



TRANSCENDING BEYOND HUMAN: ANALYZING COMPROMISED HUMAN IDENTITY AND POWER DYNAMICS IN HANIF'S *RED BIRDS*

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Abstract

Since **post-humanism** is a way of thinking about literature that seeks to move beyond anthropocentrism or the practice of placing humans at the center of everything. It is possible to use the **post-humanism** analytical lens for the work of the author Mohammed Hanif, particularly the book *Red Birds*. Hanif provides a new way to view the impact of war not only on humans but also on animals, machinery, and the environment. There is an interesting narrative choice of the author that the narrator of the story is a dog called Momo. By using an animal to narrate the story, the author challenges the assumption that only humans can think, reason, and have a voice. Moreover, Hanif's work shows the dehumanization that is caused by modern warfare, especially the use of drones that make war and the observation of humans an automated process. While the characters in the work tend to be passive, incompetent, and confused, the military and systemic structures are aggressive, purposeful, and organized. Using satire and dark humor, Hanif provides a critique of modern warfare and the role of so-called humanitarian agencies that are supposed to assist the victims of war, but often, create additional problems. Thus, the novel constructs a world wherein the intricate relationships between humans, animals, technology, and the environment, demonstrate the intersubjectivity of suffering, including the devastation of war, which affects all forms of life and non-life.

Keywords: *Non-human Perspective, Post-humanism, Satire, Technology, War*

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1. Introduction

Muhammad Hanif's novel *Red Birds* (2018) occupies a significant position in both English and Urdu fiction. It engages with the topics of war, politics and humanity in an innovative way. It focuses on the realities of war and its impact on the so-called ordinary citizen. It demonstrates that in war, the powerful states fight to protect their interests, while the impoverished families of the world bear the brunt of the destructive war. This novel is an example of satire and illustrates the absurdity of the devastation and loss. This novel is not just a war novel but examines the impact of the power relations and the military on the lives of the ordinary. War is not about victory; it is about destruction, displacement and loss, and it becomes a mirror reflection of the absurdity of the modern world.

The novel also discusses post-colonial reality, which describes the ends of colonial rule but still describes the ways in which weaker nations are dominated through military and geopolitical means, as remains the case in the novel's setting. While the novel remains distinct from the conventional plot and patterned unfolding of the events of war, it describes the lives of average people and the destruction of families, and the duplicitousness of the power holders. With the setting being in a nameless desert, the absence of a name to the setting of the novel signifies the desert as a place of the perennial conflicts of many of the countries of the Middle East and South Asia. Most of the region's war-inflicted zones, and Hanif implies it signifies a Middle Eastern war zone, are a direct result of the malfeasance of what Hanif refers to as the 'great powers' in the novel. Hanif, unlike most writers, embodies the anti-heroic reality and in Momo, Dog, Ellie, Parents, and Ali, among others, illustrates the reality of war. The writer, through Momo, a member of the younger generation, shows how war steals one's childhood and hope, as these are the defining traits of the destructed world in which she resides.

The author employs a canine figure while the humans, in their destruction and folly, create an illusion of reality during wartime. The truth, which the dog represents, is often omitted by the rest. Ellie, an American pilot, in representation of the Third World, crashes in the desert, and through and through, with this character, Hanif demonstrates the irony of politics and the powerlessness of an omnipotent country. With these characters, Hanif embodies the psyche of Ellie and the need to hold her family together, and the defiance of women, loss, and responsibility during war, and through these characters, Hanif makes the war personal and human and brings the truth of the war into lived experiences for us. After employing all these characters in his novel, he reveals the truth of war as it affects every day, and every single person's life.

The unique style & language of Hanif reflects the absurdity of war and the hypocrisy of those who fund war through government contracts and military positions. This work incorporates negative post-colonial, satirical, existential feminist theories. The title of Hanif's novel, *Red Birds* (2018), symbolizes war and bloodshed. The color red is

associated with the violence, destruction, and loss of life that accompany war and the birds represent peace, freedom, and hope. Thus, it can be concluded that, *Red Birds* is an anti-war novel, revealing the absurdity of modern times. It shows how war causes destruction and displaces people, all while the world's powerful nations continue their self-serving political games. What the world needs is peace, humanity, and justice, not war.

Muhammad Hanif's *Red Birds* (2018) is significant to both English and Urdu literature, Mr. Hanif's latest work is a sincere portrayal of the complexities of war, politics, and the human condition. He deals with the actual realities of war and the impact on the average person. The novel illustrates how the rich and powerful countries wage wars and how the impoverished and destitute families bear the brunt of these horrific wars. Hanif's *Red Birds* is a powerful statement on the futility of war and the total destruction it brings. It is not merely a war, but an examination of the impact of the great game and military conflicts on the ordinary person. The great game is not about winning; it is about total destruction, loss, and displacement of people. The story occurs in an unnamed desert location, which can refer to any of the Middle Eastern or South Asian countries. The desert's anonymity conveys that the experience of war is not confined to a single nation; it can happen anywhere (Hanif, 2018).

