

**CULTURAL CLASH THESIS AND 9/11: A COMPARATIVE  
STUDY OF SELECTED POST-9/11 SHORT STORIES IN  
ENGLISH AND URDU**



By

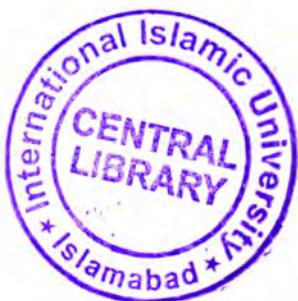
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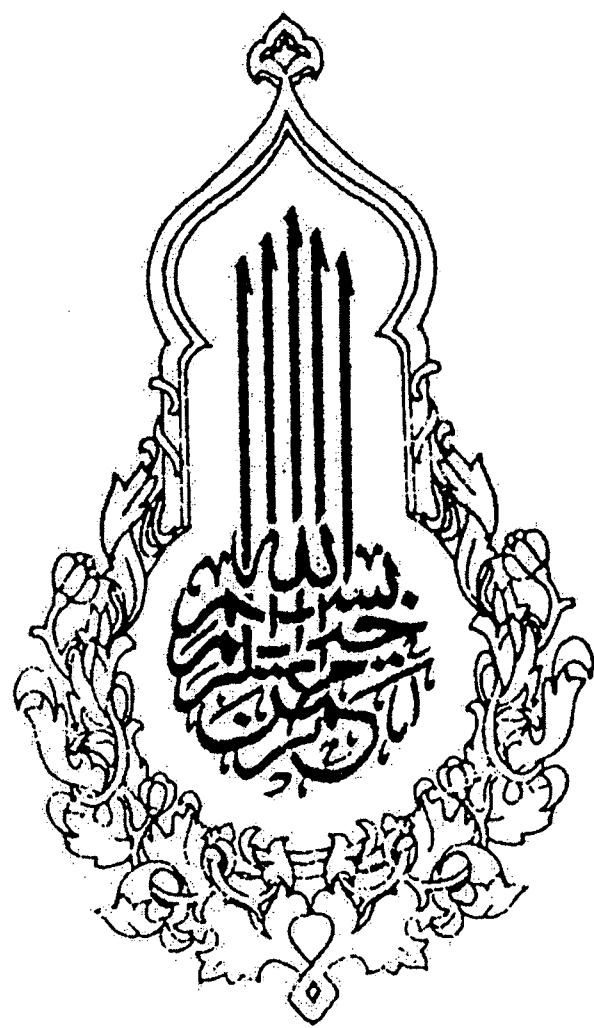
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## Acceptance by the Viva Voice Committee

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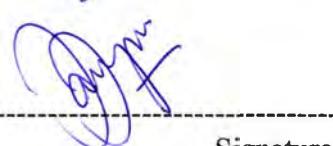
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To my Mother  
Who is my lesson of strength and endurance

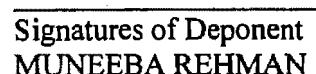
## DECLARATION

I, Muneeba Rehman daughter of Muhammad Javed, Registration # 124-FLL/MSENG/ F09, student of MS, in the discipline of English Literature, do hereby declare that the matter printed in the thesis "**Cultural Clash Thesis and 9/11: A Comparative Study of Selected Post-9/11 Short Stories in English and Urdu**" submitted by me in partial fulfilment of MS degree, is my original work, and has not been submitted or published earlier. I also solemnly declare that it shall not, in future, be submitted by me for obtaining any other degree from this or any other university or institution.

I also understand that if evidence of plagiarism is found in my thesis/dissertation at any stage, even after the award of a degree, the work may be cancelled and the degree revoked.

 This work was carried out and completed at International Islamic University Islamabad, Pakistan.

Dated: 24<sup>th</sup> December, 2012

  
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MUNEEBA REHMAN

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**Muneeba Rehman**

## ABSTRACT

The attacks of September 11, 2001, being a watershed moment in world history inspired a great deal of literature. However, the short fiction received little attention as compared to the novels that were written on the theme of 9/11 attacks. This gap in the critical literature has been focused in the present study as it foregrounds the perspective of short fiction writers in English and Urdu on the issue. The theoretical framework has been provided by Samuel P. Huntington's seminal theory of "clash-of-civilizations" that predicts a strong clash between Islam and the West in the post-Cold war era. The study attempts to analyze whether the selected short fiction corroborate the theory in relation to the changed political scenario of the post-9/11 world or repudiate it. The findings support the fact American and Pakistani authors do not necessarily conform to Samuel Huntington's theory of cultural clash. There are several authors who deviate from the general norm of propagandist literature and present original and creative narratives that highlight human pain and suffering of those affected directly or indirectly by the heartrending event of 9/11. There is also a slight difference in the approach of American and Pakistani authors; the former are concerned with the immediate cultural and socio-political impact on their compatriots, whereas, the latter focus on the mental turmoil of the immigrants and speak against contravening the civil rights of the attacked countries, Iraq and Afghanistan. Besides, the dissertation highlights Pakistani short fiction in Urdu as a credible and trans-national perspective on the subject of September 11.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists. From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime.

(George W. Bush, Sept. 21, 2001)

#### 1.1. Introduction to the Study

This dissertation focuses on the response of short story writers on the subject of September 11, 2001. The event of September 11, 2001, along with changing the world political scenario in prominent ways, has also inspired the field of arts and literature. As the attacks were perpetrated by some persons of Arabic speaking background, Muslims and the values of their religion became a controversial subject and invoked responses not only from the American authors, but also from the writers of the third world countries. Due to its geographical proximity to Afghanistan, Pakistan has been an important ally of the U.S. in the resulting ‘war on terror’; accordingly, its writers have registered their opinion on the issue in the form of fiction. This research study is a comparative analysis of short fiction that is written by American and Pakistani authors. The analysis is carried out in the light of Huntington’s theory of “clash-of-civilizations” and seeks to investigate the approach of short fiction writers from across two cultures towards the attacks. Clash of conflicting cultures was predicted by Huntington in his 1996 book, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. His theory, although considerably criticized by the critics before 9/11, gained new currency after it. The question of identity, religion, ideology and culture became the center of discussion for critics and analysts all over the world especially in relation to the changed status of Muslims and Arabs. Literature dealing with the theme of the

attacks also addresses these questions. This research study is an effort to analyze as to what extent 9/11 short fiction validates the cultural-clash theory or on the other hand, repudiate it.

Directly carried out on American soil, the suicide attacks were seen as an assault on American sovereignty, “way of life, [and] freedom” by the President Bush (September 11, 2001). It is also declared in his various speeches in the days following 9/11 that the terrorists were Muslims and belonged to an extremist militant organization, al-Qaeda. Linking the attacks to militant Islam turned September 11 into a watershed moment of the 21st century as after the fall of former Soviet Union in 1991, the USA had reigned as the uncontested superpower until 9/11 happened and a handful of militants challenged its supremacy by attacking the centers of its economic and military power. Changing the world political scenario drastically, 9/11 sensitized the relations of the US with the Muslim world and vitalized the cultural-clash theory as an apt paradigm for the post-Cold War politics. The official speeches of the US administration and the mainstream media presented Islam as a security threat to America and later its decision to invade Afghanistan further created a rift in the US-Muslim world relations. The general environment of post-9/11 America was characterized by xenophobia, jingoism, anger and revenge. The President called the entire nation to unite and help fight terrorism by shopping, consuming and resuming the normal course of their lives. There was an upsurge of patriotism, mourning and commemoration. Flags could be seen everywhere, flyers describing the World Trade Center’s workers covered buildings around Manhattan, and many vigil ceremonies and commemorating services were held in the memory of the victims. Along with the national practices of mourning, there was fear and mistrust of the immigrants. Increased scrutiny and security was observed at all public places and airports, along

with the application of USA Patriot Act, that allowed complete governmental liberty to scrutinize communication made anywhere in the United States. Both the physical site of disaster, Ground Zero, and its victims were considered sacred and no one could think differently about the attacks. The official viewpoint was the only legitimate way to perceive the tragedy leaving little room for alternate interpretations. O'Brien comments on policing of speech in post-9/11 America: "In those early weeks, the power of the official 9/11 interpretation was all but overwhelming. Conspicuous dissent in a national forum was both rare and vilified" (2011: 8). As an example, he cites the criticism that Sontag and Bill Maher received for expressing their dissent over the officially authentic story of 9/11. Susan Sontag's short article "The Mature Democracy" (2001) in *New Yorker* and Bill Maher's comments on the attackers and imperial policies of America sparked controversy; Sontag got scathing reviews on her article and Maher's contract to carry on his show *Politically Incorrect* was cancelled, as a result (as cited in O'Brien: 9). It is clear from these instances that freedom of speech was curbed and strict censorship was employed to create a uniform, collective thinking about September 11.

The political fallout of 9/11 also permeated the cultural life of America and immediately after the attacks, websites, blogs, electronic and print media along with other popular art forms like clip art, comic strips, music, television shows, photography, film, painting, sculpture and wall art registered the impact of this tragedy and responded to it in their own distinct ways. The cultural landscape in the beginning was marked by conformity to the official narrative of 9/11, however, until 2002 expressions of dissent had become common as the general public opposed America's decision to attack Afghanistan. Also, there were critics like Daniel Harris, who openly expressed their disapproval of the general cultural reaction of the

American nation. In "The Kitschification of Sept. 11" (2002), Harris criticized the exceedingly sentimental expressions of collective grief; according to him "the overkill of ribbons and commemorative quilts, haloed seraphim perched on top of the burning towers and teddy bears in firefighter helmets waving flags" are kitschy ways to mourn that aggravate the loss and make it difficult for the people to get over the tragedy. Besides that, "the rhetoric of kitsch" also serves another covert political function: "The strident sentimentality of kitsch makes the unsaid impermissible and silences dissenting opinions, which cannot withstand the emotional vehemence of its rhetoric... [I]t whitewashes the political context of the attack which...appears to have had no cause, no ultimate goal" (2002). Harris clarified that patriotism, notions of martyrdom and excessive display of emotions was promoted by the government as it imbued the event with sacredness, thus making it impermissible to doubt and question anything.

Literature written after September 11 also testifies its importance as 21<sup>st</sup> century's most influential event. In the days after the attacks, websites and blogs saw an outpour of poetry and stories that were written by common people to express their sorrow. Like these spontaneous manifestations of feelings, most literature in the immediate aftermath simply reiterated the clichéd official story and commonly held beliefs about 9/11. In "Introduction" to the book, *Reframing 9/11: Film, Popular Culture and the War on Terror*, Birkenstein, Froula and Randell write about how the *Left Behind* evangelical series of twelve books that build upon the Biblical myths of Armageddon, and resurrection of Christ played a role to endorse the apocalyptic vision of post-9/11 world. According to them, although the evangelical books were not much popular before 9/11, they became best-sellers after that. Owing their popularity to the fact that they "galvanized a new culture of "rapture" or "second-coming" enthusiasts", they also "register[ed] a messianic global outlook as well as

their casual revitalization of the militaristic ideologies of the “crusade” or “clash” of irreconcilable civilizations” (2010: 5). This idea of war and clash with the conflicting civilizations gained popularity as it built a meaningful “relationship between conservative ideology and American foreign policy” (5). Similarly, there were literary writers like John Updike and Martin Amis who supported the ideology and policies of the American right and their works bear witness to it. Affected by the hysteria about Islam and terrorists, Updike’s *Terrorist* (2006) and Amis’s *The Last Days of Muhammad Atta* (2006), reek of the same Manichean rhetoric of “evil” and “good”, angels and demons that was prevalent in the post-9/11 period. Criticizing them for their stereotypical representation of the Other, Pankaj Mishra writes in his article, “The End of Innocence”, “Assembled from jihad-mongering journalism and propaganda videos and websites, their identikit terrorists make Conrad’s witheringly evoked revolutionaries in *The Secret Agent* and *Under Western Eyes* look multidimensional” (2007).

However, it was noticed that as time passed a certain distance was achieved in terms of time and memory, and it became possible to view the attacks in a critical, thoughtful manner. This temporal distance from the tragedy gave rise to resistant voices and invited pluralistic interpretations of the events of that day. Keniston and Quinn discussing the political role of 9/11 literature say that it “contests 9/11’s co-option for narrowly political ends” and “offer[s] critiques of and challenges to political discourses that seek to simplify or fix the meaning of 9/11” (2008: 3). Besides that, there are post-9/11 literary works that use it only as a backdrop against which their characters explore other big questions and crises of their time. 9/11 appears only as a shout-out in their novels or just as a passing reference. Moreover, there are writers who focus on human loss and suffering of the victims. Jonathan

Safran Foer's young protagonist, Oscar Schell, in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2006) is an apt portrayal of Foer's humanistic approach; the narrative deals with the process of healing and how Oscar comes to terms with the tragedy of the death of his father who died in one of the towers. In short, 9/11 literature provides a valuable platform to view the attacks by rejecting to fix its meaning and by questioning the dominant narrative.

Taking this as an assumption, the research project aims to investigate the representation of 9/11 event in selected short fiction, in relation to the cultural clash theory given by Samuel Huntington in 1996. The theory explices the future of international political scenario after the Cold war, and has been considerably authenticated by the 9/11 incident. Within the theoretical framework of civilizational-clash theory, the study compares the post-9/11 short stories in English and Urdu to find out the extent to which the creative writers resort to Huntington's theory in delineating upon the September 11 attacks. In this way, the contrastive analysis acts as an evidence to either substantiate or confute the cultural-clash thesis in relation to literature in general and contemporary post-9/11 popular literature in particular. Moreover, the study helps bring forth the difference in perception of the 9/11 incident by Pakistani and American authors.

Many empirical and theoretical studies have been conducted to test the Huntington thesis, but little has been done to check whether literary works of fiction also bear its overtones or not. Saddik A. Gouhar's article "Modernist Arabic Literature and the Clash of Civilizations Discourse" is a good example of tracing the notion of civilizational clash in literature. Gouhar highlights the incorporation of Western literary techniques into Arab literature by the Muslim/Arab poets led by Badr Shaker Al-Sayyab. This is an attempt on their part to dismantle the narrative of "clash

of civilizations" and strengthen the intercultural ties between the West and Islamic world (2009: 44). The modern Arabic poetry produced after the World War II is strongly influenced by Western literary ideals especially T. S. Eliot who has utilized Biblical imagery, myth and tradition extensively in his works. The Arabic modern poets identify themselves with the turmoil that Eliot experienced after World War I and thus Christ's crucifixion and other mythical characters find a place in their writings. This employment of Western literary techniques in their works is an attempt to establish inter-cultural ties with the West and to contradict Huntington's theory of inter-civilizational clash. In the same vein, the present study proves to be a useful addition as it explores the proposition of cultural clash in 9/11 popular literature.

### **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

The Post-9/11 fiction, emerging in the US/European and Pakistani literature, views the events of September 11 differently and may not necessarily conform to the "clash-of-civilizations" thesis.

### **1.3. Research Questions**

- Q1. What is the approach of the short story writers of English and Urdu towards 9/11? Do they perceive it as an outcome of cultural clash of the West and Islam or a tragedy on human level?
- Q2. How has the theme of September 11 attacks been treated in post-9/11 fiction, in general, and in popular literature in particular?
- Q3. What are the similarities and differences in the portrayal of the tragic events of September 11 by American and Pakistani authors?

Q4. What are the factors that are responsible for any difference or similarity in standpoints on 9/11 as cultural conflict issue?

#### **1.4. Theoretical Framework/ Methodology**

The study is qualitative in nature and primarily constitutes the comparison of short stories that are written in English and Urdu on the event of 9/11. The ground of comparison is provided by Huntington's theory of cultural clash. An in-depth comparative analysis reveals the approach of the short story writers towards 9/11 in general and of the difference of perception of English and Urdu short story writers in particular. The comparative critique judges as to what extent Huntington's theory is reflective of the truth about 9/11 as depicted in literature. In addition to this, the comparison of English and Urdu short stories foregrounds the similarities and differences of the two civilizations namely, Western and Islamic, that are said to be in clash since times immemorial. The events and characters of the selected short stories from the two entirely different cultures act as a lens from which to view and analyze the historic event of 9/11 in an objective manner.

As for the particular approach of comparative analysis, American model has been invoked that advocates multicultural comparisons and transcends the French approach of focusing on national literatures. According to that any work of art can be compared to another, may it be from an altogether different culture of the world. Correspondingly, "rapprochement" method is employed as the technique of comparative analysis; it is defined by Alfred Owen Aldridge in his book, *The Reemergence of World Literature: A Study of Asia and the West*, as "The process consists in pointing out analogies, similarities and differences, or common elements of any kind in two or more literary works selected because in some way they are

artistically akin" (1986: 45). Accordingly, the detailed components of short stories are compared in order to foreground the difference or similarity of 9/11-perception in the popular writers of America and Pakistan.

The primary sources of this research study are ten short stories that are written in English and Urdu and Samuel Huntington's book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996). The secondary sources comprise of the journal articles, books and reviews that have relevant material on the stated topic. Dealing with stories of every post-9/11 short story writer is beyond the scope of this study; hence, the stories have been selected in accordance with the theoretical framework. In order to find out the approach of short fiction writers towards 9/11, those stories are selected that have 9/11 as the major theme. The main proposition of the cultural-clash theory predicts a clash between the West and Islam that, according to its proponents, came true as 9/11. Therefore, I have chosen those stories that comment on the relationship of these two civilizations, situate 9/11 culturally, and fictionalize the cultural Other. Also, this research study aims to analyze the reaction of indigenous Pakistani writers to 9/11, so Urdu short stories have been chosen for the analysis. The selected short stories written in English and Urdu revolve around the September 11 attacks. However, they are different in their manner of presenting the issue. Some portray it through the individual stories of the victims and some blend the political and the personal. I have selected the following stories in English for the analysis:

- *Varieties of Religious Experience* by John Updike
- *The Last Days of Muhammad Atta* by Martin Amis
- *Twilight of the Superheroes* by Deborah Eisenberg
- *The Mutants* by Joyce Carol Oates

- *Still-life* by Don Delillo

The short fictions in Urdu that are selected for this study are as follows:

- *9/11* by Ammar Masood
- *Operation Mice* by Nilofer Iqbal
- *Shanākht* (Identity) by Masood Mufti
- *Nīnd kā Zard Libās* (Sleep's Yellow Apparel) by Zahida Hina
- *Reality Show* by Irfan Ahmed Urfi

The selected texts provide an opportunity to analyze and judge the reality of the event from the viewpoint of creative writers that can complement or dismantle the already given perceptions based on Huntington's idea of civilizational clash. Also, the comparison helps to see how the events of 9/11 have affected other parts of the world especially Pakistan; how do their intellectuals view it; and whether Huntington's celebrated notion also proves to be true in case of the writings of writers from other parts of the world.

Since this research is conducted in English, the excerpts or quotes of the selected Urdu short stories are translated by the researcher herself.

As Huntington's theory of civilizational clash provides the theoretical framework of this study, it is important to give its brief overview and explain its revitalization after September 11 attacks, 2001. After the end of the Cold War and the fall of the former USSR, the future of international world politics remained in limbo for some time as scholars began to search for new paradigms. In the Western political theory, two voices attracted considerable attention, that is, Francis Fukuyama's (1992) "End of History" thesis and Samuel Huntington's "Clash-of-Civilizations" theory.

Samuel Huntington proposed that in the post-Cold War world, clash would not be among the nation-states but among different civilizations. In *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*, he argues that the main reason that would bring different civilizations in opposition to each other would primarily be cultural. The differences in values, traditions, religious beliefs and outlook on life that forms each civilization's identity would result in intolerance towards the cultural values of other civilizations (1996: 28). The view of shifting of power or deconstruction of power hierarchies was also affirmed by Lamin Sanneh (New York Times, 2001), and Andrew Sullivan (New York Times, 2001). It was pointed out that in the post-Cold War world Western civilization would be challenged by an Islamo-Confucian alliance and that it would change the power relation between the West and its others.

Samuel Huntington's notion of cultural clash of civilizations was brought into limelight by the September 11 attacks. Before that, it had remained a general and somewhat subjective view of his to predict the future of world politics in terms of civilizational conflict among the major existing nations. 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: 22). He considers culture as the ultimate reason of conflict and goes on to define it. According to him religion surpasses all other components that differentiate one civilization from another and owing to this fact it will act as the major dividing line among them: "Civilizations are differentiated from each other by history, language, culture, tradition and, most important, religion" (25). At another point in the same *Foreign Affairs* article he asserts, "Even more than ethnicity, religion

discriminates sharply and exclusively among people" (27). Although civilizations are exceedingly pluralistic entities, Huntington asserts that it is their religious ideology that forms the basis of their relationship with other civilizations. As an example of this kin-country rallying, 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.

In the post-9/11 period, this 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. That 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: 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: 217). 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: 477).

To sum up, the main objective of this dissertation is to find out as to what extent short fiction in English and Urdu reaffirms these notions of clash between Islam and the West, and whether creative fiction writers reiterate the clichéd dominant rhetoric or offer some other nonconforming standpoints on the issue. This objective is fulfilled by carrying out an in-depth comparative analysis of the ten selected short stories in relation to Samuel Huntington’s controversial theory of “clash of civilizations”.

### **1.5. Chapter Division**

The **first chapter** is “Introduction”; it introduces the topic, builds up the rationale, delineates upon the significance and charts out the research questions that are addressed by the research study. The **second chapter**, “Literature Review”, outlines the main tenets of the cultural-clash theory and the criticism it received before and after the 9/11 attacks. Moreover, it critically reviews the relevant literature available on the topic of 9/11 literature, and points out the gap which the present research project seeks to fill. The **third chapter**, “Representation of September 11 in Selected English Short Fiction” deals with the detailed analysis of five short stories written by American authors. The main focus of this analysis is to highlight their approach towards the attacks. Similarly, the **fourth chapter** titled “Perception of September 11 in Selected Urdu Short Stories” explores how Pakistani writers view the 9/11 attacks

and answers the question that do they conform to the cultural-clash thesis or view the attacks as a human tragedy. The last chapter, "Cultural Clash in Post-9/11 Short Fiction of English and Urdu: A Comparative Analysis", presents an in-depth comparative analysis of the selected short stories written in English and Urdu. The analysis outlines the approaches of writers from American and Pakistani cultures and also explains the factors that are seemingly responsible for them from the texts. The study concludes with the summary of the main issues addressed and their findings and suggestions.

