it is because of this fact that the survivor is unable to comprehend the incident in immediacy.

Citing Freud in her work *Unclaimed Experience,* Cathy Caruth differentiates between physical and mental wounds; she notes that the bodily wound is "simple and healable" so it can be perceived whereas the mental wound is "experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known" (3). Caruth alludes to the inaccessibility of trauma to the consciousness of the victim till it inflicts itself for a second time, recurrently, in the dreams, hallucinations, and cyclical actions of the survivor. She further highlights the significance of the recurrence of the haunting experience because "it is not just any event but, significantly, the shocking and unexpected occurrence of an incident" (*Explorations*

in Memory 5). Additionally, she emphasizes on the unavoidability of trauma's belated effect on the victim as it reshapes the victim's life.

Caruth also provides a detailed explanation of trauma and its symptoms. She argues that traumatic memories repeat in "intrusive forms of visualization of the trauma scene, nightmares, or associated affects" (*Unclaimed Experience* 11). For Caruth, trauma is an overpowering experience of unexpected or cataclysmic incidents and a response that appears in the uncontrolled recurring appearance of hallucination and other unpleasant phenomena. These events are too horrific for the mind to place in waking memory; hence, they reside in the unconscious (*Unclaimed Experience* 57-58). Caruth notes that "the experience of a trauma repeats itself, exactly and unremittingly, through the unknowing acts of the survivor and against his very will" (*Unclaimed Experience* 16). For Caruth, trauma calls for a mode of representation, and a literary text performs that duty to make the incomprehensible understandable by using techniques such as gaps, repetition, and breaks (*Unclaimed Experience* 115). She maintains that whether "it occurs within a strictly literary text or in a more deliberately theoretical one, can never be asked in a straightforward way, but must, indeed, also be spoken in a language that is always somehow literary: a language that defies, even as it claims, our understanding" (*Unclaimed Experience* 18).

In *Unclaimed Experience,* Caruth conspicuously marginalizes the topos of recovery, focusing on what she describes as "the new mode of reading and listening that both the language of trauma, and the silence of its mute repetition of suffering, profoundly and imperatively demand" (9). Her readings of both theoretical and literary texts are centered on this new mode, a mode defined by delphic incomprehensibility, by

fragmentation and acting out. Caruth highlights how trauma victims may pass on their trauma to others. Hence, for Caruth, trauma is not only related to a single individual's past, but it is snarled up with the community at large and may revive when one observes another victim's ordeal. Caruth also transfers the psychoanalytic model of individual trauma to the study of collective trauma. This model shifts the emphasis away from the psychological condition of trauma to a sociological construction of belatedness, which is hypothetically registered with the traumatic event in the first place.

Moreover, Caruth emphasizes repetition as a crucial feature of trauma writing, one that expresses ideas of compulsion and acting out, of being caught up in endless cycles of suffering, and of a fatalistic sense of doom. She argues:

> In modern trauma theory, there is an emphatic tendency to focus on the destructive repetition of the trauma that governs a person's life. As modern neurobiologists point out, the repetition of the traumatic experience in the flashback can itself be traumatizing; if not life-threatening, it is at least threatening to the chemical structure of the brain and can ultimately lead to deterioration. (*Unclaimed Experience* 76)

Thus, for Caruth, the fundamental determining feature of trauma fiction is repetition. According to Caruth, "the repetitions of the traumatic event—which remains unavailable to consciousness but intrudes repeatedly on sight—thus suggest a larger relation to the event that extends beyond what can simply be seen or what can be known, and is inextricably tied up with the belatedness and incomprehensibility that remain at the heart of this repetitive seeing" (*Unclaimed Experience* 105). Caruth has engaged with narration

and recovery with less skepticism. For her narrating trauma tends to transmit it through a kind of contamination or contagion.

Furthermore, Caruth proclaims that the survivor of the traumatic event experiences dual trauma in the sense that he or she has witnessed the trauma of other people's bereavement, and ironically, the survivor perceives his or her survival as a trauma because he or she is continuously troubled by the flashbacks of other people's loss. So, the survivor undergoes a dual trauma i.e., the trauma of death and the trauma of survival. The most significant aspect of Caruth's conceptions relevant to this dissertation is the assumption that the survivor of trauma, when they are haunted by the flashbacks of some traumatic occurrence, are essentially telling the 'real history'. Caruth notes that the survivors of trauma are the ones who have registered the event in its pure actuality, and while reiterating those instances, are unable to either augment or detract effects from that incident that is documented in their cognizance. She concludes that the hallucinations and flashbacks of trauma survivors are the actual histories that are presented to the people who did not directly witness the actual events.

Caruth's work is monumental for trauma theory. It is central to this dissertation because it plays an imperative role in reconnoitering the trauma of the characters represented in the selected fictional works. Her notions lead the researcher to explore why some of the characters are unable to articulate their traumatic memories, and are able to inform others about their trauma only belatedly. Furthermore, her notions are helpful in understanding why the survivors of trauma, usually curse their existence. The contributions of Caruth are also helpful in understanding how these flashbacks of the

survivors of trauma create historical accounts and what is the truth of such histories. The exploration of trauma is not only confined to theory; the language of trauma reveals the presence of cultural trauma in fictional representations as well which function as a memory to settle old scores rather than a way to escape from the cycle of communal violence. According to Caruth, trauma narratives recount the haunting "geographical, historical, linguistic, cultural and political context" (Ashes of History 7), Furthermore, Caruth uses trauma to illustrate a specific notion about history and the limitation of language and representability. Equating the suffering of trauma victims with the traumatic aspects of all human communication, Caruth aestheticizes and structuralizes trauma. Caruth's model of trauma is employed as part of the conceptual framework of this study as it not only helps explore how traumatic events impact the lives and identities of characters in the selected texts of Morrison and Bashir, but also how her theorization of trauma helps explore the link between the individual and collective experience of trauma.

3.4 Laurie Vickroy's Literary Trauma Theory

While Caruth highlights the significance of the referentiality of literary language, mentioning the second theorist used for this study's conceptual framework is important here because Laurie Vickroy defines contemporary trauma narratives as a "response to the events so overwhelmingly intense that they impair normal emotional or cognitive responses and bring lasting psychological disruption" (*Trauma and Survival* ix). Caruth's explanation of trauma and its representation in literature are primary influences on Vickroy's work, but she furthers the argument by incorporating details related to fictional techniques and the truth-value of trauma fiction. Vickroy in her influential book *Trauma*

and Survival in Contemporary Fiction (2002) defines trauma narratives as a genre. She

contends that trauma narratives have both "therapeutic and testimonial value" (*Trauma*

and Survival xi). She categorizes the genre of trauma narratives as distinct from other

genres of fiction because according to her, the former are direct testimony. For Vickroy,

"[a]uthentic trauma fiction has a similar potential for historical truth in its ability to

convey specific lived experience" (*Trauma and Survival* 21). She argues that "[t]he

literary narratives contextualize trauma for readers by embedding them in scenarios of

social and historical significance" (Reading Trauma 1). Her prime contention about

trauma narratives highlights the ethical concerns of these narratives and how the authors

use such narratives as a technique to provoke empathy and critical thinking in the reader.

Vickroy has borrowed from earlier trauma theorists (e.g., Cathy Caruth, Shoshana

Felman, Dori Laub etc.); however, the differences between their works cannot be

ignored. She introduces trauma theory to her reader by referring to the works of major

trauma theorists and elaborates the relevance of this theory to literature. She enlists the

symptoms of trauma as:

> periods of nervous, restless activity—scanning the surrounding world for signs of
>
> danger, breaking into explosive rages, reacting with a start to everyday sights and
>
> sounds—against a numbed, gray background of depression, feelings of
>
> helplessness, a loss of various motor skills and a general closing off of the spirit
>
> as the mind tries to insulate itself from further harm. (*Trauma and Survival* 12)

Vickroy's major contribution to the trauma theorization is her realization of personal

tragedy as a consequence of larger destructive socio-political forces. She points out the

patterns of subjugation and their impact on human psyche; hence her primary contribution to trauma theory is the ethical dimensions of trauma narratives.

Vickroy's postulation of trauma theory moves forward by delineating the characteristic features of trauma narratives. She asserts that in order to comprehend the "complexities of traumatic situations", she has "adopted an interpretive method that combines literary, cultural, and psychological approaches" (Vickroy, *Trauma and Survival* x). She thoroughly reviews the available literature related to trauma theory and explicates the relationship of trauma theory to literature. Vickroy deals with the theorization of trauma and its aesthetic reflections in literature. She defines trauma texts as narratives that help readers to "access traumatic experience" and that "have taken an important place among diverse artistic, scholarly, and testimonial representations in illuminating the personal and public aspects of trauma and in elucidating our relationship to memory and forgetting within the complex interweavings of social and psychological relationships" (*Trauma and Survival* 1) She thoroughly theorizes the manifestations of trauma in fictional narratives and explores the multifaceted relationship between sociocultural influences and intimate communal relationships.

Vickroy's work is especially significant for this thesis because she elucidates the cultural aspects of traumatic experience that shape the individual's self-perception and also help to understand the worth of the individual's surroundings. She claims that contemporary trauma narratives are undeniably personalized responses to this century's emergent consciousness of the devastating consequences on the individual psyche of wars, poverty, colonization, and domestic abuse. Vickroy claims that "[k]nowledge of trauma offers the opportunity to unveil new perspectives concerning relationships of

power and their effects, to analyze what we repress and why, and to examine our need

for cultural and individual myths that block understanding (Vickroy, *Trauma and*

Survival 22). Since this dissertation focuses on the cultural contexts of the selected texts

to understand the trauma of the characters, Vickroy's work is especially useful in

understanding that.

Vickroy further assesses how trauma narratives rearticulate the lives and voices of

marginalized people; reject Western conceptions of the autonomous subject; and recognize

the complex negotiations of multicultural social relations. She has effectively combined the

literary, psychological, and cultural aspects of trauma to propose an interpretive method for

trauma narratives. She argues that "trauma narratives go beyond presenting trauma as

subject matter or character study. They internalize the rhythms, processes, and

uncertainties of traumatic experiences" (*Trauma and Survival* 3). She argues that literature

reveals the intricacies of power and the relationship between society's demands and the

individual's psychological well-being. For Vickroy, trauma is an undeniable and

reminiscent subject in the contemporary world, which is likewise represented in literature.

She explains that trauma narratives use literary techniques to articulate the trauma

of the characters. According to her: "Survivors experience resists normal chronological

narration or normal mode of artistic representation. Because they live in durational rather

than chronological time, they continue to experience the horrors of the past through

internal shifts back in time and space rather than experiencing the past as differentiated

from the present" (*Trauma and Survival* 5). Vickroy elucidates the complex relevance of

literature to trauma theory. She recognizes the "therapeutic and testimonial value" (*Trauma*

and Survival xi) of trauma narratives and emphasizes the significance of the distinctive

features of such literature. For Vickroy, these trauma narratives are not legitimate but also

"authentic" as "direct testimony" of the survivors (*Trauma and Survival* 21). She argues

that unlike sensationalist use of trauma in popular fiction or films, trauma narratives use

the techniques that are appropriate to "incorporate the rhythms, processes, and

uncertainties of trauma within [their] consciousness and structures" (*Trauma and Survival*

xiv). Emphasizing the significance of trauma narratives, Vickroy contends that such

narratives give voice to the voiceless and marginalized classes so they help the reader to

fully realize the trauma of these ostracized people and also to empathize with them.

This thesis uses Vickroy's model of trauma to read Morrison and Bashir's selected

texts as her theorization of trauma situates the latter within its psychological, literary, and

cultural background to elucidate the relationship of trauma to societal oppression.

Vickroyan model of trauma underlines fictional works' socio-cultural context to broaden

the understanding of the relationship between objectification, repression, and

discrimination. Furthermore, Vickroy underscores the significance of aesthetic devices

used by writers of trauma fiction to duplicate psychic neurosis of trauma victims. Both

Caruth and Vickroy illustrate how literary trauma theory can help us understand the artistic

portrayal of otherized subjects through specific narrative techniques in the selected works

of Morrison and Bashir. Vickroyan theory helps throw light on how these literary

techniques help the authors to embody the rhythms, processes, and ambiguities of psychic

experiences within textual structures.

3.5 Ted Morrissey's approach of "trauma-based literary analysis"

Finally, the conceptual framework of this study draws on Ted Morrissey's approach of "trauma-based literary analysis" given in his book *Trauma Theory as an Approach to Analyzing Literary Texts* (2021). In this book, Morrissey explains his notion of "trauma-based literary analysis" as an approach that seeks to identify characteristics of a text that suggest that author experienced either personal or communal trauma or both. According to Morrissey, fiction writers display their experience of trauma cultures through the use of specialized stylistic traits that make their works representative trauma texts. He also identifies that the experiences of individuals in a trauma culture are related to that of the group, and one cannot be separated from the other.

Based on the works of Caruth and other literary trauma theorists, Morrissey's approach identifies four characteristics of trauma texts. He contends that "cultural trauma has a tendency to result in literary works with similar narrative characteristics" (Morrissey 18). For Morrissey, "literary texts must reflect more than a single traumatic characteristic to be considered a likely 'trauma-culture' text" (Morrissey 99). He explains these characteristic as:

a. "intertextuality, that is, the use of various 'texts' to create meanings when contextualized together that are somehow different from the meanings of those same texts when read independently.

b. repetition, that is, the compulsion to return to images and events, particularly ones that at first blush may seem relatively insignificant but

that gain significance(s) with each return.

c. a dispersed or fragmented narrative voice, that is, a style of narration that employs multiple authorial voices/perspectives, and/or a decidedly nonlinear emplotment (or even a decidedly "non-plotted" emplotment).

d. a search for language . . . for powerful, indeed, almost magical words—that will uncouple the traumatized from the traumatizing event. (Morrissey 90)

Morrissey argues that whenever there is "cultural trauma, *postmodern* narrative techniques are likely to follow" (Morrissey 20). He proclaims that trauma literature is produced as a result of cultural trauma, and the authors mimic trauma through the use of literary techniques.

Drawing on Morrissey's approach, this study analyzes the causes that make the author narrate trauma stories. This is done by probing into the communal histories of African American and Kashmiri communities because, for Morrissey, literature develops from corresponding social circumstances. Morrissey hypothesizes that cultural trauma affects the literary productions of a society, and this claim can be testified through the analysis of Morrison's and Bashir's fictional works. Trauma literature represents the trauma culture for the purpose of healing it. In other words, Morrissey's approach focuses on the production and reception of trauma literature within its socio-historical context.

His approach focuses on the "historical and cultural factors" (Morrissey

81) that result in the production of trauma literature. According to Morrissey, the horrific historical moments cause social anxieties that are reflected in literary productions. Resultantly, the socio-historical context of the authors helps identify the causes that made them write trauma narratives. The traumatic histories of marginalized communities manifest themselves in art forms. Communal trauma "results in the type of literary production" (Morrissey 18) that can be called trauma literature. Keeping in mind the question of what causes Morrison and Bashir to produce trauma narratives, this study pursues to analyze the present and past of the African Americans and Kashmiris, probing into the individual and collective consciousness of the characters. The psychological and socio-historic dimensions of the literary works are crucial to answering the question. This study also tries to answer the question of how the trauma fiction of Morrison and Bashir give order to the traumatic communal histories and try to restore order of shattered collective consciousness.

Morrissey poses certain questions, and these questions are fundamental to this study as well. According to Morrissey, the analysis of trauma texts should answer the following questions:

- Why do writers write what they write?
- Why do writers choose certain narrative techniques over others?
- What can topic and technique tell us about the culture in which that writer is producing text? (Morrissey 24)

Morrissey's prime interest lies in "trauma, its effects on the psyche, and how

these effects manifest themselves in narrative style" (Morrissey 25). Literary

writers psyches are affected by the communal trauma, and it is reflected

through their narrative style. Using Freud's theorization, Morrissey contends

that the individual psyche is affected by the communal psyche because an

individual's "mental state impacts others in his sphere, there is no clear

distinction between individual and group psychologies" (Morrissey 42).

Keeping in view Freudian and Caruthean theorization of trauma and

psychoanalysis, Morrissey asserts that the "traumatic stress disorders develop

in part because there was a context in place that precipitated the event being

interpreted as traumatic" (Morrissey 29). Morrissey not only emphasizes the

relation of the individual to the group but also the significance of the

individual's language. According to him, the language of a subject is a product

of his/her socio-cultural environment, so in order to fully comprehend the

meaning of an utterance, language needs to be analyzed in its socio-cultural

context. Both Freud and Lacan assert that "individual psyches develop and

operate essentially the same as group psyches" (Morrissey 64).

Utilizing Cathy Caruth's definition of trauma, he moves on to Kai

Erikson's notion of social trauma. He further argues how the "long-term effect

of trauma is a dramatically altered worldview" (Morrissey 67). Trauma results

in the "degraded perception of *truth*" (Morrissey 68) by the survivor. Keeping

aside the subjective nature of truth, trauma survivor finds it difficult to "*know

what is true*" (Morrissey 69). This perspective of the validity of truth is key to

understanding not only PTSD but also Caruthean trauma theory that focuses on

the dreams and hallucinations as reflecting the unassimilable aspects of trauma. Traumatic experience causes memory that stores the traumatic incident that is not "available for retrieval under ordinary conditions" (Morrissey 69). Identifying the characteristics of trauma literature, Morrissey argues that "the victim of trauma is unable to perceive time and space *normally* " (Morrissey 87).

Morrissey's approach gives an organizational base to this study because he insists that the "group psyche operates much the same as the individual psyche" (Morrissey 87); therefore, his approach provides the best framework for studying the relationship of the individual and the communal traumas of African Americans and Kashmiris as depicted in the selected texts. Morrisey's approach of "trauma-based literary analysis" is also a suitable framework for understanding Morrison's and Bashir's fiction as trauma literature because the selected works demonstrate the characteristic features of trauma fiction as elaborated by Morrissey. These works can be read together with history books as well as books from the fields of psychology, sociology, and ethnography. The sentences from the fictional texts could be a "quote from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder* (DSM)" (Morrissey 121-122). The trauma texts of Morrison and Bashir "connect sociohistorical texts with their fictive narratives" (Morrissey 96), and both authors use the techniques of repetition; fragmented voice; intertextuality; and specialized language in their works to convey the trauma of their characters as well as its relationship to the collective trauma of the group.

3.6 Conceptual Framework

This study blends the theorizations of trauma given by Caruth, Vickroy, and Morrissey alongside DSM-V to develop a conceptual framework that will inform the analysis of the selected texts. First, the study identifies the traumatized characters in the fictional texts of Toni Morrison and Shahnaz Bashir using *The American Psychiatric Association*'s (1987) *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder V*. The manual states that the diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) applies to the state in which the individual "has experienced an event that is outside the range of human experience" (DSM-V). The analysis of the fictional characters operates from the premise that the protagonists are trauma-hit characters, and the traumatic events they encounter in the text are represented through direct or indirect action. These characters are marked by certain symptoms or effects of trauma such as the distortion of linear time; the disruption of relationship with others and the self; and the vivid and enduring impression imprinted on the mind of the victim. Caruth's notion of trauma, which is in accordance with the *American Psychiatric Association*'s definition of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (Mengel and Borzaga 4) is also used in understanding the trauma-hit characters. She holds that massive trauma precludes all representation because the ordinary mechanisms of consciousness and memory are temporarily destroyed. Instead, Caruth suggests that the traumatic event is not registered in the conscious mind of the victim and is dissociated from normal mental processes of cognition. According to her, the traumatic incident cannot be known, represented, or registered at the time of happening.

Both Caruth and Vickroy examine the concept of trauma and its role in literature, and insights from the latter inform the analysis of the selected texts. Caruth's theorization

engages with the questions of language and history in relation to trauma and the

significance of memory. For Caruth, trauma remains as an enigmatic absence trapped

within an "immemorial past" that is unknown to the present, for a traumatized person is

not only overcome by the traumatic incident but is also trapped within the very repetition

of the traumatic nightmares, repetitions, and flashbacks. According to Caruth, testimonies

of trauma occur through the breakdown of representational forms since it is an "injury to

the psyche that language often fails to adequately represent or express" (76). Caruthean

model emphasizes that the traumatic incident overwhelms the victim and resists language

or representation and focuses on the referentiality of the literary language. In her

theorization, literature and trauma intersect at "the complex relation between knowing

and not knowing" (3). For her, "if trauma is at all susceptible to narrative formulation,

then it requires a literary form which departs from conventional linear sequence" (13).

Using Caruthean model of literary trauma theory, the study analyzes the selected texts as

trauma narratives that fictionalize the traumatic past of African Americans and Kashmiris

and its impact on the lives and identities of individuals and communities.

Caruthean model is correlated with Vickroyan model of trauma that emphasizes

the socio-cultural milieu of the literary texts to comprehend the respective oppressive and

traumatic histories. Vickroy attributes trauma narratives to contemporary cultural

situations and argues that these catastrophic incidents are prerequisite for trauma fiction.

