

## Representation of War Trauma in Hanif's Red Birds

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### Abstract:

After the two World Wars, several authors have focused a significant portion of their literary works on the subject of war trauma. Muhammad Hanif is widely known for his contribution to war writing. This study's primary goal is to identify war trauma in the Hanif book that was chosen. *Red Birds* (2018), his masterwork, was chosen by the researcher for research. By using Freud's Psychoanalysis Theory (1901) and Carruth's Trauma Theory (1996) the researcher has examined this book. The researcher discovered that the novel's protagonists have mental illnesses brought on by the conflict. Several different things can induce mental disturbances. These elements include overkill bombing, a lack of essential services in conflict areas, homelessness, the murder and kidnapping of family members, and excessive bombardment. Also, the study discovered that the war victims are dealing with inferiority complexes and that this mental disease prompted self-shattering. Children and adults respond to combat trauma in different ways. When compared to the adult characters in the novels, children are far more influenced. The trauma of war has profound and enduring repercussions on children. The individuals in the book are afflicted with a variety of psychiatric disorders as a result of this battle trauma. This study demonstrates how extensively the impacts of war trauma on the lives of the characters are shown in Hanif's work.

### Keywords:

Trauma, War, Bomb Shell, Troops, Refugees, Death

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## **Introduction:**

Wars have figured prominently in the history of study of mind in many different ways. For the majority of the 20th century, the impact of the world wars maintained the viability of mental intercessions. The main impetus for founding the National Institute for Mental Health in the USA was clear proof of the large population that was ineligible for military service during World War II. Better methods for comprehending how medications affect body weight were developed as a result of the mistakes in the translation of mental side effects between authorities and warriors (McAloon, 2018). War has a devastating effect on a nation's welfare and economy. Family networks are destroyed by war, frequently impeding national social and economic progress. Long-term physical and emotional trauma to children and adults is one of the effects of war. War is necessary for destruction. Except for death, not all outcomes are recorded. These include pervasive suffering, a lack of ability to maintain one's health, disability, decline in one's financial or social situation, and psycho-social illness (Murthy & Lakshminaryana, 2006).

Trauma is a reaction to a painful or upsetting occurrence that overwhelms a person's capacity to deal with the reasons of that specific upsetting event and damages both his or her sense of self and capacity to experience the full range of feelings and experiences. When psychology was young, the origins of trauma were thought to be purely physical. According to this theory, traumatic stress syndrome would result in tiny explosive pieces that would enter the cranium and cause brain damage. The causes of trauma, however, did not manifest themselves since the explosives were so little that they were not even apparent (Jung, 2003). Nonetheless, several ideas have since been put up, and a great lot of study has been done in this area. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder has been proven to be the main symptom of war trauma (PTSD).

## **Research Questions:**

- Where and in which ways the factors of war trauma are being represented by Hanif particularly in *Red Birds*?
- How has Hanif used war trauma so as to illustrate and give depiction of the state of human mind during war?

## **The Significance of the Study:**

This research emphasizes the damage that war does on its victims. People are impacted by war both directly and indirectly. It directly causes death, injury, and homelessness. It has an indirect impact on the war victims' minds. People are mentally affected after seeing violent situations. The individuals are broken by this mental disorder. This study's primary goal is to provide light on the psychological state of those who have experienced atrocities of varying severity that have been perpetrated during conflict and how those crimes have affected their personalities. How has Hanif connected all of these elements to provide the reader a comprehensive understanding of how war affects people's minds? *Red Birds* has several themes that Hanif has included, but this research only addresses two of them: war trauma and self-shattering. It also discusses how wartime trauma and wrongdoing cause people to acquire self-destructive inclinations.

## **Literature Review:**

Trauma is a high-stimulus condition that ignores a person's capacity to handle serious risks or perceptions of serious threats. This covers a range of occasions, circumstances, and settings. They include mishaps, tragedies involving other people, and other sorts of maltreatment. Large-scale human rights breaches have been brought on by the socio-political environment of the twenty-first century. Mass killings, torture, and extrajudicial executions are just a few of the forms of state-sanctioned violence that authoritarian regimes have engaged in on a huge scale. All of this is done with the purpose of harming a person's mind and body as well as the spirit and fiber of the entire community. Those who experience extreme trauma as a result of enormous human rights breaches and widespread violence suffer from both mental and physical health problems. Trauma's primary causes are typically found in the system that supports it, not in the people who experience its consequences. Yet, violations are altering the psychological and social realities of the survivors and their communities. What is absorbed is the terror-related experience. The integrity and relationships of oneself, the family, and the community interrupt the fundamental bonds to others. The most cunning forms of persecution are employed to instill shame and guilt in victims, forcing them into exile from both them and their communities (Siegel, 2003).

