

**Traces of Clash-of-Civilizations Thesis in Selected Pakistani and
American Post-9/11 Short Stories**
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Abstract

The crumbling of the Twin Towers on September 11, 2001, along with altering the world's geo-political scenario radically, became the pretext for the on-going war on terror, military invasions, contravention of civil liberties and a renewed era of American imperialism. Notably, after a considerable time since the Cold War, a group of Islamic militants attacked the military and economic centers of the US flagrantly on 9/11 and so the whole Muslim world incurred the wrath of the superpower. In the days following the attacks, Muslims were subjected to intense prejudice and racial profiling in both communal and governmental spheres. Literature, being the reflection of the society, could not stay impervious to it, and registered its impact in the form of poetry, fiction and drama. Pakistan, sharing its border with Afghanistan and being an ally of the US, has been enormously affected by this war against terror. Phenomena like ideological polarization, religious extremism, suicide bombings, drone attacks, ethnic and sectarian violence have developed and are increasing unremittingly due to Pakistan's involvement in the war on terror. In this context, Pakistani literature in both English and Urdu has responded to the critical events and represented the viewpoint on 9/11 of this part of the world. Six selected short stories written in America and Pakistan have been compared here to find out their approach towards the 9/11 attacks. Whether the selected American and Pakistani short stories deem 9/11 as an intense clash of Islam and the West as predicted by Huntington in 1996 or view it as a human tragedy is a question central to this study.

9/11 as Clash of Civilizations?

Since the fateful day of September 11, a lot of theories have been invoked to explain the reason of what incited a group of Islamic militants to attack the Twin Towers and kill 2977 Americans. From among the plethora of explanations given by the cultural theorists, foreign policy experts and political analysts, only one is authenticated officially by the American government. According to them, that feat of terrorism carried out by 19 hijackers of Arabic descent was a brutal

and blatant attack against the sovereignty and freedom of the US. It was a clear realization of the speculation of clash between Islam and the West given by Samuel Huntington in 1996. This reliance of the official story on Huntington's thesis created a discourse around 9/11 that deemed Muslims as Others, resulting in a collective environment of hostility, xenophobia and bias against the whole Muslim community.

In the post-9/11 period, insistence of Huntington on religion being the major cause of difference and hence conflict among the civilizations made him famous in the US media who sought to explain the 9/11 attacks simply in terms of the West/Islam dichotomy. In his article, "The Clash of Civilizations?", he states, "It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural" (1993, p. 22). Although civilizations are exceedingly pluralistic entities, Huntington asserts that it is their religious ideology that forms the basis of their relationship with other civilizations: "Even more than ethnicity, religion discriminates sharply and exclusively among people" (p. 27). As an historical example of this kin-country rallying on the basis of common religious roots, he cites Russian war in Afghanistan in which all the Muslim countries including Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Palestine supported the Taliban with troops, weaponry, and funds. Similarly, the attack of a small group of Muslim militants when interpreted through the lens of cultural-clash paradigm gave another meaning to the whole scenario in which the American prosperity, secularism and ideals of democracy were threatened by the Muslim fundamentalists in the form of attacks on the twin towers. Eric Neumayer and Thomas Plümper in their article, "International Terrorism and the Clash of Civilizations" state,

According to Huntington, one should expect a particularly strong clash between Islam and the West given the legacy of fourteen centuries of conflict. This conflict ultimately stems from similarities in the aspirations of the two civilizations – as universalistic and missionary– with simultaneous fundamental differences in culture and religion. (2009, p. 715)

Huntington thinks that there is some problem intrinsic to Islam and it lies not in the difference between Western and Islamic civilizations; he states in *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, "The underlying problem for the West is not Islamic fundamentalism. It is Islam, a different civilization whose people are convinced of the superiority of their culture and are obsessed with the inferiority of their power" (1996, p. 217). Michael Dunn affirms this in his article "The 'Clash of Civilizations' and the 'War on Terror'": "So: 'Islam' hates "Western civilization" because of "what it is". This is a clear depiction of a 'clash of civilizations' which is – significantly – not caused by the policies or actions of "Western civilization", but simply because 'they' hate 'us'" (2006, p.

3). Demeaning the fundamental values of a religion leads to Othering of all Muslims who are seen as followers of a backward ideology with no potential to welcome change and adapt themselves to technologies of a globalized world. After 9/11, Bush government and the mainstream media endorsed the stereotypical image of the Muslims and presented them as hostile to the western values. In words of Anna Hartnell, “Representations of September 11 in news media, film, and literature that emerged in the first few years after the event tended to restate and reaffirm the centrality of the West” (2011, p. 477).