### **1.6. Significance/ Rationale of the Study**

The notion of literature as being sublime or that it is written only for aesthetic purposes is certainly history now. Rather, literature and politics have an enduring link especially since Edward Said's monumental study *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) that trace this historical link. As the September 11 attacks were a global political event, literature written on the subject explores the link between politics and aesthetics and also raises moral issues related to the representation of a human tragedy. It is observed that in 9/11 literature, on the one hand, writers use literature to portray the sufferings and mental trauma of the people, and on the other to present alternate meanings and counter-narratives in response to the official explanation of the attacks. Yet there are works of 9/11 literature that endorse the notions of cultural-clash discourse by depicting stereotypical Others and angelic victims, thereby asserting the superiority of the US as the world's superpower. The present study deconstructs these generalized notions about the Other, and presents different, myriad ways with which 9/11 is interpreted by Pakistani and American writers. Furthermore, one finds that although 9/11 was a global event and

its resulting war on terror affected non-Americans more than the Americans in the long run, the criticism and research produced focuses on the works that are created by the American authors. Its reason might be that the physical site of 9/11 was America and thus its creative artists are considered more authentic and reliable sources to look for its meaning and cultural resonance. In doing this, the criticism available on 9/11 literature ignores the reaction of writers from other parts of the world. This study, by comparing the Urdu short stories with that of English, foregrounds the opinion of the third world writers on this international issue. It enriches the studies on 9/11 literature as it introduces another transnational perspective on the subject. Also, the very act of comparing them with American authors means that they are credible voices that need to be considered while dealing with literature written after 9/11.

It is also noticed that short fiction written on the attacks does not manage to get as much attention as the novels. This research study fills this gap by bringing short fiction to the forefront and highlighting the perspectives that it has to offer on one of the most pivotal events of the 21<sup>st</sup> century - 9/11.

In addition to this, the notion of civilizational clash and its importance regarding 9/11 makes it one of the most influential and controversial theories given in the 20<sup>th</sup> century whose spilling over effect continues in the present century. To compare the selected short stories in the light of this thesis proves to be an interesting study as it builds up its authenticity regarding the works of fiction across two cultures, that are, Western and Islamic.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE: THE CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS SINCE SEPTEMBER 11

The events of September 11, 2001 are widely believed to be one of the greatest factors that have “changed the world”. Quite a number of theories have been invoked to explain its causes and the mystery surrounding it. Huntington’s prophetic theory that predicted an intense clash of Islam and the West is considered to have come true in its most essential form. Here, given the limitations of my topic, the relevant literature is reviewed in two sections: first section underlines the original theory and the critical response it generated before and after 9/11 respectively; the second section comprises the cultural and literary impacts of 9/11. This review of relevant literature reveals the gap in contemporary discourse regarding the representation of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in popular literature, and thus highlights the significance of my research study.

#### 2.1. “Clash of Civilizations”- Before and After 9/11

Samuel Huntington was a distinguished political scientist and professor of international relations at Harvard University. He gained popularity through his article, “The Clash of Civilizations?” that was published in *Foreign Affairs* in 1993, and later through the book- *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996) that built on the same point of the article. The article stirred a great deal of debate among the theorists of international politics as it proclaimed the beginning of “multipolar and multicivilizational” era of global politics (1996: 21). In the Cold War period, according to Huntington, the major conflict was due to opposing ideologies, but in the post-Cold War world difference of culture is the focal cause of disharmony or cooperation among people of different civilizations: “Cultural commonalities and

differences shape the interests, antagonisms, and associations of states" (29). He rejected the other four paradigms that were presented to explain the post-Cold War world politics - One world paradigm, two world paradigm, states paradigm, chaos paradigm- and espoused his "civilizational paradigm" which actually do not refute any of these paradigms but reform them by linking them with culture and civilization (37). The main tenets of Huntington's paradigm are as follows:

- i. Intracivilization cooperation of nations creates "counterforces of cultural assertion" and develops a consciousness of culture and civilization among other nation states (33).
- ii. The world after Cold War is primarily divided in two poles: "the West and the rest" (33).
- iii. Although nation states remain the chief participants in international politics, their alliance and rivalry with others is aligned on cultural lines.
- iv. Due to having civilizational differences, states from different civilizations tend to fight more and hence "pose the greatest dangers for stability" (36).

Culture and civilization being the key terms of his thesis required a clear definition. According to him, culture is the common element in every description of civilization, in fact "civilization and culture both refer to the overall way of life of a people and a civilization is a culture writ large" (41). The characteristics of civilizations, in Huntington's opinion, are as follows:

- i. Religion is "the most important" of all factors that define a civilization (42).
- ii. Race and civilization can never come to have equal meaning.
- iii. A civilization is an integrated whole and any of its constituent parts cannot be understood without reference to the whole civilization.

- iv. Civilizations are fluid and dynamic; they evolve, grow and eventually die away over the passage of time. Nevertheless, they are "long-lived" (43).
- v. Civilizations may or may not encompass a single state; however, they are usually composed of different states or political bodies.

Jack F. Matlock (1999) analyzes the definition of civilization as put by Huntington in his article, "Can Civilizations Clash?". According to him, there is an agreement on the first characteristic of civilization underlined by him that civilization in singular means civilized, cultured and refined; whereas, in plural it refers to multiple types of civilizations that are found in world history.

Matlock argues that Huntington has failed to specify what a civilization exactly constitutes when he says, "it's a culture writ large" as notable scholars like Jacob Burckhardt (1929), Arnold Toynbee (1934-61), Fernand Braudel (1995) and Philip Bagby (1958) have varying stances on this issue and define the constituents of civilization in their own ways. Similarly, the borders of civilizations are not clear yet they mark "fault lines" is paradoxical as "no two [scholars] agree precisely where the dividing lines should be placed among various civilizations" (1999: 431). Furthermore, Russia being put under the Orthodox civilization and Latin America being left out of the Western civilization is a contended matter among critics as Matlock says, "...but it is simply not true, as Huntington claims, that "scholars generally agree in their identification of the major civilizations in history and on those that exist in the modern world"" (431).

Huntington confuses culture and civilization most of the time in his study. "Many of the conflicts in which culture has played a role have been within the civilizations he postulates, and yet we often see a part cited as if it were the whole, an evident logical fault" (433). His considering of civilization as one broader identity

often generalizes the specific and individual cultural components that come into play when conflicts occur on global or national scale. He cites the example of Bosnia whose “culture has features that can be exploited by unscrupulous politicians to the point of violence: a sense of different identities despite close association over centuries; a sense of historical wrong, part fact, part myth; a tradition of the vendetta, to name only a few” (1999: 434). On a similar note, Dieter Senghaas in his book *The Clash within Civilizations: Coming to terms with cultural conflicts* also contends that the two civilizations, involved in the Islamic-Confucian alliance termed by Huntington as a potent opponent to the Western civilization, have no common cultural factors that may cause them to join in mutual association. Rather the alliance “may well be analyzed in power-political or economic categories...[as] it [the civilizational paradigm] does not offer links between culture on the one hand and concrete behavior at the global political level on the other” (1998: 73). Referring to clash within civilizations, he attributes them to an exploitative economic system and unequal distribution of wealth rather than conflicts arising due to cultural differences. Senghaas notes, “Fault lines do occur at the micro-level, but they are not automatically based on cultural differences...Distribution conflicts, in these cases, form the core of the conflicts and must be judged as primary factors” (75). In addition to this, geopolitical rivalry, economical issues, military strength, and “membership in or exclusion from international institutions” are also deemed important factors in conflicts between any nation-states, Matlock proposes (1999: 436).

Huntington describes the third phase in intercivilization relations in which there are eight major civilizations that would hold primary roles in the global affairs in the Post-Cold War world: Sinic, Japanese, Hindu, Islamic, Orthodox, Western, Latin American and African (1996: 45-46). In the first phase (before 1500 A.D), the

interaction among civilizations was sporadic and alienated due to slow means of communication and large geographical distance among them. However, in the second phase, from 8<sup>th</sup> century until 19<sup>th</sup> century, due to the colonial expansion of the West, a master-slave relation was present between the West and other civilizations. The third phase, however, came to be immensely different from the previous two phases as the postcolonial nations improved in relation to the West, and fostered their own identities and culture. Due to increasing civilizational consciousness, interaction among civilizations increased and the global politics that was previously defined through a Eurocentric lens came to be viewed through the prism of multiculturalism; and consequently, intercivilizational conflicts became more prevalent than intracivilizational clashes of ideologies (48-54).

M. Shahid Alam in his book *Challenging the New Orientalism: Dissenting Essays on the "War Against Islam"*, challenges Huntington's observation of history regarding the first phase when "contacts between civilizations were intermittent or nonexistent" (1996: 21). He argues that history of civilizations "has been one of nearly continuous contacts - via trade, migrations, wars and transmission of diseases- amongst all major civilizations in the eastern hemisphere" (2006: 26). Moreover, Alam views the second phase in the world history as the development of a very concrete dichotomy of "a dominant Core and a subjugated Periphery"; the Cold war as the clash of the Center and "a segment of that Periphery"; and the end of Cold War as the triumph of the Core in terms of "a new phase in global capitalism...in the guise of IMF, World Bank and WTO" (27). He also considers nation-states and civilizations synonymous since the Sinic, Japanese and Hindu civilizations are represented by single core states, China, Japan, and India respectively; and the Orthodox and Western civilizations are represented by Russia and the US. So the problematic

empirical relationship of states and civilizations can as well be interpreted as “inter-state conflict over interests - say, between United States and China, or China and Russia” (29).

## **2.2. Humanist Critique of Civilizational Clash Thesis**

Amartya Sen, Lamont professor of Economics at Harvard University and Nobel Laureate has reviewed the civilizational clash thesis in his book *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (2006). In this critique, like many others, the very concept of civilization as the main feature of human identity has come under siege. Sen is of the view that placing the whole fabric of human history in the straightjacket of civilizations is a very concrete system of classifying people and dismisses all the possibilities of various pluralistic and varied identities that a human being possesses. He theorizes these problems as “identity disregard” and “assumption of singular affiliation” (Gallagher 2006: 74). “Identity disregard” suggests that it depends on circumstances and specific situations in which one finds oneself that a particular identity is highlighted and the others go into background, whereas “assumption of singular affiliation” connotes that identity can never be monolithic and all aspects of it can be equally meaningful or meaningless. Sen argues in his article, “What Clash of Civilizations?”, that insisting on a singular religious identity of people as the most important is placing them “inside a unique set of rigid boxes” and that “the people of the world can be classified according to many other partitions, each of which has some - often far-reaching - relevance in our lives: nationalities, locations, classes, occupations, social status, languages, politics, and many others” (2006). He goes on to say that “identity is not a matter of discovery; it's a matter of choice” and the deciding factor is feasibility- how others see us. Sen is also exceedingly humanistic in

approaching the civilizational clash thesis. He warns that such speculation is sure to highlight differences among people and consequently leads to violence, enmity and conflict. "The insistence...on a choiceless singularity of human identity not only diminishes us all, it also makes the world much more flammable" (2006). Being critical of Huntington's version of history, he contends that it fails to notice "the extent of internal diversities within these civilizational categories" and "the reach and influence of interactions...across the regional borders of so-called civilizations" (2006). Sen points out that in placing India under Hindu civilization Huntington has taken for granted the historical reality that India is the home to as many Muslims as Hindus and accommodates Sikhs, Parsees, and Christians as well. Besides that it favors secularism as a religious philosophy and thus cannot be precisely designated as a Hindu state as suggested by Huntington (Bowden 2008: 3).

Edward Said (2001) has also been critical of the "clash-of-civilizations" thesis and denounced it in his article "The Clash of Ignorance" by asserting that it is a rather vague and generalized way to widen the already present gulf between the West and the rest. Rather than finding out the "fault lines" between civilizations one should try to search for parallels. Regarding its relevance to 9/11 attacks he states,

The carefully planned and horrendous, pathologically motivated suicide attack and mass slaughter by a small group of deranged militants has been turned into proof of Huntington's thesis...In fact, Huntington is an ideologist, someone who wants to make "civilizations" and "identities" into what they are not: shut-down, sealed-off entities that have been purged of the myriad currents and countercurrents that animate human history... (2001)

In his lecture, "The Myth of the 'Clash of civilizations'" (1996), Said offers an Orientalist critique and points out that this is not a new paradigm of post-Cold War politics; it's just a "recycled version" of the same Cold War paradigm that suggests a war of ideologies between different nations. The only difference is that this time war

is fought on “many fronts” in the form of Islamic and Confucian ideologies as the opponents of Western civilization, which previously was only between the ideologies of Communism and Capitalism. He also holds Huntington accountable for focusing on the US as the locus of his argument, and suggesting ways to maintain its hegemony on other nations by any means. In Said’s view,

So strong and insistent is Huntington’s notion that other civilizations necessarily clash with the West and so relentlessly aggressive and chauvinistic is his prescription for what the West must do to continue winning, so that the reader is forced to conclude that he’s really most interested in continuing and expanding the Cold War by other means, rather than advancing ideas that might help us to understand the current world scene or ideas that would try to reconcile between cultures.<sup>1</sup> (2005: 3)

Said’s second contention is that Huntington’s sources through which he builds his thesis are “journalism and popular demagoguery”, rather than “theory or serious scholarship” and that the idea of civilizational clash is not original and has actually been borrowed from Bernard Lewis’s article *The Roots of Muslim Rage* (1990) (4). Like Sen, Said also talks about the utilization of the thesis in terms of world peace as it primarily focuses on clashes and asks, “Doesn’t it mobilize nationalist passions and therefore nationalist murderousness?” (5). Furthermore, he argues that the definition of culture keeps on changing in a single civilization and also there are “counter cultures” in opposition to “official culture” that make a single culture pluralistic and fertile, so to talk about civilizations as monolithic entities “does damage to their variety, their diversity, their sheer complexity of elements, their radical hybridity” (10). In the vein of his Orientalist critique, Said calls this an interventionist plan to justify attack on Islamic and Confucian civilizations by proposing a supposed geography and conflict of cultures.

### **2.3. Empirical Testing**

Critics like Jonathan Fox (2002), Errol Henderson and Richard Tucker (2001), Bruce Russett, John Oneal and Michaelene Cox (2000), Ted Robert Gurr (1994), Philip Roeder (2003), and Andrej Tusicisny (2004) have analyzed the clash-of-civilizations thesis quantitatively to reach on scientific, unbiased conclusions, which previously have been based on “anecdotal” reviews according to Fox (2002: 415). In general, the empirical testing of the theory has not validated Huntington’s propositions about the intense clash of Islam and the West, and the rise of intercivilizational clashes after the Cold War period. Yet some critics like Tusicisny’s research yielded some favorable results that contribute in making the theory a helpful explanation of the post-Cold War era. The quantitative analysis of Huntington’s theory can generally be placed in two broad categories: one deals with the intercivilizational clashes and the other examines intrastate conflicts. Henderson and Tucker’s research studied “the relationship between civilization membership and inter-state war” (2001: 317), while Russett, Oneal and Cox (2000) specifically focused on the armed inter-state clashes that involved militarized action as well. In the second category, Gurr, Fox and Roeder tried to view the cultural-clash theory with respect to ethnic violence within individual civilizations and states. The purpose, however, that is common to both categories of researchers is that both try to measure the extent to which cultural differences are responsible for sparking clashes in the post-Cold War era. They all have come to the conclusion that cultural differences do not have any important role in increasing the likelihood of conflicts between civilizations, rather the intracivilizational conflicts certainly increased in the period following Cold War: “militarized interstate disputes across civilizational boundaries became less common, not more so, as the Cold War waned” (Russett, Oneal & Cox 2000: 583). Nevertheless, the Islamic and African

civilizations were the ones that experienced the highest ratio of cultural clashes within them, thus supporting Huntington's claim to a little extent that Islam is the most belligerent of all civilizations. In short, the studies unanimously state that the probability of Islam/Chinese and the West's clash is minimal as the factual analysis clarifies.

Jonathan Fox, in his article "Ethnic Minorities and the Clash of Civilizations: A Quantitative Analysis of Huntington's Thesis" (2002), has empirically tested the major propositions of Huntington's theory. He sought to find out whether the conflicts belonging to different civilizations have increased in number and intensity after the Cold War or not. Secondly, he tested the prediction of the clash between Islam and the West. His analysis contradicts Huntington's theory as "civilizational conflicts make up only a minority of ethnic conflicts in the post-Cold War era, constituting 37.8 per cent (104 out of 275) of the conflicts" (2002: 427). Furthermore, the probability of the Islam/West clash is not supported by the data as clashes between these two civilizations "constitute a small minority of civilizational conflicts" (415).

In another article, "Religion and State Failure: An Examination of the Extent and Magnitude of Religious Conflict from 1950 to 1996", Fox notes that Islamic groups have been far less involved in intercivilizational conflicts than Christian groups, thus proving Huntington's most debated proposition regarding Islam's bloody borders wrong (2004: 70). Yet it is important to note that these quantitative analyses are carried out by Fox either before September 11, 2001, or do not include this event. There have been more comprehensive and accurate attempts at testing the theory by critics like Andrej Tusicisny.

In his article, "Civilizational Conflicts: More Frequent, Longer, and Bloodier?", Tusicisny has carried out a comprehensive analysis of the three basic proposition of Huntington's thesis. His findings regarding "Islam's bloody borders" and clashes within civilizations comply with the results of other empirical studies that I have discussed previously. His results reinforce that "the strife between Islam and the West remains marginal (3.5% of all conflict years)" (2004: 496). Yet by using a more broader and authentic set of data he shows that core-intercivilizational conflicts increased in the post-Cold war period and "the frequency and intensity of conflicts between civilizations remain virtually as high as in the Cold War" (497). Thus, he proves that "the clash of civilizations seems to be a real and important phenomenon" (497).

After reviewing the empirical test results of the cultural-clash thesis, it is observed that the studies conducted before and after 9/11 attacks have not predicted the Islam/West clash likely in future; also, the empirical tests conducted before 9/11 do not prove that Islam has bloody borders, but some of the post-9/11 empirical tests confirm Islam's belligerent status due to its intracivilizational clashes and particularly due to its open attack on the US in September 2001.

#### **2.4. 9/11 as "Clash-of-Civilizations"**

Criticism on Huntington's theory can be divided into two periods: pre-9/11 and post-9/11. Before September 11, 2001, it was criticized for its concept of civilizations, categorization of seven civilizations, its selective use of history and its focus on clash rather than formulating a framework for world peace. Critics like Said have also indicted it for extending the project of American imperialism by proposing to exploit the differences between weak civilizations. Thus, before the attacks of September 11

it was not considered much relevant to the future of post-Cold War politics. However, as soon as the planes struck the towers on September 11, Huntington was hailed as the prophetic and futuristic critic of American foreign policy as his prophecy of Islam-West clash had been fulfilled.

Storming the print and electronic media right after the attacks were the speeches of President Bush who used the “clash-of-civilizations” framework for legitimizing war on terror. In “Civilization and Civilized in Post-9/11 US Presidential Speeches”, Tanja Collet has carried out the discourse analysis for the presidential speeches of three years (2001-2004) after the attacks. The corpus of the speeches show that they make frequent use of the word “civilization/civilized” and resort to constructing the dichotomy of an innocent, civilized victim vs. a shrewd, terrorizing attacker. In this way it shapes up the New World Order that Huntington predicted in which “Othering is achieved...by creating narrative dichotomies that oppose civilization to its negation, terror, and by formulating membership categories, such as civilized world/civilized nation, that construct ‘standardized relational pairs’ with their implied absolute contrasts” (2009: 472-473). Consequently, the Other is demonized and the dichotomy of good/evil is constructed to convince people of a lethal, demonic enemy and to incite them for revenge. Collet cites a number of excerpts from the speeches that prove her argument, for example:

The United States is presenting a clear choice to every nation: stand with the civilized world, or stand with the terrorists. (Bush, 6 October 2001); ...terrorists are plotting further destruction...for their war against civilization (12 September 2002); There is no neutral ground – no neutral ground – in the fight between civilization and terror, because there is no neutral ground between good and evil, freedom and slavery, and life and death. (Bush, 19 March 2004: as cited in Collet 2009: 463)

She, therefore, concludes that “through the activation of a ‘clash of civilizations’ frame” support is gathered and sympathy is earned “for the so-called

‘war on terror’, which has claimed numerous lives worldwide and continues to do so with no end in sight of the hostilities” (473).

With the tragedy of September 11, Huntington’s thesis gained new currency in the official discourse of the US administration; it found its way in the rhetoric surrounding the war on terror. Michael Dunn affirms this in his article “‘The ‘Clash of Civilizations’ and the ‘War on Terror’”. He posits that “[t]he concept of clashing civilizations, then, is deeply ingrained in the thought structures of Western diplomats, scholars, intelligence analysts, officials and Presidents” (2006: 4). He cites critics like Bernard Lewis and Gilles Kepel who resort to “Islam’s bloody borders” as an explanation of the 9/11 attacks. Elucidating Lewis’s post-9/11 argument he writes, “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’” (3). According to this view, the intrinsically violent nature of Islam is what propelled the attacks apparently, and revivified the clash-of-civilizations paradigm. Dunn takes Huntington’s argument one step further and maintains that his theory also “plays into the hands of the al-Qaeda leadership”; the clash-of-civilizations rhetoric “cut both ways” as it provides “an ‘us versus them’ discourse” to the U.S. and al-Qaeda both (5). Similarly, Philpott in “The Challenge of September 11<sup>th</sup> to Secularism in International Relations,” (2002) suggests,

If international relations scholars are to understand the violence of September 11, then they must come to understand how religious movements like radical Islamic revivalism, acting on their political theology, challenge the Westphalian synthesis, the fundamental authority structure of the international order. (92)

The dominant official 9/11 story was believed fervently by the American public as various surveys, conducted in the years since the attacks, reveal. M. Tessler,

in his article “Arab and Muslim Political Attitudes: Stereotypes and Evidence from Survey Research” (2004), has cited the results of a national poll conducted by the University of Michigan’s Institute for Social Research. According to the poll, 54 percent of the Americans believe that the September 11 attacks were a clear manifestation of an intense clash between Islam and Christianity.