According to Freud (1953), a precocious sexual encounter that was the product of sexual abuse by another person was not simply a provocateur but also a particular cause of hysteria. He independently came to the conclusion that hysteria was caused by psychological stress. He concurred that dissociation, as described by Janet, was the altered state of consciousness that was the inevitable result of traumatic experiences. According to Janet, hysterical symptoms are signs of dissociation. Patients' symptoms were reduced through the use of language to describe their feelings and by reconstructing their past (Herman, 1992). Nevertheless, Freud eventually shifted from what was known as the seduction hypothesis to that of conflict theory, contending that hysteria was not triggered by memories of external trauma but rather by the unacceptable character of sexual and violent urges. Freud, however, valued internal psychological theory and imagination over the outward facts of trauma. He proposed that the patient's mental condition may have been affected by external trauma (Diamond, 2004).

According to Bruce perry (2014), psychological trauma is more horrible than physical trauma. Hence, if something impacts the mind for a long period, it eventually becomes a permanent component of the body and causes great agony. Trauma therefore produces a person's mental health issues as well as psychological diseases. This study focuses on the psychological trauma brought on by conflict, which increases the risk of disease since it is less visible than physical injuries but nonetheless just as harmful. Those with emotional trauma are like vampires who can't get rid of it.

Similar to how experience and time have been linked to psychological trauma in psychology. When people endure difficult conditions for an extended period of time, it causes them considerable difficulty. It interferes with how the mind functions, causes the person ongoing discomfort, and annoys him. If someone experiences horrific events repeatedly throughout their lives, this generates knowledge, making it impossible for them to handle the circumstance and impairing their ability to think clearly and under control. The PTSD hypothesis thus tackles both the causes of trauma as well as its consequences. According to the trauma hypothesis,

nightmares are brought on by traumas that lead a person to feel discomfort all the time. In other words, the theory shows that trauma obsesses the person, and it is very hard to eliminate it forever (Jerome, 2013).

### **Theoretical Framework:**

Using Freud's psychoanalytical theory, some specific and pertinent lines or paragraphs from the book *Red Birds* have been chosen (2018). Instead of focusing on the data's structure, the themes in the data are examined. Because they face psychological conundrums, the primary characters are the centre of attention. For the study, both textual and qualitative data are gathered because this type of research is qualitative in nature. The foundation of this work is Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1953) and his theories about trauma. The shapes of anguish that endure in people's lives are required by the notion of trauma. These folks experience a particular level of unpleasant events that are repeated and often have a traumatic effect on people's psyches. These experiences frequently have a very damaging nature, and they seem to happen to those who have experienced them repeatedly. Nonetheless, the painful acts are not the victim's fault; rather, they are occasionally uncontrollable external circumstances that may be referred to be their fate. Trauma can therefore be an exterior activity rather than an interior one (Freud, 1953).

The trauma theory, as put forward by Freud in 1953, contends that recurring traumas are what give rise to nightmares. Despite being fully aware of the trauma's origin, the person is unable to recover. According to the hypothesis, the person has a trauma obsession that he finds difficult to overcome. If a person has been dealing with severe illnesses for a long period, their mental state is severely disturbed. It affects a person's ability to think clearly, causes them ongoing discomfort, and annoys them. Someone who experiences horrific events repeatedly enters a condition in which they are unable to regulate their thoughts and behavior. As a result, the idea tackles both the trauma and its effects. Freud (1915) went on to discuss if the impulse to flee is related to an unforgivable occurrence. The victims suffer twofold harm as a result of this, which symbolizes the double survival. Trauma is connected to both the fundamental processes; death and life, or simply the gap between a person's desire and an unacceptable state.

### **Textual Analysis:**

Each and every person in the camp is affected by the conflict. Their physical and emotional state demonstrates how severely the conflict has damaged them. Conflicts in the world have a significant impact on children. The involvement of children in conflicts is the most morally repugnant act. Characters in *Red Birds* experience dislocation, physical and psychological torment, anxiety, sadness, hostility, and difficulties with post-traumatic stress disorder during times of conflict. As they prepare for potentially unpleasant future events, children wrestle with a variety of issues. Due to poverty and other social and economic problems in less developed nations, children take part in conflicts, putting many of them in danger. We notice that many of the refugees in *Red Birds* have morally degenerated. The selling of items that have been stolen or plundered provides the refugees with the majority of their income. There, robbery is accepted as commonplace, and no one views it as an unethical habit. As it appears in the book: How're you going to keep your integrity in a place where thievery is not only accepted but also

expected? If you are not a petty thief, if you are not going to steal bricks and paper and sugar then surely you are a bigger thief.... What you goanna do when wading through a morass of moral corruption?" (Hanif, 2018. p.16)