9/11 in American Culture and Literature

Jeffrey Melnick (2009), in his book *9/11 Culture: America Under Construction*, has explained at length how the event of 9/11 has shaped (and continues to shape) the American popular culture in its aftermath. It has become the dominant theme and leitmotif in the fabric of American popular culture; it is present directly or indirectly, in every work of art that is created in the post-9/11 scenario. Melnick concedes that 9/11 has added variety and innovation to the American cultural landscape in many ways, yet at some points it loses its influence due to its overemployment. Its rampant use in every cultural artifact produced in the post-9/11 period is due to its utility in terms of money and the sacred touch that it renders to cultural works, and for this reason it is used “as a cheap shout-out—a way to establish authority, seriousness of purpose, [and] marketability” (2009, p. 7).

Despite the substantial material worth of 9/11 in cultural art, when a considerable time passed, there were calls to stop being obsessive about 9/11 and to get over it. This was achieved to some extent in 2005 when “filmmakers were no longer worried about breaking any post-9/11 rules” (p. 20). It was then when people became able to joke about it and the movies like *The Aristocrats* and *South Park* contributed “to remove the aura of sanctification” (p. 20). The withdrawal of the sacred and inviolable connotations that were attached with the tragedy made it available for interpretation and atypical usage. This was an important point in the evolution of 9/11 in its cultural sense as then it was “repurposed for non-9/11 cultural work” (p. 20). Moreover, artists started expressing their qualms about the previously fixed interpretations of the attacks. “[T]he total American innocence” and the culture of celebrating victimhood was questioned in fictional works which according to Melnick “overturn[ed] the appellation of 9/11 memorialization” (p. 23).

9/11 had a profound impact on the literature produced in the US and also in the rest of the world. Themes of terrorism, religious fundamentalism, American exceptionalism, status of immigrants and Islamophobia could be seen in all post-9/11 fictional works; some directly commented on the events of the day and its fallout while, others just used it as one element in the broader narrative. A brief survey of 9/11 fiction shows that some writers do resort to stereotyping Muslims

and reiterating the official story of the US government that relies heavily on Huntington's civilizational clash thesis, whereas some try to grasp the complexity and variety of this event by maintaining an objective stance. Yet there are others who criticize the American reaction to the tragedy and charge the government and media for using the death of victims for promoting their political aims. Apart from that, the ethnic American response of fiction to the attacks differs considerably from that of the American.

Utilizing the sentimental and shock-value of the attacks, the US administration created an environment where there was no room for dissent. Any critical voice that tended to question the official motives was categorized as anti-nationalist and blasphemous as in violating the sanctity of the memory of the dead (Ramanan, 2010, p. 126). Accordingly, in cultural artifacts and literature the September 11 attacks were "politicized, co-opted [and] distorted" (2008, p. 1) as Keniston and Quinn argue in their article "Representing 9/11: Literature and Resistance". Exploring the political role of resistant literature, they suggest that 9/11 literature offers "critiques of and challenges to political discourses that seek to simplify or fix the meaning of 9/11" (p. 3). Literature refigures the complex reality of the attacks by providing multiple viewpoints and painting it in different colors every time it seeks to represent it. Literature through its figurative language and defamiliarization finds creative ways to face the catastrophe; it is complex and thus grasps the emotional gravity and psychological problems that the characters face. In this way, it "resists reifying 9/11" (10), "offers a way beyond binary thinking" (p. 14), refuses "incommensurability, and prompt[s] attempts to place 9/11 into an historical framework" (p. 3). Keniston and Quinn value the "salutary intransigence" of post-9/11 writings as they promote alternative meanings of 9/11 by "paradoxically complicat[ing] and even transcend[ing] the events of a single day" (p. 15).

