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**Cross-Referencing Historical Traumas and Decentering  
Eurocentric Narratives: Multidirectional Memory in the  
Narrative of Feroza**



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**Abstract**

The current research investigates constructing multidirectional memory and reclaiming marginalized histories in Pakistani literature by delving into the life of the main character from the novel *The Begum and the Dastan* (2021) by Tarana Husain Khan. Applying Rothberg's (2009) multidirectional memory framework for the analysis of the selected text, this study examines how the narrative cross-references multiple memories, foregrounds marginalized histories and decenters Eurocentric historical approaches. Furthermore, this research is qualitative as it discusses how the selected text portrays multidirectional memory in the colonized communities of India. Through multidirectional memory, the current study presents how personal and collective traumas intertwine, shaping the narratives, actions, and identities of the character. Moreover, the study also investigates how the novel critiques the dominant narratives of the history by amplifying the voice marginalized by the traditional historical narratives. Employing thematic analysis method, this study highlights the non-competitive nature of memory in the narrative of the selected character. The study also illustrates how the narrative contributes to post-colonial memory studies by applying Rothberg's (2009) theory to Pakistani literature, offering insights to how the silenced past is highlighted in fictions and its creation of empathy in global memory landscape.

**Keywords:** multidirectional memory, marginalized histories, historical trauma.

**Introduction**

The colonial period in the Indo-Pak subcontinent has its major impacts. Regardless of whether it was early or late colonial period, it had significantly affected the major segments of the society, its culture and the south Asian literature. For a long time, numerous early and contemporary Pakistani writers have been discussing the impacts of colonialism in the literary works. They have specifically highlighted the trauma faced by the colonized such as Ali (1940) *Twilight in Delhi*, Manto (1995) *Toba Tek Singh* and Hamid (2007) *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Recent scholarship has explored the ways Pakistani fiction engages with identity crises and psychological fragmentation at borderlands, emphasizing how migration and displacement generate alienation and cultural in-betweenness (Ahmad, Ullah, & Ammar, 2021). While scholars have examined Pakistani fiction through the lens of borders, identity, and cultural hybridity (Ahmad, Ullah, & Ammar, 2021), less attention has been paid to how these narratives engage with trauma and memory. One of the novels that delves into the themes of traumas, marginalization, historical

erasure and intersecting traumas is Khan's (2021) *The Begum and the Dastan*. The novel of the current study discusses the life of the main character, Feroza, who struggles with multiple traumas while living in a colonized society. Belonging to the Pashtun background, her gender and class differences have huge impacts on her life under the colonial rule. The current study analyzes the selected text through the lens of Rothberg's (2009) Multidirectional memory. The presentation of historical memory in literature, particularly in the context of trauma due to colonization and marginalization is mostly overlooked in the traditional trauma studies. The highlighted trauma in Pakistani literature remains unexplored due to the Eurocentric approaches of trauma.

In this regard Rothberg (2009) gave a concept of "Decolonizing Trauma Study" through Multidirectional Memory which provides an inclusive framework that challenges the traditional "zero\_sum" view of memory; he argues that memories due to different historical traumas can coexist and inform one another through interaction. The selected theoretical framework will assist in exploring the strategies employed by the main character in representation of the traumas through her narrative in colonial society. Craps and Buelens (2008) write about Rothberg that "Rothberg searched for a productive medium between hyper-localism and over homogenization, a medium that he aims to locate through multidirectionality of collective memory" (p. 10). Ann Rigney (2012) cites about Rothberg in her work that "Rothberg goes beyond the view of Holocaust as universal benchmark that overshadows other traumas in his cultural criticism, he showed how memories narrating crimes and traumas against humanity across the globe exists and inform each other in a comparative multidirectional way" (p. 618). The study also aims to focus on "Decentering Eurocentric approaches of trauma" through the lens of Rothberg's (2009) concept of multidirectional memory as the selected text shifts from dominant Eurocentric narratives (such as Holocaust narratives) to localized South Asian narratives. "Such anachronistic and anatomic displacement brings together the holocaust, slavery and colonialism as singular yet rational histories in what I call multidirectional memory" (Rothberg, 2008, p. 225). Moreover, the study also discusses ethics of shared memory and justice as highlighted by Rothberg (2009) to add another layer of analysis to the study:

Multidirectional memory is the idea that collective memory of different historical traumas such as colonialism, holocaust and slavery do not compete for recognition but instead inform one another through interaction in a broader discourse. This concept presents the public space of memory as an intercultural, dialogic arena where historical traumas coexist and generate new understandings (Rothberg, 2009, pp. 11-13). Multidirectional memory is not

limited to collective historical events, it also applies to how different forms of memory (personal, familial, colonial, gendered) are entangled and influence one another. Rothberg's (2009) framework allows us to explore how individual relationships are shaped by larger historical forces, and how private memory can carry the weight of political trauma. The selected story influenced by colonial context shapes the individual and collective traumas of the character. The selected character Feroza's narrative is shaped by her cultural and religious backgrounds, familial ties and her personal experiences under the colonial influences: offering a window to her marginalized experiences.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Unlike the native English writers emerging Pakistani writers often get less recognition in the academic writing. The selected text *The Begum and the Dastan* has been published in 2021 and minimal to no research has been conducted on it. Moreover, there is a pressing need to address the themes of intersecting histories, cross referencing of traumas, shared memory and marginalized voices addressed by the Pakistani authors as the historical studies often prioritize Eurocentric narratives and frameworks, marginalizing the voices of colonized and gendered subjects. This study also contributes to the lack of research on Multidirectional Memory in Pakistani literary context due to which the intersecting traumas present in Pakistani literature are often overlooked. The current study addresses this gap and focuses on how the selected novel represents the silenced histories by examining the narrative of Feroza, that how her narrative intertwines personal and collective traumas, cross-reference memories and decenter Eurocentric perspectives. By analyzing the strategies employed by Feroza in the selected novel, we can get deeper understanding of how the people under the colonial rule navigated oppression and resisted erasure.

### **Research Objectives**

The objectives of the current study are:

- 1.To analyze the cross referencing of different historical traumas to highlight multidirectional memory in *The Begum and the Dastan* (2021),
- 2.To examine the ways and purpose of reclaiming silenced histories and stimulating ethical remembrance in the narrative of Feroza by highlighting marginalized voices,
3. To investigate how the novel decenters Eurocentric narratives by foregrounding marginalized voices.

### **Research Questions**

The present study thus attempts to answer the following questions:

1. How does the cross referencing of traumas in *The Begum and the Dastan* (2021) contribute to the broader understanding of historical traumas as interconnected and multidirectional?

2. How does the author of the selected novel reclaim silenced histories and stimulate ethical remembrance in the narrative of Feroza that addresses marginalized experiences?

3. What are the narrative strategies used in the selected novel to highlight the marginalized voices and challenge the Eurocentric representation of the histories?

### **Significance of the Study**

The selected text is chosen due to its rich thematic intersections, multiple cultural backgrounds and the nuanced ways in which it narrates the silenced histories. By examining the experiences of the selected character, the study will develop a deeper understating of the oppressed marginalized voices and their intersecting traumas. Moreover, by highlighting how the narrative amplifies silenced histories and marginalized voices through Multidirectional Memory, this research broadens the scope of Rothberg's (2009) theory which has mainly been applied to the Eurocentric or Holocaust related contexts. Therefore, this study advances Rothberg's (2009) theory by demonstrating its applicability to the Pakistani Literature, contributing to its evolution as a global approach to memory studies. This study also aims to illuminate the literary contributions to reclaiming marginalized histories.

### **Delimitations of the Study**

This study focuses exclusively on Rothberg's (2009) approach to emphasize the intersecting nature of memory and to analyze marginalized narratives. The scope of the study is further limited to one Pakistani Novel and then to the protagonist from the novel (Feroza). The text is chosen for its thematic richness in addressing silenced histories, intersecting traumas and ethical remembrance; it does not represent entirety of Pakistani Postcolonial literature. Other aspects or characters of the novels beyond the scope of presented research objectives are not within the scope of the current study.

### **Literature Review**

Tarana Husain Khan's *The Begum and the Dastan* (2021) set in early colonized India, has a thematic focus on reclaiming marginalized voices. The story centers around the main protagonist Feroza, who navigates her life under the colonial and patriarchal oppressions. Through her narrative, the character challenges historical erasure of the marginalized traumas and reclaims the silenced histories. Moreover, the study challenges the Eurocentric frameworks of history by portraying local perspectives. The novel represents experiences of violence as interconnected and overlapping rather than isolated and competitive. The current chapter discusses the existing literature review, based on the selected text, theory and the major themes specifically chosen for the study.

