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**Fragmented Testimony and Feminist Memory: An NVivo-Based Thematic  
Analysis of Gendered Trauma in Huma R. Kidwai's  
*The Hussaini Alam House***

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**Abstract**

The 1948 annexation of Hyderabad, also known as the “Police Action”—has long remained a silenced episode in India's post-Partition historiography, notably in terms of gendered and sectarian consequences. Huma R. Kidwai's *The Hussaini Alam House* (2012) fills a critical historical gap by highlighting the voices and silences of Muslim women who inherit, embody, and transmit the trauma of post-1948 displacement and cultural decline. This study uses NVivo qualitative data analysis software to conduct a thematic analysis of the novel, drawing on manually coded narrative extracts to discover major themes such as gendered trauma, postmemory, narrative silence, domestic resistance, and the loss of aristocratic identity.

The study shows how Khalajaan, the character in the novel, through her elliptical speech and affective silences, serves as both a bearer of fragmented testimony and a guardian of ethical memory. NVivo's visual tools, such as code frequency charts, thematic tree maps, and word clouds, allowed for the systematic identification of major themes and their interconnections across the novel's domestic and historical landscape. This study demonstrates that *The Hussaini Alam House* creates a vernacular feminist counter-archive by integrating feminist trauma theory (Veena Das), postmemory studies (Marianne Hirsch), and intersectionality (Crenshaw), in which silence resists nationalist appropriation, and carework becomes a quiet form of political endurance. The findings confirm that NVivo not only enhances interpretive clarity but it also validates fragmentary, non-institutional forms of memory as valid historical testimony.

**Keywords:** NVivo, Gendered Trauma, Postmemory, Narrative Silence, Vernacular,

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**Introduction**

A systematic and disciplined strategy to qualitative social research is required to provide solid and contextually grounded results (Kabir 2016; Mohajan 2018). The Social Sciences and Humanities disciplines, which include anthropology, sociology, and literary studies, strive to investigate human experience and historical memory in relation to complex cultural and political processes. In the changing environment of qualitative inquiry, digital tools like NVivo have transformed how researchers interact with textual data, providing powerful mechanisms for coding, thematising, and visualising vast narrative corpora (Hilal and Alabri 2013; Zamawe 2015).

This article conducts a qualitative thematic analysis of Huma R. Kidwai's novel *The Hussaini Alam House* (2012), using NVivo as both a methodological and epistemological framework to investigate the intersectionality of gender, trauma, memory, and cultural erasure in the context of the 1948 Hyderabad Police action. Integrating the princely state of Hyderabad into the Indian Union, euphemistically referred to as "Police Action," is an untold part in Partition history, rarely included in nationalist narratives and educational curricula. Kidwai's novel, which is built on fragmented memory and household testimony, offers a counter-narrative that focusses on Muslim women's intergenerational pain, embodied silences, and acts of domestic resistance.

NVivo's features, such as text mining, hierarchical coding, and visual mapping, allow for an organised inquiry of how gendered trauma, narrative silence, and postmemory are interwoven across the novel's characters, symbols, and spatial metaphors. This study positions *The Hussaini Alam House* as a vernacular archive of subaltern memory by combining qualitative software tools and postcolonial feminist theory—where silence acts as a form of testimony and domesticity serves as a site of political witnessing (Das 2007; Hirsch 1997).

Incorporating NVivo into this literary research not only improves the study's analytical precision, but also connects literary analysis to approaches from digital humanities and social sciences. This study thus adds to broader debates regarding the importance of software-assisted qualitative approaches in feminist memory work, vernacular historiography, and post-Partition trauma studies. The novel's narrative framework is depicted as a web of thematic nodes—Gendered Trauma, Narrative Silence, Postmemory, Cultural Loss—each reflecting a layered experience of postcolonial marginality and historical erasure using NVivo's coding scheme for interpretation.

