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Exploring Trauma and Text Worlds in the Novel The Spinner's Tale: A Cognitive Poetic Analysis

Hajra Umer
Ph.D. Scholar, Department of English, Air University, Islamabad, Pakistan, umerhajra427@yahoo.com

Huma Batool (PhD) [Corresponding Author]
Assistant Professor**,** Department of English, Air University, Islamabad, Pakistan, humabatool2019@gmail.com

Maria Farooq Maan (PhD)
Assistant Professor, Department of English, Air University, Islamabad, Pakistan, maria.farooq@au.edu.pk

Abstract

Over the last few decades, the prevalence of violence and terrorism in Pakistan has substantially affected the mental health of Pakistani youth (Khan 365; Munawar et al. 10). This issue is comparatively underexplored and requires careful consideration. The present study examines individual and collective trauma in Pakistani society, utilising the theoretical framework of literary trauma theory in the light of contemporary Pakistani fiction writing, specifically *The Spinner's Tale.* It draws attention to the protagonist Ausi's trauma by employing the 2022 revised fifth edition (DSM-5-TR) of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders,* published by the American Psychiatric Association (APA). It utilises Kai Erikson's theory to explore the collective trauma of Pakistani society. These theoretical concepts are studied from a cognitive poetics perspective, employing the Text World Theory (TWT) proposed by Joanna Gavins as the analytical framework. The findings reveal that Ausi's Trauma is realised in the narrative through all three interconnecting levels of TWT, i.e., the discourse world, the text world, and the new worlds. Furthermore, the results demonstrate that the discourse world-level of TWT connects Ausi's trauma with the collective trauma of Pakistani society, as it is responsible for Ausi's transformation from a young, educated Pakistani youth into an internationally wanted terrorist. The present study aims to raise awareness within Pakistani society regarding the damaging effects of social disruption, which may lead to further incidents of violence and terrorism.

Keywords: cognitive poetics, collective trauma, contemporary Pakistani fiction, text world theory (TWT)

Introduction

Over the last few decades, mental health disorders have become a significant concern globally (Munawar et al. 10). According to the American Psychiatric Association (305), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is one of the most frequently encountered mental health conditions, developing after an individual experiences or witnesses one or more traumatic incidents. According to recent psychological studies conducted on Pakistani society (Al Jowf et al. 6474; Kanwal et al. 66; Rawan et al. 41), PTSD has been the most widespread psychological disorder in Pakistan in the last few decades, resulting from massive casualties due to social disruption, terrorism, sectarian and interpersonal violence, sexual abuse, honour killings, target killings, and other instances of poor law and order situation. However, it is essentially an understudied issue in Pakistan and, therefore, requires careful consideration.

Throughout history, literature has been a valuable source to convey underlying meanings through the effective use of language (Batool et al., "Conceptualisation of 'Sadness'" 2; Haq et al. 27; Sikander et al. 80). Apart from its aesthetic value, literature has also been an important agent of social change for its ability to challenge dominant ideologies prevalent in different societies and by providing diverse worldviews (Ali et al. 65; Altaf and Batool 452; Altaf et al. 93; Batool et al., "The Cultural Appropriation" 97; Saba et al. 54). In the same manner, literary trauma theory, which falls under the discipline of trauma studies, draws on literature to highlight the impact of trauma on society (Balaev 363). Literary Trauma Theory explores the relationship between the mental wound inflicted by trauma and the language used in a literary text to describe this wound (363).

It is important to note that trauma, being a significant public health concern, is differentiated into individual and collective trauma. Trauma, referring to an individual's emotional response to a stressful incident, is commonly termed as individual or psychological trauma. On the other hand, trauma collectively experienced by a community or society is referred to as collective trauma (Alexander 1-10; Weisner 1-12). Keeping this in mind, the focus of the current study is to analyse individual trauma concerning the collective trauma of Pakistani society.

Furthermore, Bhui et al. highlight that the widespread occurrence of violence and terrorism in a society undermines social cohesion and has a significant impact on the mental health of individuals living in that society (1). Recognising this, it is essential to conduct a comprehensive study of fictional literature from Pakistan that explores the psychological struggles faced by individuals who have been victims of violence and terrorism. This area has

not been thoroughly examined and deserves greater focus. Thus, it serves as the central theme of the current research.

The current study examines the notions of individual and collective trauma from the lens of literary trauma theory by utilising the PTSD categorisation provided by the American Psychiatric Association in 2022 and Kai Erikson's concept of collective trauma presented in 1994, respectively. This is done in the light of *The Spinner's Tale,* a Pakistani novel by Hamid. The text revolves around the life of the protagonist, Ausi, who is a misguided political activist at a local university in Karachi. He transforms into a jihadist recruiter and an internationally feared terrorist.

Furthermore, the current study utilises the cognitive poetic approach of Text World Theory (TWT)presented by Joanna Gavins in 2007 as its analytical framework. The field of cognitive poetics brings to the surface the unrecognised cognitive and linguistic patterns associated with the reading and interpretation of a literary text. Since literature reflects and shapes societies, recognising these patterns in works of literature, such as Pakistani fiction, through cognitive poetic analysis can help to understand the impact of individual and collective trauma in Pakistani society more clearly (Stockwell 10).