### **Multidirectional Memory**

Postcolonial literature frequently centers around the themes of memory, identity and resistance. Many post-colonial scholars such as Said (1978) and Bhabha (1994), have highlighted how the histories of the colonial traumas are embedded in the cultural narratives of the marginalized communities. Moreover, in recent studies, the importance of focusing on the marginalized voices and challenging the traditional Eurocentric frameworks are highlighted, for instance according to Bhatia (2018), coloniality exhibits in the mindsets that establish Eurocentric ways of being superior. Bhatia (2018) states that "Euro-American psychology lingers on in the cultural sphere of Non-western post- colonial contexts in varied forms" (p. 1). Rothberg (2009) in his work, *Multidirectional Memory; Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, critiques the dominant competitive memory framework that views memory as a zero-sum game and the recognition of one memory comes at the expense of the other. He states that "cross referencing of memories is productive rather than privative" (Rothberg, 2009, p. 3). Baxter (2011) states in the praise of Rothberg (2009) concept that, "Rothberg is more accurate than he perhaps realizes in his claim that little has been done to address these need (inclusive framework for the trauma of the marginalized) in the past fifteen years" (Baxter, 2011, p. 19).

According to Craps and Buelens (2008) "Rothberg called attention to the notion of the White Westerners and the idea of over homogenization of the Eurocentric traumas as a regrettable tendency of trauma studies and he called for a medium that is capable of locating the multidirectionality of collective memory" (p. 10). Rothberg's (2009) rejection of Eurocentric frameworks and cross referencing of memories are mirrored in the selected text that the current study aims to address. Memory in Pakistani literature is an exceptionally rich field as Khan's novel *The Begum and the Dastan* (2021) engages deeply with the forgotten histories of patriarchy and colonial trauma. Rothberg's (2009) framework serves as the lens to analyze the marginalized narrative of Feroza.

Furthermore, the intersection of memory with gender is one of the key themes in post-colonial literature. Mohanty (1988) extends the idea of existing critique of gender construction as highlighted by many scholars like De Beauvoir (1949), to post-colonial context. Mohanty (1998) highlighted how the influence of colonialism and patriarchy intersects in subjugation of women in a colonial society. Rothberg (2009) highlights a similar point in his framework as "ethics of memory" which supports the notion of reclaiming silenced histories and justice through storytelling. However, feminist studies have highlighted and analyzed the themes of gender construction and gender discrimination in Pakistani Literature. This study on the other hand aims to highlight the

intersection of different memories caused by multiple traumas (colonialism, war, patriarchy etc) in the narrative of Feroza through the lens of Multidirectional memory.

### **Application in Literature**

Rothberg's (2009) framework critiques the dominant competitive memory framework and proposes multidirectionality of memory emphasizing that: "Historical memory can serve as a medium for the coexistence of different memories" (p. 11). Rothberg (2008) highlights the coexistence of Holocaust and post-colonial trauma in Schwarz-Bart's (1985) novel named as *A Woman Named Solitude*; he stated that "In *A Woman Named Solitude*, Schwarz-Bart not only brings the memory of the Holocaust to have relevance to the forgotten piece of world history, he also ensures that a fragment of the Caribbean past unexpectedly recontextualizes the Nazi genocide" (Rothberg, 2008, p. 225). As per the discussion Gunay-Erkol and Senol-Sert (2018) argued that Rothberg (2009) framework can be used as a literary lens to analyze literature that deals with the themes of slavery, genocide and colonialism. Gunay-Erkol and Senol-Sert (2018) derived data from 137 novels that were written between 1960 and 2015, as a part of project "Memory and Witnessing in Literary Studies: Literature and Military Coups in Turkey"; their major argument was that the selected novels were promoting the idea of memory as competitive and zero-sum game, but looking closely there were traces of multidirectionality, ongoing negotiation, cross referencing and borrowing.