9/11 is said to be the most terrible catastrophe that struck America. Reiterated in this absolutist vocabulary, it was called by numerous critics "an inaccessible, incommensurable and unrepresentable event", a day of such mammoth proportion that the world history lacks another example like it (Karavanta, 2010, p. 3). In such a context, literature's ability to grasp the tragedy was questioned; it was argued that words could not grasp the complexity of 9/11 and in words of Martin Amis "all the writers on earth were reluctantly considering a change of occupation" (2002). Besides, the attacks were said to be "a cultural rupture" and discontinuity in history (Rothberg, 2008, p. 123); in the continuous time of history they were seen as a fissure, a line that divides the time in 'before and after' 9/11. In such challenging times, literature has a significant function to perform in terms of contextualizing 9/11 in history and countering a fixed meaning of 9/11. Reading Delillo's *Mao II*, Rothberg in his article "Seeing Terror, Feeling Art: Public and Private in Post-9/11 Literature" (2008) shows how pre-9/11 and post-WW II works resemble 9/11 and address the questions

that it raises, thus asserting that 9/11 is not a rupture in history and works of art dealing with tragedies of its kind can show ways to solve the conundrum that is 9/11. Rothberg, through his reading of *Mao II*, Delillo's essay "In the Ruins of the Future" and some poems, clarifies the link between terror and mass culture. They are similar in the sense that they both weaken the relationship between "private and public" and "seeing and feeling", so "terrorism [is to be considered] in relation to other aspects of mass-mediated society" (p. 123) and the task of a writer in such taxing times is to oppose the Manichean polarities in which the meaning of 9/11 is officially framed. He should "meet terrorism on its own terrain" and "address the world in multiple languages from the vulnerable position of a "half-dressed foreigner"" (p. 128). In the age of war on terror, he argues, literature "begun the critical post-9/11 tasks of bridging the public and the private, the local and the global, and our faculties of seeing feeling and understanding" (p. 124). Similarly, Rothberg suggests that Delillo's "In the Ruins of the Future: Reflections on Terror and Loss in the Shadow of September" intelligently avoids "retreating into an us/them logic" and proposes the establishment of "a post-secular alternative republic" which is cosmopolitan, inclusive and "finds a place for headscarf-clad citizens" as well (p. 130).

Terrorists and Victims in Masood Mufti's *Shanākh* (Identity) and Updike's *The Varieties of Religious Experience*

The very title of Updike's story bespeaks of his approach. He tries to build a connection between the character's doings and their religious ideology. It turns out that the "variety of religious experience" of the terrorists is most fundamentalist and medieval. Driven by the promise of infinite paradise, they feel a higher purpose is being fulfilled in killing the innocent. They see all Americans as infidels and themselves as believers and martyrs of the future. Thus Updike, making the most of his pseudo-scholarship of the Quran, ridicules not only the terrorist that may have been a natural reaction, but also his religion. He, like Amis cracks the joke about the misinterpretation of the Arabic word for houris; he thinks that God actually meant 'raisins' which they translated as virgins. These jokes and tone of contempt in talking about the terrorist's religion show that Updike is not so objective in his treatment of the 9/11 event. Even through the character of Don Kellogg, he doubts the concept of God who takes pleasure in human suffering, but commenting on the increased church attendance after 9/11, he says humans are fools as the harder God hits them, the more eagerly they revert to him for mercy and blessings. Moreover, Updike's story depends on certain fixed dichotomies, for instance Dan Kellogg, his daughter and granddaughter are shown as innocent victims in contrast to the terrorists who are evil. Also, paradoxically it is shown that the believers kill in the name of God, and rob the faith of people like Kellogg as he becomes an atheist after seeing the misery of the 9/11 victims. Amis, in his story also reiterates cultural clichés about the terrorists making his story fail at giving some helpful insight in

the psyche of the attackers. On the other hand, Masood Mufti's story, *Shanākh* (Identity), also deals with the question of identity crisis that got renewed importance after September 11, 2001. Though, his story shows that he thinks cultural identities and religious ideology to be important markers in the post-9/11 world, his story does not employ the same evil/good and terrorist/victim polarities. It does not blame Americans for the mental agony and problems his protagonist faces as a Muslim American after 9/11. Rather, he tries to explore the reasons behind the newfound irrational practice of generalizing all Arabs and Asians as terrorists. Logically, he interprets this to be primarily a government-created phenomenon; the administration using the tool of media disseminated the notions of terrorism as linked with a particular religion and race; they purposely cultivated xenophobia among the nation to justify the subsequent war on terror. In this respect, Masood's approach differs from that of Updike's.

In addition, it is seen that Muslims in Updike's story appear as only perpetrators of the crime, other Muslims who got marginalized and feared deportation or imprisonment due to being labeled as terrorists never find a place in their story. They remain silenced. On the contrary, Masood Mufti's *Shanākh* (Identity) gives voice to the Other group that is involved in this 'war on terror'. They also show Muslims to be one of the victims of the September 11 attacks as they suffered heavy losses in terms of money and human life. Yet, Mufti makes no effort to justify the actions of the terrorists or try to present the sufferings of Americans as trivial or inconsequential.