Following this, the theoretical components from the field of literary trauma theory, i.e., the classification of PTSD provided by the American Psychiatric Association in 2022 and Kai Erikson's notion of collective trauma, are explored in the novel *The Spinner's Tale* by utilising TWT as the analytical framework. This is done to provide a novel interpretation of the selected text, an area previously not investigated.

In the current study, TWT helps identify how its three integrated levels, i.e., the discourse world, the text world, and the sub-world within the novel *The Spinner's Tale*, reflect the protagonist's individual trauma. Moreover, examining the novel's discourse world reveals how the protagonist's trauma is intertwined with the collective trauma of his society.

This paper argues that the persistence of social disruption, violence, and terrorism in Pakistani society creates a sense of shared vulnerability, impacting Ausi's individual trauma in *The Spinner's Tale*. In this manner, Ausi's individual trauma is deeply intertwined with the collective trauma of Pakistani society. The article highlights the need to consider the broader societal context in understanding the individual trauma of people who are direct or indirect victims of violence and terrorism in Pakistani society. In this regard, it studies the role of radicalisation as a significant social and cultural force that moulds trauma into extremism.The present research aims to explore the following research questions:

1. In what ways do the three interconnecting levels of TWT, comprising the discourse world, the text world, and new worlds, shed light on Ausi's trauma in the novel *The Spinner's Tale*?
2. How does the discourse world level of TWT inform about the convergence of Ausi's trauma and the collective trauma of Pakistani society?

Trauma Theory and Trauma Literary Studies

Michelle Balaev highlights that the field of trauma studies is interdisciplinary and deals with the effects of trauma on the memory, physical body, and identity of traumatised individuals (362). In the field of literary trauma studies, the works of noteworthy trauma theorists such as Cathy Caruth, Kai Erikson, Soshana Felman, Dori Laub, and Dominick LaCapra support the event-based model of trauma theory as they have only focused on the traumas experienced by people from the Western world (Balaev 362). This trauma model is grounded in the definition of trauma provided by the third edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-III)* issued by the American Psychiatric Association in 1987. The event-based model considers trauma as a single, unrepresentable event; it can only be represented through its repetition in the form of flashbacks and dreams (Rothberg 224).

Caruth builds on the definition of trauma provided by the American Psychiatric Association in 1987, and discusses the latency of trauma, wherein the original experience resurfaces in the mind of the individual after a lapse of time, in the form of flashbacks and painful recollections (15). Similarly, Erikson's conception of trauma also supports the event-based model as he describes trauma as an unrepresentable event that can only be represented through dissociation or shattered identity (226). This shattered identity manifests in the form of flashbacks and dreams regarding the actual event (Balaev 362).

In contrast, literary trauma theorists such as Michelle Balaev, Stef Craps, and Irene Visser support the pluralistic model of trauma theory, which brings into consideration ethno-cultural factors responsible for causing trauma in various racial, cultural, religious, and ethnic minority groups from the non-majority, non-Western world (Marsella 17). In recent years, studies (Kellermann 1; Kim 1; Mann 340) in literary trauma studies have highlighted broad themes concerning the psychological, cultural, and racial traumas suffered by various individuals and nations, as depicted in contemporary fictional works. In this regard, Mann explores the individual trauma of an American soldier named Bartle who served in the Iraq War and the collective trauma of American society resulting from the USA's global war on terror through Powers' novel *The Yellow Birds* (340). This makes individual trauma a rich area for inquiry. In this regard, the current study utilises the classification of PTSD (American

Psychiatric Association 305) to study the personal trauma of the protagonist Ausi in the selected text *The Spinner's Tale*.

Studies (Shah et al. 1358; Umer et al. 102; Yaqin 234) have been conducted on Pakistani fiction to examine the trauma experienced by individuals in Pakistani society. Yaqin (234) analyses necropolitical trauma in Shamsie's novels, using Achille Mbembe's concept of necropolitics. Similarly, Shah et al. investigate the irreversible damage caused by traumatic incidents to the psyche of individuals in the context of Pakistani society. For this purpose, their research has utilised Caruth's theory of trauma to explore Bhutto's fiction, *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon* and *The Runaways* (1358). Similarly, the current study examines the collective trauma experienced by Pakistani society in the selected Pakistani novel.

It is worth noting that the current study bridges the gap between the event-based and pluralistic models of trauma theory. It does so by studying the individual and collective trauma present in a non-Western Pakistani society, utilising the theoretical components from the event-based trauma model, including the PTSD classification given by the American Psychiatric Association in 2022 and Kai Erikson's notion of collective trauma, respectively. In doing so, this study provides a novel dimension to the field of trauma studies.

The Field of Cognitive Poetics and Cognitive Literary Studies

Peter Stockwell mentions that the term "cognitive poetics" originated in 1992 in a publication by Reuven Tsur (10). Cognitive poetics as a methodological approach incorporates insights from cognitive science, cognitive linguistics, and cognitive psychology into the study of literature (10). George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's 1980 presentation of conceptual metaphor theory is considered pioneering in the field of cognitive poetics (3). Some of the other frameworks studied under the domain of cognitive poetics include deictic shift theory, possible worlds and mental space theory, conceptual blending theory, text world theory, cognitive narratology, and others (Stockwell 15).