Individuals are abused so much that they have begun to mistake illicit activity for legitimate activity. People's lives have been ruined by war. The aggressive actions of the strong nations that attack them have a negative impact on them. Even the most fundamental necessities of existence, including health, are denied to people. By sending ordinary physicians who are completely unable to handle the people's mental and physical health, the powerful nations deceive the weaker nations. The doctor in the refugee camp is not a true doctor; rather, he or she only collaborated with other doctors briefly prior to the war. He is unable to handle the people's physical and mental health issues, which exacerbate the pain of those living in refugee camps. Mutt uses the following terms to explain the doctor's predicament: "He started to travel in the ambulance with real doctors and nurses and maybe learned a thing or two: how to stop people from choking on their own blood or tying that knot on a limb that might just save it. And after the real medics went back everyone started calling him Doctor. He can deliver babies and set bones but he is not happy being a doctor" (Hanif, 2018. p.22).

The majority of the book is devoted to discussing how war affects people psychologically, especially children. Children suffer the same negative effects of war that adults do. But, there is a distinction in how conflict affects children and adults. Children have a tendency and attachment to stay close to their relatives. They rely on other people for sympathy, affection, and attention. War has a very negative impact on and disturbs this relationship. Kids might be harmed by their parents' deaths. The difficulty parents go through to obtain a place to reside and a means of support is what causes their mental illness. Children have mental disturbances when they do not receive the appropriate attachment, affection, and attention. The emotional deficit of the parent keeps it in a disturbed state. They could have to deal with parentage substitution in the event of an orphanage.

In that situation, some other family members take guardianship of the orphans but are unable to truly step in as parents. Some children are even denied adult protection. Children living in refugee camps must deal with issues like that. Sometimes, battles affect children their entire lives. For instance, when youngsters are deprived of an education and dwell in refugee camps. Being in camps without their parents throughout the war had an impact on their entire way of life. They deal with mental illnesses. They develop psychosis and become patients. These psychological issues are an essential component of their mentality. They have to wait years before they can begin living normally. After having lived in a dreadful situation, they do not lead a regular life. One can only picture the suffering of those who lost limbs, were rendered disabled, and lost their sight as a result of the heavy bombardment. How can a youngster lead a normal life after being denied access to health care and education? How can a girl who has been sexually assaulted by society have a normal life after missing the ideal opportunity for marriage? Even after the conflict, they are unable to regain the potential they lost as a result of it.

The purpose of the study is to examine the psychological effects of war as they are experienced by various characters in *Red Birds* at several pivotal moments. The effects of war are extremely dangerous for young people compared to the elderly. In *Red Birds*, for instance, Momo and

Brother Ali are affected by conflict in a lasting way as opposed to the adult characters. Compared to adults, children are a more vulnerable target in combat situations. Depression, homelessness, orphanages, a lack of attention, starvation, and secure living situations can all have an impact on children. Children experience psychological issues, especially after the conflicts. Children also face dread, mental sickness, and post-traumatic stress disorder following the conflicts.

Physical injuries are less detrimental than psychological issues. Children frequently have firsthand knowledge of surprising and upsetting events. Momo's actions are proof of certain psychological repercussions. Momo and Bro Ali enjoyed playing with various manufactured guns. As a result, Momo didn't start using firearms like the M16 until he was fifteen. Mommy Dear remarked: "for Ali and Momo sometimes he crafted little replicas of weapons, pistols, toy machine guns. They would go around the house shooting each other" (Hanif, 2018. p.126). This recreation of a weapon is only a result of the conflict. Children from typical, tranquil neighborhoods never engage in such activities. Father Dear advised kids to get ready for the approaching conflict as Mother Dear berated him over the way the kids were acting. In *Red Birds*, Momo highlights the duplicitous behavior of the invaders. He claims that the invaders are attacking the populace before performing the purported treatment. Momo claims: "First, they bomb us from the skies, and then they work hard to cure our stress. . . . I have been the subject of many studies since I was eleven. Growing Pains in Conflict Zones. Tribal Cultures get it. Even Reiki for War Survivors. I am a good subject. (Hanif, 2018. p.4)

War's consequences are unquestionably too severe. The psychological toll of the destruction was too great. For those impacted by conflict, adjusting to normal life becomes too difficult. In *Red Birds*, a researcher visits young people who have seen conflicts and wants to learn more about their thoughts. Teenager clearly enjoys Momo, who has had deep effects on his mind that are difficult to undo. She is a consultant for USAID who has come here to research the thoughts of those who have been touched by the conflict, as Father Dear mentions Lad Flower body. Momo also finds it odd that the Americans first bombed us before choosing the smartest individuals to look after our mental health. She studied the minds of youngsters to gauge the psychological impacts of conflict. She had developed open and pleasant ties with Momo in order to examine his psyche. When questioned about her study, Lady Flower body replies that she comes to do her research on teenagers' minds. It is important to keep in mind their aspirations, anxieties, and emotions. She must be aware of the effects of war.