The Terrorist as Demonic Other in Ammar Masood's 9/11 and Martin Amis's *The Last Days of Muhammad Atta*

In *The Last Days of Muhammad Atta*, Martin Amis clarifies his take on the subject of 9/11 by characterization. The protagonist of his story, Muhammad Atta, is presented as a sadist and a pervert who is obsessed with death and killing people. Amis shows Atta to be a person hopeless of any good happening in this world. He hates life and all its vibrancy including women, children, and music. After going through the story Atta appears to be a demon, a bestial character who finds the idea of 'jihad' and militant Islam appealing. Here, Amis through his fictional portrayal of the mental processes of Muhammad Atta tries to ridicule the concept of the rewards that God promises to the believers. Atta is an educated person so he doesn't believe in the notion of getting seventy houris as an afterlife reward. Pankaj Mishra endorsing the point says Amis's account of the terrorist relies on "some widely circulated clichés". "Constipation as well as sexual frustration torments Amis's Mohammed Atta who, though preparing to bring down America, is detained by an arcane point about virgins in paradise" (2007). Objectivity that should inform a writer while tackling this sensitive subject seems to be missing from his story. To probe into the psyche of a terrorist on the last day of his life is to explore a whole way of life, a culture to which he belongs. This demands research into authentic Islamic sources that

shape up the mind of Atta, but as Mishra puts it, Amis “visited the websites of Koranic pseudo-scholarship” (2007).

In the whole narrative Amis’s tone in describing the Sheikh, his disciples and their faith is ridiculing and derisive. He likens the Sheikh to an animal with lips looking like a dog and hands like a lobster’s. As Jones and Smith put it, “the 9/11 novels offer little apprehension of the jihadist psyche” (2010, p. 945) this stereotyping and demonization denies readers any chance to understand the inner workings of the mind of a terrorist. As a contrast, the Urdu short story, *9/11*, by Ammar Masood is characterized by an inner monologue of the terrorist that shows him to be capable of reason and logic. Although, the moment of realizing the truth comes to him when it is too late to change the destiny he has chosen for himself, the overpowering desire to hug the sleeping child shows that like all human beings he can feel love. His ideology is embedded in tradition and notion of honour, yet the brutality of the idea of killing an innocent child steers his mind on the way to recognize his essential human self. Masood’s portrayal of the final thoughts of the terrorists and the hopeful message it conveys is in sheer contrast to the sexually frustrated, mentally and psychologically ill Atta who is a single-dimensional character, having no positive traits.

Humanity Challenged—Emotional and Psychological Impact of 9/11 in Zahida Hina’s *Nīnd kā Zard Libās* (Sleep’s Yellow Apparel) and Don Delillo’s *Still-life*

Viewing 9/11 as a tragedy on human level was the first response of an average American, people watching the towers fall on TV and those who were present on the site wept for the ones who died in the towers. Everyone tried to share the pain of the families whose loved ones died painful deaths as firefighters, as WTC workers, as pedestrians or tourists who, owing to their ill luck, happened to be in the towers on that lethal morning of September 11. The tragedy was said to be so enormous that words fell short to describe it. At such a moment of crisis, when there was a dire need to give expression to the feeling of pain and suffering, writers wrote about the tragedy. In addition to giving expression and meaning to the attacks, they found creative ways to deal with trauma through their writings. This served a therapeutic purpose that was much needed at that time. In the stories that I have discussed in previous chapters, I found that writers from both the USA and Pakistan have tried to capture the human side of 9/11.

Unlike Updike, Delillo in his short story, *Still-life*, focuses on how a survivor from the WTC deals with the memory of the attacks. His life changes drastically; he reunites with his wife and son whom he left a year and a half ago. His mental suffering is graver than his physical injury. The images of the burning towers, smoke and sight of blood, his friends dying before his eyes become a part of a troubled memory that transforms in “a dream, a waking image”. Even when is anesthetized by the doctors for a minor operation, he sees his friend Rumsey

sitting in their office chair. The sedative is useless in repressing the memory of the traumatic event, 9/11. Still in the following days, he tries to get over it by listening to classical music that is full of noise, by immersing himself into the quotidian routine. He picks up his son from school, goes to play with him in the park, cooks and follows his therapy plan like a prayer ritual. Keith's obsessive following of his exercise routine is actually not to care for his twisted wrist: "it wasn't the torn cartilage that was the subject of this effort. It was the chaos, the levitation of ceilings and floors, the voices choking in smoke" (p. 12). Routine life and the repetition of chores is what soothe him and he utilizes them to fight the trauma he passes through.