Muhammad Hanif employs average characters, and through average characters, he portrays the realities of war and its impact. The characters of the novel emphasize the obliteration of the youth and the loss, and the dog's voice symbolizes the truth and folly of humans. All characters embody the realities of war, people's helplessness, hypocrisy, foreign powers, women's resistance and the roles they play, the impact of war on everyday lives and the lives of all people. The novelist's technique, in this case, exemplifies a novel's distinction and renders the absurd. The novel illustrates the modern era's absurdity, and war, in all its forms, brings destruction and dislocation. Furthermore, in this day and age, the world's fundamental need is peace and humanity, not violence and war.

1.1. Problem Statement

The plight of innocent victims of war is one of the most prominent concerns in the fiction of Muhammad Hanif. *Red Birds* illustrates how powerful countries start and control wars, while the ordinary people, the bystanders, bear the brunt of the consequences. They lose their homes, families, and peace of mind, and live in makeshift refugee shelters, and come to endure inhumane conditions. Through the character of Momo and his family, Hanif expresses that the destruction of war is not merely the decimation of buildings and cities; it is the dismantling of the human psyche, dreams, and aspirations. The ordinary people who were once the protagonists of the story have been uprooted and displaced, their lives reduced to a mere existence in the midst of chaotic and violent struggles to

secure not only food and medicine, but also the most fundamental of all human requirements, safety. The focus of *Red Birds* is the dehumanization of people, the obliteration of their identities, and the loss of their individual stories as they become defined as ‘refugees’ or ‘victims’ without any identity.

1.2. Research Objectives

The aims and objectives of this research are;

- To explore the blurring boundaries between humans, animals, and machines as represented in the novel.
- To investigate how the *Red Birds* critique war, colonial legacies, and modern power structures.
- To investigate how the novel depicts the erasure of human identity and presents humans as more than humans.

1.3. Research Questions

- 1 In what ways are human, animals and machines connected in the story?
- 2 How does post-humanism help us to understand the novel and what power structures shows in the novel?
- 3 How is the human identity erased and transformed into a post-human condition in the novel?

1.4. Research significance

When the novel *Red Birds* was published in 2018, the writing was shaped by the societal influences of wars and the refugee crisis. There was a sense of fear, displacement, and mistrust of the government and sovereign powers. *Red Birds*, too, is set in a war-torn desert camp and depicts people dealing with loss and survival and the impacts of foreign power. It illustrates the issues of war, refugees, and the prevailing sense of distrust that defined the society in 2018. There have been various studies on *Red Birds*. Some have studied the portrayal of war and international aid in the novel and how, in some circumstances, aid appears to be ineffective. Some researchers have inquired about the representation of Muslims, and some have focused on the women in the narrative and how they dealt with power and oppression.

The novel addresses broad themes such as war, politics, and survival, but still leaves some aspects unexplored. One such aspect is the long-term psychological impact of war, which while covered in the novel, lacks the detail of sustained psychological transformation of the characters. Another is the role of the media and the foreign actors, which while mentioned, does not clarify how these external forces impact the agency of the war-affected populace. The *Red Birds* novel can be useful in the forthcoming studies due to its unique style of discussing the impact of war using humor and satire. It allows exploring the psychological, emotional, and social impact the war has on people. It also addresses the role of media and foreign operatives on the war-affected people's lives.

2. Literature Review

Aamer Karim (2020) essay Muhammad Hanif's *Red Birds*: 'Anti-colonial textuality' and beyond examines how Hanif's novel critiques war, the act of colonizing, and the politics of the world. Karim examines how Hanif uses modern humor and satire and how they represent the modern war and how the foreign aid still damages the old simmering colonial core. The novel examines the suffering of people living in war afflicted areas due to the actions of the powerful West. Using various characters such as Momo the dog, the American pilot, and others, Hanif illustrates the pain, suffering, and survival of the people who have been marginalized and forgotten. Karim argues that Hanif uses both the comic and the serious in his style, so that the reader will perceive the great injustices and the profound contradictions that exist in the world. The article examines how Hanif challenges the notion of 'Western help' and what a form of control entails, rather than true aiding. Overall, Karim sees *Red Birds* as a significant work of anti-colonial literature that challenges the West's supremacy, amplifies the silenced, and restores humanity's complex relationship to war and power as a social critique (Karim, 2020).

The article by Ayesha Durrani (2019) discusses the impact of Muhammad Hanif's *Red Birds* in showing the effects of war on innocent people. She explains that the novel is also about the ordinary suffering caused by the political and economic interests of the big powers. The book is set in a refugee camp where people who have lost everything try to survive and reconstruct their lives. Durrani analyzes the use of war's sadness and confusion through the use of humor, irony and a talking dog. She points out that in giving a voice to the neglected, the refugees, the children and the animals, Hanif shows their plight. The article discusses Hanif's criticism of the foreign powers who, in his view, provide aid to the destitute and the poor. Durrani states that in *Red Birds*, tragedy is blended with comedy, and this is a serious invitation to the reader about what is essential in the world, the suffering, humanity, and injustice. In conclusion, Durrani states that Hanif's novel is a powerful anti-war message, and with the world's conflicts, the novel emphasizes the importance of peace, understanding and empathy (Durrani, 2019).

