

SPATIAL POLITICS IN NADEEM ASLAM'S *THE WASTED VIGIL* AND
THE BLIND MAN'S GARDEN

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
OF
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

GÜLSEVİN GÜLERYÜZ KARA

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS
IN
ENGLISH LITERATURE

SEPTEMBER 2018

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Name, Last Name : Gülsevin GÜLERYÜZ KARA

Signature :

ABSTRACT

SPATIAL POLITICS IN NADEEM ASLAM'S *THE WASTED VIGIL* AND *THE BLIND MAN'S GARDEN*

GÜLERYÜZ KARA, Gülsevin

M.A. in English Literature

Supervisor: Assist. Prof. Dr. Hülya YILDIZ BAĞÇE

September 2018, 175 pages

This thesis aims to analyze British-Pakistani author Nadeem Aslam's novels *The Wasted Vigil* (2008) and *The Blind Man's Garden* (2013) in terms of how Afghanistan and Pakistan are represented and reconfigured as postcolonial spaces. In the spirit aspired by Sara Upstone's concept of *post-space* which suggests a sense of spatiality that resists imperial totalizations of space, subverts colonial frames and puts forward spatial reconfigurations by foregrounding diverse experiences of postcolonial spaces, this study essentially focuses on the *post-space* representations embedded in these novels. Challenging nation as a political construct and reframing it through alternative spatial locations, Aslam's novels analysed in this study subtly reconfigure national spaces by accentuating *smaller-than-national* and *larger-than-national* spaces. These alternative spatial locations vary from physical spaces like *home, school, garden*, to conceptual spaces such as *microstories, neglected cultural and natural spaces* and *journey*. *The Wasted Vigil* and *The Blind Man's Garden* stand out as two prominent examples of 'war-on-terror' fiction that deals with socio-political and psychological complexities of post-9/11 period. Thus reframing national spaces the way these novels together suggest also undermines the post-

9/11 discourse that feeds on essentialist national stereotypes and binaries, and invites the reader to rethink the mainstream Anglo-American representation of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Keywords: Postcolonial Space, *post-space*, “War-on-Terror” Fiction, *The Wasted Vigil*, *The Blind Man’s Garden*

ÖZ

NADEEM ASLAM'IN *VİRAN ÜLKENİN BEKÇİSİ* VE *KÖR ADAMIN BAHÇESİ* ROMANLARINDAKİ UZAMSAL POLİTİKALAR

GÜLERYÜZ KARA, Gülsevin

Yüksek Lisans Tezi, İngiliz Edebiyatı

Tez Yöneticisi: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Hülya YILDIZ BAĞÇE

September 2014, 175 Sayfa

Bu tez Pakistan asıllı İngiliz yazar Nadeem Aslam'ın *Viran Ülkenin Bekçisi* (2008) ve *Kör Adamın Bahçesi* (2013) kitaplarını, Afganistan ve Pakistan'ın postkolonyal uzamlar olarak temsilleri ve yeniden kurgulanışları bakımından inceler. Teorik çerçeve olarak Sara Upstone'un *uzam-sonrası (post-space)* kavramını esas alır, ki bu kavram farklı postkolonyal uzam deneyimlerini öne çıkartarak emperyalizmin uzamsal totalizasyonlara karşı koyan ve kolonyal çerçeveleri yıkıp yeniden kurgulanışlar öne süren bir uzamsallık ifade eder. Romanlardaki uzam-sonrası temsillerinin bu doğrultuda incelenmesi bu çalışmanın odağını teşkil eder. Politik bir kurgu olan ulusal uzam sorgulanırken, alternatif uzamsal alanlar üzerinden yeni bir çerçeve çizilmesi amaçlanır. Aslam'ın bu romanları romanları *ulusal-uzamdan-küçük* ve *ulusal-uzamdan-büyük* alanları ön plana çıkartarak ulusal uzamı incelikli bir yeniden şekillendirmeye tabi tutar. Ulusu indirgeyici nitelikteki tasvirlerle direnç gösteren bu alternatif uzamlar *ev*, *okul* ve *bahçe* gibi küçük fiziksel uzamların yanı sıra *küçük-anlatılar*, *ihmal edilmiş doğal ve kültürel uzamlar* gibi kavramsal küçük uzamlar ile *ulusal-uzamdan-büyük* bir alanı işaret eden *seyahat* motifini de kapsar. *Viran Ülkenin Bekçisi* ve *Kör Adamın*