Theorizing trauma in the context of psychology, literature, and cultural criticism, Vickroy

focuses on the social forces that compel the authors to produce trauma narratives. She

identifies "the cultural origins of trauma in the contexts of racial, sexual, and class

oppressions" (Vickroy, *Reading Trauma* 1). For Vickroy, human beings have the ability

to survive and adapt but even then "traumatic events can alter people's psychological, biological, and social equilibrium" (*Trauma and Survival,* 12). Vickroy calls this "tyranny of past" (*Trauma and Survival* 12) because the traumatized victim's focus on specific incidents of the past make the present irrelevant and dark. Like Caruth, Vickroy elucidates trauma narratives as narratives that "go beyond presenting trauma as subject matter or in characterization", and focuses on how they "incorporate the rhythms, processes, and uncertainties of trauma within the consciousness and structures of these works" (*Trauma and Survival* 24). Vickroy's work is useful for understanding the trauma narratives of Morrison and Bashir as her theorization of trauma focuses on the "cultural, sociopolitical and psychological causes and contexts of trauma" (*Trauma and Survival* xii) that this thesis is also interested in exploring. Secondly, her reading moves away from Caruth in its vision of considering trauma fiction as capable of bearing witness in ways that enable audience healing through the experience of reading. Finally, Vickroy's model of trauma elaborates on textual strategies used to represent trauma, which provides a useful framework for understanding the representation of trauma in Morrison's and Bashir's selected work.

These conceptual postulates of Caruth and Vickroy are applied in combination with Ted Morrissey's notion of "trauma-based literary analysis". Morrissey's notion seeks to identify characteristics of a fictional work that suggest that the literary writer has personally experienced communal trauma. As a result of this experience, authors write trauma texts that display specific stylistic traits to represent the psychic neurosis of individuals and communities and resultantly gives access to traumatic history. Morrissey hypothesizes that there is a certain fundamental correlation between traumatic

experiences and narrative production. The basic question that he addresses is why certain

kinds of fictional texts are psychologically produced; that is, he probes into the psychic

origins of creativity. Using Morrissey's approachToni Morrison's and Shahnaz Bashir's

fictional works can be read as fertile territories for literary trauma theory because the

selected fictional texts of both the authors display evidence of individual and communal

trauma as well as the use of fictional techniques characteristic of trauma literature.

Utilizing the theoretical postulates of Cathy Caruth and Laurie Vickroy in

combination with Ted Morrissey's approach of "trauma-based literary analysis"

and DSM V, this study investigates the interrelationship of communal trauma,

history, and memory in the fictional works of Toni Morrison and Shahnaz Bashir.

To identify characters as traumatized, I have used the DSM-V as scale. But mere

identification of the traumatic symptoms is not enough; therefore, the histories

and cultures of the two communities are also taken into account. To understand

how the selected fictional narratives portray the individual as well as the

communal trauma of the African American and Kashmiri communities, Caruth

and especially Vickroy's work has been drawn on. The fictional works of the

selected authors are analyzed and interpreted using literary trauma theories of the

above-mentioned theorists to explore how these writers represent their characters'

traumatic experiences and what effects do these have on their individual and

collective identities and memory.

Chapter Four

Relationship to the Past: Trauma, Narrative, and Memory

> We are all the time constructing narratives about our past
> and our future and . . . the core of our identity is really a narrative
> thread that gives meaning to our life, provided . . . that it is never
> broken.
> — Donald P. Spence, *Narrative Persuasion*

> [I]n mental life nothing which has once been formed can
> perish.
> — Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*

> The memory of oppressed people is one thing that cannot
> be taken away, and for such people, with such memories, revolt is
> always an inch below the surface.
> — Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States:
> 1492 to Present*

> Memory is the selection of images; some elusive; others
> printed indelibly on the brain. Each image is like a thread… each
> thread woven together to make a tapestry of intricate textures.
> And the tapestry tells a story. And the story is past…Like others
> before me, I have the gift of sight. But the truth changes color
> depending on the light. And tomorrow can be clearer than
> yesterday.
> — Kasi Lemmons, *Eve's Bayou*

This chapter analyzes Toni Morrison's and Shahnaz Bashir's selected trauma texts, *Beloved* (1987) and *Home* (2012)*,* and *The Half Mother* (2014) and *Scattered Souls* (2016) respectively to explore how these fictional works bear witness to communal trauma and grant "a paradoxical mode of access to extreme events and experiences" (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 34) such as slavery, oppression, discrimination, war neurosis, etc. The chapter gives a brief overview of the historical setting of each text; this is followed by the analysis of each text that is focused on highlighting textual examples whereby the authors have memorialized their communal histories. The selected trauma texts of Morrison and Bashir narrativize the communal memories and contribute to

preserving history. In the selected fictional texts, the authors foreground the traumatic events e.g., racial history, slavery, childhood abuse, racial discrimination, war trauma, political oppression, disenfranchisement etc. The texts put special emphasis on memory and history, that results in the recovery of the traumatic past. In Caruthean understanding, trauma is inherently a past phenomenon because it is comprehended "after a period of latency, and the psychological consequences that it triggers refer back to the event itself—an event lurking in the past—trauma and history seem to be irrevocably coupled" (*Unclaimed Experience* 15). Hence, the issues of trauma and their relevance to memory and fictional narratives are central to this chapter. Drawing on the theoretical postulates of Caruth and Vickroy, the chapter argues that the selected trauma texts of Morrison and Bashir fill in the gaps left by official historical narratives, "pointing to the unhealed wounds that linger in or on the body, in sexuality, intrusive memory, and emotional relations" (Vickroy, *Reading Trauma* 167). All the four selected fictional texts ascribe meaning to the past elucidating the interconnections of memory and traumatic historical events.

Study of the history of trauma theory indicates that the concept of trauma has twofold lineage; it encompasses both medical and psychological tropes and has emerged as a type of social discourse in the contemporary times. The recognition of the significance of individual's physical as well as mental health has helped generate the discourse on trauma that is now used to comprehend the individual and collective experiences. It is an acknowledged fact that the traumatic experiences of the past can resurface in both individual and collective present, and that "entire nations… can respond to trauma just as individuals do" (Morrissey 411). Individuals suffering from the Post-

traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) usually have no "conscious recollection … of the traumatizing event" (Morrissey 408), so the memories of the event are no more than "dissociated recollections" (Morrissey 408). The traumatic memories haunt the survivors and their conscious mind transforms the "traumatic memory into *narrative* memory" (Morrissey 409). Reliving and sharing the traumatic event to a compassionate listener can help the victim "produce change in the abnormal processing of the traumatic memory" (Vickroy, *Trauma and Survival* 22). This transformation of traumatic memory into narrative memory relieves the victim of many major symptoms of PTSD.

Transformation of traumatic memory into narrative memory helps in coping with many major symptoms of the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) because "the physioneurosis induced by terror can apparently be reversed through the use of words" (Herman 183). When the survivor of a traumatic incident narrates his/her traumatic memory it, "helps the witness to re-externalize traumatic events and narrate his or her story in order to escape merely repeating and reenacting the traumatizing experience in social contexts such as testifying and writing to empathetic witness" (Langer 19). The field of trauma studies recognizes the significance of the unhealed past and the necessity of "how past needs to be remembered and worked through so that we can avoid repeating it (Davis & Meretoja 3). Therefore, history and memory are very important tropes of trauma studies. All the significant critics of the field i.e., Anne Whithead, Andreas Huyssen, Roger Luckhurst, and Pierre Nora share the same notion of history, in which they see history as a "grand narrative". Along with history these critics and theorists of trauma pay special attention to the intricacy of memory.

Another concern of trauma literature is "the recovery of memory and the acknowledgement of the marginalized, repressed or forgotten" (Onega et al. 2) because "narration is an indispensable tool for healing" (Onega et al. 3). The field has always focused on the problem of memory presented in Freudian psychoanalytical theory. It relies on the idea that traumatic memory cannot give direct access to the preserved past since the experience resides behind repression or denial in the Freudian dynamic unconscious. Freud formulated the idea of repression in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1990), identified the compulsive return of the repressed (uncanny) material in *Das Unheimliche* (1919), and specified the repetition compulsion of trauma in *Inhibition, Symptoms, and Anxiety* (1926) (van der Kolk & van der Hart 1995). This is why a traumatizing experience could be retrieved only via literary representation. According to Cathy Caruth, "the language of trauma, and the silence of its mute repetition of suffering, profoundly and imperatively demand a new mode of reading and of listening" (*Unclaimed Experience* 9). This representation of trauma in fiction gives unique access to history; in other words, the fictional narratives bear witness to the traumatic histories. Caruth claims that the inaccessibility of trauma in normal language makes trauma narratives an apt way of presenting history. All the above theorizations of the relationship of memory, trauma, and narrative in the context of history will inform the ensuing analysis of the selected texts.

Memory and trauma have a complicated relation in the contemporaneous fictional works. Creating these narratives is problematic because "traumatic memory is often "wordless and static," and the survivor's "initial account … may be repetitious, stereotyped and emotionless" (Herman 175). Memory in particular plays an important

role in the literature inscribed by gender, religious, or ethnic minorities, and by

disempowered communities. The fictional texts selected for the present study are also

correlated to the communal history and memory of African American and Kashmiri

communities because both Morrison and Bashir "work from traces of memory and

history" (Vickroy, *Trauma and Survival* 33). Their fictional works replicate and preserve

the disappearing and muted histories of their ostracized communities. This chapter

attempts to comprehend how Toni Morrison and Shahnaz Bashir fictionalize the history

of their repressed communities and what role memory plays in their narratives. For this

purpose, probing into the issues of subalternity and marginality through an in-depth

analysis of the fictional works is important. In the selected fictional works of Morrison

and Bashir, history serves as an archive for the communal memory, and the literary

writers accommodate this cultural memory in their fictional works.

Morrison and Bashir memorialize the histories of their marginalized communities

through their trauma fiction and restyle "cultural memory through personal contexts,

adopting testimonial traits to prevent and bear witness" (Vickroy, *Trauma and Survival*

5). The histories of the marginalized communities usually disappear or are sidelined, so

the testimonial trauma narratives help restore these "disappeared histories" (Caruth,

Literature in the Ashes 7). These testimonial narratives of the selected authors are not just

stories of individual traumas but "individual as representative of a social class or group"

(Vickroy, *Trauma and Survival* 5) and arise from their "corresponding social conditions"

(Morrissey 12). Trauma narratives of Morrison and Bashir deal with disturbing subjects

such as incest, racial discrimination, rape, human rights violations, and sexual and

cultural violence. According to Horvitz, such narratives are needed "to resist cultural

repression and to bear witness to oppression" (18). The selected novels of Morrison and Bashir are communal testimonies that are "subversive in challenging oppressive practices and relations" (Vickroy, *Trauma and Survival* 7). Being part of marginalized communities, both Morrison and Bashir have personally witnessed and experienced traumatic events. While Shahnaz Bashir is a direct survivor of trauma, Toni Morrison has inherited the burden of communal trauma from her community. The significance of the writers who are direct survivors of trauma has been discussed by various trauma theorists. Tal notes that nontraumatized authors and readers are not sensitive to the "signs that invoke traumatic memory" (16).

In order to understand the African American traumatic experiences in the U.S., Morrison's historically informed fictional texts are significant. In her fictional works, she chronicles the marginalization of her race. Her fictional narratives are "preoccupied with the necessity of recovering the past in literature as means of repaying a debt to those who lived through it" (Rico 5). Being an African American woman Morrison understands and recognizes the social fabric that perpetuates racial oppression and vulnerability. Morrison portrays both the inequality and oppression, along with the resilience and strength of her community. The selected fictional texts are set in the time period when African Americans were facing overt discrimination. So, African Americans understand trauma both individually and as a part of a community. They experience trauma within the context of preexisting and coexisting devastating events.

Caruthian understanding of trauma demonstrates that trauma is an unresolvable problem of the unconscious that illuminates the inherent contradictions of experience and language, while Vickroyan model probes the relationship of trauma to culture. Morrison

is one such author who portrays the complex relationship between sociocultural influences and intimate personal relations in her fiction. History and memory serve as the main source of Morrison's fictional texts. The reason is not only her identity as a black author but also her strong affiliation with her racial roots. This replication of the African American history also gives significance to Morrison's work. African American troubled histories make trauma the compelling feature of Morrison's fiction. She narrates the cultural trauma through her fictional works that span from the traumatic memories of her ancestors' experience of slavery down to present day.

4.1 History, Memory, and Trauma in Toni Morrison's Selected Fiction

Morrison's fifth novel *Beloved* (1987) is set in Ohio and records the sufferings of a slave family during the Reconstruction era. The story is about a slave woman, Sethe, who kills her own daughter to save her from the brutalities of slavery. Through Sethe's life history, Morrison paints the gloomy portrait of the dehumanizing effects of slavery as well as the lingering damage inflicted on its survivors. The novel's plot is inspired by an actual incident in which an African American slave mother, Margaret Garner from Boon County, Kentucky, murdered her own daughter rather than allowing her to spend the inhuman life of a slave (Davis and Meretoja 61). The story is partly realistic, however, partly it is a supernatural story that elucidates the impacts of slavery on the psychological conditions of the slaves, especially women. Through Sethe's story, Morrison sheds light on the greater questions of cultural and communal problems. The text propagates Morrison's understanding of "personal as political" (Lanier and Tally 12). Sethe's story becomes a ghost story after her encounter with Beloved (supposedly the ghost of her

deceased daughter). The author reveals the narrative in fragmented flashbacks that take the reader back into Sethe's past and explain the cause of the conflicts in her present.

Sethe's story starts at the *Sweet Home* during the time of slavery and progresses with her escape along with her children. On her way to freedom, she is caught by the overseers. Seeing that there is no way of escape, Sethe tries to kill all her children rather than allowing them to go back to the *Sweet Home.* However, she only manages to kill one daughter who is later called Beloved, and the overseers 'rescue' the rest of the children. Later on, explaining her stance, she clarifies that her love for her children compelled her to kill them because she did not want them to experience the same trauma she encountered at the plantation. Nonetheless, when Sethe meets Beloved eighteen years after the incident and in the form of a ghost, many incidents make her believe that that is her dead daughter so at the heart of her heart she is delighted, though partly guilty as well. She cuts off her ties with the outside world and tries to give full attention to her daughter Beloved. This act of Sethe shows her remorse as a mother. Initially, she spends good time with both her daughters; Denver and Beloved, but with time her guilt prompts her to ask for forgiveness from Beloved. She explains her sufferings to Beloved and how much she had to endure for her children. However, one day Beloved disappears and never returns. Sethe continues to grieve for her daughter until Paul D comes to her rescue. The novel explores how the traumatic experience of social powerlessness and devalued racial identity makes an African American mother evaluate her circumstances and find ways to oppose dominant forces.

Toni Morrison has based the story of Sethe on the true story of Margaret Garner (Davis and Meretoja 61), which she discovered through a newspaper article. She is not

void of her socio-historical context and it is clearly evident in the course of the narrative. She gives minute details of the historical time period in her work. Morrison has memorialized her racial history by bringing the story of "Garner from the nineteenth century into the twentieth century through her female character Sethe" (Rarastesa 135). The story of Margaret Garner was written into a newspaper article in 1856, and Morrison reproduced the same in 1974. In the novel, Morrison uses the same story to show how the central character tries to act out and work through her maternal trauma.

Morrison fictionalizes the actual history in her novel in which Sethe, a runaway slave, kills her baby daughter. The conditions in which Sethe kills her infant closely shadow the events that led to the infanticide in the Margaret Garner case. Both women had escaped slavery, and both women killed their young daughters upon hearing of their master's return to take them and their children back into slavery. The threat of returning to the dehumanizing and abusive conditions that uphold slavery prompted both women to stop such a fate by using the drastic means of killing. The infanticides were not an act of violence, but rather a reaction, triggered by unresolved trauma and carried out by these women to avoid further violence from being imputed upon their offspring.

Although the story is based on the life history of Margaret Garner, it does not narrate the full incident because it is a fictional work so some parts of the text come out of the author's imagination. As Martha Hodes states: "Morrison wrote *Beloved* with only the seed of Margaret Garner" (132). Garner's story inspired part of the novel; she was a slave from Kentucky who used to do domestic labor with her children in Mr. John Pollard Gaine's house. Mr. Gaine was a congressman and a plantation owner, who inherited a huge plantation including slaves from his father. Margaret Garner's mother Prisclla was

also part of the inheritance; hence, she along with her children was her owner's property. Margaret Garner had a better life at the Gaine's household as compared to other slaves because she used to take care of her master's children. But this somewhat peaceful life was disrupted when Mr. Archibald Gaine became the master and the caretaker of the house. With this change in the management, Margaret Garner's life also became a living hell because she "became the potential sexual victim of Archibald Gaines" (Rarastesa 145). These historical origins are important in understanding *Beloved* and the trauma that Morrison represents in the text.

It is Morrison's Sethe who presents to the world in story form the results of dehumanization and trauma that Margaret Garner experienced. Trauma plays an important role in Sethe's decision to grab her four children and run to the shed to kill them after she realizes the schoolteacher has come for them. It is there that she kills the baby, who comes to be known as Beloved. The other three are spared only because Sethe does not have enough time. Moments before the killing of Beloved, Sethe and her family had been outside, working and at peace. Her decision was sudden and reactive. It was the return of the overseer that triggered the return of trauma, followed by the desperate act to end further violent events. Using the method of repetition in imagery and language and through testimony, Morrison turns the reader into not only a witness but also an experiencer of the historical trauma.

Beloved tells the story of a slave woman who chose her freedom. She escaped her master and found a new home that did not possess the structures and conditions of slavery. Even though she got away from those conditions which sustain slavery, she continued to carry the trauma within her psyche that a life of slavery had caused. This

trauma caused her to kill her infant daughter, and it is this infant daughter that she believes comes back to haunt her. As the haunting progresses, the history of Sethe's trauma emerges. She had lost her own mother, a woman she was denied a relationship with, to hanging, and witnessed the body in the tree. Her own mother lost her mother during the middle massage from what appears to be a suicide into the sea. Throughout the novel, Sethe tries to regain the lost mother-daughter relationship and come to terms with the horrific pain this caused her. Sethe's trauma is represented by the figure of the ghost Beloved. It is how Sethe and Beloved behave together that reveals the suffering and loss of being denied motherhood and consequently, the daughter being denied a mother.

Morrison's novel engages with the African American past and bears witness to the history of slavery against the national amnesia. Other than fictionalizing the story of a runaway slave, the novel also narrates female protagonist's quest for social freedom and psychological wholeness. The plot of the novel revolves around Sethe's life in the Sweet Home Plantation. Describing the arrival of Sethe at the Sweet Home, Morrison writes:

> Sethe was thirteen when she came to Sweet Home and already iron-eyed. She was a timely present for Mrs. Garner who had lost Baby Suggs to her husband's high principles. The five Sweet Home men looked at the new girl and decided to let her be. They were young and so sick with the absence of women they had taken to calves. Yet they let the iron-eyed girl be, so she could choose in spite of the fact that each one would have beaten the others to mush to have her. It took her a year to choose—a long, tough year of thrashing on pallets eaten up with dreams of her. A year of yearning, when rape seemed the solitary gift of life. (12)

Morrison sets the tragic tone of the text right from the beginning and the reader anticipates the later life of Sethe, who marries Halle and gives birth to three children. She had the usual life of a slave, but everything changed with the death of her owner. Her life becomes a living hell after the death of Mr. Garner the plantation owner. After his demise the plantation is given to the abusive schoolteacher. The schoolteacher uses power to oppress the slaves working on the plantation. Morrison narrates the arrival of the schoolteacher in these words, "Then schoolteacher arrived to put things in order. But what he did broke three more Sweet Home men and punched the glittering iron out of Sethe's eyes, leaving two open wells that did not reflect firelight" (*Beloved* 11). His nephews sexually assault Sethe in the barn while Halle and Paul D watch the scene in horror. Narrating the incident Morrison writes:

> After I left you, those boys came in there and took my milk. That's what they came in there for. Held me down and took it. I told Mrs. Garner on em. She had that lump and couldn't speak but her eyes rolled out tears. Them boys found out I told on em. Schoolteacher made one open up my back, and when it closed it made a tree. It grows there still. (*Beloved* 19)

This treatment of the Schoolteacher's nephews shows how Sethe is subjected to rape and inhuman treatment. The tree on Sethe's back demonstrates her painful connection to her traumatic past. The lash scars of Sethe are physical representation of the traumatic memories of an individual that give access to the communal history. This scar is not individual trauma but symbolically represents the traumas of African Americans as a race. Paul D tries to comfort Sethe by kissing the tree; this act symbolically demonstrates his solidarity with Sethe. "As she raised up from the heat she

felt Paul D behind her and his hands under her breasts. She straightened up and knew, but could not feel that his cheek was pressing into the branches of her chokecherry tree" (*Beloved* 20). Sethe's scar becomes a sight that connects as well as hitches the intimate or sexual relations. "Paul D tries to comfort Sethe, he "rubbed his cheeks on her back and learned that way her sorrow, the roots of it, its wide trunk and intricate branches" (*Beloved* 17). Sethe's physical wound is in effect a reflection of her psychological trauma that connects her to her group and evokes empathy in Paul D.

