





Research Article

Fractured Selves: Narratives of Gender and Trauma in Shafi Ahmed's *The Half Widow* and Shahnaz Bashir's *The Half Mother*

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Abstract: The study examines on two influential works from contemporary Kashmir, *The Half Widow* (2012) by Shafi Ahmed and *The Half Mother* (2014) by Shahnaz Bashir. Drawing upon trauma theory, feminist literary criticism and postcolonial discourse, this research explores how these narratives illuminate the creation of 'fractured selves' among women affected by enforced disappearances during the Kashmir conflict. This study demonstrates that both authors use novel narrative techniques – such as temporal disruption, embodied metaphors and fragmented memory – to create an image of the psychological and social implications of ambiguous loss. These texts illustrate how women's identities become contested places where personal trauma is intertwined with collective memory and political resistance. Through close reading of texts and interdisciplinary theoretical approaches, this research suggests that these stories are not solely accounts of suffering but also serve as epistemic forms of resistance that challenge the official discourse on the Kashmir conflict. The findings contribute to understanding how literature preserves marginalized experiences and expands trauma theory beyond Western contexts. This article highlights how concepts like 'half-widow' and 'half mother' represent liminal identities that resist traditional categories while creating new forms of female agency within the framework of limitations. In the context of war, this study highlights the importance of women's narratives in documenting the impact of conflict and preserving cultural memory.

Keywords: Kashmiri literature; trauma narratives; enforced disappearances; feminist literary criticism; postcolonial studies

1. Introduction

The Kashmir conflict, spanning over eight decades, has reshaped the region into a pervasive 'fearscape' – a spatialized terrain of anxiety and mistrust that intersects with Appadurai's five interlocking 'scapes' (Appadurai, 1996). In the midst of this violent geography, state terror has led to enforced disappearances that leave behind a trail of half widows and half mothers. These experiences can be best captured through the literary accounts describing conflicts which highlight the gendered nature of political violence.

The seminal works of this genre, namely *The Half Widows* (2012) and *The Half Mother* (2014), are notable for they portray women's deal with the liminal spaces that arise through forced disappearances. The portrayal of individual and collective identities through political violence is emphasized in stories like Salma, the half widow, whose husband vanished without trace, and Haleema, the half mother searching for her disappeared son. All these narratives provide insight into how this could affect an individual as well as families. The study argues that gendered-event narratives of political violence produce fractured selves that present women's identities as contested sites where the personal trauma is interwoven with collective memory and political resistance. This study traces how trauma comes to be represented in narrative through the literary devices of both authors, creating textual embodiments of psychological fragmentation that mimic the fractured lives of their protagonists.

2. Theoretical Framework

Cathy Caruth's groundbreaking work on trauma theory provides essential insights into understanding these narratives. Her concept of 'unclaimed experience' illuminates how

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trauma resists direct representation, emerging instead through repetitions, gaps, and temporal disruptions (Caruth, 1996). Trauma is revealed through fragments, dreams and bodily sensations in both novels, which Caruth describes trauma as inherently belated due to the overwhelming nature of traumatic events, which consume our consciousness and can only be accessed indirectly. In her work on *Trauma and Recovery*, Judith Herman links these accounts to cycles of remembering and forgetting (Herman, 1992). Herman's emphasis on testimony as a crucial component of healing resonates strongly with these literary texts, which function as forms of bearing witness to experiences that official discourse often renders invisible. As Hanif and Ahmed (2020) show in their analysis of *The Half Mother* that such narratives demonstrate how "women are not only victims but also fighters," thereby broadening conventional Western trauma frameworks – often centred on individual pathology – by emphasizing collective resistance and survival strategies.