Delillo, by showing how Lianne and Keith's relationship changes after the attacks makes a statement on the fast-paced lives an average American lives. What helps recover Keith is the process of reflection. "He began to think into the day, into the minute." There is a sense of stillness in Keith's life after he survived the catastrophe, it is certainly "being away from... all the streaming forms of office discourse" that makes him sensitive and perceptive about life's details again. He is able "to see what he was doing"; able to find meaning in the same relationship that seemed meaningless before. 9/11 and being a survivor did not change Keith or Lianne but the difference it brought was that "now... he was watching".

Avoiding the cultural clash rhetoric and focusing on the human suffering and even wider implications of 9/11, Delillo brings up the subject of consumer culture that he deems as harmful to the essential humanity of people as terrorism (that is the attacks, precisely). In the story, Keith and Lianne get closer to each other, as the sense of tragedy, an extraordinary thing, makes them value each other more. Keith, who was disinterested towards Lianne's need of emotional and physical intimacy, seems to soften in the aftermath of the attacks. The mere thought of death is what bridges the gap in their relationship. Watching the footage of the falling towers, Lianne thinks, "she knew she'd never felt so close to someone, watching the planes cross the sky." Keith was expected to die in the towers but he is here with her and in this way Delillo establishes 9/11 as a restorative of human intimacy, contact and communication. These are the essential human values that consumer culture robs a society of. Driven by the infinite charms of the consumer culture their lives were dedicated to earning money, leaving no time for "actual communication" with each other. As Keith says that they "used to say everything, all the time", but they did not listen to each other and "it practically killed" them. That is where the problem lies and for this reason now Lianne listens to him "mind and body" as she thinks that "listening is what would save them this time, keep them from falling into distortion and rancor." In words of Adam Thurschwell, "both Keith and Lianne find that they are ready to forego this game of (female) hyper-analysis and (male) resistance" (2007, p. 301). The tragedy of 9/11 bears a positive influence

on them. By making the circles of the personal and the political intersect, Delillo presents 9/11 not as a rupture in history or an incommensurable event. The tragedy affected the lives of people in varied ways; it was not only death, grief and depression, as for Lianne and Keith it brought reunion.

In the same way, Keith who used to be a busy, indifferent businessperson feels a sense of “contained elation in these times”. Previously, he “used to want to fly out of self-awareness” but now through his long spells of contemplation and newfound habit of observing things, he is well on the way to “self-disclosure”. As Lance Rubin suggests, that in some way a terrorist act is also a means to free people from the invasion of mass media culture. Analyzing the function of the lethal lullaby in *Lullaby*, she writes,

[T]he lullaby in *Lullaby* can be read as a Derridian *pharmakon* of both poison and cure...At the same time, the lullaby is also positioned as a *form of resistance* to the imposition of any absolutist discourse. That is, the poem is imagined as the solution to the fearful self-censorship and imperialist ideology that characterized post-9/11 discourse. (2008, p. 164)

It is as if narrowly escaping death has made Keith come to consciousness, he’s “easing inward”, trying to focus more on his inner self (the spiritual) than the outer (or the physical). Giving the ordinary and commonplace a novel touch, and defamiliarizing the reality is what the tragedy does for Lianne, for previously she took things for granted, as “not more ordinary than usual” but in the post-9/11 time she realizes that “she was wrong about was ordinary” and that there is always “a deep fold in the grain of things”. Her superficial approach towards life is now changed to seeing and valuing profundity in common things.

In the narrative Delillo contrasts the co-option of the attacks by the media that turned it into a global spectacle with the healing power of literature and art. Lianne, though, not a witness of the falling towers, sees it fall infinite times on the television. She finds the footage so terrible that every time she sees it, she thinks of turning off the TV but could not do so. She is overpowered by the feelings of sympathy and dread. The footage showing the plane flying through the clear blue sky and then hitting the towers “entered [her] body, that seemed to run beneath her skin”. In contrast to the devastating effect of the footage, there is the therapeutic power of Giorgio Morandi’s Still-life paintings that adorn her mother’s apartment. Lianne finds them “serenely self-possessed”, holding a mystery around the crude contours of the bottles, jugs and biscuit tins. The color composition and use of light gives it an “obscure” touch, “a reconnoiter inward”, that asks the onlooker to appreciate its depth. Visual images of the destruction of the towers only made it more difficult for Lianne to make sense of the post-traumatic world, but in contrast to that still-lives have a soothing effect on her psyche. This foregrounds the importance of art and literature in the age of terrorism.