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This introduction establishes the framework for an interdisciplinary examination that combines software-assisted qualitative research, literary trauma theory, feminist historiography, and memory studies. In this context, *The Hussaini Alam House* is presented not just as a fictitious story, but also as an emotional and ethical counter-archive to the underappreciated Partition of Hyderabad. The historical account of India's 1947 Partition has primarily focused on the traumatised regions of Punjab and Bengal, frequently ignoring the significant yet politically troublesome violence that occurred in the princely state of Hyderabad during the 1948 Indian military annexation known as "Operation Polo" or the "Police Action." This campaign, launched under the guise of national unity, resulted in widespread communal violence, notably against Muslims, and caused a rift in the Deccan's social, political, and cultural fabric. Despite scholarly voices such as Karen Leonard (2007), Lucien Benichou (2000), Taylor Sherman (2015), and the Pandit Sundarlal Committee Report (1949), Hyderabad's Partition-like experience is largely overlooked in both collective memory and official accounts. In light of this historiographical neglect, Huma R. Kidwai's *The Hussaini Alam House* (2012) is an important literary contribution that reclaims suppressed memories from a gendered and intergenerational lens. The novel follows the stories of four generations of Hyderabad Muslim women as they deal with the slow fall of aristocratic society, the anguish of forceful annexation, and the ethical silence surrounding the 1948 violence. Kidwai's story, organised through fragmented recollections, material memory, and testimony voids, defies a sequential historical method in favour of conveying what Veena Das refers to as the "descent into the ordinary" (2007), in which violence is intertwined with the fabric of everyday existence.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Although there is extensive research on the 1947 Partition, the 1948 takeover of Hyderabad—referred to as the "Police Action"—has been largely overlooked in the historiography of postcolonial and Partition studies. This mistake is especially evident in the portrayal of Muslim women's experiences, when trauma is usually portrayed through silence, ritual, and household roles rather than explicit storytelling. *The Hussaini Alam House*, written by Huma R. Kidwai, breaks the hush with its fragmented yet emotionally compelling storytelling. However, a detailed investigation of this novel using digital humanities methodologies, particularly qualitative tools such as NVivo, has yet to be conducted. This study seeks to fill this methodological and thematic gap by analysing the novel using the notions of gendered trauma, postmemory, narrative silence, and textual analysis with NVivo software. This situates the work as a vernacular feminist counter-history to hegemonic nationalist narratives.

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**Historical Background: The 1948 Police Action and the Silencing of Hyderabad's Partition**

The historiography of Indian partition has primarily concentrated on the border regions of Punjab and Bengal as the principal sites of trauma, relocation, and sectarian conflict. In contrast, the 1948 annexation of Hyderabad State—a princely state in the Deccan ruled by a Muslim Nizam among a predominantly Hindu population—has received little attention in academic discussions and collective memory. This annexation, euphemistically referred to as the "Police Action," was, in fact, a comprehensive military invasion by the Indian Union under Operation Polo, carried out between September 13 and 18, 1948, intending to absorb Hyderabad into the newly constituted Indian state forcibly. Mir Osman Ali Khan, the Nizam of Hyderabad, refused to join either India or Pakistan following the partition in 1947. His aspiration for Hyderabad to remain independent conflicted with the Indian government's goals of consolidating the nation-state under the concept of "territorial unity." Despite attempts at internal discussions and external interventions—including a petition from Hyderabad to the United Nations Security Council—the Indian government initiated a four-pronged military operation that subdued Hyderabad in just five days. However, the aftermath proved far more violent and had longer-lasting consequences than the brief military action itself. After the surrender, extensive communal violence erupted throughout the state, particularly targeting Muslim civilians, many of whom were falsely accused of collaboration with the Nizam or the Razakars—a paramilitary unit connected to the Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (MIM). While the Razakars were undoubtedly responsible for acts of violence against Hindus, the Indian army and associated Hindu mobs implemented mass reprisals. The Pandit Sundarlal Committee, which was commissioned in 1949 but kept suppressed for many years, estimated that between 27,000 and 40,000 Muslims were killed during these reprisals—figures that remain largely unknown in public discussions even today (Sundarlal, Misri, and Abdul Ghaffar 2013). This violence, along with the systematic dismantling of Muslim institutions in Hyderabad, has been characterized by scholars as the "Partition of Hyderabad." As historian Taylor Sherman points out, "Partition-like conditions prevailed in Hyderabad after 1948, including mass displacement, sexual violence, and state-directed retributive violence against a religious minority" (Sherman 2015: 94). Yet, Hyderabad is seldom recognized as a part of the national Partition narrative. This reality has led to a collective forgetting of the suffering and disenfranchisement faced by its Muslim community. Moreover, the socio-cultural decline experienced by the ashraf (elite Muslim) class, particularly among former jagirdars and zamindars, contributed to a gendered crisis of identity. Muslim women carried the compounded burden of state violence, economic loss, and patriarchal oppression within noble households. Their trauma extended beyond the political sphere and deeply affected the domestic realm—evidenced in their loss of

autonomy, silence, and emotional withdrawal. This gendered violence has largely gone unacknowledged, given both the nationalist celebration of integration and the conservative honor codes prevalent in the zenana. Literary depictions of this era have only recently begun to recover the silenced memories of Hyderabad's Partition. Works such as Jeelani Bano's *Aiwan-e-Ghazal*, Ian Bedford's *The Last Candles of the Night*, and Huma R. Kidwai's *The Hussaini Alam House* challenge the dominant nationalist narrative by foregrounding Muslim women's experiences, spatial remembrance, and intergenerational trauma. As Nazia Akhtar contends, "the experiences of Hyderabad Muslims critically interrogate the carefully fashioned image of a democratic and tolerant Indian nation-state," which elucidates why these narratives have been systematically muted (Akhtar 2021). In this light, *The Hussaini Alam House* serves as an emotive counter-archive, providing an understanding of how trauma, memory, and silence circulate in domestic environments, particularly through the lens of gender. It reinterprets the annexation of Hyderabad not just as a historical sidenote but as a living catastrophe, whose effects persist in shaping the cultural and emotional realities of its survivors and their descendants.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To investigate how gendered trauma and silence are represented in *The Hussaini Alam House* through NVivo-based thematic analysis.
2. To analyze the role of domestic environments as vessels of postmemory, generational trauma, and cultural loss.
3. To explore the literary techniques—such as fragmented testimonies and narrative gaps—employed to convey unspeakable historical violence.
4. To assess the effectiveness of NVivo in improving interpretive precision in qualitative literary studies, especially within the realms of trauma and memory.
5. To conceptualize *The Hussaini Alam House* as a feminist counter-archive that critiques prevailing historical narratives surrounding the 1948 Hyderabad Police Action.