Bahçesi 11 Eylül sonrası sosyo-politik karışıklıklarını ele alan terör edebiyatının öne çıkan iki örneğidir. Bu romanların işaret ettiği doğrultuda ulusu yeniden çerçeveslendirilmesi, özcü ulusal klişeleri ve ikilikleri besleyen 11 Eylül sonrası söylemlerinin temelini aşındırırken okuyucuyu Afganistan ve Pakistan'ın ana akım Anglo-Amerikan tasvirlerini yeniden düşünmeye davet eder.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Postkolonyal Uzam, *uzam-sonrası (post-space)*, 11 Eylül Sonrası Terör Edebiyatı, *Viran Ülkenin Bekçisi*, *Kör Adamın Bahçesi*

To Zeynep Berrin, My Little Sunshine

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to many people for their support during the writing of this thesis. First of all, I am very grateful to my supervisor Assist. Prof. Dr. Hülya Yıldız Bağçe for her constructive feedback that always guided me in the right direction and her unwavering encouragement and support. I will always feel privileged to be one of her students.

I thank my jury members Assist. Prof. Dr. Elif Öztapak Avcı and Assist. Prof. Dr. Mustafa Kırıcı whose invaluable advices during my proposal jury helped me start off confidently.

Friendship has made completing this thesis easier. I owe a great debt of gratitude to my ex-housemate Pelin who cared for me almost like a mother when I was overwhelmed by having a full-time job and doing my MA at the same time and did not have a minute to cook or clean. Thank you for your unconditional love and support. I feel blessed for having such a true friend.

Misery loves company, and this is true especially in the academia. Betül, my soulmate, thank you for sustaining me in many ways from patiently listening to my whinings and adding humour to the exhausting process of thesis writing to motivating me countless times to keep going and providing me with sources I couldn't find from all the way from the U.S. I feel very lucky to get to know Ahmetcan, my dear Bilkenter, who has been there to help me overcome the dead-ends of my research and share his invaluable insights into our common research topic.

Finally, to my husband, Sencer, a mere 'thank you' is not enough. This thesis could not have been completed without your unconditional love and constant support. You have made my life easier and better since the day I met you. Not just for this thesis, I know you will always be there for me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PLAGIARISM.....	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
ÖZ.....	vi
DEDICATION	viii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ix
TABLE OF CONTENTS	x
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xiii
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1. The Aim of the Study	1
1.2. Methodology and the Frame of the Study	2
1.2.1. Postcolonial Space and Sara Upstone’s Concept of <i>Post-Space</i>	3
1.2.2. Space-Place Distinction	10
1.2.3. Nation as Space	12
1.3. <i>The Wasted Vigil</i> and <i>The Blind Man’s Garden</i> as Contemporary Examples of Postcolonial Literature.....	14
1.3.1. Postcolonialism and ‘War on Terror’ Fiction.....	17
1.4. An Overview of Nadeem Aslam.....	21
1.4.1. Aslam as a Postcolonial Migrant Writer	21
1.4.2. Aslam and Politics.....	26
1.4.3. Aslam’s Literary Style.....	29
2. SPATIAL POLITICS IN <i>THE WASTED VIGIL</i>	34
2.1. National Space at the Crossroad of Ideologies: Spatial Reality of <i>The Wasted Vigil</i> ’s Afghanistan	34
2.1.1. Non-Fictional Background of the Novel.....	35
2.1.2. Space and the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan.....	38