The main character of the book, Momo, provides us a peek of all the activities that go on within the camp for refugees. He alludes to the hoarder and trafficker who works in the shops of the servant of God. He is a black shopkeeper who keeps food in storage. He describes how a juvenile ran the Royal Hardware Depot by stealing items off of the hangers. They have a lot of metal components. At the camp's corner, there was a doctor's office. When a fatality or significant injury was reported, the camp's own laughing siren-equipped ambulance was on the roadways. There was a junk store in the camp. A doctor learned in a death camp by trial and error. He acted in a really peculiar way for the welfare of others. He was unconcerned about the injuries and deaths of others. He took care of Mother Earth because she would soon pass away. Hence, in order to identify aspects of war trauma in the various characters, the researcher applied trauma and psychoanalytical theories to the analysis of Hanif's book *Red Birds*. In addition, the

researcher has chosen a few brief passages from the book for examination, learning about the character's mental condition in addition to the collateral harm brought on by conflict. The effects of war on people's physical and mental health have been disastrous. They have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). People's lives are affected by war in a lasting way.

### **Conclusion:**

The researcher noted that all of the characters in the novel have psychological disorders brought on by conflict, and that these psychological disturbances have an impact on people's lives, in light of the data analysis in the study's preceding chapter. Because of this, individuals have fractured personalities and an inferiority complex. The refugee camp's whole population was in terrible shape. Their homes have been destroyed by the heavy bombardment, and they are now compelled to live at the camp for refugees. The lack of basic amenities makes living in the refugee camp extremely uncomfortable. The foreign assistance providers have turned into bandits and are stealing instead of giving amenities to the conflict victims. The camp's residents suffer from severe mental illness and extreme agony. They are restricted in their mobility, and the army must grant them authorization before they may do so. People in the camp are now psychologically ill as a result of this, and they no longer possess any charm. This gives us a clear picture of the impact that war may have on the lives of those living in conflict regions. Moreover, the following terms help clarify the picture: "When Mother Dear does her daily laundry you can smell despair wafting through the washing lines. She pours tears in her curry, so sad is that woman. Why does she need salt? She could just cook with tears (Hanif, 2018.p.51).

The researcher learns that American fighter planes attack civilian homes excessively through the words of Mutt, a philosophical dog and one of the novel's narrators. That day, in his opinion, was the third worst of his life. The Momo family's home was reduced to ruins by the heavy bombing. This bombardment might occur at any time and would likely result in significant collateral damage. The victims of these frequent bombings experience a lot of disruption. The comments of Mutt, a philosophical dog that serves as one of the novel's narrators, are what the researcher discovers about how frequently US fighter jets hit homes belonging to civilians. He ranked the day as the third worst of his life. The devastating bombing left the Momo family's house in ruins. This bombardment might happen at any time, and it would probably cause a lot of collateral damage. These regular bombs cause a great deal of disturbance for the victims. The families were permanently disturbed as a result. They long to have their kids join them again. One of the missing kids is Bro Ali. His kidnapping has been a constant cause of conflict for the family. Mother Darling worries for him constantly. She desires to see him once more in her presence. She thinks Father Dear has sold her to the Americans, and so does Momo. The husband and wife, as well as the father and kid, now have an emotional disconnect. The entire family system is damaged. The family members of those murdered in conflicts experience emotional anguish over their loss. Some suffer injuries and develop disabilities. They experience acute psychological dysfunction as a result of their impairment, which turns into a source of mental disease. As described by Hanif in the novel, all of these elements work together to generate the battle trauma.

The researcher discovers after analyzing the data gathered that every character in the book is dealing with psychological issues brought on by the conflict. Trauma victims are those who experience the negative consequences of traumatic events and who feel powerless and unable

to regulate themselves. They deal with ambiguous emotions, intense outrage, and bothersome tendencies. Individuals who have lived through combat experience war trauma. They are unable to get rid of these traits. In the wake of this tragic event, several individuals in the book endure panic, melancholy, degeneration, and irritation. Their ability to live a productive life is hampered by these difficulties. A person's family life is significantly impacted by traumatic experiences. The social lives of the people are also impacted by these traumatic events. Due to their repressed emotions, people become violent against other people. The results of a bad experience with war are wrath and grief. In Hanif's *Red Birds*, almost all of the characters experienced emotional anguish and are still damaged from the conflict. All of these people have been impacted by the war. Each character has psychological problems. The atmosphere of the book is unsettling and frightful. It is a desert, with sand and wind everywhere.

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