Muhammad Hanif's representation of Muslims in his book *Red Birds* is critiqued in Abdul Samad's (2021) article. The author indicates that Hanif counters the dominant representation of Muslims in Western media, especially after the events of 9/11. Instead of demonizing Muslims, such as portraying them as abject, violent, and anti-human, Hanif portrays Muslims as real, with emotions, and as aspirational, and having genuine struggles and wars. The article illustrates that Hanif recognizes the strength of the ordinary, such as, the war refugees and familial constituents. The authors illustrate how, through the novel, the dominant false imaginations of the powerful that justify control and imperialism under the guise of 'help' or 'peace' are critiqued. The use of humor and irony on the part of the author is intended to make readers reflect on and engage with the

extent to which Muslims have been othered and misrepresented in international relations. The article discusses textit{*Red Birds*} and its engagement with stereotypes and the resulting promotion of equity and justice, as well as the engagement with narratives from the Global South and how these narratives resist the dominant, systemic misrepresentations, and, in particular, the narratives that emphasize the humanity in the war-affected and colonized people (Samad, 2021).

Razia Mahmood (2024) analyzes how *Red Birds* illustrates the effects of war and the emotional trauma and destruction that comes with it and how it causes displacement. Mahmood states that the novel shows emotional scars that make it difficult to move on from the violent destruction left by war. *Red Birds* illustrates the psychological trauma of war and displacement as Mahmood states, “Hanif juxtaposes memory, dream, and the stream of consciousness technique to narrate how war trauma is ever-present in the consciousness of individuals.” *Red Birds* illustrates the psychological trauma of war and displacement. Mahmood explains that refugees and displaced individuals feel a sense of loss in their identity as they exist in a liminal space between their former home and their current, new home. This article illustrates the struggle and the real issues on the war affected individuals and the Mahmood states that *Red Birds* illustrates trauma as a metaphysical weakness, and that it is a part of every individual. Mahmood concludes that *Red Birds* illustrates trauma as a metaphysical weakness, and that it is a part of every individual. Hanif's storytelling also shows the enduring strength individuals possess and their ability to remember and reconstruct their lives after trauma (Mahmood, 2024).

Tariq, Cheema, and Maryam (2024) reveal how *Red Birds* uncovers the cruelty of globalisation and modern imperialism. The authors show how powerful states instrumentalise the notions of ‘help’, ‘aid’, and ‘peacekeeping’ to subjugate and control weaker states. Hanif shows that these so-called peacekeeping actions are simply neo-colonial actions that keep the poorer states in dependency to the richer states. The authors examine how the setting of the novel, that of a refugee camp, is a powerful illustration of the disparity and inequity that exists in the world. Using irony and dark humour, Hanif critiques the transcending forces that offer ‘development’ but deliver violence and suffering instead. The authors argue that Hanif provides agency to the voiceless and the refugee underclass. By portraying their suffering and defiance, Hanif shows that globalisation is a process whereby the systematic violence and exploitation are euphemised. The authors argue that *Red Birds* is an unequivocally postcolonial novel and that it challenges the readers to engage with global capitalism and to decentre coloniality of power in the contemporaneous world (Tariq, Ahmed & Maryam, 2024).

Pierre Veyret analyzes *Red Birds* by Muhammad Hanif and *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid. He examines how both authors portray people living under precarious conditions, refugees, migrants and victims of warfare trying to survive in an inequitable world. Veyret

refers to such people as the “precariat” - people who have no stability, no security and no power. He examines the ethical depth in Hanif’s work and how it demonstrates the ability of literature to empower and articulate the concerns of the precariat. The article examines how Hanif’s use of the triad of humor, irony, and pain assists the readership to grasp the concept of human suffering, without it devolving into a mere exercise of pity. Veyret commends Hanif for the war and displacement narratives that maintain the dignity of the characters. The article also demonstrates how literature can articulate a sense of moral obligation towards the suffering of others. In the final analysis, Veyret posits that *Red Birds* is an invitation to the readers to see the world through the lens of empathy and honesty, and to remember that all individuals, especially the most vulnerable, are entitled to recognition, respect, and justice (Veyret, 2020).

Khan Muhammad Ejaz, Shazad Amir & Roohi Shamaila (2021) examine how '*Red Birds*' illustrates the consequences of PTSD for individuals who experience conflict first-hand. The authors note that the novel's characters cannot escape emotional pain, trauma, fear, and intrusive memories. The authors explain that Hanif's characters display signs of trauma and mental health conditions through symptom clusters like insomnia, anxiety, and intrusive memories. The authors examine the way the novel illustrates the effects of war on the mental (and emotional) aspects of the human body. They also note that Hanif posits the intersection of personal trauma with the overarching political and economic structures of war, indicating that pain and suffering are both individual and collective. They illustrate the ways in which humor, friendship, and the act of storytelling are mechanisms of resilience and therapy in the novel. The article illustrates how *Red Birds* speaks about the mental suffering of war survivors and encourages readers to understand it, calling for the need for understanding the impact of war on the mental health of survivors and how it allows the representation of the emotional suffering that is often ignored in war literature (Ejaz, Amir & Shamaila, 2021).