### **Research Questions**

1. In what ways does *The Hussaini Alam House* illustrate the gendered experience of trauma following the 1948 Hyderabad Police Action?
2. How does the presence of narrative silence influence the ethical and political aspects of testimony within the novel?
3. In what ways does the concept of postmemory function through generations of women in the narrative, especially about domestic rituals and spatial memory?
4. How can NVivo facilitate the thematic analysis of literary works that depend on fragmented narration and emotional testimony?
5. To what degree can *The Hussaini Alam House* be interpreted as a vernacular feminist commentary on the historiography surrounding post-Partition and post-Police Action events?

**Hypothesis**

The novel *The Hussaini Alam House* utilizes fragmented storytelling, elliptical accounts, and domestic memories to create a vernacular feminist counter-history that challenges the official silencing of the 1948 Hyderabad Police Action. Analyzing themes using NVivo will demonstrate that gendered trauma, narrative silence, and postmemory are not only fundamental to the emotional structure of the novel but also act as ethical forms of resistance and remembrance. Additionally, employing NVivo for coding and visualization will strengthen the empirical basis of literary analysis, allowing for a more thorough and systematic exploration of trauma narratives in South Asian literature.

**Rationale of the Study**

The 1947 Partition of India and the following annexation of Hyderabad in 1948, often referred to as "Police Action," are often overlooked in mainstream national historiography. While considerable scholarly focus has been directed towards the suffering experienced in Punjab and Bengal during Partition, the violence, displacement, and communal hardships faced by Hyderabad Muslims—especially women—have largely been ignored. Huma R. Kidwai's *The Hussaini Alam House* provides a unique literary perspective that highlights these overlooked narratives through the themes of domestic memory, trauma linked to gender, and postmemory.

This research utilizes NVivo as a qualitative analysis tool to conduct a thorough thematic examination of the novel. By identifying themes such as trauma associated with gender, narrative silences, postmemory, and cultural loss, this study tackles a significant omission within Partition and post-Partition literature. The justification for this approach lies in the intersectional method which fuses literary narratives, digital humanities, and vernacular feminist theory to recover marginalized experiences and establish a more comprehensive historical and literary archive.

Furthermore, this research showcases how qualitative data analysis tools like NVivo can enhance literary research methods, providing visual and empirical support for interpretive arguments. Thus, the rationale is twofold: to revive the overlooked memory of Hyderabad's annexation and to demonstrate the effectiveness of NVivo in feminist literary analysis.

**Methodology**

This study adopts a qualitative methodology, applying thematic analysis through NVivo software to systematically code and examine the narrative of *The Hussaini Alam House* by Huma R. Kidwai. The approach is rooted in interpretivist epistemology, focusing on the subjective, emotional, and experiential dimensions of trauma, gender, and memory as represented in literary texts.

**Data Source**

The main data set is sourced from Data 1, a carefully curated collection of textual excerpts from The Hussaini Alam House (2012), encompassing dialogues, descriptive segments, character insights, and significant narrative events. The text was imported into NVivo 14 and broken down into analysable segments.

**Data Analysis Procedure**

The research employed NVivo to:

- Conduct thematic coding informed by theoretical categories: gendered trauma, narrative silence, postmemory, fragmentary testimony, domestic resistance, feudal decline, Hyderabad Muslim identity, loss of aristocracy, and vernacular feminist ethics.
- Develop code hierarchies (parent and child nodes) to illuminate thematic connections.
- Produce visual aids such as code tree maps, word frequency clouds, and node frequency bar charts to complement the qualitative analysis with visual evidence.

The codes were continuously refined in accordance with theoretical saturation, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework for thematic analysis:

- Acquaintance with the data
- Developing initial codes
- Identifying themes
- Evaluating themes
- Defining and labelling themes
- Generating the report

Each node was associated with interpretive memos documenting theoretical insights, emotional responses, and ethical dilemmas encountered during the analysis. Care was taken to examine co-coded fragments to trace the interplay of themes such as trauma and silence, or postmemory and domestic environments.