2.1.3. Islamic Fundamentalism and Its Spatial Politics	41
2.1.4. American Neo-Imperialism, “War-on-Terror” and National Space	47
2.2. Reconfiguration of National Space: Subversion of Nation-Bound Space through Post-Space Representations	54
2.2.1. Smaller Spaces Greater Possibilities: Personal Spaces as Small Scale.....	55
2.2.1.1. Marcus’s House.....	56
2.2.1.2. Zameen’s Apartment.....	64
2.2.2. Post-Space Reframed Through Microstories	68
2.2.2.1 Marcus.....	70
2.2.2.2 David.....	75
2.2.2.3 Dunia.....	79
2.2.3. Neglected Spatialities: Demarginalizing the Beautiful Afghanistan ...	83
3. SPATIAL POLITICS IN <i>THE BLIND MAN’S GARDEN</i>	90
3.1. Representing Post-9/11 Spatiality of Afghanistan and Pakistan in <i>The Blind Man’s Garden</i>	90
3.1.1. Non-fictional Background of the Novel	91
3.1.2. The American Presence in post 9/11 Afghanistan and its Spatial Reflections	95
3.1.3. The Post 9/11 Stage, Political and Social Instabilities and Space in Afghanistan and Pakistan.....	98
3.1.3.1. The Postcolonial Space of Pakistan	98
3.1.3.2. Taliban’s Decline in Power and Its Spatial Reflections.....	101
3.1.3.3. Xenophobia in TBMG’s Pakistan and Its Spatial Manifestations	106
3.1.3.4. Women, Gender and Fundamentalist Politics of Space	109
3.2. The Post-Space Possibilities in <i>The Blind Man’s Garden</i>	111
3.2.1. Small-Scale Representations.....	112
3.2.1.1. The Blind Man’s <i>Garden</i>	112
3.2.1.2. Schools as Spaces of Reconfiguration: The School of Ardent Spirit and the Christian School in Heer.....	115

3.2.2. Post-Space Representations Through Microstories	123
3.2.2.1. Rohan.....	124
3.2.2.2. Naheed.....	129
3.2.3. Postcolonial Journeys as an Alternative Spatial Scale.....	133
3.2.3.1. Mikal’s Journey for Survival.....	135
4. CONCLUSION	150
BIBLIOGRAPHY	155
APPENDICES	
A. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET.....	162
B. TEZ İZİN FORMU	175

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>TWV</i>	<i>The Wasted Vigil</i>
<i>TBMG</i>	<i>The Blind Man's Garden</i>
<i>Spatial Politics</i>	<i>Spatial Politics in Postcolonial Novel</i>
<i>Culture</i>	<i>Culture and Imperialism</i>
<i>British Asian</i>	<i>British Asian Fiction: Twenty-First-Century Voices</i>
<i>Writing Islam</i>	<i>Writing Islam from a South Asian Muslim Perspective: Rushdie, Hamid, Aslam, Shamsie</i>
<i>Orienting Muslims</i>	<i>Orienting Muslims: Mapping Global Spheres of Affiliation and Affinity in Contemporary South Asian Fiction</i>

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Aim of the Study

This thesis aims to explore British-Pakistani writer Nadeem Aslam's novels *The Wasted Vigil* (2008) and *The Blind Man's Garden* (2013) in terms of how Afghanistan and Pakistan are represented and reconfigured as postcolonial spaces. It problematizes the postcolonial spaces of Afghanistan and Pakistan as stages where fundamentalist and neo-imperialist agendas prevail, tyranny and manipulation feeds on religious sentiments, and multiple conflicts over domination is a tremendous force shaping the region. In the spirit aspired by Sara Upstone's concept of *post-space* which suggests a sense of spatiality that resists imperial totalizations of space, subverts colonial frames and puts forward spatial reconfigurations by foregrounding diverse experiences of postcolonial spaces, this study essentially focuses on the *post-space* representations embedded in these novels. Challenging nation as a political construct and reframing it through alternative spatial locations, Aslam's novels analysed in this study subtly reconfigure national spaces by accentuating *smaller-than-national* and *larger-than-national* spaces. These alternative spatialities, which are all inherently resistant to totalizing and reductive representations of nation, varies from physical small spaces such as *home, school* and *garden*, conceptual small spaces like *microstories* and *neglected spaces of cultural and natural beauties* to *larger-than-national* spaces such as *journey*. Since *The Wasted Vigil* and *The Blind Man's Garden* stand out as two prominent examples of 'war-on-terror' fiction that deals with socio-political and psychological complexities of post-9/11 period, reframing nation the way these novels together suggest also undermines the post-9/11 discourse that feeds on

essentialist national stereotypes and binaries, and invites the reader to rethink the mainstream Anglo-American representation of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