Muhammad and Ahmed (2021) examines how Hanif’s *Red Birds* engages with the complexities of representation of refugees and Muslims in Western media after the events occurred on September 11. The authors explain how Western literary and political imaginations cast refugees in one of two roles: a passive and helpless victim, or an aggressive and dangerous other. In contrast, Hanif presents refugees as intelligent, strong and resourceful in ways that Western soldiers or aid workers do not understand. The article studies the use of satire as an instrument for revealing the truth and exposed the hypocrisy of American politics. One example includes the dominant Western discourse of “help” that is in-fact a discourse of destruction and confusion. The authors commend Hanif for articulating those voices that are usually muted: the refugees, the youths, and the poor. They assert that *Red Birds* is a response to neo-orientalism that remains dominant, and attempts to dictate the representation of the Eastern world. The article demonstrates to the

consumer of literature to move beyond the mundane and stereotypical representations of refugees, and to engage with the complex, and human dimensions of the refugee experience (Muhammad & Ahmed, 2021).

Farkhanda Nazir's article examines Hanif's utilization of magical realism in *Red Birds* and how it depicts pain, trauma, and emotional wounds that seem to evade articulation. The author notes that at times, human suffering is so profound that it renders articulation in ordinary language impossible. By employing magical realism in the form of a talking dog, and surreal, dreamlike occurrences, Hanif provides a different avenue through which readers can experience the pain of the characters. The writer attempts to analyze how such a manner of writing enables an understanding of trauma on an emotional, rather than rational, level. The combination of realistic and unrealistic occurrences exemplifies how the experience of war is baffling, perplexing, and unnatural. The article commends Hanif's imaginative realism, and the ability it possesses to foster a greater depth of emotional connection and understanding to the characters' psychology. Nazir asserts that the use of magical realism in *Red Birds* provides an avenue to portray unspeakable wounds, offering insight into the war's pain and the psychological trauma associated with loss and the memories that endure. (Nazir, 2022).

Ahmed Waqas, Shakir Muhammad, Khan Rana Naeem & Qureshi Abdul Waheed (2023) demonstrate how *Red Birds* depicts the psychological and emotional effects of war, particularly the PTSD of soldiers, the trauma of war refugees, or even the emotional trauma of animals in the narrative. They argue that, according to Hanif, trauma is not simply an individual matter but rather a plight of an entire community or society, the effects of which are instigated by violent warfare and the loss of lives. The study suggests that the characters suffer from fear, confusion, and shattered selves as a result of surviving destruction. The use of parody in the novel is not destruction, but merely survival. The authors argue that Hanif is showing an unadulterated truth about the wounds that war inflicts upon the human psyche. The novel also critiques the overwhelming and endless silence about the suffering of homeless refugees and the indifference of the world's powerful countries. The authors of the article argue that *Red Birds* has a refreshing and motivating story that is about the immense and inestimable suffering caused by wars and the greater pain that must be endured. It also advocates for the need to be liberal and have the recognition of psychological trauma, which is an element of war. (Waqas, Muhammad, Naeem & Waheed, 2023)

According to Touqir, Sonia, Sajid, & Hira (2021), *Red Birds* illustrates an extreme representation of absurdity and hypocrisy embedded within the constructs of modern warfare and international aid. The authors explain the use of irony and humor in Hanif's critique of the irony of war and aid being aimed at the same primary targets. They argue that within the confines of the novel, the refugee camp becomes an institution for the

commodification of human lives for political and profit purposes. The aid workers, as illustrated in the novel, are portrayed as befuddled and their assistance is depicted as making the situation worse. The authors use critical discourse analysis to argue that within the self-mockery of international politics, aid and the language of Hanif are the self-deprecating part of the aid. The authors accentuate the social and political criticism embedded in the dark comedy of Hanif and how this style influences the *Red Birds* reader to both laugh and think. The authors were able to discern that *Red Birds* is an anti-war novel, however, it is also a profound commentary and indictment of the global order that is premised on the exploitation of the poor and the “helping” systems that are designed for the primary purpose of helping and sustaining the problem. The novel also invites inquiry about the true purpose of war and the humanitarian aid (Touqir, Sonia, Sajid & Hira, 2021).

Arooba Maqsood & Afsha Saleem (2025) engages with the concept of 'wilderness' presented in *Red Birds*, looking at its representation of both destruction and hope. The authors note the desert setting in the novel, and how it symbolizes a backdrop for the emptiness spawned by war; it reflects how human avarice and politicking has transformed and robbed the wilderness. Still, the authors note that “the wilderness” allows the human spirit the opportunity for contemplation and regeneration. The journey of the characters across the desert mirrors the search for meaning, life, and a sense of self. The authors examine the way in which Hanif, through the use of both humor and tragedy, engages the readers of the novel to contemplate the cost of war on humanity and nature. The authors argue that Hanif employs the desert metaphor to suggest that in the face of desolation, it is still possible to locate hope and rejuvenation. The authors conclude that *Red Birds* transforms wilderness into a space of moral and emotional contemplation, where the devastation of nature carries the seed of awareness and where the act of survival is a subtle form of protest (Maqsood & Saleem, 2025).