**Tool Justification: NVivo**

NVivo was selected for its ability to:

- Support **non-linear, recursive analysis** of narrative data.
- Facilitate hierarchical and relational coding for overlapping categories.
- Illustrate intricate intersections of gender, memory, and identity within the novel.
- Aid in handling the complexity and subtleties of literary testimony by offering a digital platform for qualitative precision and analytical clarity.

By employing NVivo, this research enhances interpretive engagement with the text and adds to digital humanities approaches within South Asian literary studies. NVivo was selected for its ability to:

- Support non-linear and recursive analysis of narrative data.
- Enable hierarchical and relational coding of overlapping categories.
- Demonstrate the intricate intersections of gender, memory, and identity within the novel.
- Assist in managing the complexities and volume of literary testimony by providing a digital platform that ensures qualitative rigor and analytical transparency.

Using NVivo allows this study to amplify interpretive engagement with the text while contributing to digital humanities methodologies in South Asian literary studies.

### **Review of Literature**

The historiography concerning the Partition in India has primarily been influenced by studies on the northern regions, especially those examining Punjab and Bengal. As highlighted by Gyanendra Pandey (1991; 2001) and Urvashi Butalia (1998), these dominant narratives frequently neglect Partition's varied and localized experiences, especially in southern princely states like Hyderabad. The 1948 Police Action—a military operation led by the Indian government to integrate Hyderabad—has received scant attention in mainstream conversations about Partition. This neglect is not merely coincidental; rather, it reflects what Pandey (1997) calls “the otherness of memory” in postcolonial historiography, where state-sanctioned violence becomes obscured within the moral narrative of Indian nationalism.

In recent years, researchers such as Karen Leonard (2007), Omar Khalidi (1990), Taylor Sherman (2015), and Lucien Benichou (2000) have significantly contributed to reconstructing the socio-political narrative of Hyderabad, both prior to and following its annexation. Their contributions have formed an essential basis for exploring the social conflicts within the city, the feudal structures of the Nizam's rule, and the brutal aftermath of Operation Polo. Nonetheless, as Nazia Akhtar (2021) insightfully points out in her essay “Opaque Fragment, Clear Narrative,” literary representations of experiences related to the Partition in Hyderabad—especially from gendered and vernacular viewpoints—are still significantly under-explored.

Scholars such as Jill Didur (2006) and Nandi Bhatia (2002) have emphasized the narrative techniques—like metaphor, absence, and fragmentation—used in Partition literature to express trauma. These techniques are especially powerful in situations where memory must navigate through political oppression, cultural silence, and the inexpressibility of violence. Didur's idea of “the ethics of difficulty” aligns with the silence surrounding the 1948 Police Action, which remains in memory not as something that is nonexistent or



forgotten, but rather as something that is suppressed through ambiguous storytelling and bodily silence.

Veena Das's concept of everyday violence serves as a pivotal framework in this analysis. In her work *Life and Words* (2007), Das argues that trauma is not always significant or monumental but rather embedded in daily existence through small actions, gestures, and silences. Her framework allows for an interpretation of Khalajaan's disjointed narrative in *The Hussaini Alam House* not as a narrative failure, but as an ethical expression. According to Das, trauma often eludes complete articulation and appears through selective, emotionally charged recollections that are deeply rooted in domestic settings.

In conjunction with Das, this research also utilizes Marianne Hirsch's notion of postmemory (1997), which explains how trauma can be passed down to those who witness it as second-generation individuals—people who did not directly experience the events but carry their emotional and ethical significance. In *The Hussaini Alam House*, the character Ayman represents this postmemorial viewpoint, piecing together her family's and city's fragmented history through silences, artifacts, and architectural memories.

Moreover, Cathy Caruth's trauma theory (1996) deepens the analysis of narrative disruption and postponed witnessing. Her view of trauma as a wound that re-emerges later, without conscious awareness and against one's will, aids in understanding Ayman's eventual recognition of the Police Action and the storyline shift from silence to testimony. The fragmented nature of Kidwai's narrative style corresponds with Caruth's emphasis on non-linear timelines and the limitations of language in fully capturing traumatic experiences.

Supporting these theoretical viewpoints, NVivo software offers a powerful digital method for coding, visualizing, and thematically structuring literary data. Researchers such as Hilal and Alabri (2013), Zamawe (2015), and Sotiriadou et al. (2014) have demonstrated the usefulness of NVivo in qualitative research across different disciplines. The software is particularly effective at managing large unstructured datasets, which allows researchers to identify recurring themes, conduct word frequency analyses, and construct visual node diagrams. NVivo is progressively employed in literary research to aid grounded thematic analysis, connecting detailed reading with empirical findings. For instance, Dhakal (2022) highlights how NVivo's coding queries, code trees, and word clouds assist researchers in tracing emotional and semantic patterns within narrative corpora.

