

Cultural Memory in Catastrophic Time:

Trauma, Temporality, and the Reconstruction of the Psyche in Partition and 9/11 Fiction

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to postulate the idea of 'catastrophic time' as a vast psychic split in the cultural memory framework. The 1947 Partition of India and the September 11 attacks are two major catastrophic incidents that upset the flow of subjective time, identity, and remembrance. Using memory studies, trauma theory and cognitive literary models, this paper will illustrate how fractured historical ruptures give rise to internal conflict and emotional turmoil. A close comparative reading of Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy Man* and Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* reveals that both use child-centred consciousness to capture the raw immediacy of trauma. The study shows Partition literature's corporeal displacements, intergenerational silence, and absence of historical records that haunt collective psyches, while 9/11 narratives manoeuvre through media hyper-presence, visual hyper-reality and endless replays that trap characters in grief loops. These texts employ novel literary forms as instruments for psychic reconstruction and bibliotherapeutic healing while strategizing narrative fragmentation and cultural trauma. Finally, this paper asserts that literature is a reconstructive technology that restores agency, emotional topography and mnemonic unity to disparate imaginaries of the human psyche.

Keywords: Catastrophic time, Indian partition, September 11 attacks, Memory studies, Trauma theory.