Bottici and Challand have demonstrated how the workings of a political myth turn it into a popular truth in the social and media spheres in “Prophecy Rethinking Political Myth: The Clash of Civilizations as a Self-Fulfilling”. They analyze the clash-of-civilizations theory and call it a “self-fulfilled prophecy” (2006: 215). Through their analysis, they find out that “through this *work on myth* that the idea of a clash between civilizations has come to work as a powerful image, on the basis of which people not only think about the world, but also act within it” (322). This “work on [cultural clash] myth” is performed by both electronic and print media. *The New York Times* devoted a separate column to it named ‘A Nation Challenged’ and Washington Post published columns that warned the government of the “awakening” of Islam (323). *Foreign Affairs* that published the original “clash-of-civilizations” article of Huntington and its critique previously “launched a new special issue entitled ‘Long war in the making’, and its leading article argued that the real roots of the attacks on the Twin Towers lay in seventh-century Arabia” (325). Similarly, the use of icons by the scholars created a “repertoire of *topos*” that helped transform the civilizational theory into a self-fulfilled myth. Examples of the icons include the pictures of “fanatical bearded man with an open mouth and eyes wide open or of the hooded men with the Koran and hatchet in their hands” (326). “[T]he prophecy of a clash between civilizations”, they conclude, “when launched by Huntington, was, to a certain extent, already self-fulfilled” (330).

## 2.5. September 11 Attacks- a dominant *topos/leitmotif* of American Popular Culture

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. He titled the first chapter of his book “Introduction: 9/11 Questions (and Answers)” as the whole debate of American art after 9/11 revolves around the questions that the attacks generated, according to Melnick. The answers that are given in the political realm and the explanations presented by the cultural artists are what constitute post-9/11 culture (2009: 3).

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. He calls 9/11 an “answer to every question now” and “a sort of magical-thinking response” that produce “ritualized invocations of 9/11” (12). He cites video games based on the character of Osama Bin Laden (an apt example of this ritualized expression), allowing the players to maim, kill or torture him in a perverse manner (12).

Melnick published his book in 2009 and is of the view that still the landscape of American cultural art is “under construction” (2009: 4); it still needs time to evolve further and thus the cultural artifacts that he analyzes in his book are a “series of sketches that make no claim to completeness”, nor present “a total vision when taken together” (16). The responses are given “too soon” (Melnick 2011: 221) to

make up history. In his view studying of 9/11 art expressions is documenting “history of the present” (2009: 5). It is also for this reason that he describes 9/11 art as “decentralized and anti-monumentalist” (4). It is decentralized in the sense that it deviates, in meaningful ways, from the official narrative of 9/11 and anti-monumentalist in being noncanonical and embracing the high and low, both forms of cultural art, to shape 9/11 culture. He believes that to get an authentic and real picture of what is produced in the name of art after 9/11, one has to take into account every form of cultural expression from high-brow novels to personal stories, from telethons to newspaper columns, from movies to songs, from comic strips to even rumors that were spread in the days following 9/11 (17). “The “culture” of 9/11”, he posits, “is a multimedia culture...encompassing numerous demographic, affective and affinity groups” (4) and is “characterized above all by its on-the-fly practicality” (5). It is the characteristic of 9/11 culture that it is created when needed, sometimes to give people’s fear and grief expression, and at others to reveal its complexities that many tried to do by creating works of art.

Melnick demonstrates how the notion of 9/11 in its cultural and social sense has evolved over the years since the event took place. The immediate crude response to the attacks was the official narrative that relied on the repetition of “the same keywords and phrases in an attempt to control the possible meaning of September 11 tragedy” (2). He cites the novelist Sharon Schwartz to show how strongly creative artists disapproved it. Schwartz calls it “post-9/11 “butchery”” and “not bloody, but insidious attack on the common language” (as cited in Melnick 2009: 2). It is called “the language of the crusader” by Michael H. Hunt in “In the Wake of September 11: The Clash of What?” (2002). He says that “strong strains of fundamentalism” are present in the approach of both the parties involved in this conflict and “[t]he talk

from the White House, the Justice Department, and the Pentagon draws from a familiar nationalist repertoire that reduces complex situations to easily grasped terms familiar from other times of tension and fear" (425).

Melnick shows by giving the example of a comic strip that 9/11 became a cliché and a "readymade" (5) answer for every question that was asked to the government. In the *Doonesbury* strip the spokesman for the President confidently says, "It's 9-11, 24-7" (as cited in Melnick 2009: 2). This answer clarifies that in the hands of the government the idiom of 9/11 lost its myriad implications and morphed into a fixed, absolutist explanation of all their actions.

For its utility in terms of money and the sacred touch that it renders to cultural works, 9/11 is used "as a cheap shout-out - a way to establish authority, seriousness of purpose, [and] marketability" (7). The attacks on the WTC are seen as an assault on American economy and so in the wake of September 11, advertisers and multinational corporations urged the people to buy American products as it highlighted their American identity that is strongly entwined with corporate or consumer culture (Dickinson 2005: 271). In doing this, they "reweave[d] the sublime into the practical, the everyday, and the mundane" (272). The tragedy was sublime and they linked it with the ordinary, everyday lives to achieve their purpose of increasing consumption. This relationship of economy and patriotism is explored by Greg Dickinson in "Selling democracy: Consumer culture and citizenship in the wake of September 11" (2005). Dickinson analyzed the advertisements published in six weeks after the attacks and has reached interesting conclusions about the way 9/11 was used to boost the economy. According to him, the more recent ads after the tragedy also used "commodification of the flag" (276) to draw a link between patriotism, citizenship and economy. Overall, Dickinson maintains in the aftermath of 9/11 consumption was

suggested “as powerfully mundane modes of responding to the awfulness of the unleashed terror” (282).

The rampant use of 9/11 in rhetoric of war and revenge by the Bush administration generated several counter-narratives in the form of conspiracy theories and “9/11 truth” (2009: 2). There were four major conspiracy theories: Zionists/Mossads’ attack on American economy; 9/11 Truth Movement; LIHOP (Letting It Happen On Purpose) and MIHOP (Making It Happen on Purpose); factual inconsistencies (Knight 2008: 170). Critics argue that it was not Muslims’ but Jews’ doing who are in charge of the world in a secret way; others maintain that the Bush government knew about it beforehand but did not do anything to stop it. Similarly, adherents of MIHOP hold that the government was the real instigator of the attacks; to prove this accusation on the Bush administration, they present a list of factual discrepancies that prove the attacks were pre-planned and a part of the big conspiracy to justify the occupation of oil-rich Muslim countries.

According to Melnick these 9/11 truths or conspiracy theories perform two important functions. Firstly, they signify “an act of protest” (2009: 48), “a key grassroots rebellion” against the state-controlled meaning of 9/11 and the “corporate actors” who control American media to support the cause of the US administration (43); secondly, they localize this national tragedy to highlight race issues in America.

After 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” (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” (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” (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 applecart of 9/11 memorialization” (23).

## **2.6. Approaches towards September 11 Attacks in Post-9/11 American Literature**

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 to find out what approaches does it take up towards the attacks has been carried out here. It can be said 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 paradigm, 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. Its review is important for my study as the analysis rests on comparison of Urdu short stories with that written by American authors.

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: 126). Accordingly, in cultural artifacts and literature the September 11 attacks were “politicized, co-opted [and] distorted” (2008: 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” (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” (14), refuses “incommensurability, and prompt[s] attempts to place 9/11 into an historical framework” (3). Keniston & 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” (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: 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 that, the attacks were said to be "a cultural rupture" and discontinuity in history (Rothberg 2008: 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" (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"" (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" (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 (130).

Chuck's *Lullaby* as analyzed by Lance Rubin in her article "We're the Culture That Cried Wolf": Discourse and Terrorism in Chuck Palahniuk's *Lullaby*" (2008) reflects on the post-9/11 environment of xenophobia, jingoism, scrutiny, and questions the monolithic official interpretation of the attacks that focused itself only on Islamic terrorists attacking the superpower, USA. The whole novel is a "subversive horror text" fraught with subtle links that effectively critique post-9/11 America on many levels (162). Chuck, in an indirect allegorical way, criticizes the policing of speech and governing of thoughts by the government-controlled media particularly. *Lullaby* is a poem that is lethal; anybody who hears it dies at the spot. The narrative's protagonist, Streator imagines how people would react if he makes the poem public. The fear and panic that would spread is shown to be similar to the post-9/11 America. According to Rubin, "Envisioning how language would be controlled by the government in the same manner...[Streator] presciently foresees a policing of discourse in a manner that came to fruition after 9/11" (2008: 166). Also, he imagines people "chanting prayers [and] singing hymns" (as cited in Rubin: 167) that refers to the culture of commemoration and a religious wave that surged up in the US after the attacks. Besides interpreting the lullaby to be an allegory for 9/11, "it can also be seen as a *solution* to the fearful self-censorship that characterized post-9/11 discourse" (169). It may, as explained in Rubin's analysis, free the minds of the people who are overpowered and governed by the mass media as transgressive acts (like *Lullaby*) and terror are similar in the sense that they both subvert the dominant narrative. On yet another level, Rubin sees it as "cultural lullaby", the slow overpowering effect of the mass media that stifles free and creative thinking (169). Chuck in his fictional world of the lethal poem goes to the extent of criticizing America's decision to wage war on Iraq and Afghanistan in revenge. When Streator and his friends find out about the

deadly lullaby, they set out on a journey to collect and wipe out all its copies wherever they may be present, but they end up killing people and burning books in order to do so. Here, Chuck hints at the dissolving line between the Us/Other dichotomy: the US so as to punish its enemies attacked innocent civilians in Afghanistan and Iraq, stooping to the very level of and enacting the same feat as the terrorists. They became the very Other they vilified. As Rubin states, "Killing in order to save, imprisoning in order to keep free, and creating distinctions on exclusive terms between "us and "them", all reinforce the idea that discursive paradigms are never neutral" (172). Streator's reaction to the death of his daughter and wife is also "a fitting metaphor for America's reaction" to the tragedy of 9/11 (174). To cope with trauma, Streator builds models of towns and buildings, as an effort to "make order out of chaos" (as cited in Rubin: 174), but after all this process of building, he smashes the models to pieces in his rage. This does nothing but heighten his mental agony when he limps due to the pierced shards of models in his feet. This "cycle of building and destroying" characterized the American policy to deal with post-9/11 national trauma; trying to deal with trauma by the therapy of war accentuated the sense of loss rather than subsiding it (174). It barred the way for any "imaginative, creative responses to dealing with the tragic complexities of 9/11" as Rubin analysis of *Lullaby* suggests (174). The novel does not just point out the fallacies, but goes much further and "presents alternative solutions for reacting to the events of 9/11 through Helen's coping strategies" (175). Helen tries to find her way out of the maze in the historical art museum and scars the antiques to get rid of a past that haunts her and "to assert herself against the entrapping maze of history" (175). She is unlike Streator, does not wallow in her sorrow and "uses [her] losses constructively". According to Rubin, the American reaction to the attacks should have been like this, a positive

constructive attitude that might have steered the world on its way to achieving peace, yet “*Lullaby* suggests that 9/11 gave the nation an opportunity it did not take” (175).

Along with some clear voices of dissent that approached the events of September 11 with skepticism, there were expressions that conformed to the popular sentiments by reiterating the dominant logic of conflict between fundamental Islam and the US. Mohan G. Ramanan in his article “The West and Its Other: Literary Responses to 9/11”, deals with the representation of terror and its agent Islamic fundamentalism in post-9/11 fiction. Ramanan is repelled by “the way those representations often demonize Islam when tackling Jihadi terror, the manner in which the representations underscore the Huntington thesis of the clash of civilizations and offer pseudo Islamic scholarship as a justification” (2010: 125). He contends that texts like Updike’s *Terrorist* participate in the ongoing “process of ‘othering’ Muslims” which began as a consequence of establishing America as a symbol of democracy of whose enemy is terror in the form of Islamic fundamentalism (127). The attacks along with giving rise to pro-war rhetoric “also manufactured a new American nationalism which enabled the US to see itself as innocent in relation to the demonic other” (127); this American consciousness of the “end of innocence” contributed to the overall environment of xenophobia in which anyone who looked like a Muslim was taken to be a terrorist. Ramanan, in his analysis, charges Updike of caricaturizing the Islamic fundamentalist, Ahmad, of using his pseudo-scholarship on Islam for making fun of the religion (like in the raisin-virgin controversy) and of resorting to “stereotypical formulations” (130). According to Ramanan, Updike’s novel uses Islamic knowledge and sources that are not considered authentic and credible by the critics; this casual attitude towards such a sensitive issue creates a kind

of “flippancy” and one can “see how the binary opposition of civilizations posited by Huntington, takes a literary toll in terms of credibility” (129).

Delillo’s *Falling Man*, that unlike *Terrorist*, is often rated highly by the critics for its philosophical and humane approach towards the attacks, is also criticized by Ramanan for it loses its human impact by its overemployment of the 9/11 image as seen on TV. “The horror of the event gets sanitized and blunted by a Baudrillardian hyper-reality of the image”, he argues. In *Falling Man* too, there is a subtle reflection of Updike in how he portrays the Islamic terrorists (128). Toby Litt writes about Hammad, the terrorist who is on one of the planes that hit the towers,

Delillo’s 9/11 terrorists read like a weak echo of earlier Delillo gangs...intensifying their all-excluding faith. Here is Hammad, similarly pitying of unbelievers, similarly tunnel-visioned: “This entire life, this world of lawns to water and hardware stacked on endless shelves, was total, forever, illusion. In the camp on the windy plain they were shaped into men. They fired weapons and set off explosives. They received instruction in the highest jihad, which is to make blood flow, their blood and that of others.” (2007)

Contrary to these American responses, Ramanan finds Mohsin Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and Kiran Desai’s *The Inheritance of Loss* “more adequate responses” to 9/11 that “show a vital difference in perspective between ethnic writers and their Anglo-Saxon counterparts” (131). Hamid’s novel has been appreciated for it uses “Sept. 11, 2001, as a fulcrum to question and challenge American verities” (Kloer 2007). The novel is valued for it gives voice to the Other. Changez, the disillusioned protagonist who has recently returned from the US talks to an American journalist who takes him to be some extremist mullah. Unlike the other stereotypical jihadist figures of 9/11 literature, he is a successful Preston graduate who adapts himself to the American culture and values perfectly. Nevertheless, the attacks on the towers prove to be unsettling for him in emotional and ideological ways. He realizes that his role in boosting the economy of a country that bombs his kin countries is only

like a janissary. Consequently, he “refuse[s] to participate any longer in facilitating the project of domination” (as cited in Jones and Smith 2010: 940) and returns to Pakistan as a schoolteacher. Reflecting on the character of Changez, Martin Jones and L.R. Smith call him “impeccably haute bourgeois”. “Yet, while the Europeans and Americans post-9/11 remain neurotically attached to their urbanity and their doubt, this is not the case with Hamid’s Changez” (2010: 940). In their article “Terror and the Liberal Conscience: Political Fiction and Jihad - The Novel Response to 9/11” (2010), Martin Jones and L. R. Smith explore how the “new urban character: the jihadi” (933) is represented in 9/11 fiction. Analyzing Updike’s *Terrorist* and Delillo’s *Falling Man* in comparison to *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and Richard Flanagan’s *The Unknown Terrorist*, they find out “novelists like Delillo, McEwan, McInerney, Houellebecq, and Updike consider Islamist terror an existential threat to the political order of the city rather than a “symbolic” response to American hubris and its single-minded pursuit of global financial and political power” (944). According to them, these novelists portray stereotypical caricatures of the terrorists without providing any insight into their psyches. In contrast to them, for Flanagan and Hamid the terrorist is either a self-created character of the US to justify its imperial ends or it is a justified response to resist the hegemony of its economic, technological and cultural onslaught. They contend, “Terrorism from this perspective is both a Western invention and a response to Western imperialism” (940). Reading Flanagan’s novel, Jones and Smith see it as exploring “the problematic democratic response to the political environment engendered by 9/11” (940). Commenting on the American reaction to 9/11, Flanagan says in the novel that terrorism has become a complex term with paradoxical meanings as “[a]ll around the West you see the language of Stalinism is being invoked” (as cited in Smith & Jones: -941). Flanagan is an

Australian writer and his narrative is set in Sydney where the police finds three planted bombs that are about to go off. Although Tariq al-Hakim, the computer dealer-cum-drug seller, has no connections with the terrorist plot, he and his girlfriend Doll are sought by the police and are presented as “homegrown jihadists” (941). This story is successfully made to look true by the Prime Minister, John Howard, who colludes “with a willing media” and “by feeding pliable journalists like Cody with a diet of disinformation” (941). *The Unknown Terrorist*, although set in Australia, yet certainly being a “stand-off between truth and power” (as cited in Smith & Jones: 944) generally comments on the strategies of the US government to deal with terrorism at home and abroad. May be as Jones and Smith suggest, its dedication “to former Australian Guantanamo internee, David Hicks, and the biblically challenged identification of Jesus Christ as “history’s first suicide bomber” can explain as to what broader statement does it make (941).

Ethnic American writers like Laila Halaby, Claire Messud and H. M. Naqvi have also registered the effect of the attacks on people of different racial and religious backgrounds. Laila Halaby’s novel *Once in a Promised Land* (2008) deals with racial tensions and fading tolerance of the American society towards immigrants. The story circles around an Arab American couple whose marriage is turning out to be a failure; Halaby contextualizes this deterioration of a relationship in the larger political equation of post-9/11 America. Jasim and Salwa, both are harmed and mistrusted by their American colleagues (Jake and Marcus) with whom they have developed close connections after drifting apart from each other. Discussing the novel, Aaron DeRosa comments that in the case of Jasim and Salwa “the promise of an inclusive America that accepts Arabs and Muslims is proven false” (2011: 4). According to her, the mistake made by their American colleagues is that they “the Other [they] want to

identify is the terrorist Other, but the Other we seek to address in scholarly discourse is the Arab and Muslim Other”<sup>2</sup> (4). This paradoxical expectation problematizes the issue of representation of immigrant Americans in fiction.

Claire Messud’s *The Emperor’s Children* (2006) is a comedy of manners that criticizes the American culture through the lives of three youngsters who did not succeed to achieve much in life. Carla Spivack analyzes the themes of these novels in her article, “Disappearing Civil Liberties: The Case of Post-9/11 Fiction”:

[...] Claire Messud, *The Emperor’s Children* (2006); Ken Kalfus, *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country* (2006). These works...to one degree or another satirize American society’s response to the attacks, skewering its narcissism, its oblivion to world history, the reassurance of happy endings and its need for the myth of the perfect community. (2010: 870)

H. M. Naqvi’s *Home Boy* (2010), is another powerful narrative that is based on the lives of three Pakistani boys whose lives change drastically after 9/11. The attacks prove to be shattering for their worlds; they are fired from their jobs and face discrimination on religious basis. The situation is exacerbated to the extent that one of them is deported from the US. The tale of these three young Muslim boys has been vividly captured in all its emotional intensity by Naqvi.

In short, fiction that is written after 9/11 is of the same types as the reactions to the tragedy. In the immediate aftermath, the only story that was available for common people was the one produced by the US government on media channels. Theoretically reliant on the cultural clash paradigm of Islam and the West, the official story has been called the dominant narrative that is couched in words fraught with sentiments of revulsion, revenge and war. Later, when people managed to gain back their senses, skepticism grew and counter-narratives, as opposed to the official narrative, developed. Four or five years following the tragedy, when a considerable

distance was achieved in terms of space and memory, cultural theorists, philosophers and all fields of literary theory responded by dealing with the problems and fallout of the attacks in their own distinct ways. The reflection of all these three phases of the post-9/11 period can be seen in the fictional world of what is called 'literature after 9/11'. As it is seen in the reviewed literature, there are works that fall back on cultural-clash rhetoric, generalize the acts of a group of terrorists to the whole community, and present stereotypical image of the Other. While in contrast, there are fictions that approach the tragedy with a flexible and open mind, reviewing it on a human level, not only in terms of the immediate victims but also for the whole American nation that includes Arab Americans, Jews and South Asians.