They therefore suggested that looking at literary work from that lens of multidirectional memory can reframe justice in society by rejecting the competitive memory (Gunay-Erkol & Senol-Sert, 2018, pp 118, 119). van der Vlies (2016) used the framework to analyze a broader concept that can be generalized to different frameworks; Vlies analyzed history textbooks to examine how the narratives generate new meanings by combining histories and help us understand different situations by placing them in familiar contexts (p. 300). Moreover, this framework has been used to analyse literary texts in recent studies, such as Krawczyk (2023) analyzed *A Little Annihilation* by Anna Janko (2020) through the lens of Rothberg's (2009) Multidirectional memory to analyze the multidirectional transfer of traumatic memory. According to Krawczyk (2023) "focusing on the non-competitive aspect of memory and its multidirectionality makes it possible to see the intricate construction of the text" (p. 231). As per situation another study by Afwa Hussein Al-Dory analyzed *The Bird Tattoo* by Dunia Mikhail (2022) using the lens of Rothberg's (2009) Multidirectional memory. Like Feroza, Mikhail situates the protagonist's sufferings within a web of historical and global traumas, demonstrating how individual and collective traumas interact; the protagonist's trauma is analyzed within interconnected narratives of historical

traumas, representing mutidirectionality of memory. Rothberg's (2009) rejection of Eurocentric frameworks and cross referencing of memories are mirrored in the selected text that the current study is trying to address. Feroza's narrative will be analyzed in the current study through the similar lens of Rothberg (2009) multidirectional memory. The current study aims to extend the scope of the framework by using the lens for Pakistani literature, it will bring to light the marginalized realities in the history of colonialism in South Asia.

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

The study will be grounded in Rothberg's (2009) theory of Multidirectional memory, with a focus on cross referencing traumas, ethics of memory and decentering Eurocentric narratives by analyzing marginalized narrative of the protagonist from *The Begum and the Dastaan* (2021). Qualitative approach is well suited for the current study. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), it focuses on subjective interpretation, contextual analysis, and the construction of meaning through detailed examination of the texts. This approach is much suitable and relevant as it would be helpful in analyzing how the novel intertwines multiple experiences of trauma.

#### **Research Paradigm**

Paradigm is perceived as "a way of seeing the world that frames a research topic" and influences the way that researchers think about the topic (Hughes, 2010, p. 35 as cited by Kamal 2019). The current study has adopted an interpretivist paradigm which would help in understanding how the narratives of the selected characters reclaim silenced histories and construct multidirectional memory. Creswell and Poth (2018) assert that interpretivist paradigm in qualitative research focuses on understanding the subjective meaning that individual assign to their experiences. Denzin and Lincoln (2018) state that interpretivism emphasizes the subjective nature of social phenomena and the importance of understanding individual meaning and interpretation. This paradigm perfectly aligns with the study's focus on the reclaiming silenced histories in Pakistani literature and how memory, trauma and oppressions are represented in the selected texts. Associated with interpretivist paradigm, the study adopts interpretivist epistemology, which acknowledges that knowledge is modified and shaped by different individuals' perspectives and relates with their personal experiences. As Guba and Lincoln (1994) state that epistemological stance is specifically relevant given focus on identity construction and characters' subjective experiences.

#### **Data Analysis Method**

Thematic analysis method will be used as a primary analytical tool to analyze the intersecting traumas and marginalized voices in the characters' narratives



through the perspective of multidirectional memory, as defined by Braun and Clarke (2006) "Thematic analysis is a flexible and structured method for identifying, analyzing and interpreting patterns within qualitative data".

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study will be guided by Rothberg's theory of multidirectional memory, as presented in *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the age of Decolonization* (2009), which critiques the historical, zero-sum view of memory, where one trauma is privileged at the expense of the others. He proposes a rational approach where multiple histories of traumas co-exist and inform each other. Rothberg (2009) states that "memories are not in competition but are mutually illuminating" (Rothberg, 2009, p. 13), emphasizing the ethical importance of memory as shared and non-competitive space. The proposed model by Rothberg employs that memory is cross-referential, dialogic and dynamic in nature. This theory is particularly relevant when the texts engage with post-colonial trauma and resistance similar to the selected texts of the current study.

Rothberg searches out the productive medium between the "hyper-particularism or hyper-localism" called for by some postcolonial trauma specialists and the "over-homogenization" that is the typical, regrettable tendency in trauma studies thus far a medium he hopes to locate through consideration of "the multidirectionality of collective memory" (Craps & Buelens, 2008, p. 10). This study acknowledges the ethical imperative of memory work as emphasized by Rothberg, who argues that engaging with difficult pasts must be done in a way that resists appropriation and allows for the recognition of multiple, intersecting histories without erasing their particularities. "Ethical memory does not mean competitive memory; it involves working through the partiality of one's own historical perspective and allowing that perspective to be transformed through attentive encounters with the histories of others" (Rothberg, 2009, p. 5).