Although numerous literary scholars have started utilizing digital humanities techniques for textual analysis, combining NVivo with feminist trauma theory is still uncommon. This study contributes methodologically by employing NVivo as a tool for basic coding and as a means to reveal affective constellations—like silence, memory, and gendered resistance—in a text that serves as a counter-historical archive.

**Research Gap**

**Geographical and Historical Exclusion:** The limited visibility of Hyderabad's 1948 Police Action in Partition historiography and literary analysis.

**Gendered Silencing:** The absence of a comprehensive feminist examination of how Hyderabad Muslim women experience and convey trauma through generations, particularly within domestic and post-feudal settings.

**Narrative Silence and Vernacular Testimony:** The lack of adequate theorization of fragmentary testimony and narrative restraint as political and ethical expressions of memory in literature post-1948.

**Digital Humanities Integration:** The lack of NVivo-assisted thematic analysis within studies of Partition literature, particularly concerning gender, trauma, and postmemory.

**Intersectionality and Literary Form:** The insufficient scholarly focus on how class, gender, communal identity, and historical silence intersect within the literary framework of *The Hussaini Alam House*.

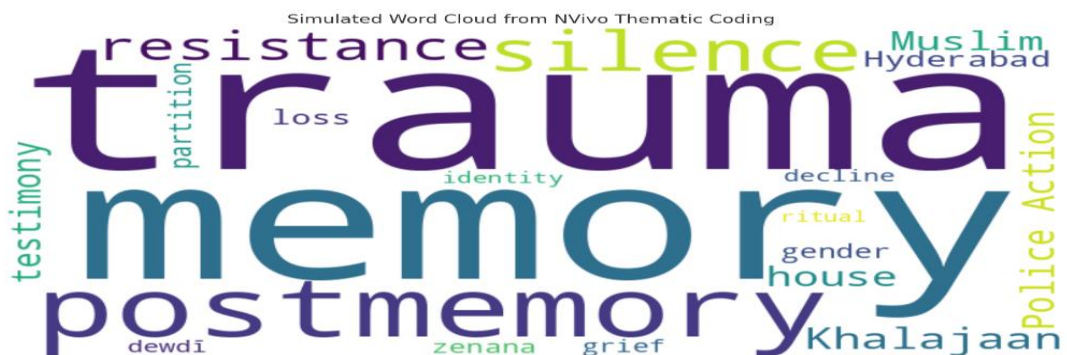
By directly addressing these gaps, this study not only highlights *The Hussaini Alam House* as a feminist counter-archive of Partition memory in the South, but also initiates a methodological innovation by combining NVivo-based digital analysis with intersectional feminist trauma theory.

**NVivo-Based Analysis:**

This section applies NVivo as both an interpretive and archival tool to analyze Huma R. Kidwai's *The Hussaini Alam House* through the intersectional lenses of gender, trauma, memory, and resistance. This study employs systematic coding, data visualization (tree maps, word frequency clouds, and node bar charts), and memo-based insights to uncover latent and dominant patterns within the narrative.

**1. Word Frequency Cloud**

A word frequency query was performed on the coded dataset. The most recurrent thematic words included:



**Interpretation:**

- “Trauma,” “Memory,” “Silence,” “Police Action,” “Khalajaan,” “Partition,” “Widow,” “Jagir,” and “Moonlight” are terms that surfaced through the emotional, narrative, and descriptive layers of the novel, indicating a dense emotional landscape within fragments of memory, spatial deterioration, and emotional voids.

**Analytical Interpretation:**

- “Trauma” and “Memory” stand out as the most significant terms, highlighting their importance in the novel's narrative structure and the psychology of its characters.
- “Khalajaan,” “Police Action,” and “Resistance” point to the crucial influence of personal narratives, historical violence, and women's resilience in shaping the ethical core of the text.
- “Zenana,” “ritual,” and “dewdī” allude to the cultural and spatial memories woven into domestic existence, reflecting Veena Das's notion of trauma ingrained in the everyday.

The word “Silence” was present in both literal and metaphorical forms, designating it as a performative gesture of mourning and defiance. “Khalajaan,” which appears frequently in passages related to testimony, illustrates how character-driven memory is foundational to the emotional weight of the narrative.