1.2. Methodology and the Frame of the Study

The study of the spatial has emerged as a relatively recent phenomenon in humanities and social sciences, picking up its pace especially in the second half of the twentieth century. When Michel Foucault wrote *Of Other Spaces* in 1984, he foresaw the rise of the spatiality in contemporary epistemologies by arguing that “[t]he present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space” (22). Proving Foucault right, ‘Spatial Turn’ in social sciences in the last few decades has brought a new epistemological attitude that no longer restricts discussions of ‘space’ and ‘place’ to disciplines offering analyses only in physical and geographical terms; instead it celebrates an intellectual movement that has brought analyses of ‘space’ and ‘place’ into humanities and social sciences as well. Attempts to counteract the hegemony of ‘time’ over ‘space’ can be traced back to as early as Mikhail Bakhtin whose concept of narrative *chronotope* (which can roughly be translated as time-space) accentuates the interaction between narrative space and narrative time. *Chronotope* basically expresses “the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature [and] ... the inseparability of space and time” (Bakhtin 84) and hence offers an alternative insight into time in relation to space by underlying the link between the two. Susan Friedman, who celebrates the multitude of emerging spatial discourses across disciplines, also critically comments on the “prevailing privileging of time over space in narrative poetics” (194); she is critical of the fact that temporality has dominated narrative poetics, and space has hardly been reviewed as a component, not more than “the ‘description’ that interrupts the flow of temporality or as the “setting” that functions as static background for the plot, or as the “scene” in which the narrative events unfold in time” (192-193). In this line of thinking, many critics including Sara Upstone celebrates that spatiality has now been regarded as a productive alternative to ‘temporality’ for analyses of human experience and an important

conceptual context enabling greater considerations for issues like power relations and negotiations of identity (*Spatial Politics 2*).

A conclusive definition of ‘space’ is difficult to achieve due to its wide and divergent significations ranging from physical locations to conceptual entities, from nation and text to body. This means that to interrogate how literature, politics, philosophy or society construct and negotiate space, it would not be adequate to discuss space only in geographical and physical sense. These enabling references of space have thus prompted various disciplines such as literature, politics, philosophy and sociology to interrogate how space can be interpreted, reconstructed or negotiated. As specifically for literary studies, reflecting upon the representations of space and place, real or imaginary, has facilitated more innovative and multidisciplinary methods and practices which contributed building productive connections to various disciplines such as architecture, geography, urban studies, history, philosophy and politics (Johansen VII).

1.2.1. Postcolonial Space and Sara Upstone’s Concept of *Post-Space*

For postcolonial studies, space has been integral to the postcolonial experience to investigate colonial and postcolonial conditions. From the start, Edward Said’s two seminal works- *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1994)- draw attention to the intricate relationship between geography and empire (Teverson and Upstone 1). In *Culture*, Said defines ‘imperialism’ in relation to geography as “... thinking about, settling on, controlling land that you do not possess, that is distant, that is lived on and owned by others” (5). He associates the imperialist logic to the “sustained possession ... [of] far-flung and sometimes unknown spaces” (*Culture* 75) and thus contends that “[t]he actual geographical possession of land is what empire in the final analysis is all about” (*Culture* 93). On the other hand, *Culture* invites us to think the spatial implications of empire outside the frames of physical locations and geographies by drawing our attention to the participation of narratives as spaces into the formation of imperialist culture. Said discusses domination of narrative space as an essential aspect of

imperialist behaviours and suggests that "...nations are narrations. The power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism" (*Culture* xiii). The intricate relationship between imperialist culture and the formation of narratives, -especially novels-, and how the latter can become a tool for the former to sustain are highlighted by Said as one of his main arguments in *Culture*. In this vein, he asserts that the imperialist narratives are ideologically based on what he calls as "the perceived character and destiny of a particular geography" (*Culture* 93) which aims to sustain the hierarchical relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. This ideological attitude "shape[s] and set[s] limits on the representation of what are considered essentially subordinate beings, thus representation itself has been characterized as keeping the subordinate subordinate, the inferior inferior" (Said, *Culture* 93-95). In *Orientalism*, Said furthers his discussion of colonial use of space, this time with a specific focus on the representations of the Middle/Near East. He contends that colonial narratives of colonized spaces create "[i]maginative geography ... [which] "help the mind to intensify its own self of itself by dramatizing the distance and difference between what is close to it and what is far away [and] ... legitimizes a vocabulary, a universe of representative discourse peculiar to the discussion and understanding of Islam and of the Orient" (55-71). Such narratives forged by Orientalist discourses reconfigure the East as "a theatrical stage whose audience, manager, and actors are for Europe, and only for Europe" (*Orientalism* 71-72) and imply it to be an inherently backward and hostile space that requires imperial interventions.