Morrison mediates the actual history through fiction to portray the trauma of her race in order to show how African Americans have collectively been "subjected to horrendous events that have left indelible marks upon their group consciousness, making their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways" (Alexander 1). Although Morrison does not present direct testimony when she narrates the horrors of slavery in the novel, yet her novel serves as direct testimony. She does not use trauma merely as a sensational subject matter, but uses the techniques that engage her readers in the traumatic experience of her characters. As Rigney notes, in the case of distressing events "fictional genres and literary modes [...] may [...] provide the only forum available for recalling certain experiences that are difficult to bring into [...] public remembrance or [...] to articulate in any other way" (348). So, this reconstruction of ancestral trauma by Morrison can be considered 'authentic' because the author uses unique and innovative literary techniques to articulate the trauma within the structure of the text. Morrison commemorates her racial history in the novel by representing individual as well as collective trauma.

Beloved is a classic example of trauma narrative because the text narrates the

trauma of the central character Sethe who has experienced slavery, oppression and rape. The text has many characteristics of orally narrated slave stories along with a description of the psychological effects of slavery. Sethe does not want her children to go through the same experience, so she kills her infant daughter named Beloved. The beginning of the text announces the pain of the ex-slaves as the author proclaims that the house is "spiteful full of baby's venom" (*Beloved* 3). The text presents "litany of atrocities … mammary rape, a mother's cutting of her baby's throat, whippings, dreadful prison treatment on chain gangs" (Sickels 8).

The White men at the Sweet Home treat Sethe like an animal who is yet to be milked. They take the milk that should have been consumed by her baby. Morrison's description of Sweet Home gives a peep into the "everyday plantation life, the severe punishments for dereliction of duties, branding, mutilation, stealing, arson, murder, rape, and division of families, including the sale of children" (Franklin et al. xiii). The author depicts the survival strategies of these slaves as some of them including Paul D, Paul A, and Six O try to run away to escape the terror of the schoolteacher. But none of them is successful. Six O is captured and burned alive; Paul A is hanged; and Paul D is sold. Morrison narrates the condition of these men saying: "One crazy, one sold, one missing, one burnt and me licking iron with my hands crossed behind me. The last of the Sweet Home men" (*Beloved* 86). As a result of all this, Halle loses his will to escape and dies. In a situation where even men are unsuccessful and hopeless, only Sethe manages to stumble towards freedom.

The condition of these ill-fated men of Sweet Home symbolically represents the condition of many African American slaves. As recounted in the introductory chapter,

historical narratives of the condition of the African American slaves portray the conditions of these slaves in the American South. Claude H. Nolen in the book *African American Southerners in Slavery, Civil War and Reconstruction* notes: "Many masters would not wait for hunger and loneliness to force fugitives to return but would set dogs on their tracks at once" (52). The worst conditions at the plantations forced the slaves to run away from the Deep South and the number increased to such as extent during this time period that it seemed like the slave system would collapse so special fugitive slave laws were passed to prevent the slaves from running away.

Sethe as an African American woman faces dual oppression as a slave and as a woman. Although she was an ordinary slave, but she has extraordinary abilities, which usually are not expected of women. A condition in which "most slave women were not willing to leave children behind, and to take them along on the arduous escape journey was nearly impossible" (Foner 415), Sethe manages to escape taking her four children along. Commemorating Sethe 's extraordinary ability, Morrison notes,

> there is this nineteen year old slave girl—a year older than herself--- walking through the dark woods to get to her children who are far away. She is tired, scared may be, and may be even lost. Most of all she is by herself and inside her is another baby she has to think about too. Behind her dogs, perhaps; guns probably; and certainly mossy teeth. She is not so afraid at night because she is the color of it, but in the day every sound is a shot or a tracker's quite step. (91)

Thus, the story does not only tell the atrocities experienced by African Americans but at the same time shows the resilient spirit of the community. The story of Sethe's tragic life reconstructs that African American past and collective suffering under slavery. The narrative constantly reminds readers of the enslaved life of the protagonist because her present is haunted by the memories of her past. The texts explains the significance of the unhealed past. Morrison tries to show the reader that slavery for African Americans is not only in the past but has an impact on their lives in the present. As the present, past, and future are interconnected for Morrison, so the protagonist also cannot free herself of her past. She clings to her past that constantly reminds her of the sexism, racism, and classism she has faced. Other than this, the pain of slavery and the constant guilt of homicide in around her all the time. Sethe represents a slave who survives slavery and tries to go on with her life, but life in the present cannot be separated from the past. She tries to forget the past, but it still haunts her.

The narrative is replete with the elements of trauma, especially the neurotic behavior of Sethe. Morrison has depicted the physical and mental deformity of her protagonist to show the sufferings of the blacks struggling in the white dominated community in the U.S. She has depicted the traumatic and harrowing experiences of a slave mother who is compelled to kill her own daughter to save her from the sexual oppression of the whites. The narrative sheds light on the history of the African Americans who were subjected to all forms of oppression. The author shows how the ghost of past still haunts the characters and they feel alienated from the mainstream society. The story reveals fragmentation of families and shows how painful the legacy of slavery still is to African Americans.

Trauma literary theory is really useful in understanding the text of *Beloved* with regards to the relationship of history to trauma, memory, and narrative. Morrison belongs to a trauma-hit community that has experienced trauma culture (Morrissey 2021) and it is reflected in her text as outlined above. Also, as the analysis above shows, Morrison utilizes special aesthetic devices to articulate the historical experience of trauma (Caruth, *Explorations in Memory* 36) in the text; she frequently uses broken narrative and disruptive language that emerge out of the debris of traumatic experience of slavery (Vickroy, *Trauma and Survival* 126). *Beloved* fictionalizes the traumatic experience of Margaret Garner through the character of Sethe and during this process the novel gives access to the muted history of African American experience of slavery.

While *Beloved* is set in the Reconstruction Era, the other selected text of Morrison i.e., *Home* (2012) is about much recent times. The novel is set in the 1950s U.S. and revolves around the notions of racial identity and historical past. The novel fictionalizes the historical period of the 1950s in the U.S. from the perspective of race relations. It was an affluent decade for Americans, especially white Americans. The Korean War (1950-1953) expanded the influence of the U.S. in Asia, when the U.S. attacked the communist North Korea so that under the influence of Soviet Union it would not expand to South Korea. As more and more men were sent for military services, it gave an opportunity to women as well as black men to participate in the war. The U.S military was racialized earlier, but this need for more military personnel compelled the Truman government to enroll more men in the military and remove the racial bar. Morrison depicts this fact in the text when she narrates how the protagonist Frank Smart Money along with his two friends gets enrolled in the U.S. military and goes to Korea to fight for his country. This

act of necessity empowered the disempowered African Americans, but it had negative consequences as well.

The text starts at a point when the protagonist Frank Money is hospitalized because of his PTSD. He is a Korean War veteran who has recently returned from the non-segregated battle ground to a segregated and stratified American society. After returning from war, Frank is fighting alcoholism and PTSD. His childhood memories have many traumatic elements that are related to his native town, Lotus, Georgia, where he experienced discrimination as a black man:

> American society in the 1940s and 1950s was rampant with racial inequality, discrimination, segregation, and sometimes racial violence. Minorities often found themselves besieged by hostile neighbors, state governments, and the federal government. The promise of the Declaration of Independence—that "all men are created equal"—was still just a dream. (D. Miller 10)

Legally freedom had long been achieved, but practically it was not applicable to every American. As late as the 1950s African Americans were subjected to "unequal treatment across the United Stated and especially in the South. Jim Crow Laws that legislated racial segregation were common in Southern states" (D. Miller 11). The society was segregated in every sphere, as the Blacks and Whites went to separate schools, separate restaurants, and even separate public buses. Morrison politicizes her fictional narrative by continually evoking the "systemic structures of racism in America" (Onega et. al. 280). The text portrays how disenfranchisement of the African Americans was institutionalized and protected by the laws.

Segregation for African Americans did not only result in social disenfranchisement but also violence and terror. White supremacist groups such as Ku Klux Klan (KKK) "terrorized African American communities in the South" (D. Miller 12). Morrison quotes one such incident in the novel when Frank and his younger sister Cee witness killing and burial of a black man. Frank narrates his childhood experience in these words:

> …we saw them pull a body from a wheelbarrow and throw it into a hole already waiting. One foot stuck up over the edge and quivered, as though it could get out, as though with a little effort it could break through the dirt being shoveled in. We could not see the faces of the men doing the burying, only their trousers; but we saw the edge of a spade drive the jerking foot down to join the rest of itself. (*Home* 4)

This inhuman treatment of a black man at the hands of KKK demonstrates the condition of the African Americans in the U. S. South. Historically, the KKK first emerged in the Reconstruction period following the American Civil War, but it kept its existence in the political and social sphere of the country till the 1970s. Starting off as a small secret hate group the Klan expanded its influence and "controlled some local politicians, judges, and even state governors" (Figley 667). In chapter seven of the novel, the narrator describes the protagonist's native town saying, "Lotus, Georgia, is the worst place in the world, worse than any battlefield" (*Home* 83). The protagonist is a war veteran and is fighting the post-traumatic stress disorder after war, but the

narrator explains that the battlefield that has caused the PTSD to him is a better place than his native town in Deep South.

The narrator continues to explain the gloominess of the environment: "In Lotus you did know in advance since there was no future, just long stretches of killing time" (*Home* 83). Life in the protagonist's native town was uncertain because people were killed randomly and even if they were alive, "[there was no goal other than breathing, nothing to survive or worth surviving for" (*Home* 83). The hopeless situation of African Americans in Lotus forces Frank Money to leave Georgia and join the army. The third person narrator explains: "Nobody in Lotus knew anything or wanted to learn anything. Maybe a hundred or so people living in some fifty spread-out rickety houses. Nothing to do but mindless work in fields you didn't own, couldn't own" (*Home* 84). The place offered no hope and prospects to its residents, so Frank says, "I don't miss anything about the place" (*Home* 83). These traumatic life circumstances of Frank Money impacted his mind and returned while he was suffering from PTSD:

> My family was content or maybe just hopeless living that way. I
> understand. Having been run out of one town, any other offered safety
> and the peace of sleeping through the night and not waking up with a
> rifle in your face was more than enough. But it was much less than
> enough for me. You never lived there so you don't know what it was
> like. Any kid who had a mind would lose it. (*Home* 83)

The narrator explains the historical trauma of African Americans living in the South, but their trauma is not limited to this as they also experienced the trauma of losing dear and near ones in the war. Frank's multiple traumas are related to his childhood experiences of racial terror and marginalization. While he is planning to run away from the hospital to save his dying sister, his memory mixes his present with his past, and all of a sudden from thinking of his immediate surroundings, his mind switches to his past:

> You could be inside, living in your own house for years, and still, men with or without badges but always with guns could force you, your family, your neighbors to pack up and move—with or without shoes. Twenty years ago, as a four-year-old, he had a pair, though the sole of one flapped with every step. Residents of fifteen houses had been ordered to leave their little neighborhood on the edge of town. Twenty-four-hours, they were told, or else. "Else" meaning "die." It was early morning when the warnings came, so the balance of the day was confusion, anger, and packing. (*Home* 10)

This incident from Frank's childhood sheds light on the white supremacists' treatment of blacks in the American South. People were forced to abandon their properties, and if they resisted, their lives were threatened. Frank remembers a neighbor who refused to leave his house and was killed by the violent mob. Frank recalls the incident: "one elderly man named Crawford sat on his porch steps and refused to vacate. Elbows on knees, hands clasped, chewing tobacco, he waited the whole night. Just after dawn at the twenty-fourth hour he was

beaten to death with pipes and rifle butts and tied to the oldest magnolia tree in

the country" (*Home* 10). These traumatic memories of Frank's childhood reflect

the traumatic history of the African Americans.

Blacks have always been ostracized in the U.S., but black women have

been doubly relegated. The selected texts of Morrison, i.e., *Beloved* and *Home*

illustrate how African American women have been systematically victimized.

Cee's character in *Home* has many similarities with Pecola Breedlove, the

protagonist of Morrison's first novel, *The Bluest Eye* (1970), as both are victims

of the society's mistreatment and both are psychologically impacted because of

the standards of white beauty. These women were subjugated by white as well as

black men. The lives of these fictionalized characters depict the constant struggle

of the real women who were marginalized on the basis of race, class, and gender.

The same collective memory is presented in Morrison's fiction: "Many of the

characters portrayed struggle with experiences of dehumanization so raw that

holding onto their humanity becomes a precarious and conflicted process, and

inevitably an ambivalent sense of identity and conscience arise out of such

traumatic contexts, where humans were daily reduced to animal or object status"

(Vickroy, *Trauma and Survival* 34). One such female character is Cee, Frank

Money's younger sister.

The narrative structure of the novel presents the repressed traumatic past of the

protagonist's siblings Cee and Frank Money. This experience of the individual character

can symbolically represent the "national repressed memory" (Wyatt 143). The life history

of the protagonist Frank Money and his sister Cee evokes the horrors related to the

historical past of African Americans. The text makes references to the atrocities African

Americans faced through the history in the form of discrimination, exclusion, and racial

terror at the hands of extremist groups such as Ku Klux Klan. The novel represents the

stratified American society in the 1950s. Morrison questions the portrayal of America as

an 'affluent society' in the mainstream history books through the portrayal of blacks who

are segregated, discriminated against, and subjected to scientific experimentation.

The narrative starts at a point when Frank is hospitalized and is fighting

his PTSD. He hardly has any memory of the past and his life has no meaning.

But all of a sudden, his meaningless life seems to take a turn when he gets a

letter telling him he needs to "[c]ome fast. She be dead if you tarry" (*Home* 8).

The brotherly feelings compel Frank to find and rescue his sister. When he

reaches Georgia to rescue her, he finds that she works for a doctor named

Beauregard Scott. He is described as "more than a doctor" (*Home* 60), who

conducts experiments. Cee was happy with her employers and her work and

thought he helped the poor black women, but one day she accidently discovers a

book on "eugenics" in the doctor's office. Eugenics systematically worked to cut

down on blacks in the U.S. (Bozeman 422). The doctor was actually "interested

in wombs in general, constructing instruments to see further and further into

them. Improving the speculum" (*Home* 113). Cee's employer used her body for

experimentation and brought her at the verge of death. This incident portrays the

historical trauma of the African Americans in which scientists had at one point

or another used black bodies as sites of experiments. This is one of the many

acts of racism and xenophobia in the U.S. whereby people of color were

deprived of their reproductive rights. Morrison fictionalizes the traumatic history of African Americans on account of their experience of eugenics through Cee's story. Her forced sterilization by her master fictionalizes another traumatic historical period in the history of African Americans.

Another important side of the documentation of racial trauma is the reference of Greenbook (*Home* 22) that is given to Frank when he starts his Southward journey to rescue Cee. This is an implicit reference to Victor Green's the *Negro Motorist's Greek Book* (1936-1964)*,* an African American cultural artifact that was published annually as a guide map for African American road trippers. Green was the author of the book who was a former Postal Service employee, so he provided a travel guide to African Americans in the form of a catalogue that guided them to safer routes, stop overs, and rest areas on their way to the South. This implicit reference of the text hints at the traumatic history of racial exclusion in the U.S. in which blacks never felt safe while travelling towards the American South.

The ghost in the text is also an important motif of the novel. Morrison uses the ghost as a motif to fill the gaps of official renderings of the U.S. history. The ghost first appears while Frank is on train, Morrison notes:

> He turned and, more amused than startled, examined his seat partner-a small man wearing a wide-brimmed hat. His pale blue suit sported a long jacket and balloon trousers. His shoes were white with unnaturally pointed toes. The man stared ahead. Ignored, Frank leaned back to the

window to pick up his nap. As soon as he did, the zoot-suited man got up

and disappeared down the aisle. No indentation was left in the leather

seat. (*Home* 27)

The reader is able to guess that it is perhaps a ghost because there is no

indentation left on the seat. The ghost appears at several points in the texts and

despite Frank's constant struggle never talks to him. The zoot-suited men of the

similar style were seen commonly in the African American communities

especially in Harlem, Detroit, and Chicago. Zoot suit riots were riots in the

history of the U.S. during the 1940s when men of color, especially Jazz

musicians and other black artists liked this style of suiting and were

discriminated against in the mainstream society because of their outward

appearance. Ghost in the novel symbolically hints at that time period in the

history of U.S. The zoot suit ghost helps the author document the forgotten

aspect of U.S. history through a peripheral narrative. Analysis of Morrison's

fictional works depicts that the author was mindful of history and realistically

portrays the history and traumas of her race. The selected fictional works of Toni

Morrison bear witness to the communal trauma of African Americans and in

return give access to the traumatic historical experiences that resist

representation in ordinary language. These fictional works seem to be instigated

by the traumatic socio-historical milieu of the author.

4.2 History, Memory, and Trauma in Shahnaz Bashir's Selected Fiction

Historical trauma and embeddedness of its memory in the fictional works is also

a central feature of Shahnaz Bashir's selected fictional works. The troubled historical

legacy of Kashmiris has prompted many fiction writers to incorporate their communal traumas into their works. The troubled history of the Kashmir valley dates centuries back but the most recent incident that shook the whole nation and continued the unrest in the society started in 1947 after the Partition of the Indian Subcontinent into two separate nations of India and Pakistan. The two postcolonial states gained independence with the departure of the British but the issue of Kashmir remained unresolved. The history of the valley demonstrates that the root cause of this dispute was the "instrument of accession" (Hanif and Ullah 1). Due to ethnic and religious allegiance the Muslim majority of Kashmir wanted to align with Pakistan but the accession of the valley to India by the Maharaja complicated the situation. The 1948 war between India and Pakistan was triggered because of this reason. When the dispute was taken to the United Nations, it urged both countries to resolve the dispute through a plebiscite. However, the plebiscite was never held, and the valley of Kashmir still remains a territory of dispute between the two countries. Kashmiris have been demanding freedom since 1947 but the freedom movement in the valley became radical during the late 1980s and 1990s. These were the years Shahnaz Bashir witnessed bloodshed and political unrest in his native land. He has fictionalized the same time period in his literary works.

In the face of such violence, bloodshed, brutality, and death, literature of the related region has an effective role to play. Kaul is of the view that contemporary literary authors belonging to Kashmir are writing with sensitivity and responsibility. The literature produced in the valley is not mere propaganda literature; rather, it voices the traumatic experiences of Kashmiris with a particular stress on the human and experiential relations. Shahnaz Bashir's novel *The Half Mother* is one such work. Bashir is a

Kashmiri author who has spent all his life in the Kashmir valley. He himself witnessed the turbulent 1990s in the valley. His debut novel *The Half Mother* is thus set in the 1990s Kashmir. The novel addresses the grave issue of involuntary disappearances of young men in the valley. The novel is about an ordinary Kashmiri woman, Haleema. Her life story serves as the author's mouthpiece who documents the miseries and misfortunes of the Kashmiris residing in the turmoil-ridden valley. The text captures the agony of a mother who becomes a half mother only because of the suppressed and marginalized condition of her community. Haleema, like many mothers of her community, lost her son in an Indian Army raid. During the 1990s, "enforced disappearances became a means for staging and implementing the Indian military's hold over Kashmir" (Zia 10). Haleema's son was abducted because of wrong information conveyed to the Indian Army in which his name was confused with that of a militant.

The narrative starts with the protagonist Haleema's childhood. She spends a miserable childhood, as her father does not have a consistent job, however, her family assumes that she will have a comfortable life once she gets married. But this hope does not come true because her marriage only lasts for three months. She breaks away from her husband after learning that he had an extra marital affair with a nurse. The only happy memory that she has of this marriage is her son Imran whom she raises as a single mother. But her happiness does not last long. Like many Kashmiri mothers of her time, Haleema also lives under constant fear of losing her son. Though the author describes Haleema's life as a content mother for some time, but this does not last long. Bashir describes that the Indian army stationed in the district is attacked by Mujahedeen (armed rebels) and as a reaction the army exercises its power against the local civilians. During

an army raid, Haleema's father is killed and her son Imran is abducted by the Indian army. She is doubly traumatized by this incident as she has to grieve for her dead father (who is killed by the Indian Army during the raid) and also search for her son. She struggles to find her son at every army camp, but she never finds him. The trauma of a Kashmiri mother as portrayed by Bashir reflects the destitution endured by many Kashmiri mothers. The text narrates not just a single story of one mother but every mother in Kashmir who live in uncertain conditions and are not sure what is going to happen the next day. Bashir portrays the epitome of the devalued Kashmiri community, where a mother not only suffers from trauma caused by her son's disappearance but also in the form of daily, grinding oppression at the hands of the Indian Armed forces.

Haleema is a traumatized Kashmiri woman who first loses her father and then her son. Narrating the incident of Haleema's father's death to the BBC representative, Izhar, Haleema says, "That day was like doom's day for me. That day was a Karbala. That day…" (*The Half Mother* 75). These words of the protagonist demonstrate her mental condition of trauma. The metaphor of Karbala displays her agony. A serving Indian Army officer, Major Aman Lal Kushwaha kills her father because the army was attacked by the militants, and they were searching the whole area. Bashir describes:

> The next morning, a patrolling party led by a Major Aman Lal Kushwaha began
> to search the houses. Almost all the men in the neighbourhood received their
> share of beating in turns. The army was still angry over the attack. From their
> room upstairs, the Joo family furtively looked at the beatings. Haleema rubbed her
> hands together in fear, while Ab Jan's face darkened. As the troops came closer to

their house, he became jittery with anger and fear. Imran's mouth was dry with

fear. (*The Half Mother* 47)

Bashir describes the whole scene in detail when the army reaches the locality, all the

male members are called out. This fictional incident reflects numerous similar incidents

that are "distorted, denied or buried by the Indian state and its many agencies" (Batool et

al. 14). Javeed Raina in his article "Half Mother A Memoir of Misery, Misfortune and

Trauma" notes: "Shahnaz Bashir not only succeeded in bringing the Kashmir catastrophe

to the forefront, but also aptly rooted Haleema's fateful tale and intermingled it in the

socio-cultural milieu of nineties to vividly picture the pains and pangs of the people" (4).