It has been twelve years since the attacks of September 11 and therefore one finds a large corpus of cultural and literary works that respond to the tragedy. After reviewing the available relevant literature related to 9/11 literature and fiction, it is evident that post-9/11 short fiction appears to be a less researched area. It is the phenomenal novels of the literary stalwarts that manage to attract all the attention and critical appraisal, thus pushing the short fiction in background. My research study, therefore, fills this gap by studying what approaches does short fiction take towards the September 11 attacks. In the next chapter, the selected short fiction is analyzed within the theoretical framework of cultural-clash thesis as proposed by Samuel Huntington in 1996. In order to bring out the differences in the approach of Pakistani and American writers, I have picked up five stories from Urdu literature and five from American. In addition to highlighting the difference in their manner of tackling the issue of 9/11, the analysis outlines other approaches (if any) that the writers utilize in their stories.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> This quote has been taken from the transcript of the lecture, "The Myth of the Clash of Civilizations" delivered at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst (1996). Edward Said, in this 35 minutes lecture contends that Huntington's argument focuses on ways to sustain the dominance of the Western civilization and it is imperialistic in the sense that he suggests exploiting differences among other civilizations that can challenge its supremacy in the post-Cold war period. He also states that Huntington, in borrowing the phrase "clash of civilizations" from Lewis places civilizations in watertight compartments and also endorses the Us/them polarity that, ultimately, does not lead to a framework of world peace or true understanding of different cultures (2005). It has been retrieved from [http://www.mediaed.org/assets/products/404/transcript\\_404.pdf](http://www.mediaed.org/assets/products/404/transcript_404.pdf)

<sup>2</sup>The quote has been taken from the PDF document present on the following link  
<http://docs.lib.psu.edu/revisioning/2011/909/11/>

## CHAPTER 3

### REPRESENTATION OF SEPTEMBER 11 IN SELECTED SHORT FICTION IN ENGLISH

In the previous chapter, the review of relevant literature was presented. The current chapter discusses the selected short fiction in English for the purpose of identifying whether they vindicate the “clash-of-civilizations” thesis or in the other case take up some new or different approach towards the September 11 attacks. The five stories are discussed in the following order:

1. *The Varieties of Religious Experience* by John Updike
2. *Twilight of the Superheroes* by Deborah Eisenberg
3. *The Last Days of Muhammad Atta* by Martin Amis
4. *The Mutants* by Joyce Carol Oates
5. *Still-Life* by Don Delillo

#### 3.1. *The Varieties of Religious Experience* by John Updike

*The Varieties of Religious Experience* (2002) is a short story written in the wake of terrorist attacks on lower Manhattan. Its title aptly describes the approach Updike adopts to view the attacks. With the tool of fiction, he penetrates into the sensibility of three types of people that were affected by this catastrophe in a direct way. Dan Kellogg, his daughter Gretchen and granddaughter Victoria represent the people who see the attacks but do not suffer any loss in terms of immediate family members. Mohamed and Nawaf are the two Arab youths, who are the perpetrators of this crime and plan to knock down the towers. Jim Finch, a bond trader who works in WTC and Caroline, an old lady who is boarding the plane that is collided into the tower, are the direct victims of the crime that claims their lives and adds them to the list of people

who died in the attacks. Through these characters, Updike tries to grasp the viewpoint of three types of groups of people involved in this tragedy – the perpetrators, the direct victims, the spectators. All of them view 9/11 through the lens of religion that makes Updike's approach similar to Huntington's. Dan Kellogg's perception of God is changed in the aftermath of the attacks, Mohamed and Nawaf's actions are also made to represent their faith, and in so doing, Updike shows religion to be the primary distinguishing characteristic of people's identity.

To invoke God in the time of crisis has generally been considered a natural reaction, but in the wake of attacks on the towers religion and its relevance in this modern world becomes a sensitive question that is reflected upon by all the characters in the story. The story opens with Den Kellogg who is watching the scene of tragedy from his terrace and with that questioning his belief in God. The story opens with his first thought, "*There is no God*", that comes with the sight of crumbling towers. The absence of God is confirmed by the tragedy and this thought evolves as the story progresses; Dan is convinced that God has nothing to do with this tragedy as He does not exist. However, ironically he is forced to think that He is heartless and indifferent to the sufferings of the earthlings. Despite of being disillusioned of any Omnipotent presence, he visits the church to become the part of post-9/11 commemorating ceremonies. That only strengthens his disappointment and in Shakespearean overtones, he remarks, "Like dogs, we creep back to lick the hand of a God who, if He exists, has just given us a vicious kick. The harder He kicks, the more fervently we cringe and creep forward to lick His hand".

Contrary to Dan's character are Mohamed and Nawaf who are shown just a few days before materializing their plan. Their perception of religion and God is in

sheer contrast to Dan's and so is their belief in one Omnipotent God, and in His magnificence that is reflected in many forms in this world and life after death.

The other two victims of the attacks, Jim Finch and Caroline are manifestation of the fact that people turn to God when in trouble and especially when they know they are going to perish in near future. Finch is on the phone with his wife when WTC, in which he is present at the moment, begins to crash down. He blesses his wife, kids and everything they do in future without him; Caroline, too, asks God to have mercy on her soul as the plane starts to tremble and jerk and appears to be heading towards the ground.

The event of 9/11 as viewed by these characters of Updike's story seem to vindicate Huntington's concept of Islam having bloody borders and being the most bellicose of all religions. Analyzed in the broader spectrum of 9/11 fictional trends, it comes under the category of "demonizing and generalizing discourses" (De Castro 2011) whose primary sources are the George Bush's speeches, popular TV and cinematic rhetoric, and writers like Bernard Lewis and Huntington's predictive works that tend to stereotype a religion by attacking its fundamental values and principles. Apart from the perspective of Jim Finch and Caroline, he constructs a dichotomy of believers and non-believers or the Americans and Arabs who are in conflict with each other. On one side stands Dan Kellogg, who represents the secular and tolerant mind-set of an average American and on the other side is Mohamed and Nawaf, the "bad men" who find America a place where "everything is excessive and wasteful" like that stage where the half-naked dancers are performing, being emblems of "soured American opportunities".

Updike's tone is one of ridicule and contempt when he describes Mohamed and Nawaf's activities before the attack and their thoughts in reaction to the dancers' sight. His anger for the attackers cannot be called unjustified, but it extends to the very essence of their religion, thereby making him fall victim to a tendency of generalization that is accentuated, perhaps, because his nationalistic pride has been bruised and the notion of American exceptionalism, that a superpower like America can never be attacked, is proved wrong.

Mohamed and Nawaf are shown to be hypocrites and pseudo-religious believers getting drunk and watching the naked dancers dance before them in a Florida saloon. They view them with contempt and contrast them with pure virgins of Paradise that they will get shortly after materializing their plan. "These houris", Nawaf thinks, are "radiant negatives of the underfed sluts who mechanically writhed on this soiled stage". In this way, the terrorist's variety of religious experience seems to be monolithic; their source of inspiration for their scheme is not any other cause but the fundamentals of their religion, the concept of Paradise specifically that promises beautiful young women for the pious men. The description of Paradise is taken from the Quran and called "the ignorant *fellaheen*'s conception of Paradise". In doing this, Updike has almost taken all others factors of their motivation for granted; it may be a politicized exploitation of their religion, or a distorted version due to literal interpretation of the verses; thus he is being swept away by the popular current of the common sensibility which is bent upon proving Islam and the whole Muslim world a terrorist in the garb of false piety. In addition, the last Prophet, Mohamed, has also been presented as the torchbearer of humanity and the two terrorists are shown to be carrying the burden of the same civilizing mission that he carried centuries ago. They are shown to be anti-western. They think that Western beliefs of secularism and

freedom are evil and even TV and radio shows are temptations from Satan “designed to lure them into eternal mire”. Mohamed is aware of his responsibility to save the world from Satanic influences and “[i]t was to keep [his sisters] from ending as sluts that he had dedicated himself to the holy cause”. This implies that the roots of all this terror is the teachings of the Prophet, his civilizing mission like that of a colonizer and the teachings of the Holy book that gives no right to infidels to live freely on earth. The teachings of Jihad that motivate the believers to fight against evil are what, in Updike’s view, made Mohamed and Nawaf attack the twin towers. In this way, Updike views the whole event of 9/11 as a clash of Islam and the West. He quotes Quranic verses to portray a negative image of Islam that is intolerant, anti-western and bent upon killing infidels. Decontextualized use of the verses without any scholarly knowledge of the Quran shows lack of research and in-depth knowledge about the real causes of attackers’ motivation.

In addition, through the quoting of the two Quranic verses, a negative image of God has been portrayed. It shows Him as wrathful, hateful of the infidels and ready to “reduce this world and its distractions to a desert”. The American variety of religious experience is shaken and suffered by this conception of God and Kellogg is made to believe in no God as a consequence. Updike also questions the authenticity of the Muslim faith by calling it a “near truth that in the utterance become true”.

Absence of a pluralistic or broad-visioned approach is also evident in the dichotomies Updike has constructed in his story. One is of the believers and non-believers or ‘infidels’. Dan Kellogg, representative of the Americans who witnessed it from a distance, has been “purged” from the conception of god by the actions of the very people who believe strongly in one God. Now, that is reflective of Huntington’s

approach in believing Islam to be an “absolutist faith [which] draws a sharp line between those in the *Dar al-Islam* and those in the *Dar al-harb*” (1996: 264).

The other dichotomy is of the “good men” vs. “bad men”. “Bad men” who blew up the towers are often stopped by “good men”. Yet another is “houris/ underfed sluts” that is used to highlight the purity of Paradise in contrast to the moral depravity of American society.

Through the views of Kellogg’s granddaughter Victoria, a little simple, innocent, and unbiased touch is given to the event of 9/11. Her simple mind keeps her from viewing the attackers as belonging to a certain nationality and then going on to harbor emotions of hatred for the whole race; so she just calls them ‘bad men’. She also represents the hope of renewal and relapse after the tragedy and helps tone down the harshness that is created by the description of the attackers as mere perverts, hypocrites, and fundamentalists. At the end of the story, she refers to the blue lights that have appeared in place of the towers and remarks, “My teacher says the blue lights are like the rainbow. It means it won’t happen again”.

However, the writer’s stereotyped presentation of the terrorists and through them that of Islam, Quran and the essence of their faith squares with what Huntington calls demonizing one’s opponents - “As a fault line war intensifies, each side demonizes its opponents, often portraying them as subhuman, and thereby legitimates killing them” (1996: 271). It also proves that Updike takes 9/11 attacks as a civilizational clash and therefore all the narrow presuppositions about Islam and their faith echo in his voice. That “Islam’s borders are bloody and so are its innards” (258) and the faith is intrinsically belligerent and a constant and most potential threat to Western peace and prosperity.

### **3.2. *Twilight of the Superheroes* by Deborah Eisenberg**

“Twilight of the Superheroes” by Deborah Eisenberg is taken from her collection of short stories of the same name that came out in 2006. The story revolves around two main characters; Lucien, who owns an art gallery; and Nathaniel, his wife’s nephew whom he helps to settle in New York. The other important characters include Madison, Amity, Lyle who are Nathaniel’s friends and share his apartment; Rose and Isaac, parents of Nathaniel; Delphine, a girl with whom Nathaniel becomes friends in the wake of 9/11 attacks; Yoshi Matsumoto, who is the owner of the loft where Nathaniel and his friends are living on rent for three years when he is staying out of New York. Eisenberg writes in Woolf’s style using stream of the consciousness technique. The characters are shown on specific places when the story opens up, and are on the same places when it comes to a close. Their perception of the world, happenings in their lives and all other details of what they go through are revealed through the train of their memory as it moves back and forth, before and after the events of September 11.

The event of 9/11 acts as a dividing line in the story and readers get a sense of immense change in the post-9/11 New York (NY). In fact, a stark contrast is noticeable in the condition of pre and post-9/11 NY in the story. The city of NY before the attacks is portrayed as some magical city, immensely beautiful, full of opportunities, open and friendly for people belonging to every caste and race. The city is beautiful to the extent of being unearthly, heavenly and looks like a scene from some fairy tale from the descriptions of its buildings by Eisenberg:

There was that unearthly palace, the Chrysler building! There was The Empire State building, like a brilliant violet hologram! There were the vast, twinkling prairies of Brooklyn and New Jersey! And best of all, Nathaniel could make out the statues of Liberty holding her torch aloft...Stars glimmered nearby; towers and spires,

glowing emerald, topaz, ruby, sapphire, soared below. The avenues and bridges slung a trembling net of light across the rivers, over the buildings. Everything was spangled and dancing; the little boats glittered. The lights floated up and up like bubbles. (2006: 8)

After 9/11, all its beauty is gone and it is no more a magical city; it is struck by the cruel hand of reality and stands naked and defenseless as the “planes [tear] through the curtain of that blue September morning” (27). Even “the cloudless sky ignites” (13) and “tiny figures rain down from the towers” (14). The lights are replaced by void and darkness as the white ash covers everything including their sensibilities of reality leaving them confused and fearful of future.

With a tone of sheer nostalgia and grief, Eisenberg remarks upon the loss of openness, friendliness, and warmth NY had to offer. It was a place of safety for immigrants; it was free of racism and its air was clean and pure, without prejudice. But a single decisive moment of history changed that character of the city, which some thought to be inalterable. “New York had once been the threshold of an impregnable haven, then the city had become in an instant the country’s open wound” (27). It provided Nathaniel’s parents a safe refuge from the atrocities of the World War II when Jews were being executed like carrots. At that time of crisis, it proved to be a lifesaving source for them, and the opportunities of a progressive, peaceful life accrued within its borders.

The motif of buildings is also used to draw a contrast between the condition of NY before and after 9/11. Matsumoto’s apartment on the 35<sup>th</sup> floor was a symbol of luck, safety and beauty for Nathaniel and his friends. Its terrace was a magical gate to the view of heaven (NY), but the same terrace becomes their source to view the towers as they are attacked. In addition, Nathaniel’s job of an architect proves to be futile as compared to his friends’ jobs. Yet most importantly, the towers that were the symbol of American prosperity and capitalist economy are gone leaving a void.

Eisenberg portrays NY as a city that was not vulnerable and liable to any damage; it was as if a curtain was drawn between NY and the third world and it was oblivious of the atrocities that were going on behind the curtain. The attacks tore that curtain and brought NY in contact with the ugly face of the world that also made it look ugly. Eisenberg describes the world behind that curtain as brimming with anger due to economic and political injustice, poverty and lack of education, "the dark world that lay right behind it, of populations ruthlessly exploited, inflamed with hatred, and tired of waiting for change to happen by" (26). Here she does not seem to be echoing the same typical ideas purporting cultural-clash thesis as found in popular post-9/11 discourse while rationalizing the attacks. Realistically, she attributes the anger of the third world people to the injustice and inequality they are subjected to and does not stereotype them because of their religion.

She, like several other critics, is skeptical of how the terrorists were able to beat the world's latest and best security system. Incurious of their ethnic roots, she avoids passing any judgment on how the fundamentals of their religion affected the decision to attack America. She calls them "few ordinary looking men carrying box cutters" who "sped past the limits of international negotiation and the frontiers of technology" (21). Even "the box cutters" is used satirically to mock the statements of the U.S government who declared that the attackers were armed with the latest technological weapons and tools.

In the post-9/11 period, things start becoming normal again, the government assures its people to have taken measures for making security foolproof and for bringing all the criminals to books. However, Eisenberg is of the view that normality after such a dire catastrophe is only a façade, though the activity of restaurants is restored and people seem to go on with their lives as before. Mental tranquility and

the soothing sense of peace are irrevocably lost and it is only due to the “*propaganda movie*” of the authorities that people are made to come back to normal. Yet, “things, in a grotesque sense, are back to normal”. Underneath their smiles lurks a sense of fear, which stems primarily due to the fact that they are unaware of what “might be going on behind the curtain” (29). This fear of unknown has made them “a little bit nervous, a little uncomfortable, a little wary” (29).

The narrative is quite broad in scope and covers how common American citizens and the governmental authorities responded to the catastrophe. The reaction of one is juxtaposed with the other. Common people were confused about the reasons of the attacks. It was a controversial subject of debate, and they got sick of the process of understanding and following the official pronouncements, as there were so many coming each day. The pre-planned actions of the government were also put into practice; they were also “prepared behind a curtain” (26). Waving of American flag became the common practice; the Government increased security and started the process of interrogation to find out the real reasons of security failure. In a subtly satirical way, Eisenberg adds, “meanwhile, one read that executives had pocketed the savings of their investors and the pensions of their employees” (26). This shows the objectivity of her approach in dealing with a subject of grave national concern. Most writers were not able to maintain this mental poise and were swayed with the popular current of blaming Muslims only, creating a discourse of hatred and malice about them and having blind faith in the government’s innocence.

The political streak is subtly present in the story and Eisenberg remarks upon the capitalist system of economy as exploitative and “evil”. She develops the same link between capitalist economy and terrorism as Slavoj Žižek does in his book-length response to 9/11, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real!: Five Essays on September 11*

*and Related Dates* (2002)<sup>1</sup>. Through the comic of Nathaniel and its characters - Passivityman, Princess Prudence, Ambiguityperson, Captain Corporation - she criticizes America's role as a dominating and exploitative character in world economy with its corporate culture being a threat to world peace and prosperity. Here she takes up a Marxian approach towards analyzing world politics and economic framework, and avers that Captain Corporation is actually controlling the world's governments and through the power of capital, manipulating everything. It holds control over both type of state apparatuses - Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs) and Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs). The RSAs, called hard power by Huntington, include "massed armies and swaggering lieutenants"; the ISAs, termed as soft power are sources of information and they are "edited by a giant mouse" (2006: 20). Even the U.S government that is hailed as a symbol of democracy is "elected by the pharmaceutical companies" and the power of Captain Corporation even extends to the food manufacturing companies. So everything, from the food that Americans eat and the newspapers that they read to form their views about politics, is controlled by the capitalists, and they are successfully made to develop a false consciousness of being citizens of the world's most free and open society. The biggest ally of America, Israel is also seen as fundamentalist, not due to the monopoly of Zionist lobby, but because it is "run by Christian fundamentalists" (20). Eisenberg's approach is postmodernist and Orwellian in the sense that she is critical of the negative role of powerful governments everywhere in the world and is pluralistic in treating the sensitive issue of the 9/11 tragedy and the reasons leading up to that. Eisenberg like Derrida holds everyone equal for the severance of world peace and not only Muslims. Derrida, in 2002, said in one of his lectures,

I have absolute compassion for the victims of September 11, but that does not prevent me from saying that I do not believe in the

political innocence of anyone in this crime. And if my compassion for all of the innocent victims is infinite, it is so also in that I do not feel it only for those who lost their lives in America on September 11. Therein lies my interpretation of what should be what was named yesterday, according to the White House slogan, “infinite justice”: to not exonerate oneself from one’s own wrongs and the mistakes of one’s own politics, even when one has just paid the most horrific and disproportionate price for it. (as cited in Marrouchi 2003: 7)

In the same vein, Eisenberg exposes the double standard of American government that claims to believe in freedom of speech and free press. The reality comes out to be quite contrary to these claims as the Americans are told the status quo's version of the story of 9/11 and other views on this issue that are voiced “behind the curtain” are kept hidden. Delphine, who is an immigrant from Europe, expresses her anger over the fact that American newspapers do not tell the correct story and she prefers to learn news from the taxi drivers who are Pakistani, Uzbekistanis or Somalians. The news that is capable of marring America's image in the eyes of its own people is not reported like bombings in Afghanistan and Iraq and the ever going “flurry of alerts in kindergarten colors indicating the likelihood of terrorist attacks: yellow, orange, red, *duck!*” (2006: 25). Delphine mocks Nathaniel and others like him for their gullibility to be fooled so easily by their governments; they are unaware of the number of innocent people American military kills in the name of executing terrorists and thus end up not questioning any action of their government. “Good, just keep your eyes closed, panic, don't ask any questions, and you can speak freely about whatever you like”, Delphine advices Nathaniel satirically (25).

Eisenberg deals with the theme of 9/11 with detachment that is necessary to present a realistic account of the event and does not view it through a monolithic lens of the clash-of-civilizations thesis. Rather, she describes the psychological impacts of the event and through the thoughts of his characters highlights the misery, pain, and

grief that the people experience. She sees 9/11 as a tragedy, a traumatic event that induces fear into people's minds. It is so unexpected a happening that it baffles them, and they are not able to accept the harsh reality. Confusion and fear are seen to be overpowering all the characters of the story. Lucien, who is a middle-aged retailer of arts is already depressed and feels lonely due to the death of his young wife, Charlie. The attacks heighten his suffering, oozing out his energy and sense of excitement, leaving him with a sense of being very old as "the vibrancy of his brain is flattened out into something banal and tepid" (16). Even after the working hours of his gallery are over, he sits there wondering about his past while having a glass of wine. He wonders how he has gotten so old and feels his youthful days are wasted as he has not done anything for serving humanity. Such dark thoughts about his past make him feel miserable.

The September 11 is seen as a day that annihilates the possibility of a future for Lucien; it is a tragedy of such great proportion that all hopes of a bright future are wiped out. He thinks that future does not exist and "may be his nephew's is the last generation that will remember what it has once felt like to blithely assume there would be a future" (26).

Similarly, Nathaniel and his friends, who belong to the younger generation of Americans at the time of attacks, are equally affected. They witness the planes searing the towers from the terrace of their apartment and their immediate reaction is that someone runs inside due to sickness, the others hide themselves to shut out the noise of the crash, and in the days that follow they crack "macabre jokes" (14) and are irritated by the dust that covers everything including their drinks. This shows the mental agitation and trauma that they go through and are not able to recover from it.

Nathaniel imagines being aged in five minutes to 50 and is dissatisfied regarding his career and love life.

Eisenberg uses the motif of superpower to represent power and ability in both political and personal sense. The title “Twilight of the Superheroes” refers to the characters of the story who lose their individual forte after the tragic attacks. America was also a superhero whose superpower status is challenged by these attacks. In addition, Passivityman’s superpower to counter the evil attacks of Captain Corporation fades away. Referring to the loss of superpowers, she remarks, “superpowers are a feature of youth ...or maybe they belonged to a loftier period of history” (21). It implies that the attacks rob them of their youthful spirits and vibrant energy; makes them feel old and push America into a period of history where it is difficult to maintain superpower. From this juxtaposition of a magical, safe, vibrant America with the dark, uncertain, lost America is suggestive of the ‘9/11-changed-everything approach’ that is found in the television and popular discourses. This everything-has-changed approach is reflective of the common attitude that is present in the post-9/11 literature. Juanjo Bermúdez de Castro writes in his article “Nine-Elevenism”,

[W]hile describing the global situation after the attacks, another historical acontextualization was to follow: the hyperbolic everything has changed. This grandiloquent generalization both in time and space reveals an ignorant and self-centred conception of history and the world affairs which does nothing but proclaim the American exceptionalism among the rest of nations. (2011)

In the post-9/11 America, the political reality affects the personal lives of the people greatly. Here the personal merges with the political, or rather gets overpowered by it in an inevitable way. The colorful details of the emotional world of one’s self are lost in the “arid wasteland- policy, strategy, goals” (2006: 28). According to Eisenberg, all pleasures of daily life, the routine activities of fun and

events of entertainment are suspended and a heavy sense of chaos and disappointment is felt in the air: "Private life shr[inks] to nothing. One's past, one's future, one's ordinary daily pleasures [a]re like dusty little curios on a shelf" (28). Lucien who tries to appear unaffected by the tragedy gave up throwing parties as he no longer has the desire to have fun due to the murky wars America starts raging on the world. Perhaps he feels guilty of trying to be happy or in the least, normal when wars are being waged by America in the world. "It is one thing to have fun if the sun is shining generally, and quite another thing to have fun if it is raining blood everywhere but on your party" (29). Even the teenagers who are dressed in brightly colored clothes and seem to be enjoying themselves in the cafés appear odd to Lucien as he thinks that their clothing, loud laughs and jovial mood "[a]re not quite right" (29).