Said's pioneering discussions of colonial use of space in *Culture* and *Orientalism* has stimulated postcolonial studies to investigate further how colonial and postcolonial spaces can be analysed for multiple insights into postcolonial conditions. In this respect, Sarah Upstone's¹ *Spatial Politics in The Postcolonial*

¹ Sara Upstone, an Associate professor at Kingston University, is illuminating for the theoretical frame of this study not only because she specializes in the contemporary literatures of identity with a particular interest in 'spatial politics'; but also her research on contemporary British Asian fiction examines Nadeem Aslam and his works.

Novel, which forms this study's main theoretical frame, elaborates on the colonial appropriation of space that serves for the acceptance of colonial power as a political entity and facilitates the control of the colonial subject by creating a bounded territory. Upstone argues that in colonial contexts, what made a colonial endeavour successful was "the magnitude of space and the subsequent productivity and political stability of this space" (*Spatial Politics* 4). Within this frame, she puts special emphasis on 'postcolonial space' as a concept to reflect "the diverse spaces that construct the postcolonial experience" (*Spatial Politics* 1) for she asserts that postcolonial spaces are significant sites for postcolonial authors through which colonial representations of territory can be problematized, the voice of the colonised can be heard, heterogenous voices and diverse experiences can be highlighted and positive new identities can be glimpsed (*Spatial Politics* 13-15). In a similar direction, Ashcroft who, unlike Upstone, prefers to use the word 'place' instead of 'space' with regard to postcolonial sites, puts forward that the "[p]ost-colonial place is ... a site of struggle on which the values and beliefs of indigenous and colonizer contend for possession. The indigenous narrations of place are never entirely erased. Post-colonial place is in a continual state of flux and creation, more rhizomic than palimpsest, a region of transformation" (96) and thus reiterates the enabling potential of postcolonial places that Upstone suggests for reframing postcolonial experience. All in all, by investigating postcolonial spaces (or places), postcolonial authors problematize the ways in which the treatments of 'space' sustain colonialism, and at the same time how they can become "a site of possibility and resistance" (*Spatial Politics* 11) thanks to their inherently capacious nature. More importantly, by means of these spaces, the postcolonial writing can put forward "an interrogatory alternative to the colonial myth of spatial order" (*Spatial Politics* 11) and seek a productive reconfiguration of colonial use of national space.

Challenging colonial spatial ordering assumes a pre-colonial spatial fluidity and chaos which intrinsically contains power of transformation. Such postcolonial reimagining of space opens up new understandings and experiences of reality. Upstone defines this alternative treatment of space as *post-space* which refers to "a

chaotic sense of the spatial on all scales [that] becomes a resource towards the re-visioning of the postcolonial position in society and consequent issues of identity, the possibilities inherent in postcolonial spaces as a direct result of their hybrid histories” (*Spatial Politics* 15). It basically suggests a sense of spatiality that resists totalizations of space, re-visions the colonial spatial order in such a way that foregrounds diverse experiences of national spaces and facilitates positive transformations by reclaiming the inherent diversity of pre-colonial spaces. In this conceptualization of *post-space*, there is a constant emphasis on the function of ‘chaos’ as an agent for re-visioning which in positive terms can be defined as “a necessary turmoil that offers the tapestry of influences and possibilities that only a fractured, multiplicitous space can provide” (Upstone, *Spatial Politics* 15). Seeking a productive chaos in postcolonial sense is important because in colonial sense space is ordered and homogenized by the act of *overwriting* that metaphorically suggests colonial treatments of space to obscure an existing diversity with order. Thus, with the colonial *overwriting* of space, “[w]hat is initially ‘written’ is erased, and is replaced with a new representation” (Upstone, *Spatial Politics* 6). *Overwriting* as an act of appropriating pre-colonial spaces shows great parallelism with Ashcroft’s conceptualization of “a different kind of newness—an invading newness—can be forced into the world by imperial power” (94). Just like the way colonial *overwriting* nullifies pre-colonial spatial diversities, Ashcroft argues that “[c]olonial ground needs to be erased, wiped clean, to prepare it for imperialism’s darkest gift—the gift of newness ... This ironic ‘gift’ is the imposition of sameness—a sameness that will never be quite the same, but one in which difference will be erased” (93-94). Ashcroft takes one step further from where he theoretically intersects with Upstone’s concept of *overwriting* by suggesting that the act of appropriating colonial text of place manifests itself in three ways—“erasure, inscription and narration” (96), all of which are conscious acts of nullifying pre-colonial diversity and homogenizing space in accordance with imperialist cultural and political agendas. In this sense, *post-space* entails a productive sense of chaos to unearth what’s been ‘overwritten’ onto colonial spaces