Aftab Farooq & Khan H. Abdul (2025) examines power dynamics through language in *Red Birds*. The authors utilize Ludwig Wittgenstein's concept of 'language games' to assess how participants in power and resistance situations communicate. They argue that in the novel, language transcends verbal communication; it becomes both a constitutive and instrumental means of the enactors of power, and the enacted. While the military and foreign aid personnel enable the articulation of language to dominate and legitimize barbarism, they argue that the refugees and other characters utilize the language to resist and challenge oppression. The paper posits that military oppression of the creative use of language, e.g. humor, irony, and storytelling, becomes a mechanism of military control that fosters resistance. The authors analyze how, through the language of war, Hanif demonstrates the constructs of reality and identity, and the authors argue that *Red Birds* demonstrates the use of critical engagement with the politically and commercially

motivated language (and politically influenced) mediated texts that conceal the truth. They argue that the novel with all suffering and silence, asserts language as a means to resist and reclaim dignity (Farooq & Abdul, 2025).

According to Fatima Ayesha and Noor Maryam (2025), *Red Birds* and *Our Lady* of Alice Bhatti can be analyzed through the lens of necropolitics, which is essentially the exercise of control over death by determining who is and is not allowed to live. The authors examine how Hanif's fiction demonstrates the contemporary political valuation of life and the disposability of certain people. In *Red Birds*, the author illustrates war zones and refugee camps as places where individuals are kept alive, but where their freedom and dignity are removed. The article argues that necropolitics pertains not only to death, but to the social and emotional death of individuals. The authors commend Hanif for his ability to incorporate humor and irony to illustrate the inhumanity of these systems while still retaining the humanity of the subject. They demonstrate that his characters, who are the subjects of political and military domination, manage to endure through the exercise of the virtues of courage, compassion and small acts of defiance. The article concludes that *Red Birds* critiques global injustice, particularly the way in which power mechanisms make life a battleground; however, the author still illustrates the existence of resistance, humanity, and hope within those mechanisms (Ayesha & Maryam, 2025).

Costa, Cavalcanti, and Haran (2017) examine the impact of post-humanism on the perception of humanity, culture, and identity. The authors describe post-humanism as not the rejection of humanity, but the recognition of contextualized humanity within a web of technology, the biosphere, and even the digital realm. post-humanism, art, and literature. The authors also note a connection between post-humanism and feminism as both critique and interrogate power relations and the socio-structural identity of the Other. The authors demonstrate that a post-human perspective is valuable in critiquing how the experience of the human is mediated by gender, race, and technology. They also critique how contemporary technology in the form of robotics and artificial intelligence reconstitutes subjectivity. In a nutshell, post-humanism allows for a reimagining of a world where humanity, technologies, and natural systems coexist in an entangled relationship (Costa, Cavalcanti & Haran, 2017).

3. Theoretical Framework

Post-humanism is a relatively new theory that puts into question the anthropocentric worldview and describes the interconnectedness and interdependencies of humans, animals, machines, and the rest of the natural world. This perspective is useful in understanding how technology and modern living and its associated practices impacts self-identity and the sense of belonging in the world. The proposition of post-humanism is that it is not about negating humanity, but rather thinking in an expansive way about being beyond the human. It is an acknowledgement of the being and existence beyond the

anthropocentric worldview that advocates the separation of elements of the world and humanity.

The central elements of post-humanism is about moving beyond the human-centrism that has characterized thinking for a long time. The post-humanism perspective counters the centuries of thinking that placed humans above the rest of the living and non living nature. This perspective legitimizes the existence of all elements of nature living and non-living and the way life is reinforced through relationships rather than dominance. The way life is sustained is through the interdependency of humans and the rest of the world, machines, and animals, nature, and the created environments. This is a strong demonstration of how life is sustained through relationships, not dominance.

Post-humanism has been interpreted by several prominent scholars, but the most notable include: Donna Haraway, N. Katherine Hayles, Rosi Braidotti, and Cary Wolfe. In her essay, Haraway introduces the concept of the "cyborg" and discusses the fusion of human and machine. Haraway uses this concept to cross divides on the human or technology, male or female, and the culture or nature divides. Haraway argues that the cyborg indicates that technology is embedded in our daily lives, and can serve to foster understanding and equality. In *How We Became Posthuman* (1999), N. Katherine Hayles argues that the integration of technology and the human body has redefined what it means to be human. Hayles argues that today, being human means having to live "with and through" technology in relation to the machine and digital systems that impact our thoughts, memories, and lives.

Rosi Braidotti integrates post-humanism with feminism and studies of the environment. In *The Post-human* (2013), she states that humans are a part of a broader system that encompasses nature, non-human animals, and machines. She sees the need to embrace and show empathy for all forms of life. She teaches that life is not about having control, but about caring and connection. Cary Wolfe concentrates on the relations of humans and animals. He posits for borderless relations in *What Is Post-humanism?* (2010) and argues that people ought not to see themselves as superior to and more valuable than the other animals, but to realize that all living beings coinhabit the same world and have a bearing on one another. These authors demonstrate that post-humanism is about breaking barriers and interconnecting humans, animals, and technology.