Eisenberg's narrative is a collage of multiple voices; the condition and viewpoints of Americans, immigrants, and the outside world find equal resonance in the story without being marginalized as in the pre-9/11 America. The Americans are portrayed as shocked and baffled, the immigrants are outraged and express their disapproval for the American government's actions, the outside world expresses its anger for what the American military does to innocent people in Afghanistan and Iraq in the name of fighting terrorism. Lucien's friends from Europe and Asia ask for explanations of the President's frightening speeches and his threats of a nuclear war. They call it a "big science fiction horror movie about the emperor of everything everywhere for which the whole world is required to buy tickets?" but Lucien is even more unaware than them, remains silent and gets confused about what he is told on TV and what the world thinks about it (28). The colonizing role of America is highlighted more by saying that the president intends to colonize the moon by setting

weapons in space (32). Thus, “[9/11] was the occasion- the pretext! - for killing and theft and legislative horrors all over the world” (27).

Eisenberg also peeps into the reasons of war that are started in the East. In this case, too, she gives a Marxist explanation. They are all for money, or the lack of it, though they are fought under different guises of “*patriotism, democracy, loyalty, freedom*” (26).

The attacks not only affect the psychological health of the people, but they also have harmful effects for the physical health. Huge amounts of fuel burn, chemicals and dust pervade the air as the planes collapse into the twin towers. This proves to be hazardous for the health of the denizens of New York. Eisenberg shows a concern for people’s health on the local scale, and an ecocritical concern for the Earth’s environment in general. Nathaniel and his friends notice a white “crematorium ash” settling on their drinks and everywhere else (24). “The air stinks from particulate matter- chemicals and asbestos and blood and scorched bone. People develop coughs and strange rashes” (28). From all the wars that are waged in the world due to the political reasons, “poor old Earth” suffers a great deal. Its beauty is marred, clean air is polluted and it leads to serious problems like global warming, melting of icebergs and depletion of ozone layer. Eisenberg calls it “an old sponge, a honeycomb of empty mine shafts and dried wells” (31). Like a sponge, it has been absorbing the consequences of human hatred and “the waterways glint with weapons-grade plutonium...the polar ice caps melt, Venice sinks” (31).

As the story comes to end, Eisenberg asks the same question as David Simpson asks in his book *The Culture of Commemoration* (2006)<sup>2</sup>. The victims who died in the attacks, the police officers who sacrificed their lives in rescuing services,

and other fire extinguishers and workers are hailed as heroes of 9/11. Memorial services are held in their honor, medals and shields are given to acknowledge their bravery and victimhood. In such a context, Eisenberg poses this question that if all this, what has been started by America in an effort to avenge the terrorists, ends in "dire catastrophe, who will the monuments of the future commemorate?" (31). What Eisenberg suggests here is an apocalyptic vision of the future if the U.S. continues its policy of military invasions of the third world countries. In fact, this is a doubt expressed by many left-wing critics when the U.S. government decided to send its troops in Afghanistan and Iraq.

In short, the story is a realistic and objective account of the changes that were brought by the catastrophe; how it affected people psychologically and the way NY's outlook changed. It also presents an insight into the reasons of the attacks, but avoids giving any absolutist statement about it. The tone of Eisenberg is subtle, neutral, descriptive, and static. The characters keep thinking and the story ends with the part entitled "Waiting" leaving a lingering sense of nostalgia and inertia. It creates questions in the reader's mind and ends with an uncomfortable sense of mystery.

### ***3.3. The Last Days of Muhammad Atta by Martin Amis<sup>3</sup>***

Martin Amis is the writer of the twelve-paged short story about the last day of Muhammad Atta, the lead terrorist of the group that was responsible for the terrorist attacks on the twin towers on September 11, 2001. The narrative tries to give a detailed account of Muhammad Atta's mental picture on the last day of his life when he is making preparations for the attacks. It peeps into his psyche, the on-going thoughts that reflect his ideology, his motivation for the attacks, his views about

American people and its civilization through the portrayal of the last four hours of his life.

The story seeks to solve the mystery as to why Muhammad Atta and his friend visited Portland, Maine when he had to take his flight from Boston at 8 am. The story uses the exact lines as quoted by the 9/11 Commission report as its opening reference. Details of what he did on his last day are the same as told in the report. Still it is a fictional take on the subject as it relies on Amis's presumptions and imagination about Atta's thoughts and feelings on his last day.

Muhammad Atta is shown to be sick and emaciated due to the "peer-group piety contest" (2006: 1). The concept of piety is related with sheer abstinence; it means denying the basic necessities of life as shown by Amis through the character of Muhammad Atta. Due to eating so less, he has developed constipation, a sick breath, nausea, pain in head and lower abdomen. In reality, the concept of piety is different and involves moderation along with virtue and purity of heart. Even the group trained for the attacks did not use the money that was sent to them from the head office. The sum of \$26,000 is returned and it shows they are following the instructions quite submissively to remain frugal.

Amis makes a connection between the physical and the spiritual. Atta's frail and sick body is reflective of his corrupt spirit and impure heart. The darkness of his thoughts affects his body; his face is detestable and "growing more gangrenous" day by day (2). Even he himself avoids looking at his face and wonders how he is able to walk the streets of America without anyone recognizing his intentions. His face is the repository of malevolence he harbors in his heart and this is the chief reason why the

Sheikh chose him as the group leader without asking him for his consent. He saw the willingness to die on his face.

Atta's motivation for the attacks is also primarily rooted in his "detestation of everything" (2). He hates women, music, pleasure, and even life, and that is why he finds the idea of 'jihad' appealing. More interestingly, he is an apostate and does not believe in any other principles of Islam. He is attacking the towers only for he wants to gain pleasure from inflicting violence on people, for "the core reason was, of course, all the killing - all the putting to death" (11).

He is unlike his colleagues, as they fervently believe in all the teachings of Islam. Amis portrays him as a sexually frustrated psychotic person who denies pleasure and consequently seeks to fulfill his desire by doing such acts of terror. This also shows that psychologically ill people of the society are exploited by the extremist jihadist organizations to materialize their plans. Moreover, Amis sees the attacks as acts of virility like various feminist critics who argue that men bound in the conservative Islamic societies are driven to derive pleasure through the abuse of power in the form of violent acts of terror. Sexual frustration finds an outlet in the form of attacking, subduing and killing innocent people.

Through the character of Atta, Amis mocks the idea of life after death and paradise. He shows it to be as unconvincing as the concept of jihad is irrational. To Muhammad Atta, the reward of virgins after sacrificing their lives in the way of God is improbable because he is an educated person after all. To a person like him, holding two degrees in architecture, it appears to be an illogical idea fabricated only to lure them to death. Thus, he believes in what he read in a newspaper about the possible misinterpretation in the process of translating the word from Arabic. The word could

have two meanings: sultana (sultan's concubines), and raisins. Atta surely has no desire to kill himself just to get a pack of raisins. In this way, Amis makes an attempt to make Muslims skeptical of their own faith by casting doubt on how its fundamental concepts may have been mistranslated to fool its followers. The contempt that he harbors of what he calls "Islamism" is reflected in the biased representation of basic Islamic values. In fact, Atta is more of a reflection of Amis's personal views about Islam, rather than a realistic character that helps in understanding the cultural Other.

Jihad is an idea that combines "ferocity with rectitude" (3) and that is the chief reason of why Atta is allured to its charm. His sick thoughts, hatred of women and the world is the spirit of Islam precisely. Amis makes this connection to show that Islam also promotes asceticism, detestation of women and renunciation of this world and its pleasures. Atta is attracted to Islam because he is a fundamentalist and extremist at heart: "If you took away all the rubbish about faith, then fundamentalism suited his character, and with an almost sinister precision" (3). Though he does not believe in any ideology or religion, his fundamentalist thoughts are the same as Islam's. The revulsion he feels for women, music and laughter is also found in the teachings of Islam and thus Islam is presented as an extremist religion by showing both of them as fundamentalists.

The expertise of Amis in dealing with the subject of male sexuality makes him interpret everything in that sense. Through the fictional Atta, he wants to comprehend the psychological working of the real terrorist, but the character turns out to be destroying the towers just because he is sexually frustrated. Paradise that is promised to the suicide attackers seems "priapic" (3).

The will of Muhammad Atta, the statements given by Sheikh, and the instruction book of the terrorists possess a remarkable semblance. All are marked by conservative and extremist religious ideas. Atta instructs in his will that no pregnant woman or an unclean person should come to attend his funeral and the person who bathes him should take care not to touch his genitals. The statements of the Sheikh reflect hatred for America and the he describes the world in the binary opposition of believers and infidels. Even when Atta cites the hadith prohibiting suicide, the Sheikh justifies it by saying that they are in the lands of infidels and it is an exception. Similarly, the instruction book uses a reference that is actually given in context of animal slaughter. It asks them to sharpen their knives to "bring about comfort and relief of the slaughter" (2). It represents Islam as a religion of violence and intolerance. A religion that has an extensive military history thus makes its followers the most belligerent of all civilizations.

Atta is portrayed as subhuman, animalistic, morally decadent, sexually frustrated, emotionally disturbed and totally out of sync with life and its normal activities. The Imam's lips are likened with dog's lips, his hand looks like a lobster's. Hence, Amis's aversion to Islam makes him relegate the Imam to the level of animals. In addition, the holy water from Medina is called "holy volvic" (9). Atta's tone is that of derision and contempt when he talks to Ziad for the last time before the attacks. He wants to plant doubt in his heart about the rewards they are promised after their suicide in the way of God. He wants to make him feel miserable as he disapproves of his affair with a German girl. He tells him the holy water absolves one of "the atrocious crime, of self-felony" (8), the suicide is not a right act as according to Quran those who hate God "love and court death" (9), and one burns until eternity before getting the virgins. All these doubts expressed by Atta, however, do not have a

disturbing effect on Ziad. He is all set for his goal of mass murder. Thus, Atta appears to be less like the leader of the terrorists and more like the mouthpiece of Amis who voices his beliefs regarding Islam, the hereafter, paradise, jihad and virgins. A review of Amis's *The Second Plane* sheds light on his ideas about Islamism,

Novelist Amis...condemns "Islamism" as an especially baleful variant. Amis attacks Islamism's tenets as "[a]nti-Semitic, anti-liberal, anti-individualist, anti-democratic" and characterizes its adherents, from founding ideologue Sayyid Qutb to the ordinary suicide bomber, as sexually frustrated misogynists entranced by a "cult of death." (2008: 149)

The theme of boredom and terrorism is present in the story and that is a novel angle explored by Amis. He thinks that terrorism that is usually connected with violence, murder, hyperactivity, noise and frenzy, in fact, promotes boredom that is its exact opposite. Every day on all the airports of the world, many security questions are asked from the passengers, the luggage and boarders go through a series of security checks. This recurrence, of the same questions, same procedures, creates boredom. The sameness of all these repetitive steps is responsible for "a net increase in world boredom" (2006: 5). The last day of Atta, too, is characterized by "themes of recurrence and prolongation" (2). The time is "dead-time" (5) and hints upon his meaningless existence, to which he wants to add meaning by death as death is the only thing that fascinates him. All his life long, he suffers due to the sameness that he finds in the world: "Cairo, Hamburg, even the winter dawn over Kandahar: they had all looked the same to him. Unreal mockery" and thus he ultimately decides to find peace in death (9).

The story, in a subtle way, expresses Amis's revulsion to militant Islam or 'Islamism' as he puts it. Amis brings up the same concerns as Huntington cites in his thesis about the bellicosity of Islam and its increased repulsion to the Western ideals. Moreover, Amis, like many other writers, is overwhelmed by the popular rhetoric of

post-9/11 world. His subjective approach towards the attacks does not let him explore the psyche and mental working of a terrorist and Atta just appears to be a stereotypical jihadist figure.

### **3.4. *The Mutants* by Joyce Carol Oates**

*The Mutants* (2004) is written by Joyce Carol Oates who is a prolific short story writer. The story revolves around an “American Midwestern Blond” who is a successful American lady (281). She is described as immensely beautiful physically as well as spiritually. She is loved by her parents and is the beloved of her fiancé; people on the street look at her with admiration for her good looks. She is innocent of the harsh realities of life and so, looks younger than her age. Like a goddess, she has the aura of golden light around her highlighting her inner peace and innocence. The story describes how the events of September 11 affect her as she lives near WTC on thirty-sixth floor of a tall building.

The approach towards September 11 adopted by the writer is that America was a perfect place in every sense before the catastrophe but after that, it goes through many changes that mar its beauty and makes its inhabitants depressed. Yet, the Americans have hope and undying spirit to get over this loss.

The protagonist of the story is a direct victim of the tragedy. She is imprisoned in her apartment with no light, no TV and telephone is dead too. Her suffering is not as much physical as it is psychological and emotional. She is coming to her apartment after getting some photocopies when she sees a plane “flying unnaturally low” and right after wards she is taken aback with the sound of “a colossal explosion” (282). Although she gets scratches and cuts on her knees, forehead and face, she manages to reach her apartment without losing her nerve. For her it is as if some enemy has

robbed the dream-like quality of her life. Her golden hair is filled with white dirt; “it had the look of undersea hair, seaweed hair, adrift in ash-water”, and the dust makes it difficult for her to breathe (286).

Before the tragic moment, she is beautiful like a goddess and her life is perfect in all respects. She is loved, has a good career and is admired by everyone. The calamity shakes her up and she wakes up from her dream, the dream of perfection and goodness. In the post-9/11 world, “[s]he is hollow-eyed and gaunt yet wakeful, no longer the dreamy-eyed blond” (286).

The happenings after 8.46 am on September 11 give the sense of “end of innocence”, a term coined by Pankaj Mishra in his 2007 article published in *The Guardian*. From “a dreamy beautiful young woman” she becomes “panicked as an animal” (283). It means that the attacks rob her of her inherent humanity. However, she does not keep wallowing in her sorrow; the end of her innocence is not permanent. It shows that the hope and courage of Americans is not irrevocably lost. So, she experiences a delight in her “*wakefulness*” and “couldn’t help but rejoice” (286). She also loses the sense of time when she gets unconscious, still she does not sleep. She thinks that the “city is gone”, bombs may have exploded in other cities too and she might not see her parents again.

The story in a subtle way establishes 9/11 as an apocalypse with fires burning in the whole city, and “Armageddon smoke” (287) filling the air. She bathes thinking that if it is the last bath of her life, she must enjoy it. Yet, as some time passes, she is able to recover her strength and peace of her mind. She is redeemed at the end of the story when the whole day is passed since the tragic moment. She regains her lost innocence after the bath and lights all the candles that she finds in her apartment.

Oates establishes her as a Christ-like figure, who after infliction of violence and injustice, is restored to her former innocence due to taking bath. The lighting of candles is an act of redemption symbolizing hope as they do on Sundays in church while offering prayers. "Like Christmas: there was an innocence to this", she mentions (287). In sheer darkness, she is able to see the frail light of the candles burning in another building and it appears to her "glimmering like distant stars" (287). In this way, the broken connection is rebuilt between her and the outside world. The inner goodness and the brave desire to get on with life again keep her from being overpowered by this grief. The candles she has lighted are "brave and festive in the dark" (287). Castro in his article "Nine-Elevenism" (2011) puts the story under the "victimizing and heroizing discourses"; he calls it a typical example of portraying a perfect pre-9/11 world that is "idyllic" and not close to reality which is then changed into a catastrophic scenario. The innocent survivors are thus transformed into emblems of courage and fortitude in order to promote patriotism and support for the government. He states,

Oates's hopeful closure with these 'brave' candles does nothing but make her short story of pre-9/11 innocence turned into post-9/11 courage a representative example of how fiction can reproduce in detail the national ideology cast by the media while shaping how the traumatic event is and must be perceived. (2011)

The writer focuses on the psychological and mental turmoil of the people and her object is not to find out who the enemy is and what does this event mean in the political sense. Only as a passing reference, she comments, "Whoever their enemies were, these enemies had struck" (2004: 286). The reference to the perpetrators remains limited to this line and thus the enemy remains faceless and anonymous in the story. It does not, in any way, allude to the civilizational-clash thesis. It has an altogether different approach towards the tragedy that is based on the American's

perception of itself as an ideal, heavenly abode for people of all kinds. The “dreamy-eyed Blonde” can be interpreted as the metaphor for America; 9/11 shatters the myth of American exceptionalism. In addition, to some extent it is an expression of the same dominant rhetoric that views the attacks as an attempt to rob its people of their secular, progressive ideals. Therefore, the end tries to rejuvenate the faith of the people and restore their confidence in their abilities as the denizens of the most progressed and the most envied nation of the world. The lightning of candles is a feat that shows the strength in the face of calamity and trauma of the affected families in particular and the whole nation, in general.

### **3.5. *Still-Life* by Don Delillo**

*Still-Life* (2007) is a short story written by Don Delillo against the backdrop of September 11 attacks. Delillo has a reputation of an effective writer of serious fiction that encapsulates the political realities of his times in a just manner. Moreover, the subject of terrorism is also considered his forte, one of the areas where one finds Delillo at his best. The story in question can be called *The Falling Man* (2007) in miniature though it bears a different ending. The plot and the main theme of the novel and story are similar. The story documents how a political happening of such large magnitude as 9/11 affects the lives of the survivors. The political and the personal blend here to show the social effects of the tragedy and is different from the clichéd cultural commentary on the attackers.

“*Still-Life*” is a suggestive title that reflects Delillo’s approach towards the tragedy of 9/11. He views it as an event that jolted the minds of the Americans, sharpened their senses and changed their outlook on life. To feel sorrow for the victims and the affected families, to feel sympathy for the maimed survivors, is

nothing but a quite natural and understandable reaction to tragedy. What it does differently for Delillo's characters in the narrative is that the separated couple is rejoined and starts living as a family once again. It proves to be a blessing in disguise for them as it brings reunion.

Lianne and Keith married out of love one and a half years before the attacks but their marriage failed. They were not able to get anything out of their union except a child that served as a connection after they broke up. Lianne's mother was against her choice as she did not approve of Keith's disposition and behavior towards women. She described him as "a model of dependability for his male friends...but sheer hell on women" (2007). Likewise, her mother's prophecy turned out to be true since Lianne felt extremely dissatisfied with her marital life. Yet the falling towers prove to be restorative for their relationship. They come to value each other's presence when Keith unexpectedly walks in Lianne's apartment just after the towers fell. He cannot explain why he does so, yet he keeps living with his son and wife, enjoying the pleasures of family life again. He plays with Justin, walks him to school and talks to Lianne. The normal course of their lives is restored again due to the two planes crashing into the towers where Keith works. Here, the attacks are not seen as negative, lethal acts of terror that affected their mental health. Out of the blue, they have attenuated the space between them that was created due to their busy and fast-paced lives.

The break caused by the tragedy is what makes their lives still for some time. Still-life is used as a motif in the story to highlight continuance and stillness, communication and silence. Their lives were full of activity before, but they lacked "true communication"- one of the common fruits of globalization and a characteristic feature of consumer culture societies like America. The paintings studied by Lianne's

mother and loved by her for their mysterious unspeakable beauty are also called “still-lifes”. No sublime event of history or an important religious figure finds expression in those works of art by Giorgio Morandi; they only portray “groupings of bottles, jugs, biscuit tins”. Yet, the stillness of those ordinary thing, the serene hues with which they are painted, and the crude and original feel of the objects appeal to Lianne’s senses - “the irregular edges of the vases and jars, some reconnoiter inward, human and obscure, away from the very light and color of the paintings”. Similarly, like the still-life paintings, the morning of September 11 becomes the canvas that repaints their lives with some dark (though tragic) hues highlighting its beauty, adding profundity to its otherwise meaningless contours. It foregrounds their importance to themselves, makes them sensitive to life’s minutest details and sharpens their senses. In the lazy days, after the calamity Keith “began to think into the day, into the minute. Things seemed still, clearer to the eye, oddly, in ways he didn’t understand. He noticed things, all the small lost strokes of a day or a minute...” That is what tragedy does to people, makes them value life as it does to Lianne and Keith.

The pre and post-9/11 lives of Lianne and Keith show a marked contrast in many respects and thus prove it as a decisive point in time. In a way, they have introduced a disjuncture in the linear motion of time, as trauma is commonly believed to do so. The concept of ‘broken time’ is given by Derrida in an interview after September 11: “trauma and the event are indissolubly linked: ‘An event always inflicts a wound in the everyday course of history’” (as cited in Devetak 2009: 805). Devetak in his article is of the view that such traumatic events defamiliarize the “ordinariness of everyday life” as is evident in the story under discussion. Keith is no more reticent, the breaks or aporias that marks their conversation in the beginning of their reunion are eliminated slowly and they are replaced with smooth

communication. "She listened to what he said and let him know she was listening, mind and body, because listening is what would save them this time, keep them from falling into distortion and rancor". After they come to terms with each other, Lianne keeps expressing her surprise by saying "*it's a movie, it's a movie*", as it is something strikingly different from her previous pattern of a monotonous life. It is then that she realizes that she used to take life and relationships for granted when she thought of them as ordinary. "Maybe there was a deep fold in the grain of things, the way things pass through the mind, the way time swings in the mind, which is the only place it meaningfully exists". It shows that her perception of things has changed dramatically by the event of 9/11 and that Delillo, in this story, is trying to portray how the attacks have affected the psyche of the American nation by changing their outlook on life.