In recent years, studies (Adam 174; Norledge 3; Fan 404) have been conducted on the works of fiction from the perspectives of cognitive poetics and TWT, highlighting the stylistic effects of literary texts. Adam studies the hypothetical focalisation in McEwan's novels utilising the cognitive poetic approach of possible world theory (174). Similarly, Norledge studies the formulation of empty text worlds in the narrative of a digital dystopian epistolary novel utilising the TWT (3).

Recent studies (Altaf and Batool 37; Azhar and Batool 1; Chen 1535) have utilised a cognitive poetics approach to study Pakistani fictional works. Chen (1535) examines the concepts of time, identity, and racial discrimination through the lens of possible worlds theory

in the novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* by Hanif Kureishi. The aforementioned studies highlight that cognitive poetic analysis provides a fresh approach to the interpretation of fictional works by uncovering the stylistic features of a literary text. Therefore, the current study employs Joanna Gavin's cognitive poetic approach of text world theory (TWT) as its analytical framework.

Analytical Perspectives on *The Spinner's Tale*

In the present study, the novel *The Spinner's Tale* by Hamid has been utilised to examine the individual and collective trauma of the protagonist, who serves as a representation of Pakistani society, from a cognitive poetic perspective. Only a few studies (Iqbal et al. 20; Nazeer et al. 1286; Shakir 19) have been conducted on the selected text. Nazeer et al. investigate the prevalence of extremism, violence, and terrorism in the novel by focusing on the protagonist's life. The study focuses on identifying the patterns, evolution, and development of terrorism in Pakistan and the conditions and circumstances that drive young, educated Pakistani middle-class men to join terrorist groups (1286). Shakir analyses the protagonist Ausi's defiance against the neo-colonial powers and their unjustified killings in non-Western countries using Jasbir Puar's concept of maiming, debility, disability, and capacity (19). However, none of the prior research on the selected novel, *The Spinner's Tale,* has examined the protagonist Ausi's trauma using the PTSD classification by the American Psychiatric Association. Nor has any study explored the collective trauma of Pakistani society employing Kai Erikson's notion of collective trauma through the lens of text world theory (TWT) as presented by Joanna Gavins. The current study aims to fill this gap in the existing literature.

Research Design and Methods

This research is a qualitative study that employs an exploratory approach. The analysis relies on the text as its primary source of data and investigates the selected novel, *The Spinner's Tale*, through the lens of literary trauma theory. It examines both individual and collective trauma in Pakistani society, using the classification of PTSD by the American Psychiatric Association for individual trauma and Erikson's concept of collective trauma as the theoretical framework. Furthermore, it utilises the cognitive poetics framework of TWT presented by Joanna Gavins as the analytical framework. In this way, the current study brings together the disciplines of literary trauma studies and cognitive poetics by offering a fresh approach to literary analysis. The selected text portrays the protagonist Ausi's transformation from an educated and psychologically sound young Pakistani into an internationally recognised terrorist displaying abnormal behavioural patterns against the backdrop of violence and

terrorism in Pakistan. This makes it a suitable text for the current study. Finally, to study the text in detail, the close reading approach is employed. Following this method, the text samples are selected based on those narrative and linguistic features embedded in the novel that indicate   Ausi's disturbed mental state, thus providing the contextual clues for literary interpretation. As the narrative of the text is non-linear, the incidents indicating Ausi's abnormal behavioural patterns are dispersed throughout the narrative. The researchers then quote the most relevant examples from the text in the analysis and discussion section, analysing them in detail, considering the selected theoretical and analytical frameworks (see Figures 1 and 2). The current study utilises the classification of PTSD given by the American Psychiatric Association in 2022 to study individual trauma and Erikson's notion of collective trauma to explore the collective trauma of Pakistani society. These theoretical components are briefly discussed below and presented in Figure 1.

The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (DSM-5-TR), issued by the American Psychiatric Association, defines post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a psychological disorder that develops in people in the aftermath of some extreme stressor. Such stressors may include exposure to an accident, actual or threatened death, serious injury, or violence (305). The symptoms of PTSD are repetitive and last over one month. Moreover, these symptoms do not appear immediately at the time of or after the traumatic incident, but rather, they develop sometime later. The traumatised individuals undergo the persistent re-experiencing of the traumatic event in the form of intrusive thoughts, distressing recollections, nightmares, and flashback episodes. Furthermore, they experience negative emotional states in the form of negative assumptions about themselves, disillusionment with people around them, detachment from the world in general, and/or misplacing blame for the traumatic incident. Moreover, they experience distorted cognitive function and mood, exhibiting irritability towards others or occasional outbursts of anger that can sometimes lead to reckless or self-destructive actions (305).