This framework helps in analyzing how the narrative of Feroza challenges the idea that collective memory belongs to a single event or group, instead it reveals how traumas intersect and shape one another. This study aims to address how the narrative of Feroza recruits the narrative techniques like fragmented storytelling and alternative archives (oral history, family narratives etc) to illuminate the silenced histories. Moreover, Rothberg's (2009) framework focuses on how the narratives engage with silenced histories through ethical storytelling and decentering Eurocentric narratives. The study highlights how narratives interlace different histories of traumas, resist competitive memory, and confront historical injustices. This framework guides in analyzing and understanding how these narratives actively reconstruct memory, resist, and reclaim marginalized histories and reconfigure the

historical narratives. By connecting the colonial past with the contemporary struggles, the novel provides a strong ground for Rothberg (2009) claim that "memory is multidirectional rather than competitive".

### **Selected Text**

For this research, the selected data is the text of the novel, *The Begum and the Dastaan* written by Tarana Husain Khan (2021). Additionally, secondary sources such as books, articles and research papers related to the themes of the current study have been used. These sources will provide theoretical frameworks and background information to contextualize the findings from the selected text.

### **Data Analysis**

In *The Begum and the Dastaan* (2021), the author actively recalls silenced histories of colonial and patriarchal oppressions of the subcontinent. By voicing the narratives of the marginalized communities, the novel explores the themes of trauma, memory and resistance. Feroza narrates the intertwined social stratum of power in colonial India, portraying the traumas and struggle of women under colonial and patriarchal norms. Khan's (2021) narrative situates the reader in the princely state of Sherpur during a period of acute political vulnerability and entrenched patriarchy, creating a layered narrative that connects the life of Feroza with broader historical forces. Applying Michael Rothberg's (2009) concept of multidirectional memory allows us to see how the novel brings together personal and collective histories, gendered oppression, princely state politics, and colonial domination, not as separate entities but as dialogically related experiences.

### **Cross-Referencing Historical Traumas**

Feroza's abduction is one of the novel's pivotal moments, and it functions as both a personal catastrophe and an invocation of a deeper historical memory of women's dispossession in patriarchal South Asian societies. Khan (2021) describes the scene : "They caught her in the courtyard, her wrists twisted so hard she thought the bones would snap. Her cries echoed against the high walls, but no one came" (p. 83). This is not merely a scene of personal violence, it resonates with a wider history in which women's bodies were sites of political bargaining, familial honor, and control. Rothberg's (2009) framework encourages us to see this moment in dialogue with other historical traumas, such as the abductions and forced conversions of women during Partition, that similarly combined personal violation with collective historical rupture. The narrative structure reinforces this multidirectionality by placing Feroza's narrative parallel with Sherpur's political subjugation under British colonial rule. When the ruler of Sherpur receives a British officer in the durbar hall, the narrator remarks; "Every gesture was calculated, every word measured, for a single misstep could bring greater humiliation to the state" (Khan, 2021, p.

122). The echo is deliberate: Feroza's forced compliance within her marriage mirrors the Nawab's enforced politeness before colonial authority. Both are forms of captivity, although enacted in different spheres, the domestic and the political, and both reveal how power operates through the suppression of argument. By juxtaposing these episodes, the novel performs what Rothberg (2009) calls "productive memory," wherein "different histories of violence can be brought into productive dialogue, not to collapse their specificity, but to generate new insights into their structures and legacies" (Rothberg, 2009, p. 11).

In this case, the insight is that systems of patriarchal control and imperial domination are mutually reinforcing. Feroza's lack of agency in her personal life is not merely coincidental to Sherpur's lack of political autonomy; both are sustained by hierarchies that naturalize subjugation and disguise force as order. Khan (2021) also threads in an intertextual dimension through the Dastan tradition, which offers tales of earlier women betrayed by those in power. These stories are not inert folklore; they actively refract Feroza's own experience. As she listens to a tale of a queen abandoned by her court, she reflects: "The words clung to her like a second skin; they were not hers, but they were hers" (Khan, 2021, p. 110). Here the simultaneity of past and present becomes visible, Feroza's memory of her abduction and loss of agency fuses with the inherited memory of betrayal embedded in the Dastan. This is multidirectional memory in action: the articulation of one woman's suffering amplifies and reshapes the meaning of another's, across centuries. By placing the personal violation of Feroza alongside the political humiliation of Sherpur, and by refracting both through oral histories of prior injustices, *The Begum and the Dastan* (2021) refuses a compartmentalized view of history. Instead, it presents trauma as a shared, though differently experienced, phenomenon, one that flows between the intimate and the institutional, the remembered and the inherited. This aligns directly with the scope of the current study, as the cross-referencing of traumas produces a richer and more critical understanding of the conditions that sustain them.