Description of Keith's appearance in the beginning, who survives the attacks and how he proceeds to recovery serve to establish the event of 9/11 as a horrifying act of terror. He is covered with soot, ash and blood from head to toe when he enters Lianne's apartment. Bits of broken glass are pierced in his skin, his left arm wrist is also injured and it makes him appear miserable and scary. Lianne feels relieved to think that Justin, her son did not happen to see his father in such condition "because it would have been awful for him to see his father like that". The doctor at the hospital describes a type of injury that is particular of suicide happenings. They call it "organic shrapnel"- small bumps are developed on the victim's skin when he gets hit by pieces of flesh flying from the attacker's body- and it certainly petrifies the reader by registering its horror on his/her mind. In addition, Justin and his friends' reaction to the attacks adds to Lianne's worry about his psychological health. The kids use binoculars to search the skies for more planes and that "scares the hell out of" her as they seem to be "waiting for it to happen again". However, the kids find it

adventuresome and interesting, something different from the normal drudgery of their lives. They are not shown to be scared and terrified as it is done in most of the popular novels of which Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2006) is a typical example.

Unlike the kids, Lianne views the attacks on her TV screen and it highlights the nature of reality in postmodern times. A real event is constituted in its representation; it is framed and structured in its image in the form of footage shown on TV or photos printed in newspapers. Devetak notes in his article, "After the event: Don DeLillo's *White Noise* and September 11 narratives"

A further instance of this blurring of the real and the simulated during the September 11 terrorist attacks has been noted by Richard Jackson. Many onlookers, he notes, felt as though they were watching a Hollywood movie, such was the cinematic experience of the spectacle. (2009: 800)

Lianne also experiences this event through the footage as it is shown on the TV repeatedly: "The second plane coming out of that ice-blue sky, this was the footage that entered the body, that seemed to run beneath her skin..." (2007). Similarly, she reads the stories of the affected families and the "profiles of the dead" in newspapers and is bound to do so under the influence of some reverent duty towards them as "not to read them, every one, would have been an offense, a violation of responsibility and trust". This fear of offending the dead has been developed in her as the victims and the affected are established as emblems of virtue in the post-9/11 popular discourse. A "culture of commemoration" is established through the representation of the event. Thus, when the first plane crashes into the tower they think it is an accident, "the way the camera sort of shows surprise". However, the appearance of the second plane makes them "a little older and a little wiser".

Somehow, they are able to distinguish reality from its image and are able to learn something from it.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup>Slavoj Žižek, responded to the 9/11 attacks in his book, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real!: Five Essays on September 11*, that comprises of five essays. The essays present a Marxian and Lacanian critique of the 9/11 attacks, arguing that fundamentalism and global capitalism are strongly linked with each other in the post-9/11 America. He is of the view that terrorist attacks like 9/11 provide the state with a reason to compromise on its ethical principles and rule of law, like the U.S. government justified the attacks on Iraq and Afghanistan under the guise of 'war on terror'. Moreover, according to Žižek this threat of fundamentalism and theories like "end-of-history" and "clash-of-civilizations" push other more dangerous forms of fundamentalisms like global capitalism into background, thus allowing the state to enjoy full authority in exercising power over the weaker states. He states,

If we look more closely, what is this 'clash of civilizations' actually about? Are not all real-life 'clashes' clearly related to global capitalism?...instead of endless analyses of how Islamic 'fundamentalism' is intolerant towards our liberal societies, and other 'clash-of-civilization' topics, we should refocus our attention on the economic background to the conflict - the clash of economic interests, and of the geopolitical interests of the United States itself (how to retain privileged links with Israel and with conservative Arab regimes like those of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait). (2002: 41-42)

He also says that fundamentalism is not an element that one can associate with Islam only; rather Christianity also has a long history of waging wars in its mission to spread the word of God.

<sup>2</sup>In *9/11: the Culture of Commemoration*(2006), David Simpson criticizes the ways in which 9/11 has been appropriated and used for promoting war and gaining the approval of the masses for the actions of the U.S. government. The expressions of

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mourning and commemoration has been turned into a culture by the government-led media that on the one hand supported consumption of patriotic and cultural artifacts, and on the other, eliminated room for dissent. Simpson cites the example of "Portraits of Grief" (that were published in *New York Times*) as a prime example of co-opting the death of victims for political purposes. Retrieved on July 4, 2012 from <http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/9-11-david-simpson/1007591038>

<sup>3</sup>The story has been retrieved from the following link:

[http://www.martinamisweb.com/commentary\\_files/lastdays\\_backup.pdf](http://www.martinamisweb.com/commentary_files/lastdays_backup.pdf)

## CHAPTER 4

### PERCEPTION OF SEPTEMBER 11 IN SELECTED URDU SHORT STORIES

The selected short stories in English were discussed in the preceding chapter. This chapter focuses itself on the introduction, discussion and analysis of the selected Urdu fiction that is written about the September 11 attacks. The following sequential order is observed while discussing the stories:

1. *9/11* by Ammar Masood
2. *Operation Mice* by Nilofer Iqbal
3. *Shanākht* (Identity) by Masood Mufti
4. *Nīnd kā Zard Libās* (Sleep's Yellow Apparel) by Zahida Hina
5. *Reality Show* by Irfan Ahmed Urfi

#### 4.1. *9/11* by Ammar Masood

*9/11* is a short story from the collection *Mūhābbāt kā Nīlā Rāng* (Blue Color of Love) written by Ammar Masood, a prominent short fiction writer of Urdu. The story centers itself on the thought-process of the terrorist in the final, decisive moments of the incident. With the help of 'stream-of-consciousness' technique it traces back to where he was born, with what ideologies he grew up with, how his philosophy of life changed over time and how it finally transformed into its current form that has motivated him to embrace death and with that put an end to the lives of others. The very act of tracking the thoughts of an attacker is an attempt to humanize his character, and not to see him only as a terrorist who is often presented as a demonizing figure, devoid of essential human passions or ability to think. As the story opens, he is in the plane that is flying towards its destiny - the WTC. As the plane

nears its destination, his thoughts keep progressing and the journey of how his concept of destiny evolved over time is shown in his interior monologue. Among the passengers is a lady who is carrying a child in her lap whose "black hair and hazel eyes" make him remember his own son whom he has left behind in his native land. The writer notes that the first stage of his concept of destiny was shaped by the traditions of the people he was born among. They were cave dwellers and gave importance to tribal honor, pride and ego over every other thing. There he learnt that to sacrifice one's life to protect one's honor and prestige should be the sole aim of life. It was then when his basic value of life was formed: "At that time, he used to think of destiny as honor" (46). He used to perceive life as a struggle to defend one's reputation.

In the second stage, his conception was changed and he thought that destiny is nothing else but love. "It was that time when he considered love his destiny" (47). His early marriage at the age of 17 and the birth of his son, Gul Sher, were responsible for this change actually. When his son was 1 year and 17 days of age, he left his native land, came to America and tried to grapple with the American reality of life that was to move on and to move on a fast pace no matter what happens. Here the writer shows a marked contrast between the American and tribal way of life. One believes in achieving material success, of making life comfortable and luxurious, while the other puts its faith in defending its name and reputation. The tribal people are "stone age people" and are as backward and conservative as Americans are progressive and liberal. The writer pits the tribal culture against the American culture and reveals that there is a wide gap that exists between the two. One is called "settlement of stone" and the other "the world's most developed country" (48). People belonging to one land gave the most significance to pride and honor, for the others "speed was more

important than direction" (48). Therefore, when the protagonist observes American culture, he finds that Americans, unlike him, do not uphold any sublime or transcendental ideas of life. They believe in moving on and staying happy in all circumstances. He feels that "the dreams of the dwellers of this city are quite trivial" as they are concerned with getting the most fashionable clothes of the season and to reach at their work places on time (48). The writer describes New York as the city "where life trembled electrifyingly, where time moved faster than man and where realization was in search of every dream" (45). Through these lines, he portrays America as a country that promises opportunity, money, and success. Still, even though pace is the most prominent feature of their life styles, they give importance to human rights over everything.

When the protagonist comes to live in the United States, he finds its culture and ways contradictory to his own. His develops feelings of antagonism towards the American way of life and this fire is fuelled by his interaction with other migrants. They had come to America in hopes of a bright, secured future, thinking it to be an open society where all are treated equally with no discrimination on the basis of caste, creed, race, or religion. Their hopes are dashed and they feel marginalized, "living on the fringes" as the writer puts it. Such a relegated social position accentuated their hostility towards Americans and they talked of revenge and retort. The protagonist, for the first time in his stay in America, feels familiar with someone when he listens to them talking about revenge and power. He feels that they are like his own kinsmen and his feelings of alienation are somehow diminished. Masood gives a slight hint that the motivation of attacks though primarily rooted in the exploitative capitalist American system is further increased by the fundamentalist religious discourse. At one point in the story, while describing the immigrants he relates, "These people

talked of revenge by referring to God with whom he had been familiar since childhood" (49). This misuse of religion along with their eloquence and brilliant use of rhetoric seem to be the forces that convince the protagonist to choose death as his destiny. Thus the third stage in his evolution of the concept of destiny is achieved and he comes to believe that "the fruit of destiny is actually revenge" (49).

The plane in the meantime keeps moving; he uses some anesthetic gas to make the passengers unconscious and then changes the course of the plane towards the towers. As it moves near the towers, a desire to touch the hands of the young child grips his heart and he, for only one instance, wants to do so, but in the meanwhile the destiny that he has chosen for himself comes nearer and he's denied the chance to fulfill his last wish. Few moments before the plane crashes into the towers, the final stage in his evolution of destiny concept is achieved. He is convinced that "love never fails. No one's destiny is revenge" (50).

Thus, it can be noticed that Masood approaches the theme of September attacks with the heart of a humanist. He does not demonize the terrorist, nor does he generalize on the basis of actions of a particular person that the whole Muslim community would be violent, anti-American and extremist. He portrays him as a normal thinking being who wants to find the real meaning of life. He thinks of life as a journey and remains curious about how it should end, and what would be its destiny. Like any human being he perceives life through the lens of his personal experience, tries to make sense of it and infer lessons that contribute to form his idea about life. In the end, his desire to touch the hands of the child shows that he has feelings and a kind heart. But, according to the writer, he is incited to be revengeful and feels hatred for the Americans by some specific groups of immigrants. This shows that the writer thinks that innocent people like the protagonist of his story are used by the religious

and political organizations for their own purposes. Most of them are young and unaware of how they are exploited. Still in the end through the final overarching change in the *Weltanschauung* of the terrorist, he not only reestablishes the faith of his readers in the love for humanity and beauty of life but also condemns the killing of innocent humans and perceiving life as a journey whose destiny is revenge. He believes that love, goodness and virtue are bound to overpower hatred, evil, vice and negative forces and so the hope of a bright future never dies.

#### **4.2. Operation Mice by Nilofer Iqbal**

Nilofer Iqbal is the writer of this short story that deals with the theme of American reaction to the attacks of September 11. The story comprises a dialogue between General Mercy and his wife Martha who converse about the Operation Mice that the Pentagon has planned to launch against the Arab mice of Iraq. The story is written in a satirical tone but the flow of dialogue, in a very natural way, reveals the tension that exists between Mercy and Martha's point of view on the invasion of Iraq. The story employs allegory, irony, satire, paradox and animal imagery skillfully to critique the unjust incursion of Iraq by the American military forces. Najeeba Arif in her article mentions, "It has been woven using a network of symbolic names, metaphorical incidents, irony and paradox" (2011: 90).

The writer has used the names of characters to point towards the actors of world politics that are involved in conflict since the tragedy of 9/11. This witty selection of the names gives it an allegorical touch as General Mercy stands for the powerful, military role of America in world politics; his wife Martha represents the third world countries that are critical of America's action of imposing war on Afghanistan and Iraq and see it as a violation of human rights; and the beloved pet

Blair take its name from the England Prime Minister Tony Blair who has always been a sincere ally of America. As Mercy mocks Martha's lack of information and myopic vision that makes her unable to see through the situation, similarly, the third world countries are seen as weak and in need of help of a powerful country that can help them get rid of poverty, instability and corrupt leaders. The writer here clearly draws a link between Martha and the invaded countries. Martha, although a writer and a well-read person, is a woman who can never come to Mercy's level as far as his wit, intelligence, political insight and steel nerves are concerned. In the same way, the viewpoint of the invaded countries is considered secondary, unimportant and devoid of factual truth as a consequence of which it goes unheard and is often quietened by the hard, overpowering voice of American logic. Martha's character may also correspond to the thinking, critical intellectuals and left-wing humanists of the American society who do not approve of its violence on the weak countries in the name of war of terrorism. Najeeba Arif in her article, "9/11 and Urdu Literature: A Sociopolitical Study of Urdu Fiction and Poetry in Pakistan" (2011), observes, "Martha represents the marginalized and less acknowledged segment of humanity who can think and can understand the situation but cannot influence the self-assertive, arrogant minds of their "men"" (90).

As the story opens, the family is faced by a tragedy that has moved them to tears. Their beloved pet bitch Blair is going to be euthanized by the vet who has taken this decision to relieve her of pain and suffering. Grieved by this loss, Mercy's "custard-heart" has become full of the milk of *animal* kindness and he makes an effort to compose himself for the upcoming important meeting of the Pentagon. The writer satirizes General Mercy's double standards; he can feel for the poor bitch dying of some incurable malady, but thinks that killing innocent children and women in Iraq

would be justified. Taking pride in the “American spirit” he says, “I am an American inside and out. My nerves are strong for the “Operation Mice” completely and my heart can cry for that loving, innocent pet as well. That is the American spirit” (2003: 182). The people of Iraq do not manage to stir his emotions of kindness and thus are relegated to a subhuman and bestial level, or rather even below than that of a bitch-Blaire.

The name of the story Operation Mice is quite symbolic and suggestive. This operation is planned by the Pentagon to teach Arab mice a lesson for robbing the sovereignty of their land. The title suggests that this story is a critique of the exploitative capitalist system of America, of its imperialistic foreign policies that focuses only on the American expansion of power and wealth with no regard for others’ freedom and rights, and of its colonist military invasion of the weak countries. General Mercy is all prepared and feels justified in waging war against Iraq, who in his view holds the world’s largest treasure of oil. He like a typical Orientalist colonial master thinks of Iraqi people as mice, “whose lives have no purpose. Their only occupation is to breed. They are unaware of the actual number of their children even. They just have one interest- fornicate and breed; breed and fornicate” (180). So General Mercy explains it to Martha that the rules of civilization are not applicable to such beasts whose only aim in life is to procreate, fulfill their carnal hunger and die. Mercy presents a stereotypical image of the Arabs that somehow succeeds to convince Martha but leaves her wondering about its truth. Unsurprisingly, the General’s voice rings with the over-confidence in his self-righteousness that comes naturally to those who hold the power of capital and he thinks that “it is unfair on the account of Nature that they [mice] are in possession of the world’s greatest treasures” (180). He plans to ‘exterminate’ all the savages and interestingly this use of the word ‘extermination’ at

once brings to mind Kurd's order in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902): "exterminate all the brutes". In this way, the writer tries to show that America's blind pursuit to seek more power and wealth has made it forget all its sublime principles of equality, justice and human rights and forced him to take up the conventional role of the same brutish colonizer from which it struggled to gain independence. When Martha reminds Mercy that "even Pope and Archbishop of Canterbury have opposed this [war and] if the President does not care for the UN Charter, rule of the jungle would be imposed", he replies convincingly "the President has said that UN cannot stop our mission. What is UN? We are the UN. We just have to decide until when to occupy that desert. For six months. For a year or forever" (181). This clearly shows that the one in power uses all moral standards, principles of humanism, and discourses of justice for his own vested interests; he holds the authority to subvert, mold or even invert them as per its needs and advantage and in present times this role of the corrupt superpower is being played by the US.

Yet insofar as the condemnation of the American military action in Iraq is concerned, the writer also criticizes the dictators of the Middle East who are equally responsible for the war imposed upon their kingdoms. They maintain relations with the US so that their money remains safe in foreign banks and their reign of power becomes indefinite. At one point in the story, General Mercy assures Martha that the US would not suffer any loss in financial regard as "this war would happen in such a way that finances and land used, both, would be theirs" (182). Ridiculing the Arab leaders he says that if one of them dies, his assets go in the possession of America and then if "we buy them with their own money, it's fair enough and that's it" (182).

Like many other stories written in the milieu of September 11 attacks, this also revolves around the conflict of a husband and wife, though its nature is not as serious

as portrayed in the narratives like *The Falling Man* (2007) or *A Disorder Peculiar to The Country* (2006); it remains limited to the level of conversation. Yet in some metaphorical sense, the conflict between two genders, that is Martha and Mercy, living in the same house and tied to each other in life-long companionship, might as well be referring to the macrocosmic global political scenario, where the presence of East and West has always been both complimentary and conflicting for each other. Given this context, it turns out in the end that Martha remains unable to convince Mercy of the fact that “war is quite an uncivilized thing” (180) and that “on human grounds, it cannot be called rightful in any sense” (182). Similarly, the condemnation of the other countries, and the pleas of human rights organizations of the attacked lands (Afghanistan and Iraq in this case) are never heard as the logic of the more powerful America reigns supreme.

General Mercy is unable to comprehend the reaction of the people protesting all over the world against this inhuman act of waging war against an already crippled nation. He only sees the kind, humane face of the US and questions that why the others are unable to see it. Furthermore, protests in England shocks him the most and he puts it as “cats rallying in favor of mice” as he considers England one of the US’s closest allies. His dearly loved bitch is also named after Tony Blaire and it points toward the nature of relationship of America and England.

The story cuts across time and “seems to encompass both the present and the future”; it also appears to be a tale from dark ages where the colonial masters plan to conquer the faraway lands and rob it of its human and natural resources (90). With the skillful use of irony and paradox, it lays bare the tall, beatific claims of American virtue and does not hesitate to expose the bigotry, hypocrisy and the fake moral standards of the superpower. Neither does it spare the power-drunk dictators of the

oil-rich countries who play an important part in bringing about the doom of their people. With the end of the story, one gets convinced that the annals of history belong to the powerful; they shape it the way they want and the bloody pages are often attributed to the weak, and the less powerful.

As a conclusion, it can be said that Nilofer Iqbal has effectively registered her protest on the minds of her readers. Being a Pakistani writer, she feels for the Muslims of Iraq whose land is invaded by the American forces and who are brutally killed in the name of war on terror. For this reason the immediate details of the 9/11 event or the description of terrorists are not her concerns. Instead, she focuses on post-9/11 political scenario of the world, on how America reacted in the spirit of vengeance and waged war on countries like Iraq and Afghanistan. Like any postcolonial writer, she opposes the imperialistic policies of the US that are inclined towards gaining control of the weak countries and increasing America's reserves of oil and foreign revenue. Like any humanist and Marxist, she is against the blind hatred of any nation, and so she tries to expose the real intentions of America behind its mission of eliminating terrorism and violence. Being satirical and mocking of General Mercy's hypocrisy, she has, to some extent, represented the voice of the Others- how they view American actions and what, according to them, might be the real motives in the guise of fighting the war on terror.

#### **4.3. *Shanākht* (Identity) by Masood Mufti**

This short story is written by Masood Mufti and the title aptly describes the main theme of the story. Mufti inquires into the question of identity and the problems that immigrants had to face in post-9/11 America. The theory of "clash-of-civilizations" and Huntington's belief that religion and civilizations form one's identity and people

develop cordiality or antagonism due to this identity is evident from the events of the story. The writer has also used this approach to interpret the scenario of changed circumstances after the attacks of 9/11.

The clash between the protagonist and his parents arises due to the difference in their viewpoint over religion and civilization. The story revolves around an American Muslim, Khalid and is set in the America of 1988. It proceeds to the time after 9/11 and establishes numerous important themes that surround the issue of American Muslims and their response to and condition after the incident. Khalid is an engineer by profession and has come to America for studying and securing his future. Khalid, though belongs to a religious family, abandons his religious beliefs and adopts the philosophy of humanism according to which all humans on earth are equal and no race, caste or geographical boundary makes one of them superior to others. Following this ideology, he feels a sense of freedom and does not hesitate to adopt the American culture. Drinking and going to the pub becomes a routine for him. His parents remain unaware of this drastic change in his ideology and expect him to come back to Pakistan and marry a Muslim girl from a respected family. Contrary to their hopes, Khalid decides to marry a Christian American girl who happens to be his friend. This becomes the reason of conflict between him and his parents and severs their relationship irretrievably. They both are unable to understand each other's point of view regarding this matter. Khalid is of the view that his parents should understand his love for the girl and allow him to marry her. On the other hand, his parents want him to think of the consequences of marrying a Christian girl. There are questions like these that are looming in their heads: Would he also change his religion if she would ask her to? What would be the religion of his children? What if she becomes a staunch Christian at some point in her life? Extreme revulsion of Khalid's parents with the

idea of a non-Muslim daughter-in-law is actually due to their background as Saleem explains in these lines,

Your youth was dawned in an American university. In childhood, while at school in Lahore, they used to read narratives of Khilafat movement and thence witnessed the Pakistan movement processions. They spent rest of their lives in a Pakistan where Islam and Christianity were mentioned only in relation with Crusade wars. How can they understand your irreligious and international love. (2002: 113)

Khaild's parents are strongly rooted in their religious and ideological identity and thus are repelled by his unconventional idea, similarly Khalid's education in States has made him adopt American culture and thus he sees no harm in developing a family relation with an American girl. Even on family level, two viewpoints stemming from two different cultural backgrounds have caused conflict of which Huntington theorized on the level of civilizations.

Yet it can be noted that in contrast to his parents' intense reaction to their son's decision of marrying an American, his siblings show a relatively mild response as they are not able to understand their parent's violent opposition. The writer is of the view that the globalization of culture, exposure through internet and cable television has made the younger generation much more open to embrace modernism and their own past and culture has somehow receded to the background. The writer being critical of this new culture says, "It has dazzled the new generation's insight along with their eyesight" (117). Their inexperience and immaturity is another factor that does not let them envision the deeper aspects and long-term consequences of their brother's newfound love, but the old parents are able to see them clearly.