The first chapter of Bashir's novel is titled: "A Reverie in Retrospect". The title

indicates the place of memory in the life of the protagonist. Introducing Haleema, the

author declares, "bit and pieces of memories randomly refracted through her reverie"

(*The Half Mother* 3). Narrating the incident of Imran's abduction, Bashir writes: "After

Imran had been taken away, she had fallen to the ground and helplessly looked up at the

sky. Her hair had fallen loose about her face, as if it had been pulled in a fight. She had

continued staring at the inky sky, searching for God and howling with helplessness…

Haleema hated the moon since then—it was a reminder of her loss, nothing else" (*The

Half Mother* 3). The repetition of the word "helplessness" emphasizes the trauma of the

mother. Through Haleema's story, Bashir is not only relating the story of a single mother

but he also refers to similar incidents in his novel that allude to the actual history of the

troubled land of Kashmir.

In chapter six of the novel titled "The First Attack", Bashir narrates the incident of the first attack on the Indian Army convoy by the mujahedeen in Natipora, Srinagar district. The attack is significant because it is the first of its kind in the locality. Bashir notes: "And then, suddenly, gunfire tore the still air. Two insurgents attacked the contingent from two alleys—the first attack on the army in Natipora" (*The Half Mother* 43). Although the attack was sudden, but the reaction of the locals was quick. Bashir shows how Haleema's father leaves his shop unlocked and quickly goes back home, while locking the door from the outside, so that the army men may think the residents were not home: "Ab Jaan heard the gunfire and rolled down the shutter of his *waan*. He did not even lock it. The only safe way home was through a backstreet. He slunk through the lane and managed to reach home, desperately locking the wooden gate from the outside; then he clambered over the compound wall and jumped into his lawn" (*The Half Mother* 44). But as the Indian Army men reach their house and knock at the door, Ab Jaan is terrified: "Outside a trooper grumbled and rapped hard on the door with his rifle butt. Ab Jaan abruptly wetted his pyjamas. Warm urine trickled down his legs and he fainted and fell down" (*The Half Mother* 45). Bashir explains the whole scenario after the incident by telling the condition of the common people who are either forced to flee their hometown or face the brutality of the Indian army for an act that they were not responsible for. The locals of Natipora had to face the Indian Army's wrath now. People were abducted, sieged, imprisoned, and killed in the whole region. Bashir writes:

> After the incident, most people abandoned their houses and ran off to the
> neighborhoods. Those trapped in their homes or those who couldn't flee would face
> the consequences of staying behind. The angry troops began to indiscriminately

beat those trapped inside their homes. They sprinkled gunpowder over the shops

and houses on either side of the road and set them on fire. (*The Half Mother* 44)

Shahnaz Bashir iterates the same situation in his essay "A Crackdown in Natipora". This

essay was anthologized in *Of Occupation and Resistance- Writings from Kashmir.* Bashir

describes the situation of an Army crackdown in Natipora in the essay: "The voice of the

announcer … befuddling … made everyone groggily ask each other certain things:

Where were the men going to be assembled for the identification parade? What was the

cut-off age of boys to stay back with women at home" (36).

The novel *The Half Mother* portrays the condition of the Kashmiris during the

1990s. Although the narrative centers on Haleema, the protagonist's life, but it actually

narrates the conflict and the war the region faced during the 1990s. Haleema's terrible

life sheds light on the lives of many Kashmiri families that collapsed; mothers and wives

who lost their sons; husbands and young men who were abducted; and old people who

were tortured. Indeed, like Morrison draws on Margaret Garner's story to create the

character of Sethe, Bashir also bases his story of Haleema on the actual story of a

Kashmiri mother Parveena. Parveena was the founding member of The Association of

Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP), Kashmir. APDP's emergence has a painful

story of a mother, Parveena Ahangar, lovingly called *jiji,* losing her young son. This

brave woman changed her "traumatic experience of state violence into a gendered

resistance against that violence" (Osuri 10). Parveena did not give in when she lost her

son; she kept on looking for him with the hope of finding him one day. But even when

she was unable to locate him, she did not submit to the state's violence. She continued

resisting and working along other parents of missing persons.

Bashir's fictional story seems inspired from this actual story of Parveena that symbolically narrates the collective trauma of the Kashmiris and indicates that it is not Haleema/ Parveena alone who is facing this trauma. In the text Bashir, narrates Haleema's trauma and explains how she feels helpless looking for her son alone and wants to join hands with thousands of other parents who have also lost their children like her. While talking to other parents whose children have disappeared, Haleema says: "it is getting murkier every day. It is getting difficult to fight individually like this…' she told them. Her hands were joined in her lap. 'But it is also difficult to fight collectively without being formally together. You know what I mean?'" (*The Half Mother* 140). Like the real-life Parveena, Haleema also ends up making an organization for the parents of the missing people. In being a fictional representation of Parveena's life, Bashir's text represents the historical trauma of the Kashmiri people.

Like Bashir's novel *The Half Mother*, his short story collection *Scattered Souls* is also set in the 1990s Kashmir to capture and portray the agony and trauma of the Kashmiris. This decade is crucial in the history of the valley because the armed conflict and resistance commenced during this time. Ever since "the Kashmiris have lived in fear of gun, whether it is that of militants or the Indian security forces. Their sons, as militants, suspected militants or sympathizers, have been arrested, tortured, killed or just disappeared" (Schofield 182). The freedom fighters as well as the Indian Army attacked each other and as a result many people were killed: "As the insurgency in the valley gained momentum, the acts of sabotage increased in frequency and intensity. The police and security forces reacted violently, often at the expense of innocent civilians who were caught in the crossfire" (Schofield 160). In the short story, "A Woman Who Was Her

Own Husband," Bashir notes: "Lately Srinagar had grown intensely turbulent. Day in and day out there were curfews, shutdowns and crossfires between the troops and the insurgents" (*Scattered Souls* 68).

Like *The Half Mother*, *Scattered Souls* also articulates the pain, agony, and trauma of the Kashmiris. The short story collection is full of stories that an ordinary Kashmiri can relate to in which a small misunderstanding can cost a person their life. The stories such as "A Woman Who was Her Own Husband" highlight the uncertain condition of the lives of Kashmiris, where a husband leaves his house but never returns back. The stories narrate the bizarre and shocking account of human subordination. The author narrates stories where women are gangraped; young men are abducted and killed; houses are searched; and people are tortured without any valid reason. These narratives present the actual account of the marginalization and oppression of the Kashmiris. They are experiencing brutal savagery and the human massacre at the hands of Indian Army in a tempestuous and deadly atmosphere of military oppression.

Bashir makes extensive use of memory in his fictional works. In the short story "A Woman Who was Her Own Husband", even the narrator, a grocery store owner, is traumatized while narrating the story of Ayesha, the protagonist, who loses her husband, Tariq, because of a blind bullet of the Indian Army. After Tariq's death when the narrator goes to Tariq's family home to condole and pray for the departed soul, he constantly thinks about the time both Ayesha and Tariq spent together as exemplary spouses.

> Early next morning, I made another long journey to pay a visit to Tariq's
> bereaved family. All the way, in my mind, I turned over a load of many memories

of Tariq and Ayesha. This time I could see Ayesha closely, yet I couldn't dare say

a word of consolation. She looked normal as usual, but completely silent. I could

only put my hand on her head and she didn't even glance at me. Tariq's mother

was still grumbling tearlessly and the wound on her head was now an angry clot.

A sing-song dirge continuously resonated in the house full of mourners. A hall

was packed with Tariq's friends and colleagues from the bank. Later that

afternoon, my wife and I returned to Srinagar, not speaking a word but heaving

deep sighs all the way. (*Scattered Souls* 70)

Bashir vividly describes the trauma of Tariq's family and wife and how his neighbors

also becomes part of that lamentation. This sharing of the grief of others symbolically

represents the Kashmiri community's collective acknowledgment and understanding of

the trauma of the victims.

In this collection of short stories, the author creates life like characters of

Kashmiri men and women. During the predominant setting of this fictional work i.e., the

1990s when the life of the residents of Kashmir had changed permanently because on the

one hand the Indian Army was trying to quash the armed rebellion and on the other hand

armed rebels were trying to free the land from unjust occupation of the army. This short

story collection comprises of thirteen stories and almost all of these stories are

interconnected to represent this conflict and the resultant trauma of characters. The first

story "The Transistor" is about two brothers residing in the valley during the 1990s. Like

the actual situation in the valley the loyalties of both brothers are divided, as one is on the

side of the Indian Army whereas the other supports the militants. However, the fateful

death of the younger brother who is on the side of the militants documents the dilemma

of Kashmiris. Although Muhammad Yusuf Dar is a proponent of the Kashmir movement, still he is killed by the militants because of a misunderstanding. The second story "The Gravestone" is the story of a father who destroys the epitaph of his son's grave to eliminate the word 'shaheed' because the government has set a condition to become eligible for the compensation of a death that there should be no mention of the word shaheed on the epitaph of the martyred. The story "The Ex-militant" narrates the interview of an ex-militant who talks to a journalist about his life as a freedom fighter— the torturous time he spent in the jail and the stigmatized life he spent outside in the society because of his past. The story "Psychosis" is about Sakeena, the wife of the said ex-militant, Ghulam Mohiuddeen, who disappears, and his wife is raped by the army men. Sakeena becomes pregnant as a result and gives birth to her illegitimate son, Bilal. The story narrates the constant struggle of a mother who has lost her husband and has to raise two children, one of whom is a product of rape. "Theft" narrates the story of Sakeena's daughter Insha who ends up becoming a thief. The next story "A Photo with Barack Obama" is also an interconnected story as it narrates the story of Sakeena's grownup son Biul. The boy ends up as a stone pelter and is equally stigmatized by both the Kashmiris and the Indian Army. Biul expects that Obama's visit to India will change the fate of Kashmiris; however, he is disappointed to learn that Obama only focused on India's cultural and linguistic diversity and did not even mention the Kashmir issue in his speeches. These four stories are linked as they narrate the life of different members of the same family. The peripheral character in one story emerges as the protagonist in the next narrative.

The next story "Oil and Roses" however, is about the suffering of Gul who loses his adopted son Showkat as he is shot dead by the Indian Army while coming back from work. The story "Country- Capital" tells the story of boys who are taken for an all-India tour by the Indian Army. When the boys praise India in a television talk, the school headmaster Manzoor Peer considers them traitors and collaborators. "Shaban Kaak's Death" is a story of an old man of 102 years who aspired for a huge funeral procession on his death, but the day he dies, the valley is under curfew. As a result, Shaban Kaak's funeral procession comprises of only twenty people, most of whom are his close relatives. So much so that his family is unable to find a gravedigger, and his grandsons who are inexperienced in the job have to dig his grave. Due to their inexperience, they have to dig his grave time and again and ultimately they have to bury him in a grave full of water. "The House" is the story of Farooq Mir, a retired government officer who is proud of his house Mir Manzil. The onlookers marvel at his house, and the people of the area aspire to have a house like his, but the arrogance of the owner never allows anyone to enter his home, nor does he entertain any guests. But his life changes altogether after a violent armed conflict between the Indian army's patrolling party and the Mujahedeen near his house. When the firing begins, his wife Zareena runs out to lock the main gate of the house but to her surprise the army has already entered the compound and is firing indiscriminately. She also becomes a victim of a bullet and loses her life. Farooq also receives two bullets and is hospitalized for a long time. This ill-fated incident changes Farooq, and he becomes a different person altogether. He now offers his house to homeless families and becomes a provider to the poor who live in his house free of cost. He becomes an active member of social welfare activities.

The next story "Some Small Things I couldn't Tell You" is a dying father's letter to his son who lives with his grandparents. He tells his sons several things about his deteriorating health and his wife's grief over his worsening situation as a cancer patient. He also mentions his childhood memories and narrates the story of his wife's cousin as well who is an officer in the police department. The story articulates the ambivalence of the narrator who doubts the loyalties of his relative after joining the Indian police. He tells his son that his wife's cousin would have killed him because of a small disagreement. This story narrates the collective trauma of the Kashmiris who doubt their fellowmen who join the Indian forces because these people are then considered conspirers and collaborators. He describes his brother Syed Hishaam ud Deen Naqshbandi as a "killer, a mass murderer" (57). "The Silent Bullet" is Ameen's story, a young religious Kashmiri who is killed by an ariel fire by the Indian Army while he was only witnessing a mass protest outside his home. The last story "The Woman Who Became Her Own Husband" is the story of Tariq and Ayesha who leave their hometown Islamabad because of the volatile situation and shift into a rented apartment in Srinagar. Tariq is killed in a bullet attack while coming back from his office; the incident impacts the wife to such an extent that she starts behaving like her husband. All thirteen stories in the collection explore the psychological effects of the prolonged violence and unrest on the mind of the characters.

Both in the novel and the short story collection, Shahnaz Bashir has documented the tragic history of Kashmiris. Bashir documents the diverse ways in which Kashmiris responded to the altering dynamics of their land in the milieu of the Freedom Movement, not forgetting the suppressive role of the Indian Army. However, the narratives that he

has constructed are not simply about the traumas of individual characters, but they actually represent the historical trauma of a whole community that has struggled against its oppressors for decades. As Caruth notes: "The traumatized carry an impossible history within them" (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 5); through his fictional works, Bashir endeavours to give voice to this history that is also representative of the history of the entire community.

Both Morrison and Bashir portray grieving mothers who are longing for their lost kids. The protagonists Sethe and Haleema fight against all odds in the hope of getting rid of their trauma. Both authors narrate the trauma of a mother losing their child and how they cope with this loss. Both texts are situated geographically and temporally apart yet the trauma of a mother is a bond that prompted this research. One mother lost her child because she herself killed her to save her from slavery; the other mother lost her child because of the troubled political situation in her native land. Both texts share not just the trauma of mothers but also the uncertain condition in which the mother is unsure about the present condition of her child and does not know for sure if the child is dead or alive. Both selected novels start with the confrontation of the protagonists with their traumatic past. In *Beloved*, Sethe supposedly kills her daughter from the fear of slavery whereas, in *The Half Mother,* Haleema's son is abducted by the Indian army. Both mothers i.e. Sethe and Haleema, are grief-stricken and their lives are in a state of disintegration. Both protagonists are shown combating with their belated trauma to reshape their lives. The opening lines of both the novels proclaim the blatant place of trauma in the lives of the protagonists. Though their traumas are not alike because Haleema's trauma stems out of Indian military's oppression whereas Sethe's trauma is caused by the institution of

slavery, both protagonists have however endured atrocious events and suffer predictable psychological harm. Although the authors have quoted incidents of repeated and prolonged abuse, but the effects of a single traumatic event of losing a child are overwhelming for both Sethe and Haleema. Both women suffer the two aspects of trauma—first they experience the traumatic incident and then they endure the eternal wound of the remembrance of the traumatic event.

Indeed, memory plays an important role in all the selected fictional works. Traumatic memory can be described by the conspicuous enigma that while its re-enactment is distressingly literal and detailed, it nonetheless is chiefly unavailable to conscious remembrance and control. The traumatic events return to the conscious of the victim in the form of flashbacks and nightmares. According to Caruth: "The pathology consists … solely in the structure of its experience or reception: the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated *possession* of the one who experiences it. To be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event" (*Explorations in Memory* 4-5). The same happens to the protagonists of both the novels as both Haleema and Sethe are haunted by the memories of their past.

After analyzing the politically conscious fictional works of Toni Morrison and Shahnaz Bashir, a clear relationship can be drawn between memory, history, social oppression and trauma, and their reflection in fictional narratives. Both the selected authors narrativize and critique the marginalization and subjugation of their communities. Works of both the selected authors show a strong awareness that victims of trauma are mentally imprisoned and isolated by their traumatic experience. Both Morrison and Bashir speak about the history that has disappeared from the mainstream historical

discourse. As writers of trauma texts, both Morrison and Bashir "explore the problematics of action in coercive circumstances that seem impossible or unbelievable to outsiders and demonstrate that the standards by which these events can be measured and judged have to extend beyond the fact-based logic of historical inquiry or the myths of humanism" (Vickroy, *Trauma and Survival* 34). The haunting fictional narratives of Morrison and Bashir come from "different geographical, historical, linguistic, cultural and political contexts, but recount the dramatic and traumatic struggles of the characters attempting to reappear in legal and political realms from which they have been banished" (Caruth, *Ashes of History* 7). The traumatized protagonists of Morrison and Bashir (especially Sethe, Frank, Haleema, Cee, and Ayesha) return to unresolved memories in order to process them and overcome trauma. However, the texts demonstrate that these acts cannot be done in isolation and require solidarity on a greater level. This is why both Morrison and Bashir emphasize communal or collective knowledge, solidarity, and resistance. The next chapter will provide a detailed analysis of the selected texts vis-à-vis the representation of the individual and collective trauma in light of the work of Caruth, Vickroy, and Morrissey.

Chapter Five

Individual and Collective Trauma

> From History tears learn a
> slanted understanding of the human
> face torn by blood's bulletin of light.
> — Agha Shahid Ali, "Of Light"

> Moving from silence into speech is for the
> oppressed, the colonized, the exploited, and those who
> stand and struggle side by side, a gesture of defiance that
> heals, that makes new life, and new growth possible. It is
> that act of speech, of "talking back" that is no mere
> gesture of empty words, that is the expression of moving
> from object to subject, that is the liberated voice.
> — bell hooks, *Talking Back*

Understanding the nature of trauma and the relationship of individual trauma to

the collective traumas of African Americans and Kashmiris as depicted in Toni

Morrison's and Shanaz Bashir's selected fictional works is the central concern of this

chapter. The chapter posits that the individual characters of Morrison's and Bashir's

works unveil the traumatic experiences of their communities, so the chapter explores the

representation of African American and Kashmiri collective trauma through the

experiences of the individual characters. First, I will discuss the concepts of individual

and collective trauma with reference to the conceptual framework of this study. Second, I

will outline the conceptual connection between individual and communal traumas.

Finally, I will analyze each selected text separately to see how the individual character's

trauma is related to the collective trauma of their community. The terms collective,

communal, and cultural trauma will be used interchangeably to refer to the group trauma

of African Americans and Kashmiris. The previous chapter explained that the selected

fictional texts are embedded in the history and memory of African American and

Kashmiri communities, and the trauma literature of Morrison and Bashir arises from the corresponding sociocultural conditions. This chapter rationalizes how the individuals living in traumatic culture influence and get influenced by their groups. In other words, the individual's state of mind is affected by the people around him/her and an individual's mental state impacts others in his/her sphere, so "there is no clear distinction between individual and group psychologies" (Morrissey 42). The trauma-hit protagonists of the selected fictional texts indicate individual traumatized minds as well as their connections to the collectives.

Caruth explains that trauma is not only related to a single individual's past but is snarled up with the community at large and may revive when one observes another victim's ordeal. Caruth also transfers the psychoanalytic model of individual trauma to the study of collective trauma. This model retracts the emphasis away from the psychological condition of trauma to a sociological construction of belatedness, which is hypothetically registered with the traumatic event in the first place. For Morrissey, an individual gets impacted by the group and in return affects the group because "every sentiment and act is contagious, and contagious to such a degree that an individual readily sacrifices his personal interests to the collective interests" (43). The same contagiousness can be observed in case of individual and collective traumas. The relevance of individual trauma to the collective trauma is also highlighted through the "relationship between social forces and the individual" by Vickroy (*Reading Trauma* 1). Hence, trauma narratives that document communal neurosis register the emotional and mental responses to a profound hurt, catastrophe, disorder, or devastation on individual as well as collective level.

Jack Saul categorizes collective trauma as "an inevitable consequence of natural and human-caused disaster ... that causes ... shared injuries to a population's social, cultural, and physical ecologies" (10). It is also important to note that individual trauma cannot truly be addressed without addressing community level factors. Sociologist Jeffrey C. Alexander and Neil J. Smeler argue that it is not an event itself that is intrinsically traumatic; rather, the meaning applied by discursive carrier groups shape the perception of the event that qualifies as cultural trauma. In other words, "cultural trauma is not simply the product of initial claims to injury, but is the production of meaning over a period of time" (3). Jeffrey C. Alexander in his book *Trauma: A Social Theory* notes: "the construction of a shared cultural trauma is not automatically guaranteed. The lives lost and pains experienced are individual facts; shared trauma depends on collective processes of cultural interpretation" (75). The shared experiences of trauma cause long-lasting psychological impacts on individuals and create histories of trauma.