Erikson differentiates individual trauma from collective trauma (226) in his study published in 1994. He based his analysis on the traumas suffered by collective societies because of the calamities faced by the Western world, such as the Holocaust, genocides, and natural disasters. According to him, individual trauma or psychological trauma affects the psyche of a particular individual. Collective trauma refers to catastrophic events or series of incidents experienced by a community, affecting social life and the sense of shared communality through ruptured community bonds. This kind of shared traumatic experience, influenced by a shared suffering, can either draw people together or drive them apart. Thus, based on this collective experience, trauma tends to create a community of its own. Erikson builds on Caruth's formulations of trauma presented in 1996 and asserts that the people from the affected

community continue to experience their trauma in the form of flashbacks, dreams, and emotional disturbances. He further adds that the traumatic incident inculcates in them a general feeling of disillusionment with the world (Erikson 226).
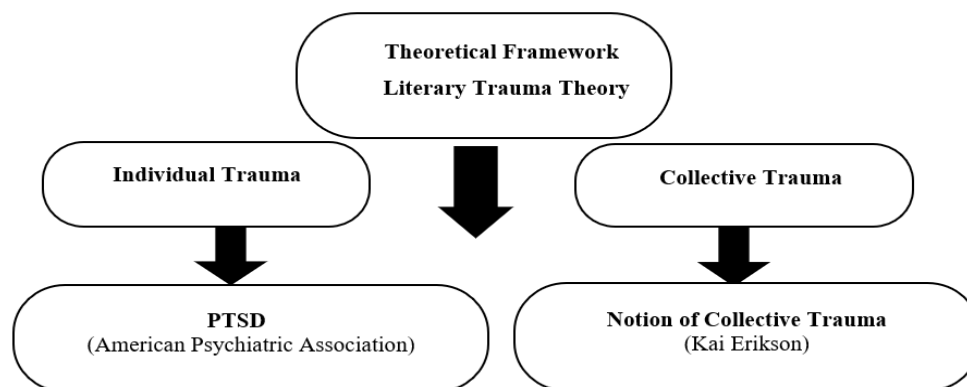

Fig. 1. Theoretical Framework Based on Trauma Theory

The current study utilises the cognitive poetic approach of TWT as its analytical framework, rather than as a theoretical framework, because it aims to provide a detailed and systematic procedure for analysing and interpreting the cognitive and mental processes of the traumatised protagonist, Ausi, in the selected text (Stockwell 10). This is done in light of theoretical components from literary trauma theory, i.e., the categorisation of PTSD in DSM-5-TR (American Psychiatric Association 305), and the notion of collective trauma (Erikson 226).

Text world theory (TWT) is a methodological approach within cognitive poetics that seeks an in-depth understanding of the mechanisms by which different readers construct mental representations of a given text. The theory was proposed by Paul Werth in 1999 and was further developed by Joanna Gavins in 2007. The current study utilises Joanna Gavins' framework of TWT, which provides a discourse framework operating on three interconnecting levels. It deals with text and context together as inseparable entities, which means that the TWT analysis does not focus on individual sentences but rather on entire texts and the worlds they create in the minds of readers.

The first level comprises the discourse world involving two or more participants engaged in a language event either in a face-to-face encounter (immediate physical surroundings), a long-distance conversation (separated in time and space), or any form of written communication. The TWT recognises the impact of individual motivations, intentions, and knowledge of the discourse participants on the process of joint negotiation in the discourse world (Gavins 8).

The next level of a TWT analysis is the text world level. At this level, each discourse participant constructs a mental representation of the text. This level comprises world-building elements and function-advancing propositions. World-building elements establish the time, place, objects, and characters that shape the world of the text. In contrast, function-advancing propositions include plot-advancing, scene-advancing, and argument-advancing elements that specify the actions, events, states, and processes driving the discourse forward. Once the main text world is constructed, various embedded worlds may emerge, which Gavins terms "new worlds". These are created either by discourse ("participant-accessible") or by characters in the text world ("character-accessible"). These departures into the new embedded worlds can be divided into two categories. The first one is termed as world switches (Gavins 45), which includes flashing backwards or forwards in time or space, and instances of direct speech or direct thought by an enactor. The second one is an ontological shift to a modal world termed modal world shifts (Gavins 91). This can further be divided into three different types of modal systems. The first one is deontic, which expresses duty, obligation, or moral considerations. The second is the boulimic modal system, articulated through desires, hopes, wishes, and dreams. The third is the epistemic modal system, which conveys the participant's commitment to truth/logic. This system provides the reader or participant access to an enactor's beliefs, thoughts, or knowledge. Conditions such as hypotheticality, conditionality, and enactor focalisation are also addressed within this modal system. (Gavins 118 − 125). The TWT, as presented by Gavins, is summarised below in Figure 2.
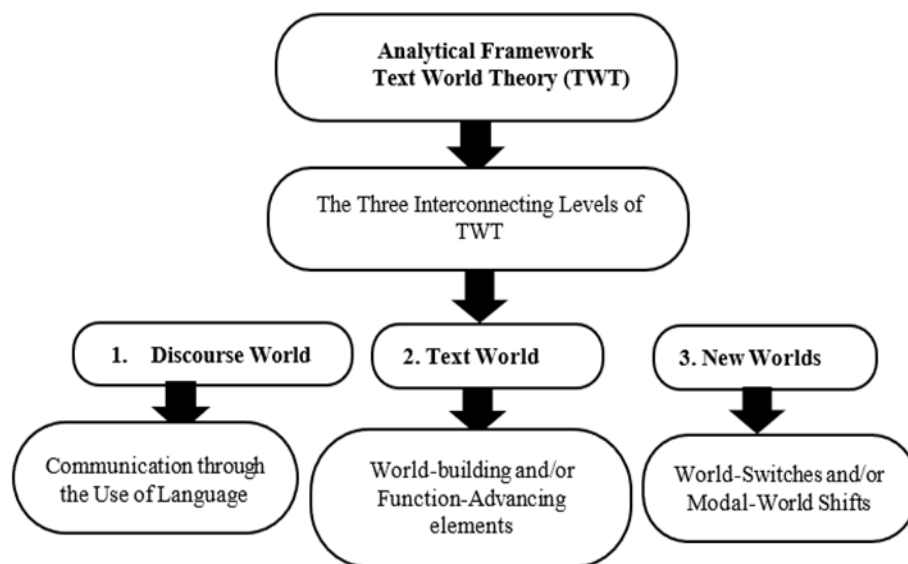