The writer, being the voice of the Other in this story, tries to highlight the plight of American Muslims after the tragedy of NYC attacks. Like all other Americans, they also experienced severe mental and psychological terror. So, the

event of 9/11 proves to be a storm in the smooth flow of Khalid's family life. The disastrous change in world political scenario induces change in the attitude of Americans towards Muslims and thus intense feelings of discomfort and insecurity overwhelms his mind. He gets mentally and psychologically disturbed. At night he sees nightmares which comprise the appearances of the contemporary American political leaders, and hazy glimpses of the past's crusades war: "like Saint Bernard's rhetorical speeches; Constantinople and Jerusalem's fall; armies of Slavic Turks; Frederic II, Louis VIII, Richard and Salahuddin's silhouettes" (121). With this eminent clash of Islam and the West, Khalid's dormant past begins coming to life and he recalls old forgotten verses of Urdu that he learnt a long time back in his childhood. Thus according to Mufti, 9/11 highlighted the dividing line that separates the people of two civilizations namely Western and Islamic. It rendered the notions of a global culture unreal and made people over the whole world return to their cultural and religious identities. The announcement by the President that a country is either on America's side or with the terrorists divided the world into two halves. "Suddenly they become the "other""", writes Najeeba Arif, "and discover there is no way out except by reverting to the tradition they had subdued and the identity they had surrendered" (2011: 89). But Khalid's Muslim identity, his wife's different religion and their children's undecided ideology makes his misery twofold. On one level, he feels alienated as a Muslim Pakistani in American society, on the other level his family cannot relate with what he feels, neither can his wife understand his fears and doubts that arise due to the tragedy. Thirdly, all the more so, he fears that his children or wife may be influenced by the popular sentiments and turn against him. Or even the mentioning of this event in terms of religion can offend his family members and ruin the peace of their family life.

From the lives of individuals to the political fabric of the society, everything is affected and changed as the narrative shifts from the peaceful time before 9/11 to the strenuous and unruly post-9/11 period. Regarding the experience of American Muslims, the tragedy of 9/11 proves to be reawakening their dormant past and refurbishes their broken ties with their culture and religion. For a man like Khalid who feels no shame in having broken all relations with his family and past no more feels at home with his humanist, liberal philosophy; his life becomes a paradox with conflicting thoughts and unanswerable questions. His conversations with a Bengali Mufeez makes him think about how he had so easily hurt his parents and dashed their hopes. So, shortly after the attacks, he makes this decision to pay a visit to his family in Pakistan so that he may seek forgiveness from his parents and find redemption. On reaching there, he finds his father on death-bed and when he goes to see him, his hand rises in the air, "one inch...two inches...six inches...rises a bit more higher and then the hand fell down like ...like a ripe fruit falls from a tree" (2002: 127). This adds to his perplexity, as he cannot figure out whether his father's raised hand wanted to give a signal of coming near or asked him to go back. He returns to States with a heavy heart and the self-reproachful feeling that he is responsible for his father's death. It becomes another catalyst that fuels the return process in Khalid's ideological evolution and heightens the sense of contradiction in his life due to the presence of two different religions in his family structure. The uncomfortable feelings are propelled when his children celebrate the memory of their dead grandfather by putting a Bible under his picture and singing biblical prayers; he feels ashamed and realizes that his father's concern about the religion of his children was not unjustified.

Mufti perceives the tragedy of 9/11 as a cultural clash between Islam and West as it is clearly manifested through the identity crisis and changed ideology of his

protagonist, Khalid. With the bombing of the towers, religious identities become important and as Khalid has long renounced his parent's religion he faces a crisis of identity.

He was realizing for the first time after September 11 2001, that danger for earthquake hovers over such areas which are caught between two rocks or being in proximity to fault lines, likewise his home was also at fault line with warring ideologies of two religions, thus the slightest movement of rocks could cause a violent upheaval. (124)

Due to this fear of upheaval, Khalid tries to pretend before his children that it is not the doing of Muslim fundamentalists, rather he makes them understand it as a human tragedy.

The case of Mufeez who is a Bengali and becomes friends with Khalid in the turbulent times that follow 9/11 is also a telling example of Huntington's proposition that "religion discriminates sharply and exclusively among people" (1996: 27). In other words, it means that people of different ethnicities are bound by one religion. Mufeez is from Bangladesh and is settled in America with his wife. Due to the riots in 1971, East Pakistan separated from Pakistan and became Bangladesh. Mufeez's family suffered a lot in the process; it was as if their own people turned against them due to political conspiracy. He tells Khalid, "in 1971 Pakistani soldiers kept viewing us as enemies. Some people of our family were arrested without any reason...Even after thirty one years my father is still missing...and my mother...she was young at that time..." (124). Due to such bitter experiences on the hands of Pakistanis, he stays away from Khalid and his friend Saleem. The ethnic conflict of the past that is a cause of enmity between them is diminished by the attacks of September 11. The narrator relates, "The same Mufeez who used to avoid Pakistanis was now gaining security from their companionship" (124). As they belong to the same religion, it brings them closer in the vogue of an international catastrophe and diminishes their differences. It

also affirms Huntington's idea that people of one religious identity identify with each other no matter from which part of the world they belong to.

Mufti's narrative paints a picture of the post-9/11 America whose marked features include hostility towards Muslims. Mufeez is attacked by some teenage American boys after they see him offering his prayers in a public park. They call him a "terrorist", "Taliban", and want to "teach him a lesson". Fortunately, Khalid passes from there and stops the boys from harming Mufeez. This heightens his own sense of insecurity since his doubts and fears have come true in the form of this attack on a harmless Muslim. Khalid cannot describe this incident to his wife, feels even more alienated and draws himself inside his self-made cocoon. This intimacy with Mufeez, his description of suffering in the 1971 riots and the attack by the boys are the factors that contribute to his change in ideology. There is a marked difference in Khalid's pre and post-9/11 thinking. In the end when Mufeez goes to offer prayers, he decides to go with him. The feeling of emptiness arising from having no distinct culture and religion makes him return to his roots and traditions. Mufti in a logical manner constructs 9/11 as an incident that once again makes religion and culture important for people all over the world be it Muslims or Christians.

Speaking like an ideologist and post-colonialist, Mufti perceives the attacks of September 11 as a revolt of the suppressed and exploited people of the third world. "Just like a long and silent plea of the oppressed eventually falls in the form of a tear-drop, silent rage against the four centuries of domination fell on New York as flames and the sky-high building of World Trade Center crumbled down to earth" describes Mufti (121). It was as if the downtrodden people had finally reacted against the exploitation of America. But the price of this reaction is also paid by them as it proved to be the start of a long chain of wars and more assaults on the weak countries.

In conclusion, Mufti perceives the tragedy of 9/11 as a work of poverty-ridden people of third world who attacked America in reaction to its exploitative economic and foreign policies. His narrative, in any way, does not imply that he holds the whole Islamic community responsible for the attacks. His characters and events of the story support Huntington's thesis in a way that he also thinks cultural identity of people is important in determining their social relations and outlook on life. Moreover, the plight of Khalid and his reversion to his own religion, testifies Huntington's thesis that post-cold War world will be dominated by cultural identities.

#### **4.4. *Nīñd kā Zard Libās* (Sleep's Yellow Apparel) by Zahida Hina**

Zahida Hina is the writer of this short story that reflects upon the suffering humanity in Afghanistan that was attacked in the aftermath of the September 11 bombings. The writer views the situation of the post-9/11 world through the eyes of a humanist. Through the story of a displaced Afghan girl who dies in the end of the story, she pleads for justice and respect for basic human rights which the US has been violating in the name of fighting the war of terror.

Parveen, a girl of 12 is the protagonist of the story. After the destruction of her home in Kabul, she is left with no choice but to leave her homeland and move to some other place. As a result of the bombing, her brother and sister have also lost their lives. The bombings have deprived her of her right hand, but in return sharpened her thinking and gave her insight. Due to her witnessing of scenes of bloodshed in which people are dying, her innocence and liveliness of childhood has faded away. It is replaced by the wisdom that one gains after going through the tough journey of life and tasting its bitter realities. She talks like a wise adult and says,

I have seen my dear sister and brother die with my own eyes. I have no palm...I have gone without food and seen people's corpses and skeletons of children's bodies...I have passed through the rain of bombing and missiles and you call me young. No, I am old like the three peaks of Koh Mar. (2009: 166)

The recollection of such memories and the loss of her siblings have affected her mentally and psychologically and is a proof of American brutality who kill innocent citizens of the third world in their blind pursuit of taking revenge.

The writer also holds the US responsible for the increased number of militants and extremist Muslims in Afghanistan. Parveen, in her letter to the president Bush, tells the story of how a young Afghan boy turned into a suicide bomber. He was a cheerful youth who loved to watch Hindi movies and had posters of Bollywood movies pasted on the mud walls of his house. After the American attack on his country and the merciless killings of his people, he renounced all his dreams and turned into a suicide bomber. The immature intellect of Parveen is unable to understand the logic behind such callous practices and she says, "Swear on God, he was such a lively, filmy style chap. You turned him into a suicide bomber. Do you do this? Or is someone else making you do all that?" (175). As America is driven by the fire of revenge, similarly the young boys of Afghanistan react against them when the atrocities become unbearable. Or perhaps this accusation of the writer for supporting the militant groups in Afghanistan might also be a reference to the past when the US nurtured and financed these groups to defeat the soviets and force them out of the region. Now when the same militant groups have turned against them, they complain as if they are the innocent sufferers in this entire great game.

The dichotomy of the ruler and the ruled is manifested through Parveen's letter who complains of her suffering, questions the authority of Americans and appeals to their sense of justice. She writes down her story in detail; how she was

displaced from Kabul, how she lost her siblings, how American bombs turned her house into rubble, and how the bombs that appeared to be butterflies proved to be fatal for her friends. She says that American planes dropped "packets of biscuits, bars of butter and butterflies" for the children. But her two friends were taken away by the butterflies and Parveen, herself lost her hand in the incident. She writes the letter in a mocking tone and says, "We didn't know that American children play with dynamite butterflies" (174). Here the hypocrisy and disregard of the US for human rights disguised in the form of revenge war is exposed. Their forces did not even spare the innocent children, and especially, made toy bombs for them. This also shows the wide gap between the imperialist and the imperialized. The two stand miles apart from each other: the line of hatred, revenge, power, and capital widening the dividing line between the two. Parveen in her letter, perceives the American president as god, who surpasses human needs and weaknesses. This shows the condemnation of the writer of the unequal distribution of wealth and power. One nation, due to its exploitative capitalistic system, becomes the superpower, controls all others, and in a truly colonial sense becomes the demigod for the weak. The letter read as,

Does your own daughter pray for you when you go for earning livelihood? But you don't go for earning a livelihood; rather you give work to others. And your daughter need not pray for you; instead, others are in need of your prayers. (174)

Parveen's letter becomes the voice of the wretched Afghans. Talking about the unjust economic policies of America, it highlights the plight of Afghan women who are skillful workers and do different kinds of traditional handwork that include embroidery on shawls, weaving carpets, and painting utensils. Parveen says that her mother also supported the family in the wartime by doing Afghani embroidery on kurtas. "I have heard", she relates, "that these kurtas are sent even to America and are

sold at high prices. But only few coins are the fate of my mother and other women like her and who can fight with fate" (175).

The story, a symbol of resilience and rebellion of Afghan people, also tends to speak against the patriarchal structures that oppress women. It somehow draws a link between the patriarchy and the colonizing role of the US in Afghanistan. Both act as agents of oppression, silencing and subjugation for the womenfolk. In the underdeveloped and backward area of Bajor and Afghanistan, women are not allowed to get education, and thus denied other positions of power in the societal framework. A woman is upheld as the symbol of honor of any tribe and thus is quite vulnerable to violence, abuse and limitations. Perhaps this is the reason that the writer chooses a young girl as the protagonist and shows her to be an exceptionally talented and intelligent girl. However, her death in the end of the story shows that such rare glimpses of rebellion are never let to be sustained and are soon diminished. One other dimension of the oppression of women in an invaded country is also highlighted by the story. Women are the ones who are the most affected by the destruction of war. They are already the marginalized segment of the society; when the community, as a whole, is oppressed by some outside power, they are further pushed towards the fringes, getting doubly marginalized as a consequence. This worsens their plight and many young flowers, like Parveen, die even before they bloom. Parveen's letter of protest that never reaches the President also attenuates the status of women in an occupied country. The subaltern never gets a chance to speak. The patriarchy and the colonial masters, both act as tools for silencing them.

The attack on children is not only seen as a casual war strategy. It is actually an insightful war tactic to destroy the future of a civilization. By killing the young ones of Afghanistan, an entire future generation is castrated. The future minds of the

nation are crippled by the fear aroused by the mass killings and the ones who are left are mutilated like Parveen. This truly bespeaks of the imperialistic policies of America that aim to wipe away a whole nation by killing their children.

The story tends to reject authority and the injustice done by the powerful to the weak Afghans on many levels. Apart from being a protest against the American brutality and the male chauvinistic Afghan society, it also blames God. Parveen, in her letter, curses her fate for being so cruel. She asks God that why did he write so much pain and suffering in their fate when he could have written happiness all the same. "You [Mr. President] are written in our fate, and for that I am angry with God. If God was not happy with us, the angels could have spoken in our favor" (175).

The tone in which Parveen records her protest is meek and sad, yet at some point, it changes to be aggressive and satirical. It mocks the appearance of the president. According to her, he looks like a joker and not like "Halaku or Changhez Khan", and so she could not understand that how can he order to drop bombs on innocent people. Ironically, a joker's job is to make people laugh, but the president gave them sorrows.

The story, in short, presents the tragic consequences of the U.S.'s war on terror. The war was against terror, but resulted in what it sought to fight against. It maimed the future (children) of Afghanistan, and even killed it by dropping bombs in the guise of butterflies. The innocent letter written by the protagonist speaks and protests against the murder of humanity; "it is both a wail and a protest against the brutalities of the American military forces" (Arif 2011: 94). The letter speaks for all the innocent victims and views the 9/11 incident from their point of view, that is clearly opposite to the official perspective.

#### **4.5. Reality Show by Irfan Ahmed Urfi**

A perfect blend of imagination and reality, the Reality Show (2008), describes a theatrical show event where the audience is unable to discriminate between the illusion and reality. The real director of the play and actors are also faced with the same dilemma. There is another unseen power that controls the actions of the play and puzzles them all. Until the end, the story and real script of the play remain unclear and it ends in limbo. With a mysterious and fearful note, the play comes to an end when some outsiders armed with guns come on the stage and snatch the remotes from the actors. The audience panicked by the sound of bomb blasts tramples each other and thus a comedy, musical show meant for providing entertainment ends up in bloodshed and chaos.

Though the story does not give any direct reference to the 9/11 attacks, it is symbolic of the event and the current international political scenario. The theatrical play, its unknown controlling force, and the sound of bomb blasts are some of the links that the attacks in a subtle manner. With its uncertain and fearful ending, it poses a lot of questions in the reader's mind that are like the many post-9/11 counter-narratives and criticisms (conspiracy theories).

The very title of the story is ironical and self-contradictory. "Reality Show" can be interpreted in two ways: a show put on to give a picture of reality or to present a lifelike show that is convincing to the extent that it can be mistaken for reality. The narrative from the beginning until the end does not give any clues as to which of these two interpretations of the title is true. So the title contributes in developing a mysterious air and making the reader think about the questions it poses.

When the show starts, the audience is made to pass through strict security tests, which include putting their mobiles, watches, and even belts on the counter. The writer comments on all the security measures as, "it seemed that a mime show was being presented, also before entering in the theater" (2008: 157). When the audience is seated in the theatre, the director does not start the play as she is waiting for the chief guest. Yet some unknown organizers start announcing the beginning of the play and actors appear on the stage. This symbol of the play in which the actors are merely puppets signifies the international political scenario. There, also, the real perpetrators of the crime never appear on the world stage and control the happenings by pulling the strings of the puppets. Due to this nature of events, many intellectuals and critics rejected the official narrative of 9/11 and conspiracy theories were given to explain the attacks. The writer here has tried to expose this technique of the super powers that always use the third world as actors of their real schemes. Thus, unknowingly the weak nations are used against their own selves.

When the narrative proceeds, the actors, in a surprised state of mind, begin their performance. Minutes after the beginning a loud sound of bomb blast is heard. The audience is shocked, but before they start running, they are assured that "it was a successful show of the production technique of the drama" (2008: 159). The audience becomes calm, appreciates the actors and the play resumes. The actors start receiving calls from their friends. Strangely, everyone who calls, rather than inquiring about their well-being, tells them of a bomb blast in their own areas. The names of locations from their friends call them holds symbolic significance. One of them mentions he heard the bomb going off near seven-eleven, but when he turned on the radio he got to know that it happened in downtown, that is the exact location of the World Trade Center. The same question that was raised after the WTC attacks arises in the

audience's minds: a bomb blast "in spite of such strict security...?". The narrator of the story, here, hints at the post-9/11 skepticism like this: "This one question engulfed all the spectators like a snake" (159). The questions remain unanswered and the play continues.

The calls of their friends petrify the actors even more and when they try to turn on the TV, some men with guns come on the stage, snatch remotes from their hands and disappear. The actors as well as the audience remains uncertain as to who the real director and organizers are. The play ends in uncertainty and the audience starts going back. Not being able to find its way to the exit door, the audience is lost in the maze like labyrinthine path of the theatre. The already irked people are more irritated and start throwing things. In this unruliness, many lose their lives and the carpet laid for the chief guest becomes even redder with the blood of the people.

The number of actors that is three is the same as that of the hijackers of United 93. The aftermath of the play is chaos and bloodshed like 9/11 proved the catalyst for invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan. Similarly, the author describes the appearance of the people who snatch the remotes from the actors as, "They all had familiar faces. Every spectator felt that just before entering the theatre, they had met them" (162). This comment is for implying the fact that the people responsible for attacks were those with whom people were familiar.

In the end, the narrator tells, "an OBN's van of a big TV network was used to cover the play live; it was played on the channel for days and did a historical record business. It is thought that the control of all those background announcements was also in the hands of that network" (163). This revelation of the author is also made in an uncertain tone, but signifies that those who are in charge of the media are the ones

who rule the world politics. The author implies that the attacks were preplanned by the Pentagon to justify its occupation of oil-rich countries. However, this benefit comes at the price of the loss of the audience who is innocent and comes only to witness the play. The audience in this case can be equated with the victims of 9/11 attacks. It includes the passengers of the planes and the workers of WTC. Thus through the manipulation of their own masses and the third world actors, they become successful in putting on a realistic show. In addition, their media earns huge money by running the live coverage of the attacks.

In short, the narrative is a complex, symbolic comment on the world political scenario in general and the 9/11 attacks in particular. Though the links it creates between the attacks and the events of the story are subtle, they explain the writer's approach towards the WTC attacks. He does not accept the official narrative of the incident and views it with skepticism. He, like other conspiracy theorists, maintains that the attacks were a planned strategy to justify the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan. In this mad pursuit of seizing world's energy resources and power, the government did not hesitate to kill thousands of its own citizens. The common people were made to believe that the extremist Islamists had done the damage, but according to the author, the real perpetrators constitute the same familiar faces that ruled the super power of all nations.

## CHAPTER 5

### **CULTURAL CLASH IN POST-9/11 SHORT FICTION OF ENGLISH AND URDU: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

This chapter centers on the comparative analysis of five short stories of English with those selected from Urdu stories. Through the comparison, I aim to analyze the approach of the short fiction writers towards the September 11 attacks. Huntington's thesis of cultural clash provides the theoretical basis of the 9/11 attacks that is evident from the language employed by President Bush in his post-9/11 speeches. The notion of this clash between Islam and the U.S. evolved into rigid dichotomies that contributed in establishing the discourse of 'war on terror'. The televisual feat of two planes hitting the towers became a symbol of cultural clash; 19 young terrorists resentful of America's economic and foreign policies bringing down the symbol of American capitalism to pieces was simply an act of terrorism that was inspired by the fundamentals of their religion, Islam. This visibly symbolic act of terrorism against the US frames the meaning of 9/11 in the terrorist/victim dichotomy that was infinitely reiterated on media and public spheres in the days following the attacks. The tragedy seemed to bring about the "end of innocence", as the nation went through severe mental and emotional trauma. The literary responses also situate the event of that day on these two points of the continuum, mostly. Either they probe the question as to what motivated the hijackers to commit this act of brutality or on the other hand, what the survivors and the families of the deceased felt, how did they cope with this unbearable loss and how did the attacks change the outlook of the American nation in general. This dissertation is an effort to find out how do the short fiction writers across American and Pakistani cultures view September 11 attacks and whether is

there a difference in their manner of treating this important political event that continues to affect world politics till to date.

I have divided the analysis in four headings under which comparative analysis is carried out: Terrorists and Victims: 9/11 as clash of Islam and the West; The Terrorist as the Demonic Other; Humanity Challenged - Emotional and Psychological Impact of the September 11 Attacks; Countering the dominant narrative.

### **5.1. Terrorists and Victims: 9/11 as clash of Islam and the West**

After the thorough analysis of the short stories, it seems clear that John Updike and Martin Amis view the attacks through the lens of cultural clash thesis.

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 terrorist 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, *Shanākht* (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 Arab 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 and Amis's.

Also, 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.