Gayatri Spivak's formulation of the subaltern question becomes particularly relevant when examining these narratives of Kashmiri women whose voices have been systematically marginalized within both patriarchal and colonial structures. Spivak's renowned question, "Can the subaltern speak?" exhibit complex language in these writings, where women's testimonies emerged not from direct words but from embodied resistance and fragmented narratives (Spivak 1988). Veena Das's anthropological research on violence and subjectivity offers crucial insights into how women's bodies serve as sites where violence is both inscribed and opposed. According to *Life and Words* (2006) by Das, events like the Partition and the 1984 anti-Sikh riots have an impact on everyday life, changing relationships through shared trauma and memory. This book explores this phenomenon using historical context in her writings. Fatma and Gaur's (2020) critical analysis of Shafi Ahmad's *The Half Widow* elucidates the multifaceted vulnerabilities, systemic exploitation, social exclusion, and profound trauma endured by half-widows within the socio-political context of conflict-ridden Kashmir. Susan Bordo's theories on the body as text prove instrumental in analysing how both novels inscribe trauma onto the female body (Bordo, 2003). Bordo's argument that bodies are "not neutral material" but rather "cultural forms" resonates with how both Salma and Haleema's physical symptoms manifest their psychological wounds, making visible what official discourse renders invisible. The bodies of half-widows and half-mothers become sites of political inscription, where state negligence leaves its mark through absence rather than presence. Bordo's framework helps us understand how these women's bodies carry the traces of their disappeared loved ones, becoming living testimonies to state crimes that resist documentation. Victor Turner's concept of liminality provides a useful framework for understanding the suspended state inhabited by both protagonists (Turner, 1969). Turner's characterization of liminal beings as "betwixt and between" aptly captures the legal, social, and psychological positions of half-widows and half-mothers, who exist in spaces that the state refuses to recognize or address. Dsouza (2016) ethnographic research on half-widows in Kashmir critically interrogates Turner's framework by illustrating how their liminal status constitutes a "perpetual (undesired) liminality," wherein the anticipated resolution of the liminal phase remains indefinitely suspended, thereby foregrounding the complex socio-political conditions that perpetuate their marginalization. Pauline Boss's theory of ambiguous loss is particularly relevant to these narratives (Boss, 1999). Boss delineates two forms of ambiguous loss: physical absence with psychological presence, and psychological absence with physical presence. Both novels predominantly engage with the former, portraying disappeared husbands and sons who remain psychologically present despite their physical absence. This condition results in what Boss terms "frozen grief," characterized by an inability to mourn, which in turn perpetuates ongoing trauma. Hamid, Jahangir, and Khan's (2021) research on half-widows in Kashmir substantiates this theoretical framework by demonstrating how the persistent uncertainty of "not knowing" the fate of disappeared relatives generates sustained psychological distress and complicates the grieving process.

2.1. Theoretical Implications

These narratives contribute to what Stef Craps calls 'postcolonial trauma theory,' challenging the universalizing tendencies of Western trauma studies (Craps, 2012). They demonstrate how concepts like 'recovery' take on different meanings in contexts where violence is ongoing and state recognition of trauma is absent. The novels suggest that healing might involve learning to live with ambiguity rather than achieving closure. The texts also contribute to understanding what Alexander (2012) calls 'cultural trauma'—how entire communities experience the effects of violence across generations. Recent studies on Kashmir demonstrates how enforced disappearances create intergenerational trauma that



shapes collective identity and memory practices. These novels expand feminist literary criticism by centring experiences often marginalized within both feminism and postcolonial studies. They demonstrate how concepts like intersectionality must account for the specific ways that political violence shapes gender identity in conflict zones. Research by Pandit (2025) on gendered violence in Kashmir shows how women's testimonies challenge both Western feminist assumptions about agency and local patriarchal structures. The texts also contribute to understanding what Abu-Lughod (2013) calls 'the question of women'—challenges to both Western feminist assumptions and local patriarchal structures. Both Salma and Haleema navigate complex negotiations between asserting agency and surviving within constraining circumstances. Both novels function as what Shoshana Felman calls 'textual witness,' preserving experiences that might otherwise be lost or denied (Felman & Laub, 1992). They demonstrate literature's capacity to bear witness to experiences that exceed individual memory and official documentation. Recent work by Hanif and Ullah (2018) on trauma in Kashmiri fiction argues that these narratives serve crucial psychological and political functions, helping both individual and collective healing while challenging official silence about enforced disappearances. The texts also raise important questions about the ethics of representing others' trauma, successfully creating empathy without appropriating or exploiting their subjects' experiences.