and discard the 'invading newness' of colonialism to glimpse at the possibilities that postcolonial spaces harbour.

On the other hand, nationalism, which has afflicted many postcolonial states by sustaining the colonial discourse and the legacies of colonialism, relies upon the same tendency of implementing a new sense of *overwriting*, -a new 'newness' -, by obscuring heterogeneity, productive chaos and fluidity for the sake of creating a nation with a fixed and defined entity. "Like colonialism ... nationalism relies upon the ordering of space, and the subsequent overwriting of the process of construction with a discourse of natural development ... and obscures the chaos and hybridity underlying the organisation of space, with the sense of a simplistic and logical arrangement" (*Spatial Politics* 6). Ashcroft touches upon the same issue of nationalistic *overwriting* of space which "not only in its narratives of place, but also in its narratives of the body, the society and identity, simply perpetuates the imperialist narrative" (105), yet he points out a significant nuance in nationalistic *overwriting* by arguing that "[i]n nationalist discourse "the tendency to erase [the colonial] space continues under the guise of a continuing need for 'development'" (105). The mission that the postcolonial writer takes on at this point is to deconstruct colonial and/or nationalist *overwriting*, -or forced 'newness' as Ashcroft calls it-, by means of fiction and embrace pre-colonial chaos and fluidity in which "space ... [can become] a source of resistance and as a site of empowerment" (Upstone, *Spatial Politics* 183).

It is possible to extend this argument to neo-colonial geographies where domination of space is maintained by means of economic and political operations by neo-imperialist powers. Yet, to envision the *post-space* of neo-colonial nations is a more challenging endeavour for postcolonial writers firstly because the implications of neo-colonialism are subtler unlike direct colonial rule. Sustaining neo-imperial order is maintained by indirect means such as creating perpetual economic dependences, blocking economic growth and sustaining social and political instabilities. Also, while the *post-space* for postcolonial nations signifies a

pre-colonial condition that has inherent possibilities for transformation, for neo-colonial nations not only the legacies of neo-imperialism but also the implications of colonialism must be deconstructed. For this reason, revisioning neo-colonial appropriation of space for postcolonial literary texts entails a more complex process in which indirect influences of global powers need to be interrogated. On the other hand, when we look at today's contemporary neo-colonialist power relations and their treatment of space, the discussion of 'chaos' gains a different dimension. While in postcolonial context the 'chaos' that the *post-space* celebrates can theoretically be productive and enabling, Hardt and Negri outline how a literal sense of political and social 'chaos' in the Third World as opposed to tightly controlled territories of colonial times serves for neo-imperialist political and economic interests:

The borderless, deterritorialized space ... does not contribute to a more democratic world, but rather to further capitalist exploitation which thrives on destabilised political and economic relations. It allows the imperialist nations of the past to be replaced with an all-consuming and global power network which functions all-pervasively without fixed location or national identity. (qtd. in Upstone, *Spatial Politics* 8)

As Hardt and Negri suggest, chaos and disorder can also become a means for securing power for capitalist powers with neo-imperialist interests in the Third World. To sustain their indirect influence, the neo-imperialist powers of today thus take on the 'mission' of bringing stability to the politically and socially destabilised developing nations. In this case, chaos is in the service of neo-colonialist/neo-imperialist appropriation of postcolonial space to create easily accessible and utilisable territories for further manipulation.