Fig. 2. Analytical Framework Based on Joanna Gavins' Text World Theory (TWT)

For the present research, cognitive poetic analysis is conducted with a special focus on literary trauma theory. This is done in three steps. First, the researchers investigate the psychological suffering of the protagonist Ausi from the perspective of individual trauma,

focusing on the categorisation of PTSD outlined by the American Psychiatric Association in 2022. This is done by mapping the text *The Spinner's Tale* on three interconnecting levels of TWT, i.e., the discourse world, the text world, and the new world levels. Afterwards, the analysis draws parallels between the discourse world in Gavins' Text World Theory and the individual and collective trauma of Pakistani society, considering Kai Erikson's notion of collective trauma.

Reframing Trauma through Cognitive Worlds

The discourse world level reading of *The Spinner's Tale* begins as soon as the reader encounters the Novel's title, activating their background knowledge. Since cricket is the most followed sport in Pakistan, the term "spinner" becomes immediately recognisable to a Pakistani reader. As the narrative progresses and the reader encounters the world-building and function-advancing elements, it becomes clear that the novel is about a cricket player with a spin bowling action, hence the name 'spinner' in the title. This refers to the protagonist, Ausi, also known as Ahmed Uzair Sufi or Sheikh Uzair. He later becomes internationally known, not for his cricketing pursuits, but for acts of terrorism. The narrative of The *Spinner's Tale* constantly shifts between past and present. It ultimately concludes with an epilogue that serves as a flash forward, highlighting the story's progression beyond the present. The narrative of *The Spinner's Tale* constantly shifts between past and present, ultimately concluding with an epilogue that serves as a flash forward, highlighting the story's progression beyond the present.

This shift in narrative is signified through different world-building and function-advancing propositions constituting the text world level of the novel (Gavins 45). The novel opens in April 2011, in the Nara Desert, where Superintendent Police Omar Abbasi arranges for the detention of the terrorist Sheikh Ahmed Uzair Sufi (Ausi). It ends in June 2011, in Southern Punjab, with an epilogue. The two different locations constituting the 'present' of the narrative include the Nara desert and Karachi. The narrative signifying the 'past' in the novel dates to November 1987. The different locations constituting the 'past' of the narrative include Karachi, Kashmir, New Hampshire, New York City, London, Kosovo, Khost – Afghanistan, Indian-Occupied Kashmir, and Rawalpindi. The only location signifying the future course of action in the narrative is signalled through the epilogue of the novel, which is set in Southern Punjab. The different characters (enactors) constituting the 'present' in the novel include Ausi, Omar Abbasi (SP), Shahab (CID inspector), Sana, Eddy's parents, and Ausi's family.

The different characters (enactors) constituting the 'past' in the novel include Ausi, Eddy, Sana, Sohail, Sinha, and the Jinn. Finally, the only character (enactor) signifying the future of the narrative is Ausi himself. Gavins (35) asserts that the function-advancing propositions on the text world-level aid in driving forward the discourse surrounding the narrative of a particular text. The different function-advancing elements in the narrative

reveal the transformation of an educated, cricket-loving Pakistani youth into a cold-blooded murderer and an internationally feared terrorist, which is embodied in the narrative through Ausi's thought processes and actions. The text world level construction of *The Spinner's Tale* is represented below in Table 1.

Table 1: Text world-level construction of *The Spinner's Tale*

Text world-level construction			
World-building elements			**Function- advancers**
Time	**Location**	**Enactors**	
Present	Nara desert, Karachi	Ausi, Omar Abbasi, Shahab, Sana, Eddy's parents, Ausi's family	Ausi's thought processes and actions
Past	Karachi, New Hampshire, New York City, London, Kossovo, Khost, Indian-Occupied Kashmir, and Rawalpindi.	Ausi, Eddy, Sana, Sohail, Sinha, and The Jinn.	
Future	Southern Punjab	Ausi	