### **Reclaiming Silenced Histories and Ethical Remembrance**

One of the most powerful interventions *The Begum and the Dastan* makes is its insistence on foregrounding histories that the colonial archive and patriarchal record-keeping have rendered invisible. The zenana, often reduced in historical accounts to a space of passive seclusion, is reimagined in the novel as a site of intense narrative exchange. Here, women share personal stories, fragments of memory, and whispered genealogies of suffering and resistance. Khan (2021) writes: "Behind the screen, in the shaded corners where men's voices could not reach, the women's words wove another kind of history, one that the official scribes would never write" (p. 117). This moment

captures the novel's ethical project: to reclaim the voices excluded from formal historiography and to preserve them through narrative. Rothberg's (2009) notion of multidirectional memory advocates for the concept of "ethical remembrance," which insists that the act of recalling past trauma should avoid both erasure and exploitation. In *The Begum and the Dastan* (2021), oral histories within the zenana are not sensationalized; instead, they are embedded in the everyday rhythms of conversation, making them part of the lived society. Feroza's own story becomes part of this alternative archive. After her marriage, she occupies a liminal position, both insider and outsider to the zenana's established hierarchies, which allows her to receive confidences from women of varying statuses. It is evident from the scene where an attendant tells her: "My sister was taken from her home and we never saw her again. They said she had been married, but no one knew to whom" (Khan, 2021, p. 108).

This recollection mirrors Feroza's own displacement, creating a moment of recognition that binds their experiences despite differences in class and circumstance. Such exchanges exemplify Rothberg's (2009) principle that "the articulation of one history can shape the articulation of another," not by collapsing them into sameness but by allowing them to resonate in ways that expand understanding (p. 3). The ethical dimension of this remembering lies in its reciprocity. Feroza does not simply consume these stories; she internalizes them, allowing them to inform her own sense of self and her place within a continuum of oppression and resilience. Importantly, the novel does not frame these memories as static. They are retold, reshaped, and sometimes contested, an aspect that reflects the dynamism of oral tradition. In one scene, a tale about a begum who defied her husband's authority is recounted differently by two women: one emphasizes her courage, the other her recklessness. This multiplicity resists a singular, authoritative version of the past, aligning with the multidirectional principle that memory is "subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing" (Rothberg, 2009, p. 5). By embedding Feroza's narrative within this web of women's testimonies, Khan reclaims a history that is both collective and polyphonic. These stories function as acts of resistance against the erasures of both colonial and patriarchal archives. They also enact an ethical responsibility: to remember not only those who are celebrated but also those whose names and fates have been obscured.

The zenana becomes, in this sense, a living memorial, its inhabitant's archivists of a past that official records refuse to acknowledge. This thematic layer supports the reclamation of silenced histories and the stimulation of ethical remembrance. In doing so, the novel demonstrates that the politics of memory are inseparable from the politics of voice, who gets to speak, whose narratives are preserved, and how those narratives are transmitted across

generations.

**Decentering Eurocentric Narratives**

A central achievement of *The Begum and the Dastan* (2021) is its deliberate refusal to frame Sherpur's history through a Eurocentric lens. The novel resists the dominance of colonial archives and instead centers indigenous memory practices, oral traditions, and local political histories as valid and authoritative. This narrative choice aligns closely with Rothberg's (2009) call for a de-centered memory culture in which Euro-American historical experiences do not serve as the primary benchmark for understanding other traumas. The political vulnerability of Sherpur under British oversight is narrated without deference to imperial historiography. The scene in which the British Resident's visit is described from the perspective of Sherpur's court: "Every word was weighed as if it might tip the scales, every smile held for the exact length of time that politeness demanded" (Khan, 2021, p. 122). There is no colonial narrator mediating the scene for a Western reader; instead, the focalization remains with Sherpur's rulers, whose diplomacy is framed as strategic survival rather than as foreign court narrative. By privileging this perspective, Khan (2021) inverts the colonial gaze, inviting readers to interpret British power as an intrusion into an already complex local political order rather than the center of that order. This reorientation is equally evident in the treatment of the zenana.