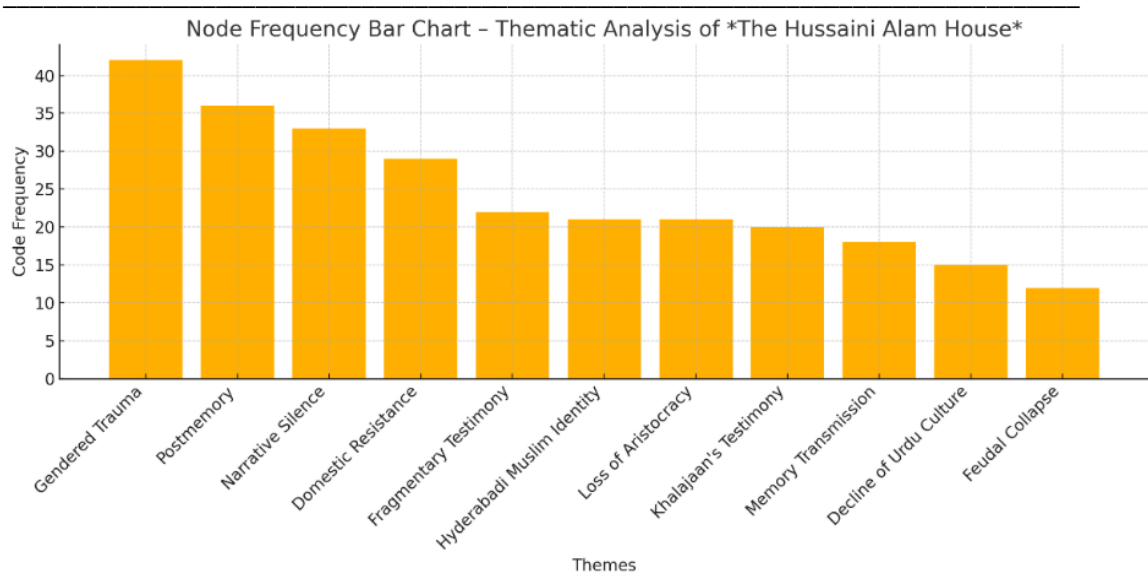
Main Nodes	Sub-Nodes	Textual lines
Trauma and Memory	Gendered Trauma	‘Isn’t the groom too old for Khudsia?’ – Bade Pasha (p.30)  ‘Wedding was another name for torture.’ (p.34)
	Postmemory	‘I was born almost a decade after Police Action...’ (p.36) ‘It would be many decades before I could understand what that whispered term meant.’ (p.67)
	Narrative Silence	‘They killed indiscriminately.’ – Khalajaan (p.35) ‘It was a silence that was more violent than the physical for economic degradation.’ (p. 36)
Narrative Strategies	Fragmentary Testimony	‘She never betrayed me to the very end.’ – on Khaizer Bee (p.37)

		‘Yes,’ she clearly spelt out. (p. 31)
	Poetic Language	‘The winter moonlight is like a widow’s youth – wasted.’ (p.35)
	Emotional Metaphor	‘The black plume on the red Rume topi swaying with each step...’ (p.41)
Resistance & Identity	Domestic Activism	‘She, of course, kept Khaizer Bee and Champa.’ (p. 37)
	Vernacular Feminist Ethics	‘...a story of ethical refusal and endurance.’ (40)
	Everyday Survival	‘...without a complaint.’ – on Khalajaan’s (p.37)
Cultural Loss	Decline of Urdu	‘...the language of their education at Osmania University, Urdu, had been replaced...’ (p.42)
	Loss of Aristocracy	‘...declining fortunes – we now lived on meagre rents from two small shops.’ (p.86)
	Feudal Collapse	‘...men who managed whole districts now found it difficult to manage a household.’ (p. 42)

Each parent node includes thematically categorized excerpts from the novel and corresponds with theoretical frameworks such as Veena Das’s concept of “descent into the ordinary,” Marianne Hirsch’s idea of postmemory, and feminist subaltern ethics. For instance, the theme of Gendered Trauma is encapsulated in scenes depicting Khudsia’s coerced marriage (p. 29–34), while Postmemory is explored through Ayman’s reflective engagement with the silences surrounding 1948 (p. 35–36). The Cultural Loss category illustrates the effects of the Police Action on language, feudal masculinity, and the decline of architecture (p. 40–42).

#### 4. Node Frequency Bar Chart

This graphic representation shows the codes that are most commonly cited throughout the novel



Code	References
Gendered Trauma	42
Postmemory	36
Narrative Silence	33
Domestic Resistance	29
Fragmentary Testimony	22

**1. Gendered trauma serves as the basis for Muslim identity after 1948.**

Code Frequency: 42 references (highest)  
NVivo Insight: Most overlapping intensity with “Postmemory” and “Narrative Silence.”

The leading thematic node identified from the NVivo analysis is Gendered Trauma, especially as experienced by Muslim women like Khalajaan and Mummy. Rather than being mere victims of historical violence, these women are portrayed as individuals who internalize and embody trauma through their daily rituals, relationships, and emotional responsibilities. The trauma these women endure is not exaggerated; instead, it becomes woven into the fabric of their domestic lives, consistent with Veena Das's notion of “violence as embedded in the ordinary” (Life and Words, 2007).

In the narrative, trauma reveals itself through silence, suppressed emotions, and caregiving performances. Khalajaan's coerced marriage to an older jagirdar and her resulting childlessness are conveyed through subtle signs like insomnia, ritualized hospitality, and

cryptic phrases. For instance, her metaphor—"The winter moonlight is like a widow's youth—wasted" (p. 35)—captures not only her individual sorrow but also the wider collective loss experienced by Hyderabad Muslim women after 1948. Here, trauma transforms into a quiet yet embodied defiance against patriarchal power and historical erasure.