3. Materials and Methods

This analysis employs close reading methods drawn from literary criticism and trauma studies, with a focus on narrative fragmentation, temporal disruption, and embodied metaphors. The method integrates a formalistic assessment of literary style with contextual comprehension of past and present cultural contexts. The methodology also incorporates what might be called 'symptomatic reading,' following Pierre Macherey's approach to identifying ideological tensions and contradictions within texts (Macherey, 2006). This involves reading for what texts cannot say as much as what they explicitly articulate. Included in this analysis are literary criticism, trauma studies, feminist theory, anthropology, and political science. This interdisciplinary perspective emphasizes the complexity of the experiences under scrutiny, which cannot be adequately understood through any single theoretical lens. Furthermore, it draws approaches used in distinction between cultural and in communicative memory studies such as Jan Assmann's to explain how these narratives are function as forms of cultural transmission and preservation (Assmann, 2011). It also maintains a close watch over ethical concerns about the academic exploration of trauma narratives, particularly in terms of how they can be used to explain re-traumatization or appropriation. Following the principles of what Carolyn Ellis calls 'ethical research,' the analysis aims to honour the dignity of those whose experiences are represented while providing scholarly insights that might contribute to broader understanding and justice (Ellis, 2007).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. *Contextualizing Kashmir Literature and Enforced Disappearances*

Despite the region's oral history of resistance and memory retention, contemporary Kashmiri literature in English has become a crucial tool for documenting conflict experiences. Mirza Waheed and other writers are among the many who have incorporated Kashmir conflict into their works, alongside Ahmed and Bashir. In 2011, Aleida Assmann stated that these stories are not about individual testimonies, but rather about collective memories of shared experiences. She also highlighted the significance of "cultural memory". Nora (1989) defines these sites as "lieux de mémoire", or memory sites, in that they maintain memories and histories while preserving them for future generations. Between 8,000 and 10,000 cases of enforced disappearances have been reported in Kashmir conflict since 1989, as estimated by human rights groups (Zia, 2019). Established in 1994, the APDP's mission is to track these disappearances and fight for truth and justice. Within this fraught environment literature has become a crucial expression of resistance and testimony, maintaining memories that official histories often suppress or erase. Peerzada (2022) suggests that the enforced disappearances in Kashmir are a result of societal and demographic shifts, aligning with settler colonial theory. Additionally, according to this theoretical perspective, literary depictions such as those of Ahmed and Bashir are indispensable means of resistance against the erasure (disregard) of disputed narratives. The broader pattern of structural violence in the occupation is



demonstrated by the legal system that governs forced disappearances in Kashmir. Military personnel are almost entirely immune to prosecution under the AFSPA, which has created an environment where forced disappearances occur without impunity (Human Rights Watch, 2019). Family structures are rendered ineffective by the lack of appropriate legal options to tackle such disappearances, leading to a rise in the social and legal status of half-widows and half-mothers who remain perpetually marginalized and uncertain. These women face multiple forms of discrimination, from denial of widow's pensions to social ostracism based on the unclear status of their spouses or children. Their liminal position challenges traditional kinship structures and creates new forms of identity organized around loss and uncertainty.

The Kashmir conflict has disproportionately affected women, who constitute the majority of conflict widows and mothers of the disappeared. Research by Zeeshan and Aliefendioğlu (2024) on women's war narratives in Kashmir reveals how traditional gender roles become sites of both vulnerability and resistance during conflict. Cultural conceptions of motherhood and widowhood in Kashmir carry specific religious and social meanings that these narratives both draw upon and challenge.

The figure of the grieving mother holds particular resonance in Islamic culture, while the category of 'half-widow' represents a radical disruption of traditional kinship structures. Zia's ethnographic work with the APDP shows how these women transform private grief into public political action, creating what she terms "spectacles of mourning" that challenge state attempts to render their loss invisible (Zia, 2019).

4.2. *Analysis of The Half Widow*

Ahmed's novel opens with Salma engaged in domestic labour that becomes a form of testimony to her loss. The passage describing her nighttime dishwashing – "She wiped her face and forehead with her sleeve and continued with cleaning utensils" (p.8), transforms everyday household chores into reminiscences about the importance of perseverance and survival. The repetitive nature of this labour mirrors the repetitive structure of trauma, where the same experiences surface again and again without resolution. Salma's role as a domestic worker in *The Half Widow* exemplifies the gendered labour dynamics prevalent in conflict zones. As Faheem (2020) notes, women expanded domestic responsibilities in Kashmir's militarized context often become arenas of both subjugation and subtle resistance. Similarly, Thakkar (2023) emphasizes the systemic exploitation faced by domestic workers in India, paralleling Salma's economic vulnerabilities and the physical toll of her labour.