In addition, it is seen that Muslims in Updike and Amis's stories 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, Ammar Masood's story, 9/11, Masood Mufti's *Shanākht* (Identity), and Zahida Hina's *Nīnd kā Zard Libās* (Sleep's Yellow Apparel) give 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, Ammar or Hina make no effort to justify the actions of the terrorists or try to present the sufferings of Americans as trivial or inconsequential. However, in Operation Mice, it is observed that Iqbal reverses the dichotomy of the terrorist and victims. She, doing just the opposite of Updike and Amis, tries to expose the antagonistic and inhumane policy of the Pentagon and double standards of American military that has no regard for innocent human life. The Arab mice, as General Mercy calls them, also include innocent women and children of Iraq who are killed due to the American military operation to obliterate terrorists from Iraq. As they are the superpower, they have the complete authority to treat the world in whatever way they want. So the General says, "the President has said that UN cannot stop our mission. What is UN? We are the UN. We just have to decide till when to occupy that desert. For six months. For a year or forever" (181). This is the misuse of the infinite power that makes America an imperialist nation as implied by Nilofer Iqbal. In the name of fighting terrorism, they too have become terrorists. Having no respect for human rights and authoritarian foreign policy that aims at collecting the oil and riches of the invaded countries, the UN is also shown to be just another tool to exercise their power. Hence, Operation Mice turns the tables and now the American military appear as terrorist and the Iraqi as their victims.

## 5.2. The Terrorist as the Demonic Other

The two stories, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (by John Updike) and *9/11* (by Ammar Masood), are written on the same theme of 9/11 but are very different in their presentation of the event. Both depict the manner, thoughts and ideologies of the attackers, yet are starkly different the way they do so.

The one by Updike mirrors the contempt, anger and antagonism expressed by the American nation over the attacks. However, the war rhetoric used by the President, the TV and the popular magazines and print media bring before them only one explanation, that is that the attackers are Muslims of Arab and Egyptian descent, lack tolerance, were jealous of American prosperity and openness, and belonged to a religion fundamentally belligerent and militaristic. Mohamed and Nawaf like their Prophet in whom they fervently believe are on the mission to purge America and punish the infidels. The only thoughts in their minds are centred on the contrasts in theirs and American society. Whereas, the terrorist shown in *9/11* seems to be a very human like character, and thus realistic. He is also planning and moving towards the same goal as Mohamed and Nawaf, but the evolution of his thoughts make him appear normal human being and not like a demon, subhuman character who is evil to the core and does not harbour any emotions of love in his heart.

Also the roots of his crime and the source have been searched by both the writers in their stories. Updike shows it to be the religion of Islam, the teachings engraved in the Holy Book and the rigid concepts of piety it promotes. It is a monolithic point of view in this sense that it does not allow its readers to consider any other possible sources of this act of terror. Unlike the myopic vision of Updike, Ammar Masood tries to present the event in a balanced manner. He does not fall prey

to the tendency of generalization and traces his protagonist's background to his cavemen ancestry. However, he does not name either the protagonist, or the place he belongs to, giving the readers space to specify it for themselves or perhaps leave it open for interpretation.

The message Ammar Masood gives in the end is one of hope that even the perpetrator of the attacks realized in his last moments that love is to rule the world after all and it's the only explanation capable of solving the conundrum of existence.

Similarly, 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: 945) this stereotyping and demonization denies readers any chance to understand the inner workings of the mind of a terrorist. Contrastingly, 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, typified and having no positive traits.

The short story Operation Mice that is written by Nilofer Iqbal is a depiction of how the Others see the actions and policies of the US government. General Mercy who is shown to be in sorrow on the death of his beloved pet, Blaire, doesn't even give a second thought to the decision of starting a war operation in Iraq. The writer shows that he and others from the Pentagon are the ones who develop this rhetoric of war and revenge, thereby presenting the third world humans as Others whose only purpose in this world is to “breed and fornicate”. The general, trying to quell the doubts of his intellectual wife, labels the Iraqis as ‘mice’. According to him this

operation initiated by the Pentagon has been called “Operation Mice”, for it is to purge the world of the Arab mice. Here we see that the “custard-hearted” Mercy relegates the Iraqi people to the level of mice who don’t have any purpose in life. They just spend their lives fulfilling their animalistic passions; the physical need to reproduce has overshadowed their spiritual selves. By delving into the thoughts of General Mercy, Nilofer Iqbal tries to expose the roots of marginalization of Muslims that started in the US in the days after the attacks. As she herself belongs to the periphery, she has produced a rebuttal in the form of her narrative that exposes American claims of freedom and respect for humanity.

The issue of representation of the Other and the image that was created of them by the American government is also touched upon by the short story *Shanākhī* (Identity) written by Masood Mufti. The protagonist, Khalid, is a humanist; he believes religious identities to be confining and creating divisions among mankind. For this reason, he considers himself a free person, living in the US and trying to materialize the American dream like any other American. But his theory of humanism and no regard for cultural-religious identity proves to be wrong in the post-9/11 America. People on the street, in parks and bus stations at once become sensitive to others' cultural roots. He starts being viewed with suspicion by those around him, even his home environment becomes tensed as he avoids talking on the subject of 9/11 and terrorists with his American wife and children. This shift in the behaviour of the people towards immigrants and especially Muslims is made prominent by Mufti for an important reason. The underlining message is that the common people were oblivious of prejudice and hatred towards immigrants, but it was the government and the media which promoted that stereotypical image of a terrorist, which in turn developed the tendency to generalize all Asians and Muslims as terrorists. Mufti, by

portraying the mental and emotional turmoil of his protagonist makes the statement that xenophobia was cultivated among the masses; it was on the agenda of the government. In short, both *Shanākht* (Identity) and Operation Mice make it clear that 9/11 is made to be presented as a cultural clash of Islam and the West by the American government. The masses were ignorant of any such prejudice, but when indoctrinated, became afraid and antagonistic towards Muslims. Consequently, this generalization and xenophobia led to the failure of American Dream and proved that 'melting pot of cultures', somehow, was an inapt description of post-9/11 America.

### **5.3. Humanity Challenged- Emotional and Psychological Impact of the September 11 Attacks**

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 Amis and 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 eye 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” (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: 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: 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-lifes 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: 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" (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: 14).

As Delillo's tale is concerned with how a survivor copes with the challenges of a disordered, fragmented world, Masood Mufti's, in the same spirit reveals the mental anguish and dilemmas that Khalid, a Pakistani American faces in the post-9/11 world. Mufti chose to show the plight of an immigrant, whereas Delillo's protagonist is an American. The difference in choosing to see the effect of 9/11 on people of two different communities arises, possibly, due to the different socio-political background of the two writers. As Masood is himself a Pakistani, he is aware of the fact that post-9/11 America became a taxing society for the immigrants and due to the Arab descent of the hijackers they are also treated as 'Others' and not like American citizens. The process of sympathizing and dealing with the loss of the victims' families marginalized them in literature as well; they often don't find themselves represented in the well-known narratives of the American literati. For this reason, though both Delillo and Mufti treat the subject of 9/11 in a humanistic way, their focus is a bit changed. Khalid, in *Shanākht* (Identity), also gets affected psychologically and mentally as his humanistic beliefs and choice of no-religion are challenged by the revival of cultural identities after 9/11. He feels a stranger in his own home; his Christian wife cannot understand his fears and he feels lonely and insecure. The incident of physical assault on his friend Mufeez, who is seen to be praying by some teenagers, and his children memorializing their grandfather's death by placing a Bible under his photograph and singing hymns are some catalysts that make Khalid aware

of the importance of his religious and cultural roots. After these incidents, he begins to see nightmare in which he visualizes glimpses of Crusades, and silhouettes and speeches of the American leaders. Even old Urdu verses that he learnt a long time back in school are evoked in his mind. He feels insecure and alien in the same America that once looked like home to him; moreover, his mental anguish is heightened by the confusion that surrounds his identity. In order to embrace a definite ideology, he makes an effort to go back to his roots. He tries to reunite with his parents by seeking forgiveness from them, and eventually goes to pray in a mosque with his friend. Mufti focusing on the identity crisis of Khalid suggests that the attacks of September 11 proved Huntington's theory right in a way. The post-9/11 America became sensitive to one's culture and religion, identifying people on the basis of their ethnic roots; it divided the line between 'Us' and 'them'. Mufti's protagonist, who was an atheist and completely assimilated in the American culture, too, is made aware of his religious identity and thus, is forced to return to his native culture and religion. In this way Mufti suggests that the post-9/11 atmosphere of xenophobia and America's decision to invade Afghanistan are the factors that contributed in making Huntington thesis come true. The technique of generalizing all Muslims as terrorists and by equating militant Islam with Islam that the majority follow is what made cultural clash thesis come alive.

Joyce Carol Oates also has a humanistic approach towards 9/11 as is manifested in her story, *The Mutants*. The "Midwestern Blond" with golden curls and an impressing personality is the protagonist of the story. Exuding confidence and beaming with happiness, she gets admiring looks by the people on the street even. Such idyllic description of the girl makes her appear as a metaphor for the pre-9/11 America and the myth of American exceptionalism. Beautiful and strong in every

respect, America, the superpower, also was the centre of attention of the whole world. The heroine, possessed by her beauty and good fortune is unable to look beyond herself and think about others. She believes that her impeccable life and perfection she enjoys is “part of a general bounty shared by all, like the warm autumn air” (2004: 281). America has the same narcissistic character due to which it fails to see the debilitating effect of its capitalist economic policies on the third world nation-states. But the attack mars its beauty and breaks the myth of its exceptionalism. Similarly, the blonde who was loved by all in her surroundings is unable to believe that someone has tried to rob the peace of her world. Shocked and terrified, she rushes back to her apartment when she sees the towers falling. There, with the lights out, she passes the day waiting for someone to rescue her. In her oblivion she thinks that the city might have been destroyed and she is among the few survivors.

The process of transformation from the “dreamy-eyed blond” to a “panicked animal” seems to be employing the clichéd rhetoric of “9/11-changed-everything”. Yet Oates gives a hopeful ending, showing her fortitude and resilience in the face of calamity. She is “a mutant being primed to survive” (286) implies the American philosophy to get over things and move on in life. For this reason, she lights all the candles that she finds in her apartment and they are “brave and festive in the dark” (287). Although she is shocked by the disaster, yet she could feel “the happiness of her shock”. She celebrates this challenging time, considering it “a special occasion” and taking bath as if it is her last bath. Till the end of the story, she comes to signify a Christ-like figure who is able to fight darkness and evil with light and inner goodness. Even if she dies in the apartment, she’d embrace death with courage.

Sharing the same pain of human suffering of those affected by the war on terror, Zahida Hina’s short story *Nīñd 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.

Deborah Eisenberg's *Twilight of the Superheroes* (2006) apart from being satirical and sceptical of the political role of America, depicts the psychological suffering of a group of youngsters who live in a fashionable loft facing the WTC. All of them seem to be confused and mentally shattered due to the attacks. The political happenings and the changed character of NYC has translated into their personal suffering making it difficult to focus on their careers. Also, Nathaniel, who is Lucien's nephew, and had come to NY for making a fortune is possessed by a "fear of failure" and "fear of mediocrity" (17). After the attacks, he gets more distracted and even loses interest in making his comic *Passivityman*. Thinking of his unfulfilled life, he gets aged mentally; it seems to him that a lot of time has passed and "in a few more minutes he'd be thirty-five, then fifty. Five zero" (18). Same is the case with Lucien, who, when September 11 happened, was already grieved and lost due to the untimely death of his young wife, Charlie. Now after it, his days are marked with a sense of stagnancy and inertia. Like Nathaniel, he also feels to be aged and weary of life. For him, the attacks turned "his miraculous city into a nightmare and hurl[ed] the future into a void" (21). Here, Eisenberg is using the same concept of being pushed back into time that is given by Delillo in his influential essay, *In the Ruins of the Future* (2001). According to Delillo, the last decade of the 1990's was the time when capital economy and technological advancement were at their peak; "the dramatic climb of the Dow and the speed of the internet summoned us all to live permanently in the future, in the utopian glow of cyber-capital...". But "we have fallen back in time and space", he comments hinting at a temporal and spatial relapse of the post-9/11 America. This is the same undercurrent that runs through Nathaniel and Lucien's

thoughts; they also see their future to be in ruins. Hopeless of having any future after the tragedy he thinks that perhaps “his nephew’s is the last generation that will remember what it has once felt like to blithely assume there would be a future” (2006: 26). In short, Eisenberg uses temporal shifts in the plot and ambivalence about time (or vacillating time) to heighten the mental confusion and chaos her characters are faced with.

As her title suggests, she shows that every hero of her story is facing the twilight of their powers. In the aftermath of September 11, they all are losing their fortés gradually. Unlike Oates, Eisenberg tries to present a realistic account of the effects of the catastrophic event. In her view, America also lost its status of the superpower when it came under attack by a handful of men armed with box-cutters. Similarly, Lyle loses her superpower to arouse pity in others; Madison’s superpower to stay composed is lost; Amity’s special ability to exploit others’ weaknesses has also weakened. Depressing and challenging post-9/11 America has less hope to offer to its denizens. For this reason, Eisenberg remarks on the lesson history teaches us in a pessimistic tone: “if history has anything to teach us, it’s that- despite all our indestructible faith in our own foresight- we poor humans cannot actually think ahead...it always turns out that no one is in charge of the things that really matter” (6). The story’s formal structure also reveals the inertia and helplessness of its characters. They are just spectators of the tragedy; they see their beautiful city become “the country’s open wound” but couldn’t do anything about it. The city becomes a metaphor for their personal lives as well. Unfulfilled wishes to have successful careers and requited love are what characterize their lives. The story opens and closes on the same scene: Nathaniel is having wine with his friends on the terrace, while Lucien is sitting in his gallery immersed in deep thought.

She also describes the changed general character of the city; New York that once teemed with activity and was a centre of attraction for its tourists came under a spell of sadness and silence. "The good-hearted, casually wasteful festival was over" (29). New Yorkers, in a state of trauma and confusion discussed the reasons and tried to answer each other's questions regarding 9/11. Everyone was asking the same question: "what should be done, and to whom" (28). But grasping reality and trying to reach any conclusion seemed unfeasible; "it was like endlessly trying to sort little bits of paper into stacks when a powerful fan was on" (28).

In short, Don Delillo, Deborah Eisenberg, Joyce Carol Oates, Zahida Hina and Masood Mufti- all have humanistic approach towards the September 11 attacks as reflected in their short stories discussed above. The Urdu writers 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, Delillo, Eisenberg and Oates focus on the immediate effects of the tragedy on Americans or the ones who died or got injured in the towers.

#### **5.4. Countering the Dominant Narrative**

Eisenberg's story *Twilight of the Superheroes* and Urfi's Reality Show do not view September 11 as a cultural clash of two civilizations. The short story, Reality Show, blurs the line between reality and fiction. It tells of a play that is started under strict security conditions and still is interrupted by a bomb sound. Nobody knows what is going on and the writer hints at the fact that perhaps the organizers of the show are responsible for the bomb sound that caused people to rush out of the hall. Relating it to 9/11, the story represents it as a complex 'play' that is pre-arranged and perpetrated by the owner of the site where it happened. Using the metaphor of a theatrical play,

the writer expresses his doubt over the official explanation of 9/11 as told by the U.S government. He, like Eisenberg, is skeptical of the fact that a handful of unarmed men hijacked four planes and succeeded in collapsing them into the towers. Eisenberg's story, as observed in the detailed analysis, is also an expression of left-wing skepticism over the dominant 9/11 narrative. These two stories are similar in this respect that they raise questions in the minds of the readers as to who the real attackers were. In this way, both the stories evoke the conspiracy theories and thus work to counter the fixed official story of 9/11.

### **5.5. Conclusion**

The main objective of this dissertation was to find out the approach of the short story writers towards 9/11 attacks in selected short fiction. By reading the ten short fictions in English and Urdu within the theoretical framework of the "clash-of-civilizations" theory, it sought to examine whether the writers see the attacks as the clash of Islam and the West or view it as a human tragedy. The study was qualitative in nature and comparatively analyzed the fictional response of the writers from America and Pakistan. This comparative method of analysis helped to highlight the difference of their approach and provided insight into the reasons that were seemingly responsible for the way they treated the subject in their works. The following questions have been put forward in the study: one, how has the September 11 attacks been perceived and presented in the post-9/11 short fiction by American and Pakistani authors?; second, what are the similarities and differences in their portrayal of the tragic events of September 11?; and lastly, what may be the reasons that are responsible for the different portrayal of the same issue by Pakistani and American authors? The study answered these questions in relation to Samuel Huntington's theory of cultural clash.

The analysis that has been carried out in the preceding pages makes it clear that although two American writers conform to the cultural clash thesis, there are several others that have entirely different perspective towards the September 11 attacks. In the studied short fiction, John Updike and Martin Amis are similar in that their reaction relies on the ideas disseminated by the administration-governed media. The effort to explore the reasons of the attacks by getting into the mind of a terrorist is a natural reaction of a writer whose nation has been taken aback by an unanticipated tragedy, yet, at the same time to present and understand the cultural Other is a task that demands objectivity and serious research into authentic resources. Somehow, these two things seem lacking in Updike's *Varieties of Religious Experience* (2002) and Amis's *The Last Days of Muhammad Atta* (2006). They demonize the terrorists they portray in their fictions offering little in the name of profound inquiry into the psychological or cultural motivations that persuade a person to kill himself in order to kill others. Amis's protagonist, in the same vein, is a sexually frustrated, mentally ill atheist who finds the idea of jihad adventuresome. He is a sadist and a pervert; he does not like people, women and music. His misanthropic tendencies and sadism find their equivalent in Islamic rulings regarding infidels, jihad and women. Thus, according to Amis Islam is an inherently sick religion that cannot cope up with the challenges of the globalized world and can only attract people like Muhammad Atta towards themselves. This is an exceedingly misleading and imbalanced insight that Amis provides his readers with. Similarly, I found that Updike also tends to mock and ridicule the teachings of Islam and its belief of accountability in the life hereafter. He, like Amis, cracks the same raisin-virgin joke to make fun of God's promise of houris (virgins) to the pious believers. The reasons that both Updike and Amis view the attacks through the lens of cultural-clash thesis and not like a creative writer might be

that they could not repress the feelings of anger and revenge that were naturally felt by the whole American nation. Moreover, their stories reflect the propaganda rhetoric against the Muslims and Islam reiterated on media after the attacks. This keeps them from presenting an alternate or creative view on the issue that may have proved helpful for a better understanding of the Other that they try to fictionalize.

Apart from Amis and Updike, it has been found out that other American writers like Joyce Carol Oates, Debora Eisenberg and Don Delillo present fresh, creative perspectives on the subject in their respective stories. Oates's heroine, although, a bit clichéd, is symbolic of the hopeful future of America, that no matter how terrible the tragic experience was to see the two towers getting vanished, the people will work through it and move on with their lives with courage and fortitude. After being panicked due to the attacks, the lady regains her composure and lights all her candles to beat the darkness. Oates, here, has portrayed the mental turmoil of the people and presents a courageous example to cope with it. On the same note, Eisenberg, though quite critical of American foreign policy and its inflexible manner of dealing with the attacks, is also concerned with the affected psychological and mental health of the common Americans. Through her characters, she shows that the government's strict rules of censorship, security and scrutiny of the private lives of the people added to the turmoil of an already traumatized people. Her narrative, unlike Oates, avoids giving a hopeful closure; rather it ends up on the same scene where it started. It shows that people found it difficult to overcome this trauma and their government's dominating explanations along with their overarching rhetoric of patriotism and commemoration made the process of healing all the more difficult. Delillo, who is considered an authority on the subject of terrorism, also evades opining about the political aspect of the September 11 attacks. He, instead, focuses on

how a WTC survivor deals with trauma and how his life is changed by the disaster. Linking the consumer culture of America and its banality with the attacks, he shows that Keith's life changes in a better way. He patches up with his estranged wife, Lianne and they both learn to value each other as a result. The very idea that Keith might have died in the towers is what incites a positive change in their previously embittered relationship.

The Urdu short stories also do not present the attacks as the clash of Islam and the West. Pakistani writers, themselves being members of the third world Muslim countries present the sufferings and woes of the people of Iraq and Afghanistan who were attacked by the U.S. in their pursuit to eliminate terror. The stories bespeak of the pain that is commonly felt by all the humanists around the world. They also strongly criticize America's exploitative economic policies and imperial ways due to which the innocent children and women of the invaded countries suffer. Stories like Zahida Hina's *Nīñd kā Zard Libās* (Sleep's Yellow Apparel) and Nilofer Iqbal's Operation Mice expose the hypocrisy of American claims that they are the protector of human rights and believe in justice and equality for the whole humanity. The way they kill innocent children in Afghanistan by dropping bombs in the guise of food is one example cited in Hina's story that reveals the atrocity and ruthlessness of American military. Parveen, the protagonist of her story, becomes the victim of American drone strike and her letter to President Bush comes to be the symbol of the unheard plea of humanity. Iqbal, on the contrary, exposes the imperial mindset of the Pentagon; they command complete authority over the whole world and treat the Iraqi as mice. Killing them is just initiating the project that they call Operation Mice. The U.N's charter for human rights is also a deception according to General Mercy as it is

the American government that forms the U.N. The world deceives itself by thinking that U.N. is an autonomous organization that works for humanity without any bias.

The short story, *9/11* by Ammar Masood like Amis's *The Last Days of Muhammad Atta* (2006), attempts to inhabit the mind of a terrorist in his final days until he achieves his destiny of death. A stark contrast is present in the approach of both the writers. Ammar's account presents the terrorist as a human being, capable of thinking and feeling love. In the final moment, when it is too late, his mind changes. Therefore, Masood does not present him as an utterly ill and beastly figure as Amis does. Moreover, his story cited the resentment of immigrants and militant organizations as reasons that have motivated the terrorist for this irrational act of terror.

As stories by American authors focus on the effect of the attacks on American people, Masood Mufti's *Shanākht* (Identity) (2002) describes the plight of a Muslim American, Khalid. In the post-9/11 America, he faces numerous problems due to his Muslim identity and South-Asian descent; it creates an identity crisis for him and he ultimately seeks comfort in his long forsaken religious ideology/identity.

From the discussion, it is concluded that American and Pakistani authors do not necessarily conform to the “clash-of-civilizations” thesis for thinking about the September 11 attacks. Among those writers who produce propagandist literature about September 11 attacks, there are several who oppose this fixed approach and present original, creative accounts that try to highlight human suffering and pain experienced by those affected by the attacks in a direct or indirect way.

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