Collective trauma can be caused due to a catastrophic incident that destroys the basic fabric of a society. In trauma-hit societies, individuals do not only experience a loss of lives, but they also lose their sense of community as a result. This sense of collective loss that a community experiences, transforms into a "collective memory and culminates into a system of meaning that allows the groups to redefine who they are and where they are going" (Hirschberger 123). Groups and communities redefine their shared culture and identify unifying factors. In trauma-hit societies, individual trauma is linked to collective trauma; the literature portraying such communities also presents characters whose trauma is related to the group. Such characters help explicate the communal trauma of the entire

society, but at the same time the society to which the trauma survivor belongs plays a huge role in the coping and healing phase as well.

Comprehension and resolution of trauma is necessary at all levels; otherwise, traumatic memories damage the individual psyche. However, "collective trauma has further destructive consequences in that it breaks the attachment of social life, degrades the sense of community, and dominates the mood and interaction of the group" (Erikson 460-61). Trauma theorists agree that "traumatic experience can inspire not only a loss of self-confidence, but also a loss of confidence in the social and cultural structures that are supposed to create order and safety" (Langer 201-204). Social environment of the author plays a significant role in the experience of trauma because it "influences the causes and outcomes of traumatic experience in a variety of ways. It forms the circumstances out of which trauma is created, but it can also provide, or decline, needed support for healing" (Vickroy, *Trauma and Survival* 3). Hence, the traumatic cultures can create two types of responses in which the community can either experience disintegration or unity and compassion. The traumatic experiences are important because "[f]or both victims and perpetrators, deriving meaning from trauma is an ongoing process that is continuously negotiated within groups and between groups; it is responsible for debates over memory, but also holds the promise of providing a basis for intergroup understanding" (Hirschberger 123). The intergroup relations can either deteriorate or flourish due to collective trauma because either the individuals belonging to a group develop empathy or they lose a sense of community as a result of traumatic experience.

Morrison and Bashir picture trauma with its psychological effects on the individuals as well as the whole African American and Kashmiri communities. The

fictional characters of the selected texts demonstrate how trauma may be collectively

experienced. Collective or cultural trauma can be explained as a trauma that "relates to

situations or experiences that individuals experience together, either as a collective or

social group" (Figley 675). This group experience can affect the psyche of an individual

for many years. Likewise, the traumatic experience impacts the group in one form or

another; indeed, the "residual effect" of the trauma is likely to be passed on to many

generations who continue to experience "an innate sense of trauma" despite not being

direct victims of it (Figley 675). Collective trauma can be caused due to discrimination

on the basis of religion, culture, or race, which results in the oppression of the minorities.

Literary authors belonging to such trauma-hit communities document this trauma in their

fictional works. According to Tal, "literature of trauma is written from the need to tell

and retell the story of the traumatic experience, to make it 'real' both to the victim and to

the community" (21). Trauma narratives trace both the individual as well as the collective

traumas and make them comprehendible.

5.1 Individual and Collective Trauma in *Beloved* and *Home*

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) tells the story of an ex-slave woman Sethe;

however, this personal story also sheds light on cultural and communal issues. Sethe's

story gives insights into slavery, the slave system in the South, and the horrors of the

Trans-Atlantic slave trade. *Beloved* is a classical trauma text that documents the effects of

racial trauma on the individual as well as the collective psyche. Sethe's experience is

representative of many similar women slaves of her time. She experiences a series of

events that are harmful or life-threatening for her as well as for her family, and these

events leave long-lasting impact on her psyche, resultantly Morrison portrays her as a

neurotic character. The traumatic experiences of Sethe's life are not only an individual ordeal, but they have larger communal implications. Morrison narrates Sethe's life inside and outside the Sweet Home to demonstrate how slavery had a long-lasting impact on the psyche of African Americans that shattered the basic social fabric of the whole community.

Sethe's story reveals African Americans' collective trauma. This racial trauma has had long-term impacts on the psyche of African Americans as it does not only constitute the collective memory but also allows the people to redefine who they are. Racial trauma experienced by blacks still lingers on the psyche of the individuals because they continue to experience marginalization in the U.S. As Vickroy argues: "the psychological consequences of oppression are passed on to children, legacies of trauma become occasions of repetitions of dominations" (*Trauma and Survival* 37). Gilad Hirschberger, in the article "Collective Trauma and the Social Construction of Meaning" suggests:

> For victims, the memory of trauma may be adaptive for group survival, but also elevates existential threat, which prompts a search for meaning, and the construction of a *trans*-generational collective self. For perpetrators, the memory of trauma poses a threat to collective identity that may be addressed by denying history, minimizing culpability for wrongdoing, transforming the memory of the event, closing the door of history, or accepting responsibility. (1441)

Hence, deriving meaning from trauma is an ongoing process for both the victim and the perpetrator. Traumatic experiences can continue to impact coming generations of the

survivors. Collective trauma of African Americans is a psychological reaction to a traumatic experience of slavery that affects an entire community. Morrison as an author belonging to a trauma-hit community is impacted by these incidents, and her literary works reflect these circumstances. In *Beloved,* Morrison portrays Sethe's individual sufferings "against the background of the community's historical sufferings" (Rico 20) to demonstrate how individual's trauma is connected to the community.

Morrison conceptualizes the collective traumatic memory in the story of Sethe who escapes from the plantation along with her children. When the overseer hunts her down, she tries to kill all her children rather than allowing them to go back to the *Sweet Home.* She manages to kill one daughter, Beloved. Later on, explaining her stance, she explicates that her love for her children compelled her to kill them because she did not want them to experience the same trauma she had encountered at the plantation. Through Sethe's story, Morrison depicts the traumatic circumstances that impacted the individual as well as the collective psyches of African Americans. Sethe's traumatic neurosis connects collective trauma of slavery to the contemporary African American readers as well. Morrison reimagines the traumatic history of African Americans and uses her fictional work as a means of the transmission of the intergenerational trauma. Morrison's fictional characters are "possessed by history" and this possession proves to be a way of "inscribing trauma" (Matus 30). Sethe's story bears testimony to the psychological traumas of slavery and the horrors faced by African Americans trying to escape the brutal institution.

Sethe and Beloved's mother-daughter relationship symbolically represents millions of African American parents and children who lost their loved ones. Sethe as a

mother should have been the protector and savior of her daughter but she becomes a perpetrator for her own children. Sethe is not an ordinary mother who has a normal relationship with her children or her past. Like most of the characters in the story, she is in a difficult relationship with the past; while she wants to pronounce her trauma and get rid of it but the words somehow do not seem to capture the incidents. As Sethe explains to Denver: "If a house burns down, it's gone, but the place—the picture of it stays—not just in my memory, but, out there in the world. What I remember is a picture floating around there outside my head ... what I saw, did or know, is still there ... right in the place where it occurred" (*Beloved* 36). So, the trauma of a tragic event can be felt in all its intensity using all the senses but the victim cannot pronounce it in words. In *Beloved*, we see the psychological effect of the personal and collective trauma of slavery that can be experienced by both the narrator and the reader but the victim cannot explain or even comprehend it at the time of happening. All the characters are haunted by the ghosts of their past; their bodies are emancipated but their minds still carry the burden of traumatic memories from the past.

Collective trauma and its relevance to the individual within a society is the central idea of most of Morrison's texts. In the other novel selected for this study, i.e. *Home,* Morrison represents the communal as well as the personal trauma of African Americans through the characters of Frank and his sister Cee. Both the siblings represent the individual traumas of African Americans in the critical times of the 1950s. While recreating the individual and collective catastrophes of African Americans, the text also substantiates Caruth's observation regarding trauma as a symptom of history and an alternative record of the past. Caruth contends that trauma is a "symptom of history,"

since the traumatized carry the history or themselves become "the symptom of a history that they cannot entirely possess" (*Psychoanalysis* 4). The novel starts at a point where Frank Money, is hospitalized and is trying to cope with his trauma after returning from the Korean War. *Home* "embodies the vexed issue of history and the myriad ways of remembering the past without being consumed by its often destructive physical, emotional, and spiritual aftermath" (Montgomery 320-321). The twenty-four-year-old Frank Money is a Korean War veteran. The text is set in the 1950s and reveals the torments of African Americans through the lives of the protagonist and his sister.

According to Vickroy, "[t]raumatized war veterans are emblematic of personal and collective losses associated with one of the most devastating twentieth-century wars, bringing with it important shifts in cultural attitudes about war, war trauma, gender, class, and reliability of authority figures" (*Trauma and Survival* 192). Frank Money's traumatic experiences as an adult during the Korean War and his childhood traumatic experiences in Lotus validate Vickroy's assertion that traumatic experiences interrupt an individual's normal life, no matter where he/she is. Frank Money is traumatized because of many reasons, including his inability to save his friends' lives and his own role in the deaths of other people. He is especially haunted by the vision in which he kills an unnamed young Korean girl. The third person narrator explains the incident in these words:

> She smiles, reaches for the soldier's crotch, touches it. It surprises him. Yum-
> yum! As soon as I look away from her hand to her face, see the two missing teeth,
> the fall of black hair above eager eyes, he blows her away. Only the hand remains
> in the trash, clutching its treasure, a spotted, rotting orange. (*Home* 95)

These flashbacks from the war bring forward the individual trauma of Frank but at the same time document significant realities of African Americans. The African American war veterans who got disillusioned when they reached back home are fictionalized through Frank's character. Morrison's novel substantiates Caruthean observation that the trauma text becomes an alternative mode of representing history (*Ashes of History* 4). As an author of trauma narrative, she excavates forgotten and marginalized historical narratives and projects them from the peripheral vantage point.

In the novel Frank and Cee suffer from trauma of dehumanization and discrimination. Cee's trauma is initiated by dehumanization and physical abuse whereas Frank's trauma is the result of discrimination and exclusion. Frank is "haunted by a troubled past" and "is intent on rescuing his younger sister from maniacal doctor" (Montgomery 320). Cee's character has many similarities with Pecola from *The Bluest Eye* (1970) because she is also a victim of self-loathing and racial discrimination. In *Home*, both the sibling experience the traumas right from their childhood but at the same time some of their traumas are unwittingly transmitted from one generation to the next. Frank is reminded of his childhood traumas in which he was subjected to terror because of his race and he along with his extended family suffered.

During the course of the narrative, the protagonist Frank Money describes the story of his life to his unnamed scribe, and while narrating this life history he "uncovers the layers of hurt that are wrapped around a central devastating traumatic experience" (Dahmani and Sibouekaz 16). Frank's traumas are multiple; he is not only suffering from trauma of racial exclusion but also that of guilt and shame. Morrison narrates Frank's

childhood trauma of witnessing the burial of a lynching victim's dismembered black body:

> When she saw that black foot with its creamy pink and mud-streaked sole being whacked into the grave, her whole body began to shake. I hugged her shoulders tight and tried to pull her trembling into my own bones because, as a brother four years older, I thought I could handle it. (*Home* 4)

Frank is introduced as a trauma-hit character struggling against PTSD in a mental hospital. He continues his narration to an attentive listener in the struggle to cope with his trauma and is only able to work through it because of the unnamed attentive listener who is also the second narrator. He is able to cope with his trauma only when he faces the past he had been trying to avoid. On the other hand, Cee copes with her trauma with the help of the women from the town of Lotus who help her come out of her trauma. Her employer, a physician and scientist, Beauregard Scott, sterilizes Cee without her knowledge. This physical experimentation does not only cause physical trauma but also creates long-lasting emotional trauma. The knowledge that she will never be able to bear a child traumatizes Cee. The author demonstrates the role of community in the process of healing and coping with individual traumas as a sagacious elderly woman warns Cee: "Misery don't call ahead. That's why you have to stay awake—otherwise it just walks on in your door" (*Home* 122).

Through the characters of Frank and Cee, Morrison "acknowledges the brutal realities of prejudice and injustice in America" (Onega et. Al. 305). The traumatic memories of the sibling protagonists can be taken as collective memory of the African

American past. Morrison presents Cee as Frank's "alter ego or second self, and their conjoined relationship serves as a locus for understanding the novel's concern with collective and personal recovery" (Montgomery 323). Frank tells the narrator that his sister Cee "was the first person I ever took responsibility for. Down deep inside her lived my secret picture of myself—a strong good me tied to the memory of those horses and the burial of a stranger" (*Home* 194). Morrison places the "historical accounts in conversation with individual testimonies in order to explore the relationship between collective and personal perspectives" (Vickroy, *Trauma and Narrative* 175). Frank and Cee are not just individual characters but represent "communal assembly of traumatized subjects" (Montgomery 324). In *Home*, Morrison indicates that "while individual redemption of past traumatic experiences is always possible, it is much more difficult to bring to an end or closure the kind of effects deriving from cultural and collective oppression" (Onega et al. 307). Morrison highlights the individual and collective pain through the impact of horrific incidents on the psyche of the people.

Home explores the conflict between the individual and the society. She shows how the individual who defies social pressures can forge a self by drawing on the resources of the natural world, on a sense of continuity within the family and within the history of a people, and on dreams and other unaccountable sources of psychic power. The central theme of the text is the individual traumas of protagonist siblings that throw light on the cultural and racial past of African Americans. The novel demonstrates the racial trauma of blacks at many levels, where they were discriminated on the basis of their physical appearance. The concept of racial beauty in the text is not just individual trauma of Cee, but it symbolically represents the collective trauma of the African

Americans. Collective traumas can be degenerative and deteriorate the psyche of the individual, but sometimes communal traumas reinforce group identity by improving the communal support system. In case of Cee, African American society, especially women of Lotus prove to be a source of comfort and help her cope with her trauma. She resolves her trauma with the help of the people round her.

5.2 Individual and Collective Trauma in *The Half Mother* and *Scattered Souls*

Like Morrison, Shahnaz Bashir also reimagines and reconstructs the individual as well as collective traumas of Kashmiris. Morrison did not witness slavery herself and writes on behalf of her community, but Bashir is a Kashmiri author who has spent all his life in the Kashmir valley. He himself witnessed the turbulent 1990s in the valley and reconstructs his native land in his fictional works. In the novel *The Half Mother* (2014), Bashir voices the collective trauma of his community and addresses the grave issue of involuntary disappearances of young men in the valley. The narrative starts with the protagonist Haleema's childhood and moves on to relate her traumas one after another; from a deprived childhood to the loss of her father, the tragic end of her marriage; and the loss of her only son, Imran. Imran is abducted by the Indian Army and is a case of enforced disappearance. The trauma of Haleema is symbolic of the traumas of many Kashmiri mothers whose sons are abducted by the Indian Army; hence, the individual trauma is representative of the collective trauma.

Bashir recreates the traumatic voices of thousands of half mothers residing in KAshmir. Through his fictional works, Bashir highlights the problems of his community that is resisting the Indian Occupation of their land and resources since decades. Haleema's fictional story is based on the actual story of Parveena, a Kashmiri mother

who lost her son. Shubh Mathur in his *Ethnography, The Human Toll of the Kashmir Conflict: Grief and Courage in a South Asian Borderland* quotes Parveena: "I went to the villages, to the forests, to the mountains, to find each one who has a sorrow like mine" (69). Books written on the life history of Parveena show strong parallels between her trauma and that of Haleema, which in turn is representative of collective Kashmiri trauma:

> Parveena was still hopeful: 'My son is innocent, 'he will be released.' She began looking for him, from police station to police station, army cantonments, to hospitals, to morgues. Days to weeks to months passed as she traversed through a network of detention centres, places where people were tortured. She contacted people who might have access to the Indian military establishment, met officials, members of Indian parliament, and the Jammu & Kashmir legislature. She did not find Javaid anywhere, but she managed to gather some information about him. (Osurie10)

It seems as if Bashir has utilized the details of Parveena's sufferings to narrate the trauma of Haleema. The only hope Haleema had of knowing the whereabouts of her son was through Major Aman Lal Kushwaha, an Indian Army Officer who had killed her father and abducted her son, Imran, but as she comes to know that he was also killed in an attack, she loses all hope:

> She didn't even know that she had begun to weep, and everyone she passed by was awfully staring at her. Imu is not alive, her heart was telling her…. I have to keep hoping, she murmured to herself minutes later. I cannot be defeated like this.

I cannot lose him like this. She wiped her tears, corrected her doppatta and pulled herself together. I have to go home and keep waiting. Yes. That is the only thing I have to do. (154)

Haleema's story sheds light on many similar stories of the disappeared Kashmiris during the 1990s. Bashir's narrative adds to the ongoing discourse related to trauma associated with involuntary disappearances. The collective trauma of the Kashmiris is related to prolonged ongoing brutalities against their community. The essence of collective trauma comes from the feeling that the members of a community share similar traumatic experiences, and this very feeling of similarity of experience creates collective trauma. Bashir illustrates a similar situation in his short story collection *Scattered Souls.*

Scattered Souls depicts realistic characters of Kashmiri men and women. The predominant setting of this fictional work is the troubled Kashmir valley during the 1990s when the valley was marred by unrest due to the Freedom movement. The life of the residents of Kashmir was stuck between the atrocities of the Indian Army and the threats of the armed rebels. This short story collection comprises of thirteen stories and almost all of these stories are interconnected to show the individual and collective trauma of Kashmiris. One of the short stories, "Psychosis" narrates a story where a wife has lost her husband. This collective experience of "half mothers" and "half widows" reinforces the cultural trauma of Kashmiris.

Bashir has incorporated factual details in his short story collection as well. For instance, "The Transistor" tells the story of Muhammad Yousaf Dar and Abdul Rehamn Dar, two brothers who in a way symbolically represent the bifurcated Kashmiri society;

half of which is on the side of the Indian Army while the other half is aligned with the

freedom fighters to achieve a separate independent homeland. Muhammad Yousaf Dar is

a farmer whereas Abdul Rehman Dar is a mainstream Kashmiri politician. As the story

progresses, the reader comes to know about the ideological differences between the two

brothers who apparently live together in their ancestral house in Daddgaam. This story is

highly symbolic of the current situation in Indian Occupied Kashmir, where the

population is divided between their love for freedom or peace. The narrator makes it clear

right at the beginning that Yousaf has a soft corner for freedom fighters but Abdul

Rehman despises them and considers them militants who are disrupting the peaceful

environment of the valley. When the resistance movement got momentum during the

1990s, people like Abdul Rehman Dar who were loyal to the Indian government felt

threatened. Explaining his condition, Bashir notes: "The insurgents were punishing those

disloyal to the freedom movement. Consequently, Rehman gathered his family and

migrated to Delhi, hoping to return during a respite in the troubles" (1). This

displacement and trauma of Rehman's family not only represents one single family's

dilemma but articulates the collective trauma of all the Kashmiris aligned with the Indian

government/army. On the contrary, the younger brother, Muhammad Yousaf Dar, in in

favour of the independence movement led by the jihadists. Bashir notes his conduct:

> aggressively thrusting up his hand in response to the slogans of freedom …
>
> fiercely thundering out the word Azaadi ... smoking cigarettes and cracking jokes
>
> with insurgents … marching besides them in processions … hiding them in his
>
> attic during the crackdowns … helping them transport their weapons under his
>
> pheran … risking himself by shielding them during Army raids on the village. (1)

This shows the dilemma and the divided sentiments of the Kashmiri people towards the freedom movement. Both the siblings symbolically represent the ideological differences within the Kashmiri community; while the elder brother has an anti-freedom-movement stance, the younger brother is on the side of the Mujahedeen (the freedom fighters). Muhammad Yousuf Dar distrusts the national news broadcast on the local medias so he uses his transistor to listen to international news i.e. BBC, but the placement of his transistor in his apple garden was mistakenly presumed to be a gadget to contact the Indian Army. As soon as the local people notice his transistor, the rumor spreads that he was Indian Army's spy. Although Muhammad Yousaf Dar is on the side of the mujahideen and helps them as well, but still a small rumor in the community results in an irreparable loss for his family. Yousaf's elder brother sends him a transistor from New Delhi to listen to news, as is a ritual in Kashmir, he installs the transistor on a tall tree in his orchard. One of the villagers sees him fixing the transistor on the tree and assumes this is a tool he is using to report against the mujahideen. He goes to the Juma prayer and tells it to everybody, and this gossip becomes talk of the town. The imam masjid assuming this rumor to be true indirectly condemns the conspirator for helping the Indian Army. Bashir notes:

> Molvi Ali Muhammad Shah announced: 'We have learnt that some unethical persons in our Daddgam have been spying on the village. And they have been exchanging information regarding the resistance movement with the government forces through wireless sets. And yes, you heard it right: wireless sets. They have become informers and are betraying the great cause of freedom and Islam. And this announcement must serve as their last warning. (5)

Despite his sincere loyalties to the freedom movement and mujahedeen, Muhammad Yousaf is doubted by his own people and even killed at the end. Although Bashir never mentions that the killers are mujahedeen, but a careful reader can infer the identity of the perpetrators. After a few days of the rumor, Yousaf was with his family in the kitchen listening to the BBC bulletin at 8:30 pm when he had a loud knock on the door. He thought and told his wife Naseema, it must be Army as they are angry with him since he has been struggling with them to not to encroach on his brother's side of orchid:

> With his daring heart and shivering body, the transistor in his right hand—
> booming BBC—and a candle stub in the left, he went over to open the door.
> Yousaf placed the candle on the top of the banister post opposite the main door
> and pulled down the bolt. In the dim candlelight, he saw three men. And before he
> could ask them who they were and what they wanted, they cocked their guns.
> With each bullet pumped into him, all his great memories of loyalty to the
> revolution flashed through his mind. (5).