Ahmed employs nonlinear narrative techniques to mirror trauma's disruption of temporal experience. The passage where Salma hears a Kashmiri song – "In the dead of night... she heard a Kashmiri song rent the air" (p.10) – demonstrates what Caruth identifies as trauma's repetitive temporality. The song triggers involuntary memory, collapsing the boundary between past and present. The specific lyrics of the song – "My first love, I am passionate about you. I will wait for you till the Doomsday" (p.10), speak directly to the condition of enforced waiting that defines the half-widow's existence. The reference to 'Doomsday' suggests an apocalyptic temporality where normal time has stopped, and only the end of the world can bring resolution. This aligns with Boss's concept of ambiguous loss, where the inability to confirm death prevents normal grieving processes.

The novel's treatment of bureaucratic violence demonstrates how state institutions perpetuate trauma through indifference and inaction. The scene where an officer dismisses Salma's application – "Sir, there is no attendance certificate... How could I draw the salary?" (p.144) reveals how the absence of legal recognition for enforced disappearances translates into economic destitution.

Salma's nighttime vigil at the window – "she would peep through the glass panes of her window... then return to her bed like a gambler who lost all his wealth" (p.142) – captures the essence of Boss's ambiguous loss. The gambling metaphor suggests both the randomness of her situation and her complete helplessness, transforming her home into a site of perpetual anxiety rather than refuge. Beigh and Manzoor's (2018) psychosocial study of half-widows in Kashmir confirms this pattern, showing how women experience chronic psychological distress, anxiety, and sleep disorders due to the prolonged uncertainty surrounding the fates of their disappeared husbands. The home, far from being a sanctuary, becomes a constant reminder of loss and unresolved grief.

The novel's exploration of property theft illustrates how half-widows become vulnerable to economic exploitation. The passage revealing how "Rahim trapped her nicely. He took full advantage of her miseries... A property worth more than one lac was grabbed by him for sixty-five thousand" (p.205), demonstrates how enforced disappearances create opportunities for



others to profit from women's vulnerability. This economic violence represents what Lisa Duggan calls "the twilight of equality," where structural inequalities exploit individual tragedies (Duggan, 2004). Salma's forced sale of her property transforms her from property owner to economic dependent, illustrating how the state's failure to recognize enforced disappearances enables other forms of exploitation. Perhaps the most devastating aspect of Salma's experience comes through her forced separation from her children. The passage describing the potential removal of her children to an orphanage – "The younger ones were to be dumped at the orphanage and the hapless family cried, screamed, wept" (p.223) – reveals how state institutions compound individual trauma through family separation. The child's plea, "Jeej I will not ask for anything... allow me to remain with you," pierces through Salma "like a sharp razor," (p.223) demonstrating how children's trauma becomes part of the mother's suffering. This scene illustrates what Janet Walker calls "traumatic paradox" – the way trauma creates impossible choices where any decision leads to further loss (Walker, 2005).

4.3. *Analysis of The Half Mother*

Bashir's novel opens with a striking catalogue of fragmented images: "Snow, dust, roads, paper planes, plastic bags, pictures, papers, smiles, auto-rickshaws, guns, doors, voices, faces, mirrors...bits and pieces of memories randomly refracted through her reverie." (p.1) This stream-of-consciousness passage mirrors what psychologists call 'intrusive memories' – the way traumatic experiences surface as disconnected fragments rather than coherent narratives.

The fragmentation technique in Bashir's *The Half Mother* reflects the protagonist mental instability and fractured psyche, which is consistent with trauma theory's emphasis on how overwhelming experiences can be overcome by linear narration. The juxtaposition of ordinary objects (paper planes, plastic bags) with instruments of violence (guns) demonstrates how trauma contaminates everyday experience. Abbas and Malik (2023) further elucidate this by exploring how the novel presents the impact of the Kashmir conflict on the fragmented identities of the characters, highlighting the individual and collective facets of trauma. Bashir repeatedly shows how trauma writes itself onto Haleema's body. The passage describing her self-medication – "After washing down half a dozen pills with a glassful of water, she tore open an orange to subdue the metallic aftertaste...she felt her cracked heels with her calloused fingertips" (p.9) – reveals the physical manifestations of psychological pain.