Numerous scholars have engaged the specific field of post-humanism to analyze intersections of humanity and technology, the animal world, and the environment. For example, when applying post-humanism to feminism and technology, Donna Haraway uses the cyborg to illustrate how the distinctions between human and machine are eroding. The post-humanist scholarship of N. Katherine Hayles focuses on how technology restructures human thought, memory, and identity. In the context of the environment and gender, Rosi Braidotti applies post-humanism, while Cary Wolfe uses it to examine the

intersection of the animal world and ethics. These scholars illustrate the point that post-humanism is not theory about science or technology alone, but a way of making sense of existence. The post-humanist framework emphasizes our involvement in a relational system of existence, where all entities, whether corporeal or non-corporeal, are significant.

Post-humanism intertwines with various other theories which also critique human-centric ideologies. One such theory is "ecocriticism," which examines the interdependence of humans and nature. Both post-humanism and ecocriticism dismiss the notion of "separate in being" with respect to the environment. It similarly aligns with feminism as both critiques power and unequal distributions of power. Feminism advocates for equality in the binary paradigm of male and female categories, whereas post-humanism advocates for equality within the wider spectrum of the social and political environment of humans, non-human animals, and machines. Another area of relevance is post-colonial theory, which examines the systems of control and division established by colonial powers. Post-humanism extends this notion by critiquing the human dominance over non-human life and nature. Cyber theory, or studies of cyber culture, examines the impact of technology on identity, social relations, and other facets of life. This is also relevant to post-humanism as both examine the growing integration of humans and technology in contemporary society. Collectively, these intersecting theories suggest that modern existence is characterized by connectedness and communal experience rather than division and isolation.

Post-humanism focuses on equality, empathy, and coexistence. Post-humanism teaches humans are not superior to other life forms, as all life forms are part of a greater whole. This includes the interconnections and influences of humans, animals, machines, and nature. Post-humanism teaches that technology alters the identity of the users, as well as the social identity of the users. Post-humanism fosters respect for the living and non-living, while advocating on the importance of everything in the world. This helps elucidate the social and psychological impact of technology. Post-humanism teaches that the means of progress should not sacrifice compassion and care. Post-humanism advocates for a world of empathy and innovation, while also promoting the social coexistence of all life forms. Post-humanism can be applied to *Red Birds* by Mohammed Hanif. In *Red Birds*, the author uses post-humanism to analyze and critique the construction of identity and power in the context of global warfare and advanced technologies. The narrative, which unfolds in a desert refugee camp, incorporates multiple perspectives, including that of a teenage boy named Momo, an American pilot, and even a talking dog called Mutt. With the employment of humor and irony, Hanif critiques the impact of warfare and technology on the human condition.

The dog's narration in the story illustrates that animals also endure pain, fear, and express loyalty just like people do. The pilot character stands for the representation of

contemporary warfare and technology, in which the destruction of life is favored over its protection. The teenage boy Momo, stands for the most innocent form of humanity entangled within the spheres of politics, war, and the struggle for existence. With his use of both machine and animal like constructs, Hanif transcends the conventional delimitation of the human and the non-human. This is a direct reflection of post-humanist thinking, as all the depicted non-human entities are seen to have emotions, suffer, and struggle to survive. The novel also captures the essence of the criticism directed towards the inhumane nature of war and modern technology, which reduces human beings to mere figures and tools devoid of any human sympathy.

The applicability of post-humanism reveals that *Red Birds* is not solely a narrative about war, but a narrative about coexistence. It tells us that every entity in the world, whether human, animal, or even a machine, is significant. Through the use of satire and polyphony, Hanif illustrates how power, war, and technology tend to sever the innate bonds between humans and other life forms. Hanif's use of post-humanism is applicable in the analysis of *Red Birds* because it offers a fresh understanding of the themes present in the novel. Post-humanism elucidates how Hanif merges and blurs the distinctions between human beings, animals, and machines to critique the paradox of the human condition, and the implications of war and technology on post-humanism. It is fundamental in illustrating the grief and empathy Hanif conveys through the persona of all of his characters, even those that are non-human. The dog Mutt and the pilot, for example, share an experience of dislocation, loss, and confusion, thus positing that the experience of emotions is not solely the domain of humans. Furthermore, post-humanism exposes how the novel reflects an unqualified and uncritical faith in the power of technology and the technological approach to problem-solving that characterizes the contemporary world. In light of post-humanism, we are able to surmise that Hanif's narrative on war is also a narrative of equality, coexistence, and collective survival.

It helps readers understand the importance of appreciating all forms of life, as well as the complexity of defining humanity. The essence of humanity entails the interconnected relationships we share with other beings, be they animal, machine, or ecosystem.

4. Analysis and Discussion

The first question examines how the novel illustrates the merging or blurring of boundaries between humans, animals, and machines. It examines how the humans in the story are made to act like animals or machines, how the animals in the story appear to think or feel like humans, and how machines in the story are made to act as if they are alive. There are several ways to interpret this question, and each of them will provide insight into what the novel has to say about identity, the human experience and the role of

technology. In this case, the question focuses on the novel's central themes to provide an answer to the question.