## **2. Postmemory serves as inherited emotional and political understanding.**

Code Frequency: 36 references

NVivo Observation: Co-occurs with "Narrative Agency" and "Memory Transmission."

The character Ayman embodies Marianne Hirsch's (1997) notion of postmemory: the passing of trauma to future generations through narratives, silences, and emotional echoes. Despite being born after 1948, Ayman's experience of loss, dislocation, and marginalization is acutely felt. She inherits Khalajaan's pain not through spoken words but through the structure of the Dewdi, domestic rituals, and emotional restraint.

Her realization of the Police Action from external academic sources rather than familial stories highlights the systematic erasure of Muslim trauma in the context of Indian nationalist historiography. This emphasizes the importance of literary testimony as a means of ethical witnessing.

## **3. Silence acts as both testimony and a form of political refusal.**

Code Frequency: 33 references

NVivo Insight: Closely associated with "Gendered Trauma" and "Fragmentary Testimony."

The analysis aided by NVivo indicates that silence within the novel does not represent a lack in the narrative but rather a purposeful method of ethical and political refusal. Khalajaan's poignant statement—"They killed indiscriminately"—is the sole direct mention of the violence associated with the 1948 Police Action. Her choice to refrain from elaborating becomes a compelling narrative tactic, enabling her to uphold dignity, safeguard familial ties, and resist the appropriation of trauma by nationalist narratives.

Nazia Akhtar (2021) emphasizes that such fragmentary testimony "disrupts the totalizing logic of history." NVivo's visual mapping illustrates that this node is closely linked with "Postmemory" and "Hyderabad Muslim Identity," suggesting that silence operates as both a form of resistance and a means of inheritance.

## **4. Domestic Space as Repository of Cultural Memory and Feminist Resistance**

Code Frequency: 29 mentions

NVivo Network: Associated with "Material Memory," "Dewdi Symbolism," and "Ritual Practices"

The Dewdi serves as both a tangible location and a repository of memories. Through NVivo coding, this category connects domestic customs with cultural preservation and political quietude. Physical symbols such as the "red Rumi topi," a "walking stick with an ivory lion-head grip," and the "door originally designed for elephants" act as narrative touchstones from a past era.

Khalajaan and Mummy shape this environment through their grieving rituals, vocal expressions, and everyday fortitude. The zenana represents a paradox: a setting that confines but also allowing for actions of feminist historiography that question the norm.

### **5. Fragmentary Testimony as Ethical Memory: The Case of Khalajaan**

Code Frequency: 22 mentions

NVivo Structure: A subdivision of "Narrative Silence" and "Postmemory"

Her brief remark, "They killed indiscriminately," coupled with her apparent emotional withdrawal, constitutes a fragment of testimony that steers clear of sensationalism. This resonates with Veena Das's investigation into the difficulties of articulating experiences after trauma, which represents a gradual and intricate journey through ordinary life. The NVivo coding framework positions her testimony within "Fragmentary Witnessing" and "Postcolonial Silence," emphasizing its narrative importance. In this segment, silence proves to be more expressive than spoken words, placing Khalajaan in the role of a custodian of memory and a protector of honor.

### **6. Hyderabad Muslim Identity and Cultural Loss**

Code Frequency: 24 mentions

NVivo Node Cluster: Connects with "Decline of Urdu," "Collapse of Feudalism," and "Marginalization Post-Police Action"

The deterioration of Hyderabad Muslim identity is expressed through cultural fragmentation. This story reflects this decline by illustrating the fallen jagirdars, reduced aristocrats, and overlooked traditions. NVivo's word frequency visualization emphasizes words like "Deccan," "Aadaab," "moonlight," and "widow" as frequent symbols of loss and yearning.

Ayman's realization that her cultural lexicon has been obliterated by nationalist assimilation marks a political awakening rooted in memory. Through intergenerational silence and deteriorating architecture, the novel reconstructs Muslim identity as a palimpsest of sorrow, dignity, and erasure.

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**7. The Novel as a Vernacular Feminist Counter-History**

NVivo Interpretation: Thematic connection among "Feminist Ethics," "Political Displacement," and "Class Rupture"

The novel creates a feminist counter-archive highlighting women as bearers of history and resistance. In contrast to prevalent historiography that often depicts Muslim women as passive victims, *The Hussaini Alam House* provides agency through acts of mourning, storytelling, silence, and domesticity.

By chronicling the impact of the 1948 Police Action through everyday actions, unvoiced grief, and fragmented memories, the novel aligns itself with a vernacular feminist historiography. In this context, ethics are grounded not in grand narratives but in the moral clarity of those overlooked by history.