Contemporary scholarship on trauma in Kashmir by the Kashmir Mental Health Survey demonstrates how chronic exposure to conflict creates widespread psychosomatic symptoms, with depression, anxiety, and PTSD affecting large portions of the population (De Jong et al., 2008). The specific details – cracked heels, calloused fingertips, the metallic taste of pills – ground Haleema's suffering in bodily reality, reflecting what Kleinman (1988) calls "somatization." The novel's exploration of legal categories reaches its apex in Haleema's question: "So am I a half mother?" (p.135) This moment of naming represents what Judith Butler calls "interpellation" – the process by which individuals are constituted through being called or named by social categories (Butler, 2004). The term "half-mother" captures the impossibility of Haleema's position: legally she remains a mother, but practically she has been severed from her child. Research by DSouza (2016) demonstrates how this legal limbo creates what she terms "perpetual (undesired) liminality," where women exist in suspended states that resist resolution. This scene in the legal aid office highlights the bureaucratic creation of liminal identities that exist outside traditional kinship structures.

The novel's depiction of protest transforms individual suffering into collective action. When Haleema sits in the road to block traffic, her vulnerable body becomes a political statement. The passage noting how "Everyone followed her. In some minutes more people joined" (p.67) demonstrates how individual trauma can catalyze broader resistance movements. This scene reflects what Judith Butler terms "grievable lives" – the way some lives are recognized as worthy of mourning while others are not (Butler, 2004). By making her private grief public, Haleema forces recognition of her son's disappeared status and her own suffering, challenging official attempts to render such experiences invisible. Zia's ethnographic work with the APDP confirms this pattern, showing how women create 'spectacles of mourning' that transform private grief into political resistance. The novel's attention to domestic rituals reveals how women maintain symbolic connections to the disappeared through everyday practices. Haleema's compulsive sweeping and cleaning reflect more than mere household routine, they act as silent expressions of grief, longing, and resistance. After her son Imran's disappearance, she is described as one who "wielded a broom, squatted and swept the floors of the house room by room. Then she went mopping, scraping and rubbing stubborn stains vigorously. She scratched the kitchen floor and coated



the oven with viscous Multani mud water” (p. 104). These repetitive acts of cleaning, especially in the kitchen, echo nurturing practices and can be interpreted as rituals of remembrance domestic gestures that maintain a connection with the absent son. A particularly poignant moment occurs when Haleema sees “wet patches on the dry cement surface of the bathroom [that] had morphed into ghostly shapes, creating an optical illusion. She poured a mug of water and spoiled them all” (p. 102). The action of trying to erase these spectral impressions parallels the psychological struggle to forget or erase traumatic memory. The visual metaphor ghostly marks on concrete captures the nature of trauma: persistent, haunting, and difficult to scrub away. This moment powerfully aligns with Nora’s (1989) concept of *lieux de mémoire*, sites where memory crystallizes and persists, especially in the absence of *milieux de mémoire*, or living social memory. Haleema’s home becomes such a site her kitchen, bathroom, and silent chores all embody the traces of grief that refuse to be erased.

Bashir’s depiction of Haleema’s respiratory problems – “Her complaints of breathlessness swiftly burgeoned into a horrible state of suffocation” (p.33), literalizes the metaphorical experience of being unable to breathe under oppression. The medical diagnosis of bronchitis provides a somatic explanation for what is fundamentally a psychological and political condition. Research in Kashmir has documented high rates of respiratory and cardiovascular ailments among conflict-affected populations, suggesting links between political violence and physical health (Housen et al., 2015). The scene of Haleema being helped from the doctor’s clinic, “slouching and rasping hard, huffing, gasping and panting rhythmically,” (p.34) creates a sonic landscape of suffering where breathing becomes a form of embodied testimony.

4.4. Comparative Analysis

Both novels explore the central theme of suspended grief, but employ different narrative strategies to represent this condition. Ahmed’s *The Half Widow* focuses more heavily on bureaucratic violence and economic exploitation, while Bashir’s *The Half Mother* emphasizes psychological fragmentation and embodied resistance. These different emphases reflect broader questions about how trauma narratives should balance individual psychology with structural analysis. Critical scholarship on Shafi Ahmed’s *The Half Widow* (2012) and Shahnaz Bashir’s *The Half Mother* (2014) highlights how both novels “witness trauma” through distinctly gendered perspectives that challenge mainstream conflict narratives. Ahmed employs a linear narrative progression punctuated by memory intrusions, reflecting the persistence of hope and continuity amid loss. In contrast, Bashir adopts a fragmented narrative approach that mirrors trauma’s disruption of chronological experience. These contrasting narrative techniques underscore the gendered articulation of trauma, offering complementary perspectives that deepen our understanding of women lived realities in conflict zones (Fatma & Gaur, 2020; Singh & Mishra, 2024).