They give you a 65-million-dollar machine to fly, with the smartest bomb that some beam rider in Salt Lake City took years to design, you burn fuel at the rate of fifteen gallons per second, and if you get screwed, they expect you to survive on four energy biscuits and an organic smoothie (Hanif, 2018, p.3)

This illustrates how war as a human endeavor has been replaced with technology. The pilot's the body the machine. The pilot's body and feelings don't matter as long as the machine is operational. With Post-humanism, the pilot, through the merger of man and machine, becomes a part of the machine. At this point, especially in a combat situation, the pilot becomes mechanical, and is expected to function without feeling or caring.

"The rear end is a jumble of coloured wires, chewed-up shiny pipes, guts exposed" (Hanif, 2018, p.11). Here, we have a mixture of mechanical and biological terms. The depth of this post-humanist construction transcends the living body or the machine. In this scenario, technology, under post-humanism, can be regarded as possessing the same sensitivity and organic attributes of a living being. Here, we are being led to the paradox of being alive; Is it man or machine or both? "They see the bared teeth, they don't see the lolling tongue. They see the curled-up, shivering tail and not the intellect at work." (Hanif, 2018, p.23). This suggests the animal in question is not only a thinking/emotional being, but also an irrational one. It is the speaker's critique of the human arrogance that tries to dissociate the rational from the animal. Thinking, suffering, and feeling like any human, makes Post-humanism proponents critique the human-animal boundary in a way that the rational abilities of a human are not a privilege.

"Sometimes God can manifest himself as a mechanical failure." (Hanif, 2018, p.120). This statement brings the divine, mechanical and human together. The notion that God can present himself through a machine's breakdown indicates that the spiritual and technological realms are no longer distinct. This is Post-humanism. It is crossing faith, humanity, and machinery. In a deeply mechanised human reality, the "mechanical failure" illustrates the revelation of the weave.

"Bone is the same, man or animal . Bone breaks, you set it, what's the difference? Is mutt bone not a bone? Is mutt pain not like man pain?" (Hanif, 2018, p.78). This quotation obliterates the classic distinction between the human and the non-human. The experiences of pain and having a body are described as universal and not confined to a particular species. The post-humanist perspective shows us that we are not a singular phenomenon; we are in fact with other sentient beings who share our corporeal and affective being. It makes an animal out of the human and a human out of the animal There is a conflated sense of being and suffering.

The second question pertains to the novel *Red Birds*, which critiques and highlights the issues caused by war, colonial histories, and contemporary systems of dominance. It centers on the understanding of the ways in which the narrative unveils the brutality, exploitation, and inequity engendered by such forces. Therefore, the question requires you to examine the novel's representation of colonialism's residual impact, the war's destructive force, and the oppressive frameworks of control and domination over people's lives in contemporary society. It asks you to consider the novel as a socio-political critique of the status quo, empowering those who are silenced by these systems.

"There are those who're gonna blame me for prying the first brick loose, but I did that to keep an eye on the comings and goings of the international-aid types, nice-smelling do-gooders who obviously were the biggest thieves of them all."
(Hanif, 2018, p.13).

This statement shows the opaqueness of true nature of international aid and the systems of power behind them. Hanif shows how the so called helpers representing the rich and powerful countries, exploit the very people they are trying to save. Under Post-humanism, it shows the systems of domination are beyond humans and include the global systems and technologies that treat people as calculating, malfunctioning components of a machine. The speaker understands that even 'aid' is a political machine that processes and strips the humanity of the victims of war.

"With the Hangar shut down, no planes coming, no planes going, it seems the whole war thing was started just to take Bro Ali away from us." (Hanif, 2018, p.18). This statement focuses on the individual consequences of war, moving the focus on politics and country and instead focusing on one brother. Hanif criticizes the way the big players in the war game see the individual human lives as insignificant. Post-humanism shows how people are trapped within the mechanical systems of warfare which depersonalize the system and the people in it. The war machine takes away love, family, and human relationships and turns routine tragedy into a form of emotional connection.

"We used to have art for art's sake; now we have war for the sake of war. War has been condensed to carpet-bombing followed by dry rations and craft classes for the refugees." (Hanif, 2018, p.32). Hanif derides the manner in which the practice of war has, in a sense, become habitual, a nearly industrial exercise. The citation illustrates the way the current practice of warfare has become aimless; it no longer serves the purposes of a justice or defense but rather endless instances of repetition for monetary gain. Post-humanism understands this as the deficit of human ingenuity and sentiment which has been supplanted by soulless annihilation and synthetic rehabilitation. War as a process becomes mechanized, even the management of anguish and suffering is in the hands of machines and institutional systems rather than empathy.

“Arab sheikhs wouldn't be sheikhs if they started giving away their backup Range Rovers in exchange for a half-blind kite with a fetish for golden showers. This is not how distribution of wealth works in post-war economies.” (Hanif, 2018, p.53).

This line mocks the continued concentration of economic resources and power, particularly in the context of war. Hanif demonstrates that post-conflict economies continue a colonial attitude in which the rich exploit disorder to further enrich themselves. In post-humanism, this illustrates the value of a system in which people are reduced to their economic and mechanical value. Modern power superseding compassion and equality, is embodied in the luxury and inanimate objects that substitute humane values.