In addition to presenting literature as providing man a refuge, a creative way to deal with the complexities of 9/11, there is something more that Delillo is hinting at. Lianne has never discussed the paintings and how its Italian name sounded “ominous” to her with her mother who studied the paintings. In not talking about them, there is the desire to preserve their enigmatic beauty. As she says, “Let the latent meanings turn and bend in the wind, free from authoritative comment”. Perhaps, in interpreting the 9/11 event, Delillo also wishes it “to be free from authoritative comment”. Adam Thurschwell sees this desire as a “veiled plea to resist the impulse to impose meaning on an event whose overwhelming human significance lies precisely in the way that the negativity of death drains all meaning from the world” (2007, p. 302). According to him, *Still-Life* teaches its readers to avoid framing the tragedy in fixed polarities, and this can be achieved “by engaging in the loving, mourning identification-without-appropriation that Delillo himself identifies...with the attitude of the writer and artist” (p. 302). This attitude of treating the tragedy with an open, flexible mind, and keeping it open to interpretation is what might help the people in getting something positive out of it. Like Keith watching the second plane struck the towers admits that they became “a little older and a little wiser”. Keith’s observation is explained by Richard Gray, delineating upon the reactions to tragedy he likens it to a fall from innocence to experience, “as an initiation into deeper, darker and more adult forms of knowledge; they were “lost,” perhaps, but they had also “grown up” (2011, p. 14).

Sharing the same pain of human suffering of those affected by the war on terror, Zahida Hina’s short story *Nīnd kā Zard Libās* (Sleep’s Yellow Apparel) highlights the miserable death of a young Afghan girl who becomes the target of an American drone. Hina, too, views 9/11 through the eyes of a humanist, and focuses on the lethal consequences of the war on terror. Being a Pakistani author and a voice of the third world, she is concerned with the sufferings of the weeping humanity in Afghanistan. Parveen, the protagonist of the story, is an exceptionally intelligent and curious girl of twelve. She is displaced from her home in Kabul when her house turned into rubble by the American bombings. Her two siblings and one hand are also lost in the attack. After coming to live at her cousin’s place in Bajor, she writes a letter to President Bush, complaining about the atrocities his military has inflicted upon them. Parveen’s eventual death and her dissenting letter come to speak for the whole Afghan nation who faced war and injustice despite having no connection with the September 11 attacks. It exposes the hypocrisy of UN’s claims of justice and respect for human rights. Hina implies in the story that the emblem of human rights also treats other nations with prejudice and discriminates them on the basis of religion and culture. Representing the Other in the US/Them polarity, she holds America responsible for sustaining the phenomenon of suicide bombings. Parveen’s letter tells of a young “filmy style chap” who was fond of watching Bollywood flicks and his mud house had posters of his favourite actresses pasted on its walls.

However, incited by the violent attacks on his people, he decides to become a suicide bomber, resolved to take revenge for what the US forces have done to his countrymen. America's injustice is not limited to their imperial foreign policy, but they also exploit their invaded countries economically. As Parveen writes of her mother that in order to earn bread for the family, she embroidered traditional Afghan kurtas that were taken to America via NGOs. Parveen knows that there they were sold at a high price, "but only few coins were the fate of [her] mother". This economic injustice contributes in doubly-marginalizing the women of Afghanistan, who are already subjugated by the patriarchy of their society.

In short, the Urdu short story writers, Masood Mufti, Ammar Masood, and Zahida Hina have a slightly changed focus as they highlight the plight of immigrants living in the US or of the wretched human beings suffering in Afghanistan. On the other hand, Updike, Amis and Delillo focus on the immediate effects of the tragedy on Americans or the ones who died or got injured in the towers. Moreover, it is noted that all the stories written in English focus on what initiated the attacks, its motivation, its pretext, whereas, the stories of Urdu deal with the aftermath, how the US reacted, how the immigrants got affected and how the world, then, paid back in blood for the audacity of 19 Arab men.

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