Mapping Ausi's PTSD Across Narrative Levels

Text World Theory facilitates the identification of textual indicators of trauma. A close reading of the Novel shows that the three interconnecting levels of text world theory reveal the protagonist Ausi's PTSD. Ausi's past trauma manifests in the present narrative in the form of flashback episodes. Furthermore, Ausi displays a range of PTSD symptoms that also manifest within the present narrative. These symptoms function as textual indicators within the narrative, and can be broadly categorised as hyperarousal/reactivity, avoidance/emotional numbing, and distorted cognitive function/ mood (American Psychiatric Association 305). Ausi's trauma in the novel is presented through dual narrative perspectives, i.e., Ausi's first-person account, which is unreliable due to his disturbed mental state, and a third-person perspective, which brings a certain level of impartiality to the narration. In this way, readers delve into Ausi's psyche while also considering an external, more pragmatic viewpoint of his trauma and radicalised actions. Ausi's detention in Indian-Occupied Kashmir in 1999 served as a traumatic incident where he was subjected to repeated torture and violence. It is mentioned in the text that during his captivity in an Indian jail:

> He stares down at the nails missing from his fingers… Every time the Jinn comes, he fights, he resists but is beaten almost senseless by the guards who hold him down. The times he loses consciousness are the best ones. That way he doesn't have to live through the experience. Other times, he has had to distract himself by

imagining in great detail, how he will kill the Jinn when he gets out of here. (Hamid 217– 218)

As a result, Ausi develops PTSD symptoms on his release from the Indian jail back to Pakistan. Bushra Jani's study similarly highlights the impact of torture experienced by fictional characters in enemy detention, resulting in the development of PTSD syndrome (1). Ausi undergoes a massive transformation from a Kashmiri freedom fighter to a jihadist recruiter and terrorist after his release. He suffers from continuous flashback episodes related to the torture inflicted upon him in the Indian jail (American Psychiatric Association 305). This is evident in the text:

> The two years since his release from Sinha's chamber of horrors have changed him… He has not shared the trauma he suffered with any member of his family…He hates his family…The only thing that matters is that he is a living, breathing, symbol of resistance… And so he remains a fragile mixture of hate and confusion. One day, he reminds himself, he will get his revenge on him. On all of them. (Hamid 236 – 237)

This flashback episode exemplifies Ausi's distorted cognitive function, as he harbours persistent negative beliefs regarding his perpetrators in the Indian Jail, i.e., Sinha and the Jinn, as well as his own family and the world in general (American Psychiatric Association 305). Ausi remains trapped in his past, even after two years, continually re-experiencing his trauma by recalling the painful horrors he endured during his detention in Indian-Occupied Kashmir.

Ausi's fractured memory is formally enacted in the narrative through world-switches, particularly via flashbacks and modal world shifts. The narrative shifts from the present location and time, i.e., Nara desert (2011), to the past, i.e., Karachi (February 2002), where the murder scene of the American journalist Rachel Boyd, perpetrated by Ausi, is narrated in terms of function-advancing propositions, namely, Ausi's thought processes and actions. This scene is presented below as a flashback episode, wherein the original text world generates countless new worlds in the minds of the readers through world-switches (Gavins 45):

> Sana. Sinha. The two images merge, clouding his mind and blurring his vision … His motion is smooth and the cleaver is sharp, cutting its way through muscle and fibre, almost halfway through. A stream of blood gushes out from her exposed larynx … He wants to remember this moment forever, not as some kind of glorious achievement, but rather as an example of what he can be capable of. A man who can so heartlessly slaughter a pregnant woman can do anything. I did not lie to you, Rachel Boyd. I have set you free. And myself as well. (Hamid 265)

The above textual evidence highlights that two contrasting new worlds are created, i.e., Sana and Sinha. This constitutes a world-switch, in the form of a flashback, representing a shift in time between the past and the present. Here, Sana refers to Ausi's past 'self', signifying his former life and romantic relationship with a girl named Sana. On the other hand, Sinha refers to his present, transformed 'self' after he was subjected to physical torture at the hands of his jailers in an Indian Jail. This shifting between the past and the present through flashback episodes (American Psychiatric Association 305) also refers to Ausi's PTSD, as he is unable to distinguish between his past and the present selves, thereby blurring the boundaries of time and space (Gavins 45).

This shifting between the past and present through flashback episodes (American Psychiatric Association 305) also relates to Ausi's PTSD, as he is unable to distinguish between his past and present selves, thereby blurring the boundaries of time and space (Gavins 45).