"The Transistor" is not only the story of two brothers residing in the valley during the 1990s but all Kashmiri men who have to choose between one or another ideological positions. Like the actual situation in the valley, the loyalties of both brothers are divided, as one is on the side of the Indian Army whereas the other supports the militants. However, the fateful death of the younger brother who is on the side of the militants documents the dilemma of Kashmiris. The story of Muhammad Yousuf describes the fate of so many Kashmiris who suffer from this social stigma only on the basis of misunderstandings.

This tragic fate of an innocent Kashmiri verbalizes collective grief. Similarly, Biul the character of the short story, "A Photo with Barack Obama" is traumatized because he faces constant humiliation from his society. According to Laura S. Brown, "therapeutic parameters have tended to minimize the effects of constant stress and humiliation" (127). Bashir states: "The first time Biul became indifferent to his social stigma was when a policeman called him *haraamzaada*, bastard, and kicked him. Then Biul was left alone, shivering in the January night on the bare, cold, chipped cement floor of a six-by-six cell in the Batamaloo police station" (*Scattered Souls* 29)*.* Biul's social and cultural environment further aggravates his trauma rather than helping him cope with it: "being a 'bastard'—the social discrimination he faced from his classmates and the neighborhood boys, the extra punishments he endured at school" made it worse for him (*Scattered Souls* 31). Biul is constantly discriminated in his own society, "consequently, a devalued self often emerges from living a socially marginal status, where traumas from poverty, racism, violence, and exploitation are more likely to occur" (Silva 36). It would not be untrue to say that for Biul not only the Indian Army but his own Kashmiri community becomes a perpetrator. His character symbolically represents numerous Kashmiris who were born because of similar circumstances and who lives traumatic lives as explained by Janoff-Bulman:

> Trauma often involves a radical sense of disconnection and isolation as bonds are broken and relationships and personal safety are put into question. Survivors feel, often justifiably, abandoned or alienated.… Trauma, and its concurrent shame, doubt, or guilt, destroys important beliefs: in one's own safety or competence to

act or live in the world, one's perception of the world as meaningful and orderly,

and one's views of oneself as decent, strong, and autonomous. (19)

Being a twelve-year-old child, it is difficult for Biul to cope with trauma as "[c]hildren are particularly vulnerable to abuse because it effects the way they develop, as well as their life coping skills and their future relationships" (Vickroy, *Trauma and Survival* 14). The humiliation and hatred that Biul faces in his society makes him a solitary person who avoids the company of human beings: "He cherished his solitary expeditions; they helped him understand himself and his existence in the world a little better. Helped him come to terms with the guilt of his being and make a bit of sense of the absurdity of his loneliness, and absurdity most difficult to express through language" (*Scattered Souls* 31). As a trauma text, this story depicts "the devastating effects of isolation, the necessity for connection, and the cultural influences on private relations and behavior" (Vickroy, *Trauma and Survival* 23).

Community plays a major role in helping the victim to cope and overcome trauma. Coping mechanism differ from person to person because various aspects of an individual's personality and social environment impact it. The intensity of the incident and the individual's characteristics and experience all determine how someone will cope with trauma. Social supports are essential to survivor's adjustment. Cultural attitudes and practices influence, notions of expected behavior, responses, and even symptoms. It is actually the culture of the victim that determines if the trauma of the victim can be worked through or not. Bilal feels unprotected in his society, and is forced to cope with his trauma in isolation. He is clearly a traumatized child character whose trauma cannot be overcome because he belongs to a conservative Muslim society where even surrogacy

is not accepted as a lawful way of begetting a child let alone being an illegitimate child. Thus, Bilal suffers throughout the course of the narrative and is unable to establish personal or social connections. When as a grown-up, he becomes a stone pelter, Bashir notes his emotions as thus: "He had more reason to fling stones than anyone else, he knew. He felt like stoning his own slander-infested existence, the forever unknown face of that trooper, whichever of the five men it had been, who had raped his mother" (*Scattered Souls* 32). Usually the traumatized victims both adults and children show symptoms of trauma that are different according to their age bracket but "children's symptoms that resemble those of adults include feelings of helplessness, immobilization, thought/ behavioral/ physical dysfunctions, hyper vigilance, and extremes of passivity or over activity" (Pynoos et al. 1059). Bilal seems to have lost interest in life and at times behaves passively:

> But when there were only three months to go before the final-term exams at school, he lost his textbooks. He had spent the day as usual, exploring the fields, and later fording a stream. This was where the disaster happened. His satchel slipped and fell into the stream, floated some distance away and then clung to tough root that leaned over the bank. He retrieved the bag. He didn't worry about the soggy books or the smudged blue ink in his sodden notebooks, the wet pages sticking together. (*Scattered Souls* 31)

Bilal's reaction to the incident demonstrates his lack of interest in his studies and also his environment. His passive reaction is an indicator of his inner trauma and discomfort. He does not seem like an ordinary child, nor is his relationship with his mother normal. He is an illegitimate child who is a social

stigma for his mother so she never forgets to remind him. Bilal never puts his

books out in the sun for drying because of the same reason; he is not

comfortable communicating with his mother and he realizes that she does not

understand his psychological state of mind so he avoids interacting more with

her. Bashir inscribes Biul's dilemma thus: "He figured he would dry them in

the sun and recover some readable text, but he became uneasy about Sakeena's

reaction to the incident. Finding out that he skipped school would upset her

greatly. It would be futile to explain why he did it. She has never truly

understood the things he went through" (31).

It is not just Bilal who faces discrimination and marginalization at the

hands of both the Indians and Kashmiris, but he represents the collective

trauma of many younger in a similar condition. Other stories in the collection

such as "The Ex-militant", "Psychosis", "Thief", "Oil and Roses," "Country-

Capital, Shaban Kaak's Death," "The House," "Some Small Things I couldn't

Tell You," "The Silent Bullet," and "The Woman Who Became Her Own

Husband", also illustrate the relationship between individual and collective

trauma.

After analyzing Morrison and Bashir's fictional characters in detail, it can be said

that national or communal trauma becomes ingrained in collective memories. Haleema

and Sethe unconsciously and repetitively relive their traumatic pasts and represent the

collective traumas of African Americans and Kashmiris. The mother-child relationship in

The Half Mother and *Beloved* provides a locus for deliberating on several sociocultural

facets of trauma. Morrison and Bashir focus on women and children because they are

frequently the most subjugated members of any society. The analysis of these fictional

works demonstrates that the "individualized relational situations reflect the impact of

more generalized social situations but also have the potential to reconfigure them"

(Vickroy, *Trauma and Survival* 5). Usually, the interconnection of individual trauma to

the collective trauma causes long-lasting psychological impacts on the psyches of

individuals as well as groups by resulting in distorted self-images. Both Morrison and

Bashir belong to marginalized communities that have long been subjected to brutal

treatment by the dominant social groups, so the fictional works of these authors serve as a

reproduction of the historical events that reflect the collective trauma of their

communities. These fictional works are not merely replication of the traumatic incidents

but also a reconstruction of the trauma in an attempt to make sense of it because societies

that have experienced dreadful incidents may feel that they have been "marked by it in

their collective consciousness and, as a result, find their memories and future identities

changed in fundamental and irrevocable ways" (Alexandar 1).

African Americans have experienced slavery, racial discrimination,

disenfranchisement, and exclusion in the mainstream American society whereas

Kashmiris have faced war, political oppression, and subjugation, so both the selected

authors' fiction incorporates themes relevant to these overarching circumstances. The

historical traumas of African American and Kashmiri communities have scarred the

individual as well as group psyches in which a "shared sense of grief and disruption may

persist over years or even centuries within the collectivity" (Rico 21). This collective

trauma is instilled with specific characteristics that can be termed as cultural trauma.

Sometimes such traumatic incidents become the point of relevance for the whole

community and rest "at the root of many national collective memories" (Luckhurst 2).

Shahnaz Bashir in his fictional works documents the trauma of his community that he has

witnessed himself, similarly in *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison narrates story of a black girl

whom she met at school, but the story of her novel *Beloved* is linked to the communal

trauma of African Americans that relates to the annals of history. These fictionalized

traumas are part of collective memories of African Americans and Kashmiris and can be

defined as "traumas that paradoxically become the valorized or intensely cathected basis

of identity for an individual or a group rather than events that pose the problematic

question of identity" (LaCapra, *Writing History* 3). Bashir's fictional works deal with

contemporary history, but Morrison fictionalizes the recent as well as the distant past of

African Americans. Keeping in view the socio-historical environment of these trauma

texts, and considering the impact of individual trauma on the collective trauma, the next

chapter analyzes the selected fictional works of Morrison and Bashir as examples of

trauma narratives by pointing out the use of literary devices that the authors employ to

mimic the traumatized psyches of their characters.

Chapter Six

Narrative Representation of Trauma

> Beginning *Beloved* with numerals rather than
> spelled out numbers, it was my intention to give the
> house an identity…the way plantations were named, but
> not with nouns or "proper" names—with numbers
> instead because numbers have … no posture of coziness
> or grandeur.
> — Toni Morrison, *Unspeakable Things Unspoken*

> But who misleads my voice? Who grates
> my voice? Stuffing my throat
> with a thousand bamboo fangs?
> — Aimé Césaire, *Notebook of a Return to the
> Native Land*

> There is no present or future,
> only the past, happening over and over again.
> —Eugene O' Neil, *A Moon for the Misbegotten*

This chapter analyzes how the selected fictional texts of Morrison and Bashir represent

and articulate their characters' experience of trauma through different literary and

aesthetic techniques. It particularly focuses on the manner in which both authors employ

language and literary form to probe the African American and Kashmiri experiences of

violence and dislocation. Both authors use repetitions, flashbacks, hallucinations,

disruptions in time and space to reflect the dissociation, dejection, breaches in memory

and fragmentation of identity. These trauma texts use aesthetic techniques such as time

shifts, flashbacks, repetitions, numbness, hallucinations, nightmares, dissociation of self

and language, re-enactments, non-linear texts, fragmentary narrative, etc. that are

considered characteristic features of trauma fiction. The chapter draws on the theoretical

insights provided by Caruth's and Vickroy's work alongside Morrissey's approach of

"trauma-based literary analysis" and the DSM-V to analyze the representation of trauma

in the selected texts. In what follows, I elaborate on the characteristic techniques of

trauma narratives using the conceptual framework of the study and then analyze all four

selected texts to see how the authors comply or deviate from the conventional aesthetics

of trauma.

Caruth describes trauma as a "response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent

event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return in repeated flash-backs,

nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena" (*Unclaimed Experience* 91). Since trauma

comprises of an overpowering and oppressive experience that the language resists, so the

authors of trauma narrative use specialized techniques to mimic the signs and symptoms

of psychological neurosis. The use of figurative language not only helps literary writers

in imitating the forms and symptoms of trauma but it also helps them go "beyond

presenting trauma as subject matter" and "incorporate the rhythms, processes, and

uncertainties of trauma within the consciousness and structures of these works" (Vickroy,

Trauma and Survival xiv). Similarly, Ted Morrissey in his notion of "trauma-based

literary analysis" identifies particular characteristics of a fictional work that suggest that

the author experienced either personal or communal trauma or both. He claims that the

use of these stylistic traits help the authors represent psychic neurosis and resultantly

gives access to traumatic history. Likewise, American Psychiatrist Association's DSM-V

also explains intrusive phenomena that are associated with the traumatic event and return

in the form of flashbacks, intrusive images, and dissociation of memories, and resultantly

return and replay the traumatic incident (Leys 241). Using these conceptual-

methodological propositions, this chapter analyzes how Morrison and Bashir employ

these techniques in their trauma texts to reproduce the traumatic experience of the victims.

Literary techniques are a fundamental features of trauma texts because "trauma fiction suggests a paradox: a traumatic event or memories about traumatic event haunt an individual but resist representation at the same time" (Whitehead 3). Hence, literary authors use specialized techniques to mimic the multifaceted and extremely varied symptoms of trauma. Each aesthetic technique used in the trauma texts performs a specific function in the narrative, e.g. authors use flashbacks as a specialized technique to inform the reader about the character's past. Flashbacks also work as a psychological symptom of the character's trauma. While experiencing flashbacks, victims of trauma do not experience the traumatic incident as an event of the past; rather, they re-experience it over and again in their present. Another significant technique of trauma narratives is repetition. The repetition of a traumatic incident amalgamates the past and present in the fictional character's life and results in a sort of numbness in which the victim loses their sense of reality or time. In repetitions, the present becomes an "exact replica of the past event in the present time" (Rico 17). Caruth identifies repetition as a fundamental trait of trauma narratives. For her, "the repetition of trauma is the presence of mute, unsymbolized, and unintegretated experiences" that are "sudden and passively endured and relived repeatedly, until a person learns to remember simultaneously the effect and cognition associated with the trauma through access to language" (*Explorations in Memory* 173). Trauma narratives also frequently use dreams and nightmares because the unconscious uses dreams to communicate that which has been repressed by constructing something unrecognizable using material from the outer world. In this way, that which

was too horrific for the waking state to place in memory becomes less horrifying.

Repetitions of language and imagery are also very frequently used in trauma narratives to

reveal the psychological structures of trauma and display its progress from the

unconscious to the conscious mind. Keeping these aesthetic techniques of trauma

narratives in mind, I will analyze the selected fictional works to see how Morrison and

Bashir employ these literary devices to replicate the symptoms of trauma.

6.1 Aesthetics of Trauma in Morrison's Fiction

Morrison's novel *Beloved* (1987) can be called a representative trauma text that

employs most of the aesthetic techniques mentioned above. Morrison narrates the story of

a slave woman whose traumatic historical past persistently haunts her but which resists

verbal description or psychological comprehension. The novel's story, in particular, the

character of the protagonist, is based upon the historical figure of Margaret Garner, a

runaway slave who killed her own daughter. Sethe, the protagonist of *Beloved* is also a

runaway slave who kills her infant daughter. The text revolves around the chronic

traumatic past of Sethe that haunts her throughout the text. Sethe kills her own daughter

to save her from the life of slavery, but it is not easy for either the protagonist or the

reader to reach this conclusion because of the complex structure of the novel.

Once the act of infanticide happens it is never verbally repeated, and Sethe's

conscious mind tries to repress the memory of this traumatic incident, but she is reminded

of it through flashbacks. These flashbacks of the incident replay the traumatic memory

and cause psychological trauma to Sethe. According to Caruth's theorization, the

belatedness of the psychic experience causes trauma in actuality because the past is

essentially traumatic and trauma itself can only be comprehended as inherently past (yet

often influencing the present). The ghost of Sethe's dead daughter resides in the

household and leaves only after Paul D exercises his exorcism, but the ghost later returns

in the body of Beloved. As soon as Beloved enters the house, the reader sees that Sethe's

disturbing past resurfaces.

Morrison uses periodic repetitions in the text to reinforce the trauma of her

protagonist. Repetition of words and images causes intermingling of the past with the

present and makes the plot non-linear. The protagonist of the novel tries to identify the

space and place of origin of her psychosis, but she is unable to do so as she notes: "it's

never going away … and what's more, if you go there---you who never was there---if you

go there and stand in the place where it was, it will happen again" (36). The protagonist is

clearly suffering from PTSD as she can neither specify the time and place of the tragic

event, nor can she tell whether it is over or still in progress. Morrison uses the technique

of repetition to emphasize the trauma of her characters. The narrator repeats "124 was

spiteful" (*Beloved,* 3), "124 was loud" (*Beloved*199), "124 was quiet" (*Beloved* 281).

These are the opening sentences of Book I, Book II, and Book III of the novel. With the

repetition of these three sentences, the reader is given the basic framework of the

development of both the narrative and the trauma. With these three opening lines, the

mood changes in every section of the text. The word "spiteful" displays anger in the

narrative voice; in the second sentence this anger disappears, but the third sentence it

loses voice altogether. This repetition of ordinariness provides an opening for emotion

and sensation to impose itself upon the waking state of the reader. Morrison engages the

reader's own conscious through this mimicking of the process of psychoanalytic theory,

wherein that which is residing in the unconscious reveals itself, first driven through the

primary process and then disguising itself through methods of displacement and condensation. Morrison uses repetition to engage the reader within the effects and the process of trauma.

Repetitions in the text take the victim back to the traumatic incident and make it difficult to get over the traumatic neurosis. Repetition is a characteristic feature of Morrison's trauma fiction. Sethe's trauma continuously reemerges till the end of the narrative, and the story keeps circling back to the traumatic incident. Sethe is suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, and her mind constantly struggles with her past. Her traumatic past never leaves her alone as Morrison explains: "but her brain was not interested in the future. Loaded with the past and hungry for more, it left her no room to imagine, let alone plan for, the next day" (*Beloved* 83). Caruthean theory explains that these traumatic repetitions of the incident are not initiated out of the victim's own will; rather, they act against the victim's will and repeat the same incident over and again (*Unclaimed Experience* 1-2). Sethe's trauma is experienced as "rememory" in the text. The traumatic rememory of white boys taking her milk is repeated time and again, and Sethe is unable to forsake this vision: "I am full God damn it of two boys with mossy teeth, one sucking on my breast the other holding me down, their book-reading teacher watching and writing it up. I am still full of that, God damn it, I can't go back and add more" (*Beloved* 83). Morrison theorizes rememory as a psychic return of the past that becomes a source of inspiration for the author. She explains her theory through her protagonist: "I was talking about time. It's so hard for me to believe in it … it was my rememory … some things you forget. Other things you never do. But it's not. Places, places are still there" (*Beloved* 35,

36). Sethe's rememory brings her psychic past back to her present, and she feels as if she is reliving the violent traumatic events. It is the rememory of the violent event that the reader engages with, through listening to how Sethe's own trauma story reveals itself to her in the form of something she dearly loved, her infant daughter.

Morrison portrays the traumatic incident of mother-child separation in the text through the character of Beloved. Sethe's traumatic past comes face to face with her when she first meets with the physical form of Beloved. The repetition of the traumatic past event makes Sethe lose track of time. To show the psychic disorder of the narrator, the author does not employ normal chronological narration or normal modes of artistic representation. Instead, Morrison uses non-linear plot, which blurs the distinction between the present and the past. Another significant technique is the use of time and place shifts. Morrison uses non-linear storyline and does not follow the conventional chronological plot. The narrative goes back and forth in time and shifts settings according to the thought pattern of the narrator. The reader of the text feels as if Morrison's omniscient narrator does not have control over the narrative. This lack of control over the narrative shows the PTSD of the characters as well as the narrator. The dialogue between the mother and the daughter, in particular, reflects the state of mind of the characters:

Tell me the truth. Didn't you come from the other side?

Yes. I was on the other side.

You came back because of me?

Yes.

You rememory me?

Yes. I remember you.

You never forget me?

Your face is mine.

Do you forgive me? Will you stay? You safe here now. (*Beloved* 89)

The language does not follow the normal speech conventions, and the characters utter incomplete sentences, yet the traumatic message gets conveyed. The sentences seem incomplete because the language is emotionally charged. This excess of traumatic feeling increases the disruption in language. The trauma of both mother and daughter is reflected through a repetition of words like "the other side," "rememory" and "remember," and "me" and "you". These short, incomplete utterances of the characters reflect their anxiety. The incomplete sentences have symbolic meanings at many levels: they show the characters' traumatic state of mind as well as leave room for the reader to interpret the text according to his or her understanding. Morrison narrates the story indirectly, leaving ambiguities so the reader has room and space to interpret the text for themselves.

When Sethe sees Beloved for the first time, her reaction is very strange. She starts running back and forth, and during all this activity she feels as if her bladder is filled so she starts urinating. This act cannot be expected from a normal human being, and illustrates her PTSD. The sudden appearance of Beloved brings back the anxiety of the actual event. Sethe was unable to comprehend trauma in its actual occurrence and registers it to some extent only on its return. The violent act of infanticide was too traumatic for Sethe's conscious mind, so it is repressed in the unconscious, but the sudden appearance of Beloved brings the original traumatic experience back to her waking mind. The trauma of the separation of the mother and the daughter is directly

repeated in Sethe's own bloodline thrice in the narrative. The narrative tells in bits and pieces that her grandmother committed suicide on the slave ship; her mother hanged herself; and Sethe slit her own daughter's throat. The act of killing her own daughter gives multiple identities to Sethe. She becomes a perpetrator as well as a victim. Like her multiple identities, the causes of her trauma are also manifold. Perhaps the act of infanticide is a defense mechanism for a slave mother who wants to save her daughter from the trauma of slavery.

Morrison narrates the whole incident through a third person omniscient narrator that only describes the incident and does not comment on it. It gives room to the reader to interpret and give meaning to the image of a young woman urinating at the sight of another young woman. This shows the repressed trauma of Sethe. She is pleased to see Beloved but at the same time Beloved reminds her of the trauma of separation that she experienced years ago. Morrison portrays the traumatic memory and the protagonist's difficult relation to her past using multiple voices. The character of Beloved gives the impression of hallucinations and dreamlike feeling to the text because the reader remains doubtful throughout the text between knowing and not knowing. Beloved brings back many repressed feelings to Sethe's waking conscious mind and give answers to the reader by filling in narrative gaps. Beloved brings the repressed past memories back to give unknown information regarding the protagonist's trauma.