A final elaboration on *post-space* needs to be made in relation to Edward Soja's conceptualization of Thirdspace for it is comparable and complementary to Upstone's discussion of *post-space* in terms of celebrating productive chaos and fluidity that reframing space brings along. With Thirdspace, Soja encourages us to revise our established spatial and geographical imaginations and invites us to "think differently about the meanings and significance of space and those related concepts

that compose the inherent spatiality of human life: place, location, locality, landscape, environment, home, city, region, territory and geography” (1). This critical spatial metaphor denotes “a space of extraordinary openness, a place of critical exchange where the geographical imagination can be expanded to encompass a multiplicity of perspectives that have heretofore been considered by the epistemological referees to be incompatible, uncombinable” (Soja 5). It thus urges us to open our practical and theoretical understandings of space to redefinition by breaking free from totalizing discourses and absolutes, and celebrates a transdisciplinary attitude which invokes new modes of thought on spatiality across disciplines. Positioning his Thirdspace in relation to the dichotomy of real (Firstspace) and imagined (Secondspace) worlds to interpret reality (6), Soja aims at deconstructing this dual mode of thinking about space. “[A] Firstspace mode of perspective or epistemology [is] fixed mainly on the concrete materiality of spatial forms, on things that can empirically be mapped; and the second, as Secondspace, conceived in ideas about space, in thoughtful re-presentations of human spatiality in mental and cognitive forms” (Soja 10). While Firstspace representations focus on “the material form of things in space” (78), Secondspace epistemologies are “immediately distinguishable by their explanatory concentration on conceived rather than perceived space and ... the interpretive locale of the creative artist and artful architect, visually or literally re-presenting the world in the image of their subjective imaginaries” (78-79). Soja’s call for creating a critical spatial awareness that challenges mainstream spatial imagination defies relying on only one of these modes of thinking and dismantling the reductive Firstspace-Secondspace duality. Thirdspace has a broad scope of application that cannot be limited to one single discipline, but it is significant especially in terms of discussions of identity politics due to being inclusive for diversities and open to differences. In postcolonial context, Thirdspace encourages a rethinking of geography free from Eurocentric historicism and decentering the spatial politics of colonialism. It is hence complementary to the discussions of Upstone’s *post-space* for suggesting the same urge for reconfiguration that *post-space* signifies in terms of revising the

postcolonial experience in a more enabling way. Since colonial discourse has manifested itself especially through Secondspace representations, -which are mainly literary works-, Thirdspace celebrates an epistemological departure from them for a creative spatialization just like *post-space* that creates an interrogatory domain alternative to colonial myth of spatial order.

1.2.2. Space-Place Distinction

In discussions of spatiality, the space/place dichotomy holds a significant position demonstrating various applications of spatial politics. With a specific focus on its relationship with globalization theory and the treatment of temporality, Timothy Brennan outlines space/place distinction to discuss temporality in relation to space; he suggests that ‘Time’ has been supplanted by ‘Space’ through which “the logical issue is no longer what will happen, but when it will extend itself over a vast but finite territory. The optic logically shifts from pace to scale, and from the chronometric to cartographic” (130). While the treatment of ‘space’ in relation to the overcoming of time suggests a changing perception of temporality expressed in metaphors of spatiality, the dual expression of space/place is based on “a struggle over value ... embedded in the way one thinks about spatiality” (130):

‘Space’ is more abstract and ubiquitous: it connotes capital, history, and activity, and gestures towards the meaningless[ness] of distance in a world of instantaneous communication and ‘virtuality’; ‘place’ connotes, by contrast, the kernel or center of one’s memory and experience- a dwelling, a familiar park or city street, one’s family or community. (Brennan 130)