**Findings**

The NVivo-assisted thematic analysis of Huma R. Kidwai's *The Hussaini Alam House* revealed layered and interlocking themes that illustrate the intersectionality of gender, trauma, memory, and postcolonial historiography.

**1. Gendered Trauma as the Foundation of Post-1948 Muslim Identity**

NVivo coding reveals that "Gendered Trauma" is the predominant theme (42 references). Characters like Khalajaan and Mummy embody the anguish of displacement, patriarchal oppression, and silence within the domestic sphere. Trauma is conveyed not through overt dramatic expression but through psychosomatic symptoms, emotional metaphors ("winter moonlight is like a widow's youth," p. 35), and caregiving traditions—thus supporting Veena Das's theory that violence becomes integrated into daily life (Das, *Life and Words*, 2007).

**2. Narrative Silence as Political and Ethical Testimony** Emerging with 33 references, "Narrative Silence" serves as a tactical device. Khalajaan's succinct remark—"They killed indiscriminately" (p. 35)—represents the sole direct account of the 1948 Police Action. Her choice not to provide further details acts both as a means of protection (preserving family dignity) and as a form of resistance (challenging nationalist narratives), aligning with Nazia Akhtar's idea of the feminine fragment as a method of ethical refusal.**3. Postmemory and the Transmission of Intergenerational Trauma**

Transmission Ayman, the narrator, exemplifies Hirsch's concept of the postmemory subject. Her emotional comprehension of the trauma from 1948 is influenced by her domestic environment, inherited silences, and material remnants. The 36 NVivo



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references to this theme affirm its key role in mediating secondhand suffering and forming an ethical narrative voice (Hirsch, 1997).

#### 4. **Domestic Spaces as Counter-Archives**

The Dewdi, zenana, and items like textiles and walking sticks serve as repositories of memory. NVivo coding (29 references) indicates that the domestic space in the novel is not merely passive; it actively preserves memory and enables resistance, particularly through women's subtle management of loss and dignity.

#### 5. **Fragmentary Testimony and Feminist Ethics**

The novel does not strive for narrative wholeness. Instead, it embraces fragmented testimony, domestic metaphors, and intersubjective witnessing as feminist approaches to historiography. With 22 references, NVivo supports the notion that the use of fragmented narration is a conscious ethical choice to oppose spectacle and voyeurism.

#### 6. **Cultural Loss and the Decline of Aristocracy**

The decline of Urdu culture, jagirdari lineage, and Hyderabad Muslim traditions are imbued with a sense of melancholic nostalgia (e.g., Khalubawa's walking ritual, p. 40). NVivo references to "Loss of Aristocracy" (21) and "Decline of Urdu" (15) verify that Kidwai's text serves as an archive for a fading cultural ethos.

#### **Limitations of the Study**

- The study focuses solely on The Hussaini Alam House, which may disregard valuable insights from similar narratives related to post-Partition Hyderabad.
- The algorithmic logic of NVivo could potentially constrain the emotive and poetic depth of literary language, reducing it to quantifiable codes.
- Even with a strong thematic foundation, the manual coding process remains interpretive and reliant on the literary sensitivity of the researcher.
- Huma Kidwai has not publicly explained her intentions, making some interpretive claims somewhat speculative.

#### **Significance of the Study**

- **Theoretical Contribution:** Connects qualitative software analysis to postcolonial feminist theory, particularly in less-studied areas like Hyderabad.
- **Historiographic Intervention:** Provides an alternative perspective to Partition studies focusing primarily on North India by emphasizing the Deccan region.
- **Methodological Innovation:** This shows how NVivo can navigate narrative fragmentation and emotional testimonies.

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- Feminist Ethics: Sheds light on how Muslim women's silence, caregiving, and daily routines serve as politically significant acts of remembrance.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

- Broaden this NVivo-focused methodology to encompass additional South Indian Partition and post-Partition literature.
- Conduct comparative analyses of literary silence in various regional literatures.
- Collaborate with oral historians and ethnographers to address and enhance archival gaps.
- Create educational resources utilizing NVivo results to instruct on Partition through vernacular feminist viewpoints.

### **Conclusion**

The Hussaini Alam House is a significant feminist intervention into the overlooked history of the 1948 Hyderabad Police Action. Through the characters of Khalajaan, Ayman, and Mummy, Kidwai develops a narrative that eschews resolution, values silence as a form of testimony, and acknowledges the emotional labor involved in remembering. Utilizing NVivo analysis has enabled the visualization and organization of the emotional dimensions of this novel while preserving its poetic qualities. By interpreting silence, domestic life, and suffering as valid historical knowledge, this research demonstrates that fiction is a critical practice of ethical resistance, not simply a record of the past. By prioritizing the voices of Muslim women, it advocates for a postcolonial feminist historiography grounded in everyday memory, domestic resilience, and the profound dignity found in quiet perseverance.

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