Another aesthetic technique Morrison uses to represent trauma is that of multiple positioning. This is used to expose the struggle between rememory and forgetting; between differing viewpoints and response to oppression; and between explanation and the inexplicable. When Sethe kisses Beloved, it takes her back to many traumatic images

of her past that are related to milk. It reminds her of her dead daughter and of all the times she had been brutally treated by men at the Sweet Home. She responds: "the girl's breath was exactly like new milk" (*Beloved* 82). This image does not only remind the reader of the traumatic separation of the mother from her child but also of the so many instances that Sethe keeps repeating throughout the text. She repeatedly recounts the incident: "those boys came in there and took my milk. That's what they came in there for. Held me down and took it" (*Beloved* 19). The images of the men at the Sweet Home are embedded on Sethe's mind and she constantly repeats "And they took my milk" (*Beloved* 20). Sethe also narrates this traumatic memory to Paul D, and when he asks her whether she was pregnant when they beat her, she repeats the same sentence "And they took my milk." This repetition intensifies the impact of the tragedy but at the same time shows that the character is possessed with the image.

Morrison uses Beloved's character to bring back Sethe's trauma not only because she is her suspected dead daughter but also because her ghostlike image has much more knowledge than the infant daughter of Sethe could have had. When Beloved says: "I kissed her neck, I didn't choke it. The circle of iron choked it" (*Beloved* 85), this knowledge cannot be expected from Sethe's infant daughter. It seems as if Beloved possesses knowledge of trauma that goes beyond her immediate surroundings. Caruth theorizes trauma's referential return, and in Sethe's story it happens through the image of her deceased daughter. Beloved's image does not only bring back Sethe's personal violent traumatic memory but also the memories of traumas beyond her immediate memory. The reader identifies that Sethe's trauma does not start with infanticide but has much deeper roots. Her trauma starts with her mother's demise or may be even before

that when her grandmother committed suicide on a slave ship. This realization of Sethe's

traumatic past memories gives her a dual identity of both a victim and a perpetrator

simultaneously. She is perpetrator of trauma but at the same time, she is a victim who

was separated from her mother. This dual identity of the protagonist portrays her as a

victim whose generations have faced similar traumas of the separation of the mother from

the child.

Through the course of the narrative, both Sethe and the reader comprehend her

trauma through the signs and symbols of trauma. Morrison emphasizes the

incomprehensibility of Sethe's traumatic experience by narrating the tragedy in

fragments. When Beloved reaches Sethe's house, her daughter Denver wants to

determine who she is, but the dialogue between the two women confuses the reader even

further rather than giving answers. Denver asks Beloved: "What's it like over there,

where you were before? Can you tell me?". She wants to know where the young lady has

come from but Beloved's answer complicates the matter even further: "Dark … Hot.

Nothing to breathe down there and no room to move in…. Heaps. A lot of people is down

there. Some is dead" (75). Beloved's answer to Denver's query increases confusion and

ambiguity in the narrative.

Morrison's complex narrative demands the reader's active attention and

participation as the language of the text is complex and non-linear so the reader cannot

directly make out the meaning. In fact, Sethe's trauma and the reader's experience can be

paralleled to a patient and a psychotherapist's experience where both move back and

forth together to get maximum information regarding the causes of the patient's trauma.

Like a psychotherapist, the reader of Morrison's text has to join the pieces of information

to understand the protagonist's trauma. Most of the traumatic memories return to the victim in belatedness because it is too difficult or at times impossible for the reader to understand trauma in a waking state of mind. Likewise, the violent event fragments Sethe's mind, and she is unable to comprehend the reality in its actuality. Language plays the role of both the conscious and subconscious because it is actually language that helps the author in hiding the traumatic incident or making it ambiguous, and it is also language that makes it comprehendible.

In the Book II, Morrison tells the story from diverse perspectives that confuse the reader. The reader has to join the bits and pieces of story as Sethe says "Beloved. She my daughter. She mine" (157); then she says "Beloved is my sister" (161); but as the narrative progresses, she says "I am Beloved and she is mine" (165). These changing claims of the protagonist demonstrate her state of mind. This uncertainty of the narrative makes it even more complex. The changing perspectives describe the victim's mind that is trying to process the traumatic memory. The language of the narrator demonstrates the psychic trauma as she misses the verb, the central action word in the sentence. The missing action word symbolically represents the missing traumatic action. However, in all the utterances, one can notice the repetition of possessive and personal pronouns. This is also a technique of bringing Sethe's trauma to the waking state. Caruth's notions of knowing and not knowing are applicable to Sethe's use of language as her conscious mind brings the desirable object to the waking mind by using the possessive pronouns, but at the same time the undesirable object that is the traumatic action is pushed to the unconscious by omitting the action word. Morrison very skillfully uses language to highlight Sethe's motherly yearning for her daughter, but at the same time it shows the

denial of the painful event of the past. The author foregrounds the trauma of her fictional

character through the use of fragmented language and memories. Other than this, she

recurrently uses sensory and bodily responses of the character to display their anxiety and

unrest. The fragmentary language, however, does not fail in reinforcing the traumatic

themes of the novel.

Both the selected novels of Morrison employ various linguistic and literary

techniques to depict the trauma of the characters. Like *Beloved*, *Home* (2012) portrays the

recurrent traumas of African Americans caused due to disgrace, segregation,

disenfranchisement, and constant oppression. Frank Money becomes a symbol of African

American tragic past due to the atrocities he faces. Morrison mimics the signs and

symbols of PTSD in Frank's character by creating a protagonist who has a distorted

personality. The neurotic protagonist is a war veteran who has returned from an

integrated war zone to a segregated U.S. At the beginning of the novel, the protagonist is

hospitalized and is trying to overcome his wartime trauma, but as the narrative progresses

the reader notices that Frank's trauma is not only caused by the memories of war but also

because of his childhood that he spent in the segregated American South. Indeed, the

novel documents the trauma that distressed the minds of African Americans during this

time.

Morrison effectively uses the techniques of flashbacks, nightmares, daydreams,

hallucinations, etc. in *Home*. Frank is a neurotic protagonist who is constantly reminded

of his childhood traumatic experiences through flashbacks. At the start of the narrative,

when he gets a flashback of his past it immediately blends his present with his past, and

the reader as well as the protagonist lose track of time. These flashbacks never let Frank

forget or come out of his traumatic past. He gets flashbacks, but he is unable to identify the source of his restlessness till the end of the narrative. Morrison hints at Frank's traumatic encounter with the young Korean girl while narrating the Church incident where Frank notices a young girl smile in the Church convention. He feels disturbed but he is unable to know the cause: "When she gave him a broad smile of thanks, he dropped his food and ran through the crowd" (*Home* 76-77). He runs away leaving his plate behind and is unable to explain the reason even to his girlfriend, Lily. His trauma is too chronic to be verbalized, so he cannot explain it in the usual words. Even Lily notices this unnatural reaction of Frank and wonders, "How could he change so quickly? Laughing one second, terrified the next? Was there some violence in him that could be directed towards her?" (*Home* 77). Frank's post-traumatic stress disorder is visible in his actions. His neurotic behavior displays his unresolved traumatic past and seems to have been caused by his traumatic experiences of childhood. However, as the narrative progress, the reader finds out that he had shot dead a young Korean girl, a discovery that changes Frank's position in the text. Suddenly, from a victim he becomes a perpetrator, who had killed a young girl at the suspicion of arousing his sexuality. Explaining the protagonist's PTSD, Morrison explains how one thing stirs another traumatic memory and makes him revisit his past:

> Too much emotion attached to frozen hills. Fire, then? Never. Too active. He would need something that stirred no feelings, encouraged no memory—sweet or shameful. Just searching for such an item was agitating. Everything reminded him of something loaded with pain. Visualizing a blank sheet of paper drove his mind to the letter he had gotten—the one that had closed his throat. (*Home* 7-8)

Frank's trauma is complex and multi-layered, so it cannot be easily detected or related to a specific object or incident. It is not just the childhood traumas that Frank is trying to cope; rather, his experiences of racial marginalization as well as those of the Korean war also increase the intensity of his PTSD. Frank's traumatic memory cannot be remembered and thus cannot be put into words; it only comes to his conscious mind in bits and pieces. This element of his memory makes the narrative non-linear.

Frank tries to escape his trauma by drinking wine, but it does not help him, and he is reminded of his traumatic experiences even more. Through recurrent flashbacks, Frank is reminded of his close friend's death during the war:

> So, as was often the case when he was alone and sober, whatever the surroundings, he saw a boy pushing his entrails back in, holding them in his palms like a fortune-teller's globe shattering with bad news; or heard a bot with only the bottom half of his face intact, the lips calling mama. And he was stepping over them, around them, to stay alive, to keep his own face from dissolving, his own colorful guts under that oh-so-thin sheet of flesh…. They never went away, those pictures. (*Home* 20)

Frank's trauma returns in belatedness because it is un-comprehended, hence unresolved. As Freud notes, "a thing which has not been understood inevitably reappears; like an unlaid ghost, it cannot rest until the mystery has been solved and the spell broken" (qtd. Garland 180).

Ghost is a regular feature of Morrison's fiction. Like many of her novels i.e., *Tar Baby, Beloved* etc., she has created an iconic zoot suited ghost in *Home* as well.

Ghosts are a regular feature of Morrisonean fiction. The author uses image of ghost

to convey a specific perspective of the text. When the zoot-suited ghost first appears

in *Home*, it is in the form of a fellow passenger of Frank Money who is travelling to

Chicago. At his first appearance, neither Frank nor the reader is able to identify that

it is actually a ghost. Morrison notes: "Frank sat up. Nothing stirred. Then he saw the

outline of the small man, the one from the train, his wide-brimmed hat unmistakable

in the frame of light at the window. Frank reached for the bedside lamp. Its glow

revealed the same little man in the pale blue zoot suit" (33). These traumatic

flashbacks make the character relive the past and make him feel literally "possessed"

(Caruth, *Explorations in Memory* 5). Frank's past reappears as if it were a ghost that

was "constantly coming back to haunt him" (Rico 14). And Frank is portrayed as a

traumatized character who is caught in static repetitions.

Morrison replicates Frank's past in the present to the extent that the

boundaries between the past and the present blur. While Frank is on his way to

Georgia to rescue Cee, he meets a black couple who try to help him, but fighting

with his PTSD, Frank has become numb and can hardly distinguish between his

present and past. Morrison explains his state of mind: "He couldn't explain it to

himself, let alone to a gentle couple offering help. If he wasn't in a fight was he

peeing on the sidewalk? Hollering curses at some passerby, some schoolchildren?

Was he banging his head on a wall or hiding behind bushes in somebody's backyard"

(*Home* 14-15). The replication of trauma burrs the boundaries of time in the

protagonist's mind. Frank relives his traumatic past through dreams and flashbacks.

His traumas comprise of childhood abuse, racial discrimination, and horrors of war.

He experiences his past in the present. Morrison notes: "Frank fell asleep between a wool blanket and plastic slipcovers and dreamed a dream dappled with body parts. He woke in militant sunlight to the smell of toast. It took a while, longer than it should have, to register where he was" (*Home* 16). Frank's dreams make him experience his traumatic past uncontrollably, and for him the "distinctions between past and present collapse" (Rico 17). There are signs and symbols that either take him back in time or bring him back to the present. Morrison notes: "As he stared at the socks, the immediate past came into focus: the hospital escape, the freezing run, finally a Reverend Locke and his wife. So he was back in the real world" (*Home* 17). Morrison uses the third and first person narrative voice in the text where the third person omniscient narrator comments on Frank Money's life experiences and the first person narrator at times interrupts his narrative and corrects him. The narrative voice hovers between first and third person, and so does the text. The first person narrative is narrated in plain text whereas the third person voice is indicated with italics. All these literary and linguistic techniques such as time shifts, flashbacks, repetitions, numbness, hallucinations, nightmares, dissociation of self and language, re-enactments, non-linear texts, fragmentary narrative, etc. used in both *Beloved* and *Home* help the reader identify the effects of trauma in the fictional narrative.

6.2 Aesthetics of Trauma in Bashir's Fiction

Like Morrison, Shahnaz Bashir also employs numerous literary techniques to exemplify the trauma of his fictional characters. In particular, Bashir uses repetition, flashbacks, and omissions to portray the trauma of his characters. There are numerous parallels between the works of Morrison and Bashir in terms of their use

of aesthetic techniques, however, Morrison's trauma texts are much more complex and multilayered as compared to Bashir's. Morrison's protagonists are both the victims and the perpetrators of trauma who are simultaneously possessed by the image of the crime they committed as well as the trauma they endured personally. Bashir's characters, however, are portrayed as victims only. The fictional works of Bashir "recognize trauma as an indicator of social injustice" (Vickroy, *Reading Trauma* xi) that results in PTSD for the victims.

The text of *The Half Mother* is nonlinear and has a sudden start. The very first chapter of the text is entitled "A Reverie in Retrospect"; the title indicates the mood of the chapter. The novel starts at a point where Imran has already been abducted, and the author narrates the rest of the story and even the actual incident later. In the very first page of the text the narrator tells the reader:

> After Imran had been taken away, she had fallen to the ground and helplessly
> looked up at the sky. Her hair had fallen loose about her face, as if it had been
> pulled in a fight. She had continued staring at the inky sky, searching for God
> and howling with helplessness, but she could only find the moon in it—the
> moon: cold, still and silent, and indifferent in the halo of its own glow.
> Haleema hated the moon since then—it was a reminder of her loss, nothing
> else (*The Half Mother* 3).

The reader is not introduced to the protagonist or her story yet, but he/she is introduced to the agony of the central character on the very first page. Unlike Morrison's narratives, Bashir's stories verbalize the trauma of the protagonists right from the beginning. It is not

only the narrative that verbalizes the trauma but also the characters. When the Indian Army takes Haleema's son away, the tragedy is comprehended right there and then. Bashir notes:

> Haleema collapsed on the dirt road, wailing, barefooted, bare-headed.… In a few minutes the whole neighborhood was shaken awake. Shafiqa pulled a stupefied Haleema into her lap. "*Gaed ha kaertham, patro!* I am a perforated soul, my son," Haleema muttered in a singsong voice. (*The Half Mother* 57)

Unlike Morrison's protagonists, Sethe and Frank, Haleema is able to verbalize her trauma through wailing. It is also significant to note that Haleema's trauma is not comprehended in belatedness, though the author shows the protagonist's post-traumatic stress disorder through the use of other narrative devices. Bashir's works qualify as trauma texts because they portray traumatized protagonists, and the author uses specialized literary techniques to mimic the symptoms of their trauma, however, his characters do not comply with Caruthean incomprehensibility and belatedness.

Shahnaz Bashir has extensively made use of various literary techniques to make the reader comprehend Haleema's trauma. The text starts as such:

> "Snow, dust, roads, paper planes, plastic bags, pictures, papers, smiles, auto-rickshaws, guns, doors, voices, faces, mirror, dolphins, textures, flags, burnt wounds, walls, shadows, silence, cigarette stubs, scraps, songs, and pigeons--- bits and pieces of memories randomly refracted through her reverie." (The *Half Mother* 3)

The start of the text indicates the use of stylistic devices by the author. It is not a coherent narrative; the fragmented and dispersed narrative illustrates the central character's state of mind. The reader of the text is sensitized to the fact that memory is going to play an important role in the text; however, the memory is not usual or casual, but it is obstinate and random that continues to come back in the form of reveries. This is how the writer sets the tone for Haleema's traumatic journey through the novel. And these reveries continue throughout the text as Bashir notes that Haleema is caught in her trauma all the time: "She woke up, bathed in sweat, repeatedly muttering, 'I looked for you! I looked for you everywhere'" (*The Half Mother* 99). According to Caruth, the dreams of the survivor are significant because they play a major role in the reenactment of trauma.

> While the precise definition of post-traumatic stress disorder is contested, most descriptions generally agree that there is a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviors stemming from the event, along with numbing that may have begun during or after the experience." (Caruth, *Explorations in Memory* 4)

Bashir also repeats the word "greatest" to make the reader realize that every emotion he is going to portray would not be ordinary. He notes: "'The greatest sufferings bring the greatest hopes, the greatest miseries greatest patience, and the greatest uncertainties lead to the greatest quest…' she mumbled Imran's words on waking up" (*The Half Mother* 3). These lines from the first page of the novel are very important because the author not only introduces the reader to the trauma of Haleema but at the same time gives hope. These lines of Imran prove prophetic towards the end of the text when Haleema becomes

the pioneer of *The Organization of the Parents of Missing Persons, Kashmir*. Her own greatest misery gives hope to many people suffering and going through similar agony. Bashir's characters act in a similarly repetitive fashion as they repeat words, phrases, and at times incidents. Bashir also uses the technique of repetition to demonstrate how reenactments and repetitions replicate the traumatic experience and make the victim relive the experience in present.

Like Morrison, Bashir's narrative is nonlinear; the author disrupts the linear time to represent the trauma of his characters because:

> In the linear time of the standard political processes, which is the time associated with the continuance of the nation-state, events that happen are part of a well-known and widely accepted story…. In trauma time, in contrast, we have a disruption of this linearity. Something happens that doesn't fit, this is unexpected—or that happens in an unexpected way. It doesn't fit the story we already have, but demands that we invent a new account, one that will produce a place for what has happened and make it meaningful. Until this new story is produced, we quite literally do not know what has happened: we cannot say what it was, it doesn't fit the script—we only know that "something happened". (Edkins xiv).

Thus, the storyline of *The Half Mother* is not linear as the author takes the reader back and forth in telling the story of a woman's search for her missing son in fragments.

Haleema, emerges as a strong woman who never loses hope in search of her missing son. She goes from door to door in search of help and narrates her tragic story

multiple times in the hope that someone might tell her the whereabouts of her son. When she goes to MLA Rafi Bhat, she expects that he will use his political influence to find her son. Haleema repeats her story word for word in the hope of getting some help. Bashir notes: "Haleema narrated the full version. She told it sequentially, bit by bit, not missing a single fact or detail. And he kept responding with 'Vary good', appreciating the steps Haleema had already taken to trace Imran. When she finished, he took a while to respond" (*The Half Mother* 82). She repeats her story time and again as she goes from one door to the next but there is no hope for her and she loses patience. The author thus narrates the trauma of a mother:

> "Outside the SSP's office, Haleema raved and wept bitterly. She had been waiting
> to meet him for two hours before she lost her patience and snatched a guard's rifle
> in frustration. She pointed the barrel at her chest and threw its butt into the guard's
> hands. 'Kill me!' 'Come on, shoot me! I don't want to live!'" (*The Half Mother* 79).

The mother loses her patience in the traumatic process of endlessly looking for her son.

Shahnaz Bashir uses numerous techniques to illustrate the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder of a grieving mother. Haleema repeats her disappeared son's name time and again, which shows her obsession with the site of trauma and how she keeps alluding to it. As a trauma victim, Haleema utters disrupted sentences. The disruption of traditional syntax and grammar displays the troubled psychic world of Haleema. When Haleema goes to identify the dead body of a young boy recovered from the Wular lake, in Bandipora district and the Gujjar boy guides her towards the dead body, she is terrified that it might be her son's and start screaming:

Imran! Haleema squealed loudly in frustration. The boy looked at her in shock but

soon his look became merciful and resolute.

The name bounced back in a lasting echo.

Imran saeba! Haleema wailed again,

Imran saeba…aa…a…' The echo came back.

'Imran!' she howled, this time with a hint of sobbing in her voice. (*The Half*

Mother 137)

Repetition of the name of her son depicts the trauma of a mother who has lost her son;

however, the impact is not simply literary here as the reader, in fact, empathizes with the

character after reading about her condition. Repetition can serve as a source of working

through trauma as the character tries to cope with the trauma by repeating, but Haleema's

repetition is not a coping mechanism; rather, it shows her helplessness in the face of a

traumatic situation that she is unable to escape. Her motherly trauma is inescapable.

Haleema is bound to her trauma that Frued refers to in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* as

"perpetual recurrence of the same thing" (22). Likewise, Caruth in her *Literature in the*

Ashes of History notes: "The repetition of trauma, therefore, is not only an attempt or an

imperative to know what cannot be grasped that is repeated unconsciously in the

survivor's life: it is also an *imperative to live* that still remains not fully understood"

(16). Imran's name is a sign of Haleema's trauma that is stuck in her subconscious and

resurfaces time and again to illustrate her unresolved agony.

Bashir also uses the technique of flashbacks to depict how the traumatic

memories of the protagonist manifest themselves recurrently. Haleema is haunted by the

images and thoughts that are not in her conscious control; they are overpowering to the

extent that she cannot put them aside to free herself of the constant grief. Haleema's unconscious mind uncontrollably recalls the same incident time and again. The memory of Imran's abduction and her father's death haunt her constantly. On her way to the Indian Army's interrogation camp *Papa2* in search of her son, she crosses the Dal Lake and it reminds her of the happy times she spent there with her family:

> The Dal brought back the memory of a family picnic, when Ab Jaan had taken Haleema and Imran for a *shikara* ride. She even remembered the ice cream Imran had wanted to have at Char Chinaari: the organic ice-candy that turned his tongue orange. Imran had let his fingers bruise the surface of the sparkling Dal as the *shikara* cruised, and then thrown water on her initiating a water fight. A splash of water on her face brought Haleema back. The auto-rickshaw stopped past Hotel Welcome, before the last turn, to give way to a passing convoy of dozens of army trucks. (*The Half Mother* 85)

The narrative intertwines Haleema's present to her past, and she loses track of time. The flashbacks of the good times spent with her family give her some solace in her present traumatic condition, but at the same time, it helps the author create a clear contrast between the happy and the sad times.