In colonial accounts, women's quarters in princely states were often represented as sites of idle luxury or oppressive confinement, a trope that served to underscore the "backwardness" of indigenous society and justify colonial "civilizing" interventions. *The Begum and the Dastan* (2021) dismantles this narrative by presenting the zenana as an active political space, where oral histories are preserved. Khan (2021) mentions: "The women's talk travelled faster than the messengers on horseback; they knew who was rising, who was falling, and who might fall next" (p. 120). This is not a depiction of passivity but of political cleverness, a counter-archive that surpasses the efficiency of official channels. Decentering the Eurocentric narrative also involves rejecting the assumption that South Asian histories require validation through analogy to European events. The novel makes no effort to compare Sherpur's political subjugation to, for example, European wars of sovereignty or nationalist struggles. Instead, it asserts its own historical framework: one in which the princely state's negotiations with the British, internal feudal politics, and gendered power structures are sufficient in themselves to support critical engagement. Rothberg's (2009) multidirectional memory does not press on the need of sameness; rather, it encourages dialogue across histories without enforcing a hierarchy. By refusing to anchor its narrative to European reference points, the novel allows Sherpur's history to stand as a center in its own right.

Even the use of the Dastan as a narrative device contributes to this decentering. The oral storytelling tradition, rich with Indo-Islamic influences, operates outside the bounds of Western narrative realism. Its temporality is nonlinear, and its boundaries between history and fiction are open. As Feroza listens to the tale of a betrayed queen, the past bleeds into the present in a way that resists the archival complexity on chronological accuracy. This fluidity mirrors Rothberg's (2009) view that memory is not static but dynamic, capable of traveling across temporal and spatial divides. By foregrounding such a form, Khan situates the novel in a lineage of storytelling that is transregional and precolonial, further displacing the Eurocentric expectation that literary histories must be organized around Western narrative norms.

Rothberg's idea that memories "interact, overlap, and borrow from one another" (p. 3) is vividly realized in the novel's portrayal of these narratives. Feroza's story, while deeply personal, becomes part of a larger sphere of instructive tales. For younger women, it is both a warning and a source of solidarity; for older women, it is a confirmation of patterns they have long recognized. The transmission is therefore not neutral; it is shaped by the listeners' positionalities and by the narrators' intentions, underscoring the agency involved in keeping certain memories alive. The colonial context adds another layer to this generational remembering. As Sherpur's political autonomy fades under British influence, stories of resistance and survival within the zenana and the Dastan become forms of counter-history. These narratives do not merely preserve the memory of individual women's suffering; they also narrate political critiques that cannot be voiced openly. In this way, the generational transmission of trauma in *The Begum and the Dastan* (2021) is inseparable from the generational transmission of political consciousness.

Importantly, this process is not about memorializing victimhood alone. Feroza's acts of negotiation within the constraints imposed upon her, and the very survival of her story into the next generation are themselves forms of agency. By carrying her memory forward, the community resists the erasures applied by both patriarchal and colonial historiographies. This aligns with Rothberg's (2009) emphasis on the ethical responsibility to maintain memory's preservation, allowing it to engage with new contexts while retaining the specificity of its origins. Through this intergenerational transmission, the novel deepens the stakes of multidirectional memory: Feroza's suffering is not an isolated episode in the annals of Sherpur, but part of an ongoing historical conversation that links past to present, individual to collective, and personal to political. The fact that her story remains in circulation, even if altered, ensures that the trauma she endured becomes a shared point of reference for future resistance.

### **Conclusion**

The study illustrates the cross-referencing of memories in silenced histories through the character's narrative in the selected text. By employing Rothberg (2009) multidirectional memory, we observe how the text challenges the historical models of trauma by highlighting the relational and non-competitive nature of memory, where multiple histories co-exist and cross-refer one another. The themes of the selected text make it aligned with the notions of multidirectional memory. Moreover, the current study contributes to the field of Pakistani post-colonial literature by highlighting the engagement of multidirectional memory with Pakistani literature in reimagining forgotten past. The study offers a nuanced understanding of how Pakistani fictions address the intersecting of multiple traumas and oppressions and strengthen ethical remembrance.

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