Both novels reveal how gender shapes experiences of loss and mourning. The concept of ‘half-widow’ itself reflects patriarchal assumptions about women’s identity being tied to their husbands, while ‘half-mother’ suggests the incomplete nature of maternal identity when separated from children. These terms paradoxically both reinforce and challenge traditional gender roles, creating new forms of female identity organized around loss. Research by Singh and Mishra (2024) on half-widows in Kashmir demonstrates how these women navigate between traditional mourning practices and modern forms of political activism. The novels also explore different aspects of female solidarity as resistance. In *The Half Widow*, Salma’s connections with other women appear more fraught and complicated by economic necessity, while *The Half Mother* depicts more explicit forms of collective action and protest. Both narratives succeed in making individual stories representative of broader collective experiences without sacrificing the specificity of personal suffering. Salma’s and Haleema’s stories become what Marianne Hirsch calls “post memory” – transmitted experience that shapes identity for those who didn’t directly experience the original trauma (Hirsch, 2008). The novels demonstrate how personal narratives can serve what José Medina terms “epistemic resistance,” challenging dominant knowledge systems that render certain experiences invisible or unintelligible (Medina, 2013). By centring women’s perspectives on enforced disappearances, both texts resist official narratives that minimize or ignore these crimes.

Both authors innovate within trauma literature by incorporating specifically Kashmiri elements – language, songs, religious practices, and cultural references – that ground universal themes of loss and recovery in local specificity. This reflects what Walter Dignolo calls “border thinking,” where local knowledge systems challenge universal claims about trauma



and healing (Mignolo, 2000). The texts also contribute to what might be called ‘postcolonial trauma theory,’ showing how Western psychological frameworks must be adapted to understand experiences of political violence in non-Western contexts. Both novels suggest that healing cannot be individual when trauma is structural and ongoing.

5. Conclusions

Shafi Ahmed’s *The Half Widow* and Shahnaz Bashir’s *The Half Mother* give deeper insight into the way political violence fractures identities that resist easy categorization or resolution. Employing innovative narrative techniques combined with deep psychological characterization, the novels portray the enforced disappearance as the creation of new forms of personhood that resist conventional understanding. These novels succeed in making experiences visible which official discourses render invisible-as forms of testimony which resist and remain imprinted in memory in contrast to dominant narratives of the Kashmir conflict. These narratives show how literature operates as ultimate witness and resistance, recording pain yet envisioning possibilities of agency and survival in untenable conditions. In contemporary trauma literature, these texts play a crucial role by expanding its geographical and cultural reach beyond Western contexts. They illustrate how local knowledge systems and cultural practices must be integrated into universal theories of trauma and healing. Their success lies in achieving of ‘relation’ – connecting the specific experiences of Kashmiri women to broader human experiences of loss and survival while maintaining their cultural specificity. The novels also contribute to understanding how gender shapes experiences of political violence, revealing the particular vulnerabilities and strengths that emerge when women navigate conflict zones. They challenge both Western feminist assumptions about agency and liberation and local patriarchal structures that confine women to specific roles, creating complex portraits of resistance that operate within and against constraining circumstances. This analysis suggests several areas for future scholarly engagement. Comparative studies examining trauma narratives from other conflict zones could illuminate both universal and particular aspects of how literature represents political violence. Additionally, studies examining reader reception of these texts, particularly among Kashmir populations, could provide insights into how trauma narratives function within the communities they represent.

Further research might also explore how these texts relate to oral traditions and folk practices of memory-keeping in Kashmir, examining how written literature interacts with other forms of cultural memory. Finally, studies examining the impact of these narratives on legal and political discourse about enforced disappearances could illuminate literature’s potential for social change. The fractured selves that Ahmed and Bashir create in their novels ultimately resist the fracturing they have endured, finding ways to persist, remember, and bear witness despite the violence that seeks to erase them. In doing so, these texts offer not only testimony to suffering but also models for survival and resistance that extend far beyond their immediate contexts. They remind us that even in the face of state violence designed to fragment and destroy, human dignity and connection persist through the powerful acts of remembering, narrating, and refusing to disappear.

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