Haleema's journey starts from a personal tragedy of a failed marriage to witnessing the death of her father at the hands of the brutal Army. As if it was not enough, she also loses her only son Imran when the Indian Army takes him to an unknown place. The trauma of the death of the father and losing her only child in the form of his disappearance can be taken in Caruth's perspective as a double trauma. It is

the trauma of not only witnessing the death of a much-loved father but also the bearing of the absence of a son who was Haleema's only hope in life. The novel illustrates the lonely life of a woman who hopes and re-hopes until the time comes when the hope is extinguished in the form of Haleema's own death. Haleema's story is not linear; it goes back and forth both in time and space. As a typical trauma narrative, it does not tell the incidents in a chronological order. According to Vickroy, "survivors' experience resists normal chronological narration or normal mode of artistic representation" (5). Bashir portrays Haleema as a character suffering from PTSD:

> Haleema began to tell her story to the auto driver. In a way, it was now a strange, a different kind of psychological torture to be compelled to tell her story to anyone from the beginning, in proper order, without missing a single detail, till the end. With time she had begun to forget details. She would remember them later, after finishing the narration, and would remind her listener of the details she had missed. The only thing she couldn't recall was how many, how many people exactly, had she narrated the story to. (*The Half Mother* 94)

Traumatized Haleema simultaneously resides both in her present and her past. In her lonely times, she hallucinates about her son. The text is almost a treatise on the traumas of Kashmiri women. Shahnaz Bashir's characters' trauma is somehow articulated differently. Both the selected fictional works demonstrate this difference.

Bashir's second text selected for this study, *Scattered Souls*, also displays the characteristics of trauma narrative through the use of fictional techniques. The author uses numerous literary techniques to display the trauma of the fictional characters. In the

very first story of the collection titled "The Transistor", the author deviates from the

linear time frame, and starts at the end. The plot of the story is non-linear as well as

abrupt because Bashir does not introduce his central character Muhammad Yousuf Dar at

the start of the story. The central character is only mentioned after describing the climax

at the start. The author starts off with these words:

> Ignorance and impetuosity are inseparable twins as are rumours and
>
> misunderstandings—all fused at their heads.
>
> One bullet pierced the transistor along its metre-band, exploding the radio into
>
> fragments and splinters. Its remains, a soldered electric chip connected to a naked
>
> speaker by a thin wire, lay scattered beside him, still blaring the BBC news.
>
> As Yousuf collapsed, a tear filmed and glistened at the corner of his right eye. It
>
> glinted, waiting to fall until life fled from his eyes. (*Scattered Souls* 1)

It is only after explaining the whole death scene of the protagonist that the author goes

on to introduce him. The narrative disrupts linear time and narrates the conclusion at the

start. Illustrating the characteristics of trauma narratives, Caruth comments: "The third

common dominator is related to the temporality… which disrupts chronology, disrupts a

certain kind of linear temporality, even though it deals with history" (*Exploitations in*

Memory 202). Similarly, as a classic example of a trauma narrative, Bashir's story does

not follow linear progression; rather, it "works through repetition and through ever-

deepening circles" (Caruth, *Explorations in Memory* 202). After describing the death

scene of the protagonist, the author moves on to introduce him:

Muhammad Yousuf Dar was consumed by his farming engagements. His elder

brother, Abdul Rahmaan Dar, was a mainstream politician greatly despised for

his anti-freedom-movement position in Daddgaam. Despite their ideological

differences, the two brothers lived together in their ancestral house and loved

each other. They never discussed politics, nor did they speak publicly against

eachother. (*Scattered Souls* 1)

After reading the death scene and realizing that the character was killed by freedom

fighters who suspected him to be an anti-freedom movement person, the reader

immediately finds out in the introduction to Yousuf Dar that he was an entirely different

person.

The second story titled "The Gravestone" narrates the story of a father,

Muhammad Sultan, who has lost his son, Mushtaq, in a skirmish between the Indian

Army and the armed militants. The story has an abrupt start as the author does not

introduce the characters. The introduction is confusing both in wording and essence.

Bashir starts off noting: "As soon as the mist lifts, he will dash straight to the graveyard"

(6). The reader is given the task of deciphering who has to rush to graveyard and why.

Another story "The Ex-militant" narrates the story of a Kashmiri militiaman who had

been under custody for a long time, and once released, he tries to integrate into the

mainstream Kashmiri society, but the author narrates his trauma of being forced to live a

stigmatized life. The story is told in the form of an interview in which the journalist asks,

Izhar, the ex-militant, questions related to his life both inside and outside the prison cell.

Narrating how he was tortured by the Indian Army he recalls: "In the first year of my

marriage, I was nervous about having children. In Papa2, they had squeezed my organ

and tried to crush my balls. I wasn't sure about my abilities to father children" (*Scattered Souls* 17). These experiences of physical torture along with psychological neurosis cause the character's PTSD. He repeats words and phrases, loses track of what he was saying, and at times goes into flashbacks. He tells his interviewer, "sorry, I keep having these memory lapses. Please remind me what I was saying." (17). This story is part of a series of three stories within the collection. The next story "Psychosis" tells the story of the ex-militant's wife, Sakeena, who is raped by the Indian Army. Bashir explains that Sakeena was clearly a post-traumatic stress disorder patient who has been hospitalized as well: "Six years ago … she was admitted to this hospital for *acute onset of confusion, delusions, hallucinations, altered behavior, pan anxiety, elation, happiness or ecstasy of high degree, self-blaming and mood swings*" (*Scattered Souls* 20). Sakeena is clearly a traumatized character suffering from PTSD whose trauma is based on and around the experience of rape. As a result of her trauma, she experiences constant grief and pain and is even hospitalized. Bashir narrates the character's trauma in the very title of the story and keeps referring to it throughout the text.

"Psychosis" is Bashir's most characteristic trauma narrative because the author employs numerous aesthetic techniques of trauma to narrativize the psychic neurosis of the protagonist. The narrative is non-linear as the reader comes to know that the protagonist is suffering from PTSD and has been hospitalized as well, but it is only towards the end of the narrative that the reader comes to know the reason of Sakeena's trauma. Describing the rape scene, the narrator notes: "the men threw her down to the ground and held her legs and arms. One on them stripped off her shalwaar and stuffed it into her mouth" (*Scattered Souls* 24). This traumatic scene keeps on haunting the

protagonist and even causes her PTSD. Thus, after her rape, "her mental health deteriorated" (*Scattered Soul* 24). The traumatizing images of Sakeena's rape scene cause her PTSD, but this is only one aspect of her trauma. The other source of her constant psychosis is Bilal, her illegitimate child that is begotten as a result of the rape. The author explains how she tries to kill him at different times, but he is rescued by his sister Insha. Bashir explains that Bilal is the "human shape of a painful memory" (*Scattered Souls* 25) for his mother because he reminds her of the most tragic moment of her life:

> Earlier, she had tried killing him. She would leave him alone at home for hours so that he could wander in the shanty and consume something, anything, pick up the conspicuous green sachet of rat poison from the window ledge and fiddle with it, or pick up the knife that lies beside the gas stove and cut himself. Or die from the simple fear of being alone for hours. (*Scattered Souls* 25)

Sakeena's motherly love is overpowered by her hatred for her perpetrators, and for her Bilal is a symbol of the perpetrators. The author shows the dilemma of a mother who is fighting with her traumatic past while at the same time trying to come to terms with the existence of her illegitimate child. Although at first she leaves him out in the cold on a rainy night, her motherly guilt also does not let her sleep and she "carefully draws him close and covers him in a good deal of the warm quilt. for a moment, she feels like stroking his hair. But she withdraws her hand just as her fingers are about to touch him. 'Bilal', she says under her breath and settles on her back. Tears stream quietly down her temples" (*Scattered Souls* 25). This scene describes the helplessness of a mother who is divided between her motherly love and her hatred for an illegitimate child.

Bashir portrays Sakeena's trauma by showing how she hallucinates and sometimes experiences flashbacks in which she can re-experiences her trauma through all her senses. In one of her interactions with her psychiatrist, she explains: "The nightmares has become infrequent. Now I don't see my body rolling down the riverbank. Nor does my bloody shalwaar appear. But the spell of sperm barely leaves me. Even presently scented things smell dirty to me" (*Scattered Souls* 21). This description of Sakeena clearly demonstrates the level of her trauma. Sakeena is perhaps the most representative character of Bashir regarding trauma as he skillfully portrays her psychic neurosis through different scenes. She tries to willfully forget her traumatic past and love her son but her trauma always returns with more intensity.

Another short story by Bashir, "A Woman Who Was Her Own Husband," narrates the story of Ayesha who dissociates herself from her current environment after the death of her husband. Indeed, "[i]t is not uncommon for victims to separate or dissociate themselves from physical and emotional self-awareness to avoid pain, splitting off from one's body or awareness can reduce the victim's immediate sense of violation and help them to endure and survive the situation" (Herman 43). By disconnecting herself from her current surroundings and reality, Ayesha creates a utopia for herself in which she assumes the identity of her deceased husband. This coping strategy of the character illustrates the magnanimous nature of the trauma she has endured: "Unfortunately, this capacity can create defensive self-restrictions, which can become ingrained, prolonging expectations of punishment or failure, instigating debilitating depression, and precluding relationships outside the captive situation" (Herman 42-47).

In the short story "A Photo with Barack Obama," Bashir narrates the trauma of Biul's isolated character who in unable to harmonize his existence in his community. Bashir uses repetition of words as a narrative technique to draw the attention of the reader towards Biul's trauma: "He cherished his solitary expeditions; they helped him understand himself…. Helped him come to terms with the guilt of his being and make a bit of sense of the absurdity of his loneliness, and absurdity …. express through language" (*Scatterred Souls* 31). Towards the end of the story, Bashir describes Biul's condition when he goes to Mohsin's photo shop to get his picture with Obama framed and sees Mohsin's uncle there, he is terrorized and flees from that place. According to Bashir, Mohsin was "the only person in the neighborhood who really sympathized with Biul" (*Scattered Souls* 31), but his uncle does not like Biul. Seeing the person who disliked him terrorizes Biul:

> He stopped, turned and scampered as far as the reed ponds near the Tengpora-Bypass crossing. And one more time, the vivid flashes of the policeman's dark hairy groin, clanking of the dangling, glinting steel buckle of his police belt, with a raised steel police logo on it, crossed his mind. Biul tried to cry, and each time he did, no tears would come. When he was sure that no one was around, he shouted and screamed at the top of his lungs until he felt a little relieved" (*Scattered Souls* 32).

Buil, who becomes a stone pelter as he grows up feels traumatized at the sight of a person who makes him feel uncomfortable.

As the analysis of the selected texts above shows, both Toni Morrison and Shahnaz Bashir employ specialized aesthetics of trauma fiction in their texts to represent the trauma of their characters. The traumatized protagonists of both the authors are different because Morrison's characters comprehend their trauma only belatedly and are unable to verbalize it, but Bashir's characters are different in that they verbalize their trauma and comprehend it at the time of its happening. Morrison's traumatized protagonists are unable to put their trauma into words, however, Bashir's characters can verbalize their trauma. In general, both authors extensively employ aesthetics techniques such as repetitions, flashbacks, fragmentation, non-linear plots, etc. to represent trauma. Analysis of the selected texts by Morrison and Bashir shows that both authors utilize numerous techniques to represent the trauma of their characters. Morrison's traumatized characters remain rather mute and do not directly narrate their traumatic experience, whereas Bashir's description of trauma is quite direct where the characters try to work through their trauma by communicating with others. The unresolved traumas of slavery, war, racial discrimination, childhood abuse, etc. of Morrison's protagonists i.e. Sethe and Frank, returns to haunt them constantly. Bashir's characters also fight with their unresolved trauma such as political oppression, exclusion, abuse, etc., and try to come out of it. Indeed, both Morrison and Bashir intensify the "conventional narrative modes and methods" (Whitehead 84) to represent the traumatic experiences of their communities, which provide a unique perspective on the silenced histories of the two groups.

Conclusion

This thesis has conducted a comparative study of the selected African American and Kashmiri fiction from the perspective of trauma literary studies. Using Cathy Caruth's (1995, 1996, 2013), Laurie Vickroy' (2002, 2015), and Ted Morrissey's (2021) theories of trauma, this dissertation has explored the intersections of literary trauma theory and fictional texts to analyze the correlation between communal trauma, history, and memory in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) and *Home* (2012) and Shahnaz Bashir's *The Half Mother* (2014) and *Scattered Souls* (2016). Although the interrelation of history, memory, and trauma in the context of trauma literary studies has been the subject of research before, this dissertation is unique in its comparative approach that took into account two different sociohistorical contexts.

This dissertation analyzed the dynamic intersections between literature, psychoanalysis, and literary trauma studies. The comparative Global South context has tried to break the monochromatic appearance of the field and increase its kaleidoscopic vision. This study has been an effort to enhance the universalizing appeal of trauma literary theory by breaching its west-centric exclusivity. The focus on the authors belonging to marginalized communities was motivated by the inequity in critical attention and validation that these communities receive globally. Cannonical west-centric trauma studies focus on traumatic incidents like the Holocaust, 9/11 etc. as singular and singled-out incidents of trauma because of their far-reaching global consequences, however, this study focuses on the traumas of the marginalized communities, especially those of the Kashmiri people, that are otherwise sidelined in mainstream discourses.

Review of the available literature related to literary trauma theory and the selected authors helped identify three gaps in the field. Firstly, while Toni Morrison is a thoroughly researched author, very little work is available on the literary works of Shahnaz Bashir. Secondly, both the authors have been analyzed individually, but their works have not been examined as representative trauma texts especially in a comparative context. Finally, the focus of trauma literary theory generally, and Cathy Caruth's work particularly has barely ventured beyond Euro-American boundaries; this study, however, has incorporated a sociohistorical context from the Global South i.e., Kashmir, to extend the field of literary trauma studies.

Employing Caruth's psychoanalytic approach [that utilizes the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)], the study read fictional works of Morrison and Bashir to see how these works bear witness to communal trauma and in return give access to traumatic historical experiences that otherwise resist comprehension and representation in ordinary language. Consequently, Caruthean model helped bridge the gap between textual and historicist approaches to studying the selected works. Caruth's model was correlated with Vickroy's theorization of trauma that focuses on the socio-cultural milieu of literary texts to comprehend traumatic histories. Vickroy's model of the specialized aesthetics of trauma was further combined with Ted Morrissey's approach of "trauma-based literary analysis" to analyze the specific literary devices employed by Morrison and Bashir to represent the psychic trauma of individuals and communities that may

otherwise be unrepresentable in ordinary language. Finally, DSM-V was utilized to identify the traumatized characters of Morrison and Bashir. The thesis has argued that Toni Morrison and Shahnaz Bashir's selected texts serve as representative trauma narratives that represent the individual and communal traumas of their communities; use specialized aesthetic techniques to portray the unspeakable trauma through a blend of memory and history; and resultantly give access to the muted histories of their respective communities.

The analysis of Morrison and Bashir's fictional texts was focused on elucidating the ways in which memory is constructed and maintained through literature. Morrison and Bashir belong to trauma-hit marginalized communities and have experienced trauma cultures that is reflected in their fictional works through the depiction of traumatized characters. The fictional accounts of Toni Morrison and Shahnaz Bashir do not only portray the post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) of their protagonists but also memorialize the oft- quoted ostracized factual histories of their communities. Memorization of ordeal offers new opportunities for the representation of aporia of traumatic history. The four selected fictional works demonstrate the catastrophic effects of social oppression on individual psyche. The works not only challenge the oppressive social contexts but also testify to true events using fictional forms. Clear parallels can be drawn between the fictional works of Morrison and Bashir as both the authors narrate the stories where a traumatic experience occurs and then returns to haunt the individual. However, it is interesting to note that despite the different gender identities of the authors, their representation of trauma has strong parallels. Although Morrison's fiction focuses

on women's traumatic experience of slavery and racial oppression, she also probes into the male experience of trauma through characters such as Paul D and Frank Money, among others. Likewise, Bashir represents both male and female experience of trauma through a number of characters in both his novel and the short story collection. Hence, the authors' gender identities do not seem to limit their exploration and representation of trauma.

While each author's selected texts were analyzed separately, the analysis provided major comparative insights. One major part of the comparison focused on the literary techniques employed by both the selected authors; the most important ones pointed out in the study are non-linear plots, flashbacks, repetition of events (incident, words, situations), hallucinations, fragmentation, time and setting shifts. Both the authors mimic the symptoms of trauma through the use of specialized literary devices and resultantly record the marginalized histories of their communities. However, while all four texts have been analyzed as trauma narratives, Morrison's fictional works mimic the forms and symptoms of trauma, however, Bashir's narratives do not always mimic the forms of trauma narratives. In fact, at times, chronology and temporality also stay intact in Bashir's work, and his narratives directly narrate trauma rather than using indirection as a technique.

Parallels have also been drawn between the works of both the authors to demonstrate how they portray the individual traumas of their characters that reflect the collective traumas of their communities. For example, both Sethe and Haleema's characters are based on actual women from African American

and Kashmiri histories. Through using historical figures, the writers illustrate that the individual traumas of these women are linked to the trauma of their communities. In all four texts, some characters manage to survive the trauma by working through it, but others are unable to cope with it, which shows the continuation of the communal trauma. Since both authors belong to marginalized communities, the narrative itself plays a significant role in making the traumatic experience manageable.

While Morrison and Bashir's fictional techniques converge, they also diverge at times. Morrison's works generally comply with the features of trauma narratives and have been extensively analyzed and referred to by the critics of the field as classical examples that adhere to all the prerequisites of trauma fiction. However, analysis of the fictional works of Bashir shows that his texts do not fully comply with the typical features of the canonical trauma fiction. Although Bashir's fiction at times uses literary techniques that reflect the trauma of his character according to the Eurocentric lenses, but it is interesting that his characters are not always mute like Morrison's. They sometimes articulate their trauma through wailing and crying out loudly. The trauma of the fictional characters of Morrison seems to be unrepresentable because the traumatized characters of Morrison are mute or present their traumatic memory in fragments. The traumatized characters of Bashir, however, do not necessarily comply to this notion of unspeakability.

Also, while Bashir seems to focus on the victim's trauma only, it is interesting to note that Morrison represents both the victim's and the

perpetrator's trauma. Morrison's protagonists (i.e Sethe and Frank Smart Money) have multiple identities. Both the protagonists are simultaneously victims and perpetrators. Other than this, Morrison's trauma-hit characters always comprehend and verbalize their trauma in belatedness. On the other hand, Shahnaz Bashir's protagonists (i.e., Haleema, Ayesha etc.) have a single identity of a victim. Sakeena, the protagonist of Bashir's short story "Psychosis" is an exception who has the double identity of a victim and a perpetrator at the same time. Bashir's characters are also different because they are able to comprehend and verbalize their trauma.

Finally, an in-depth analysis of the authors' work in relation to their socio-cultural and historical contexts has demonstrated that while both communities have experienced historical and communal trauma, the differences between their experiences of trauma can be linked to the diverse cultural contexts of these texts. Morrison's narratives offer a possibility of healing to the characters suffering from Post-traumatic stress disorder, whereas not all of Bashir's characters are able to cope with trauma and heal. The influence of culture on coping mechanisms can be seen in characters like Biul who have no option of recovery or healing.

By analyzing the fictional texts of Morrison and Bashir within their own sociohistorical contexts, this dissertation has given voice to the marginalized traumatic experiences of African American and Kashmiri communities just like the selected authors have given voice to the individual and collective traumas of their communities. The study is unique in bringing

together narratives from two different backgrounds in order to extend the field of trauma studies beyond its focus on the Euro-American subject. The study has concluded that communal trauma is prompted by the corresponding social milieu, which impacts literary productions of the respective communities. These literary works use specific aesthetic techniques to represent the psychic experience of individuals as well as communities and consequently give access to the traumatic experiences that cannot be represented in ordinary language. Thus, by reimagining and rewriting the traumatic histories of their communities, Morrison and Bashir have intertwined history and memory to remember and access the otherwise inaccessible past.

Further research can focus on the internal marginalization and oppression within the African American and Kashmiri communities as depicted in Morrison's and Bashir's works. Future studies can also focus on the perpetrator's trauma in the same context. While the causes of trauma in victims and perpetrators are very different, interestingly the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are similar in both. Another useful aspect in this line of research can be the ecocritical analysis of Kashmiri fiction. Ecocritical theory can help elucidate how the natural resources of both the communities were plundered and exploited by the dominant hegemonic powers. Furthermore, the works of Kashmiri authors can be compared to the fictional works of the authors of

Native American origin. The Native American concept of nature can also be compared and contrasted to the Kashmiris' notion of 'Paradise on Earth'. It will be interesting to see how and why nature plays a significant role in the worldview of these two communities. Other than this, the works of Kashmiri authors can be compared to the works of Indian authors who highlight the issues of Kashmir's longstanding and brutal military occupation. In short, this dissertation calls for cross-cultural research in the context of literary trauma studies, so that the latter acknowledge minority and non-Western experiences of trauma on their own terms.

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