Here, Ausi's distorted sense of 'self' reflects his distorted cognitive function (American Psychiatric Association 305). Jonas Kellermann's study of *A Little Life* similarly traces trauma through narrative flashbacks in the novel. This study draws parallels between the present and the past of the protagonist, Jude, referring to his traumatic past. Ausi, like Jude, drives a distorted sense of self that pushes him to perpetrate his trauma on other people by committing brutal acts of violence. However, unlike Ausi, Jude's trauma manifested in self-harm, and his distorted sense of self eventually led to his committing suicide (1). In the third line of the passage, the narrative shifts back to the original text world, where the murder scene is narrated, and Ausi's violent act propels the action. These lines reflect Ausi's hyperarousal, as he takes out his aggression on an innocent, pregnant journalist (American Psychiatric Association 305). In the last three lines, a world-switch occurs in the narrative, signified by a shift from third-person narration to direct speech in Ausi's voice: "I did not lie to you, Rachel Boyd. I have set you free. And myself as well" (Hamid 265). These lines illustrate Ausi's emotional numbness, as he appears utterly detached from the outside world and shows no signs of remorse after recklessly murdering an innocent woman (American Psychiatric Association 305). The narrative of the novel ends with an epilogue, signifying a shift from the present location and time, i.e., Nara Desert (April 2011), to a flash-forward in the narrative to a future location and time, i.e., Southern Punjab (June 2011), where Ausi has escaped after murdering Superintendent Omar Abbasi. Here again, the function-advancing elements signal the thought processes and actions of Ausi. The original text world of the narrative generates several new worlds through world-switches and modal world shifts (Gavins 45). The narrative is written in the first person, in Ausi's voice (direct speech), signifying a world-switch into a new world, and is addressed to Eddy in the form of a letter. Eddy was Ausi's childhood friend, whom Ausi secretly murdered ten years ago. The last few lines are significant and have been quoted below:

These people don't understand that we have always been one. That you reside within me and I reside within you. I did not kill you ten years ago. How could I, for it would be akin to killing myself … Well, I have to go now. I'm working as a tailor here, and there's a jacket that I have to finish for Shahab. (Hamid 299 – 300)

In the above-mentioned textual reference, the first three lines create a modal shift in the reader's mind, termed the epistemic hypothetical modal world shift, where Ausi is hypothetically combining the two distinct new worlds: one representing the dead Eddy and the other representing the living Ausi (Gavins 45). Afterwards, the narrative again shifts back to the past, indicating a world-switch: "I did not kill you ten years ago" (Hamid 299). In the next line, the use of the epistemic modal auxiliary 'could' takes the reader to the epistemic hypothetical modal world, representing a modal shift here. Finally, the narrative shifts forward, signifying a modal shift into a boulomaic modal world, where Ausi expresses his future intentions: "I'm working as a tailor here, and there's a jacket that I have to finish for Shahab" (Hamid 299). These lines reflect Ausi's distorted cognitive function, as he discusses his destructive future actions specifically, his plans to kill Shahab, the CID inspector in charge of his case, in a planned terrorist attack (American Psychiatric Association 305).

The above discussion shows that Ausi's fragmented self and fractured memory, enacted in the narrative through world-switches and modal world shifts, reflect Ausi's individual trauma. It demonstrates that the Novel does attempt to humanise Ausi to a certain extent by exploring the factors that led to his trauma and extremism; however, it also acknowledges and condemns his radicalised actions, attributing his trauma and behaviour to a disrupted society.

Collective Wounds: Mapping Shared Trauma in *The Spinner's Tale*

The discourse world level reading of *The Spinner's Tale* helps explore the factors responsible for Ausi's trauma by considering the broader socio-historical context of Pakistani society. It engages the reader's background knowledge regarding social disruption, violence, and terrorism, which have been prevalent in Pakistani society over the last few decades (Gavins 18). Erikson (226) points out that collective trauma refers to a catastrophic event that affects a group of people and their sense of shared communality. The Soviet Afghan War (1979–1989) and the U.S. War on Terror in Afghanistan (1999–2021) significantly contributed to the dissemination of terrorism and extremism, leading to widespread social disruption in Pakistani society (Malik et al. 625). After 9/11, Pakistan became a front-line state in the American war on terror against the Taliban in Afghanistan (Momani 41). In the Novel, the protagonist Ausi identifies himself as a "jihadi" (Hamid 60), referring to a militant extremist involved in acts of terrorism (Lowenstein 14). Ausi received his jihadi training in Khost, Afghanistan at Camp Suleyman Farsi, funded by Al-Qaeda in 1997, during the Taliban regime, where he learnt "hand to hand combat,

weapons handling and bomb making" (Hamid 173). Before murdering the American journalist Rachel Boyd, Ausi justifies himself in the following words:

> These days, we jihadis, like you media types, are constantly pressured by the demand to do something more spectacular than our colleagues. Osama crashed planes into the Twin Towers, so I had to respond by kidnapping a pregnant woman. (Hamid 263)

Here, Ausi refers to Osama Bin Laden as his "colleague" who was the founder of Al-Qaeda, a militant extremist organisation.

Osama Bin Laden fought with the Mujahideen group (referring to those who wage 'Jihad' or Holy war) against the Soviets in Afghanistan during the Soviet- Afghan war (1979–1989), and his organisation contributed to the rise of the Taliban in the 1990s in Afghanistan (Lowenstein 14). During this time, the Taliban supported Al-Qaeda in establishing jihadi training camps across Afghanistan that attracted recruits from around the world. Al-Qaeda was involved in various terrorist activities, such as the attacks on the Twin Towers in the United States on 11th September 2001. After this attack, the United States began its war on terror in Afghanistan in October 2001 (Stenersen 96). In the Novel, it is mentioned that Osama was invited to the camp on Ausi's graduation day in Khost, Afghanistan, in 1997. Ausi's fellow recruit describes Osama in the following words: "He abandoned a life of luxury to fight with the mujahideen. He's become a legend around the camps. He is very generous as well; he funds several of them" (Hamid 175).