“Big, rich nations get a bloody. Big off countries and start slashing the milk money nose in far-off for poor babies at home.” (Hanif, 2018, p.25). The quote provides an insightful critique of colonialism and global politics. It illustrates the way global powers use other countries as pawns in their conflicts, and when they lose, the populace in the powerful nation suffers as well. Highlighting the exploitation of both the wealthy and poor countries in the interconnected cycle of war and greed, Hanif also points to the post-humanist perspective on the global systems. These systems, through the political and economic frameworks, reduce humans to mere resources or digits. In this regard, the quote addresses the dehumanized victims of the systems, pointing out that systems of colonization and colonization also sorp the humanity of both the oppressors and the oppressed.

The third question refers to the book, which demonstrates how people abandon their usual sense of identity and become something different from ordinary human limits. There are two main focuses: first, the different ways of loss of identity and the causes for war, trauma, technology, or power, second, the ways the book describes people possessing new attributes, powers, or functions that make them “more than human”. To put it simply, the question asks you to critique how the book depicts the metamorphosis of people in ways that extend beyond the ordinary definition of being human.

“The day Ali was sold, he was dressed in black overalls. He thought he was being offered contractual employment at the Hangar.” (Hanif, 2018, p.15). The quotation illustrates the ways in which the experience of war and the mechanisms of power erode human dignity. In Ali's case, the term “sale” reflects the dehumanization of individuals and the commodification of people as objects in the war economy. The uniform and the “Hangar” embody Ali's individual loss; he ceases to be a unique person and merely transforms into another cog in the machine. This moment, analyzed from a Post-humanism perspective, illustrates the loss of identity and autonomy when individuals are subsumed into a technologically dominated world, devoid of emotions, and where the relevant concepts of human are absent.

“When you start talking to your dead comrades. you are about to join them.” (Hanif, 2018, p.33). This statement indicates the profound extent to which the nature of humanity is affected by the violence of war and the consequences of the trauma suffered by those involved. The extent of the suffering and the trauma to the mind and soul are so overwhelming that the living become dead entities. This is post-humanism and for many, the soldier is at the border of life and death, and is nothing but a soulless and pragmatic automaton. It is a grotesque representation of how war turns people into the living dead.' “There is no going back for me. There is nothing to lick, but sand. What is really broken here is my heart.” (Hanif, 2018, p.31). The speaker's heartbreak reveals the emotional and spiritual devastation that the war brings. The sand symbolizes emptiness and the total loss of hope. There is no home or identity left. The post-human condition views this as the end of anthropocentrism; survival is merely disrupted, and the agony of the experience is profoundly human. The broken heart is the final testament to life in an otherwise soulless world.

“I have a feeling that I am being treated like a refugee. I feel insulted, I feel homesick.” (Hanif, 2018, p.123). This quote speaks to the emotional aspects of the erasure of identity. The term politically classifies the person, thereby stripping them of their humanity. The post-humanism perspective shows us the extent to which contemporary structural systems determine identity in ways that bypass the person wholly, including their character, contribution, or worth. The sense of alienation illustrated by the speaker shows how displacement reduces people to numbers, losing their identity, dignity, and sense of belonging.

“When he came out he pulled my whole being out into the world with him. It hurt but it felt good. It was awful and it was beautiful.” (Hanif, 2018, p.218). Within this quotation, evolution is described as both painful and creative; both destructive and renewing. It describes an experience beyond physical, emotional, and even spiritual limits. Within the framework of Post-humanism, it implies that human selfhood is fluid, evolving, and not confined or restricted to biological constructs. This line links the corporeal and the spiritual, articulating the essence of humanity as the capacity for profound emotional experiences, especially suffering, which is beyond the parameters of an existentially mechanistic reality.

In the case of the study of *Red Birds* some of the research gaps are clearer, and these gaps would benefit from more focused/explicit attention/analysis. While many of these analyses focus on war and political critique, very few studies focus on the novel's ability to articulate the blurring of the distinctions between the human, the animal, and the machine, and the novel's post-human identity-related questions. Along these lines, the depiction and construction of human identity and its omission and alteration into something “more than human” is largely unexplored, especially with psychological and

ethical implications. Despite the fact that the novel is preoccupied with aspects of colonial historiographies and contemporary power relations, there is a dearth of research that examines character portrayals of these influences/relations in a more intricate and refined manner. Furthermore, the viewpoints of the human and non-human Others, and how these perspectives are critical to conflict, are largely absent from the analyses. Lastly, there is a significant absence in post-humanist critiques of the novel in relation to technology, war, and reconfigured identities. Bridging these gaps will enhance the study of *Red Birds* as a critique on identity, power, and the human experience in conflict.

5. Conclusion

In my research for *Red Birds*, applying post-humanist theory gave me insight into how the book's boundaries between humans, animals, and machines. This perspective helped how the identity of humans is both erased and transformed, portraying them as 'more than human.' I also identified existing research regarding imbalanced scholarships, particularly the intersection of overlooked voices, colonial historiographies, and contemporary structural relations of power. There is scant scholarship that draws post-humanism and the novel's examination of war and identity together. Engaging with these gaps, I aimed to articulate how *Red Birds* redefines humanity in a violent and technocratic world.

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