In this regard, the above-mentioned incidents such as the Soviet Afghan War (1979–1989), the rise of Taliban and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan in the 1990s, and the US war on terror in Afghanistan (1999– 2021) can be taken as catastrophic events that altered and affected the social fabric of Pakistani society. These incidents prompted the misguided Pakistani youth to fall prey to terrorist groups, fuelling the cycle of violence and terrorism in Pakistan.

As a result, this impacted the socio-political landscape in Pakistan and contributed to the collective trauma of the Pakistani society. Erikson (226) also maintains that societies affected by trauma on a collective level produce emotionally distressed individuals with a disrupted sense of shared communality and disillusionment with the existing status quo. On the discourse world level, the text can be interpreted in the same way, as Ausi being a member of the Pakistani society also shares the collective trauma of his society.

The novel portrays that, in the beginning, Ausi, an educated youth, joins a medical school in Karachi, where he becomes an active member of student politics. His inclination towards a political group and the consequent murder of his friend and fellow party worker, Sohail, forced him to drop out and seek refuge, first in Azad Kashmir and then in London. His disillusionment with the rigged system and society in general after Sohail's murder is

highlighted in the following lines: "… all political parties are the same, that they use workers for their own ends and then discard them … He wanted to set the world on fire" (Hamid 97).

After completing his training at a jihadi camp in Afghanistan, Ausi became a Kashmiri freedom fighter in Indian-Occupied Kashmir, where Indian forces captured him. After his release from the Indian jail and return to Karachi, Ausi realises that:

> … this nation is diseased and needs to be cleansed … The funniest thing is he never believes any of what he says, but he has the ability to make others believe… His people want him to condemn other sects … And so, he does, making speeches exulting in his hatred for the cursed Shi'as, preaching murder and intolerance. (Hamid 228–229).

The above-mentioned textual evidence clearly highlights that Ausi's anger and hatred towards Pakistani society exacerbate into violent behaviour and transform him into a terrorist and a reckless murderer. This shows that the collective trauma of Pakistani society plays a significant role in shaping Ausi's trauma. Joelle Mann's study on the Novel *The Yellow Birds* similarly explores the trauma of the American soldier named Bartle, who fought in the US's war on terror in Iraq. Mann links the protagonist's individual trauma to the collective trauma of post-9/11 American society, highlighting the global impact of the war (340). Mann's study highlights that Bartle's trauma primarily centres around survivor's guilt, and his account of trauma is quite unreliable due to his unstable and fragmented memory. Similarly, Ausi's trauma is deeply intertwined with radicalisation, and his account of trauma is also unreliable, owing to his display of PTSD symptoms.

Overall, the discourse world-level reading of the text highlights the disillusionment of a misguided Pakistani youth, Ausi, as a result of the social disruption prevalent in Pakistani society, which contributes to his trauma. As a result, Ausi propagates further violence and extremism through his terrorist activities. In this way, it can be said that Hamid, in the novel *The Spinner's Tale,* has brilliantly enmeshed Ausi's individual trauma with the collective trauma of Pakistani society.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, the present study has explored the trauma of the protagonist, Ausi, and the collective trauma of Pakistani society through Hamid's Novel *The Spinner's Tale.* The primary objective has been to highlight how the unending wave of violence and terrorism in Pakistan is impacting the psyche of Pakistani youth and disturbing the overall social cohesion of Pakistani society. The findings show that the protagonist, Ausi, in *The Spinner's Tale* suffers from PTSD, which indicates his individual trauma (American Psychiatric Association 305). Additionally, the collective trauma of Pakistani society plays a significant role in shaping Ausi's trauma, resulting in his transformation from an educated

Pakistani youth into an internationally feared terrorist. The cognitive poetic analysis, utilising TWT, has uncovered the linguistic and cognitive patterns involved in depicting both individual and collective trauma within the text. At the text world level, Ausi's trauma is highlighted through a constant shift between the past and the present, realised in the narrative through function-advancing propositions, such as Ausi's thought processes and actions.

At the new-world level, Ausi's trauma is demonstrated through deictic world switches, indicating flashbacks of his traumatic past and instances of direct speech in his voice. Furthermore, several new worlds are created in the narrative through modal world shifts, such as epistemic hypothetical modal worlds and boulomaic modal worlds. Finally, the discourse world generated through reading the novel helps relate Ausi's individual trauma to the collective trauma of Pakistani society. In this way, the present study offers a novel approach to literary analysis by integrating the fields of literary trauma studies and cognitive poetics. The study has been limited to one novel, i.e., *The Spinner's Tale*. The same aspect highlighted in this research can be explored through other Pakistani Novels and media, such as contemporary Pakistani poetry, plays, and films, to delineate the damaging effects of both individual and collective trauma on the psyche of Pakistani society. Literary writings, through their representational and symbolic functions, can influence social attitudes and beliefs, resulting in social transformation (Gohar et al. 273). Consequently, future studies can focus on cognitive mechanisms behind language use in Pakistani Anglophone literature, enhancing the readers' interpretation and understanding of various mental and psychological problems in societal and cultural contexts.

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