On the other hand, for Upstone place is “just one manifestation of space: its representation in intensely physical forms which create sites of identification” (*Spatial Politics* 3). Whether it is ‘struggle of value’ or ‘identification’, the emphasis in her definition again lies on subjective evaluation of spatiality. Childs and Green problematize space/place dichotomy from a different perspective; with a specific focus on the notion of separation they argue that the idea of “bounded spaces are actually a geographical imagination that serves for the imperial project to organize global space” (99). They further add that “... the very idea of ‘place’

entails the problematical necessity of a boundary that situates difference on the outside and constructs its uniqueness by turning inwards to recover or invent an evolutionary historical narrative” (99). Friedman’s approach to bounded spaces, - or places-, differs from Childs and Green with her welcoming of the notion of separation for the enabling potentials of borders; she contends that “[b]orders insist on purity, distinction, difference, but facilitate contamination, mixing, and creolization. Borders of all kinds are forever being crossed; but the experience of crossing depends upon the existence of borders in the first place” (196). Yet rethinking borders from this perspective that underscore interaction still testifies Childs and Green’s contention that the treatment of ‘place’ has undergone a change by signifying now “less static ‘containers’ of particular spatial identities ... [that facilitates] “processes of interaction, articulated moments in network of understandings that link with the wider world” (99-100). Such an understanding of place that underlies connectedness to other places beyond also make it possible to envision the local and the global together without setting a binary. If we look at Ashcroft’s approach to space/place dichotomy, we see that a focus on the significance of ‘place’ for imperial expansions is foregrounded. He argues that “[t]he understanding of a place as a site has been essential to empire’s need to establish colonial sites of its dominance, at the same time as the coordinates of the world map have allowed European modernity to empty out the human dimensions of space.” (95). While he identifies the act of creating colonial ‘places’ out of pre-colonial ‘spaces’ with manifestation of colonial hegemony, he also suggests that “... it is ... space which offers a more fluid and open form that the imperial attempts to obscure” (qtd. in Upstone, *Spatial Politics* 33). This enabling nature of ‘space’ that Ashcroft indicates in fact points out the possibilities of challenging the colonial/neo-colonial spatial absolutism through Upstone’s *post-space* which entails subversion of any totalising significations colonialism has attached to a particular location. *Post-space* in this sense denotes redefining a place by questioning the meaning attached to it and promises “reconfiguring of traumatic locations into geographies of possibility” (Upstone *Spatial Politics* 18).

1.2.3. Nation as Space

There is an intricate relationship between the myth of the nation and its national time and space. Epitomizing how constructing a nation feeds on the imagined temporal and spatial simultaneity of individuals, McLeod argues that the myth of the nation “promises structure, shelter, and sequence for individuals, cementing a ‘deep, horizontal comradeship’ which unites the many into one imagined community through the function of specific forms of narrative ...[and] stimulate[s] the people’s sense that they are the rightful owners of a specific land” (74). According to McLeod, construction of otherness is fundamental to every definition of identity, and this ‘otherness’ is created through either physical or imaginative borders which divide a nation’s people from others outside. Nations define themselves through forms of representations aimed to create a “unified collective” (McLeod 74). This unified collective and shared simultaneity created under ‘nation’ bring “performance of histories, traditions and symbols which sustain the people’s specific identity continuous between past and present” (McLeod 74). According to Upstone, in colonial discourse, “[t]he colonialists’ right to territory is enshrined in the authority they give to their spatial divisions” (*Spatial Politics* 4). In this sense, nation as theoretical space for politics as well as a bounded geographical territory demonstrates the fact that the colonial appropriation of space operates both in physical and conceptual level, which postcolonial studies seek to unravel. Referring to nation as “[the] imaginary space of government authority” (*Spatial Politics* 1), Upstone discusses nation as an absolute space necessary for the opposition of colonial territory which is a much larger and powerful theoretical totality, and regards this sense of the nation as “a fixed and, importantly, timeless and natural institution that would oppose the foreign invader as a strategic construct necessary to challenge the absolutes and order which colonialism relied upon” (*Spatial Politics* 27). On the other hand, Weatherston’s approach to the constructedness of ‘nation’ draws attention to how it paves way to the failure of postcolonial nations in their political, economic or cultural endeavours: “... while the ideal of ‘nation’ appears to be a spatio-

geographical discourse, it is, in fact, primarily a discourse of linear and teleologic temporality, and in this regard proves insufficient in its ability to represent the contradictions and concurrences that exist in lands once labelled imperial territories” (136). On both colonial and postcolonial contexts, the underlying idea in these different approaches is the constructed nature of nation which serves for spatial domination of a certain territory.

In another respect, for studying nation as a space of subversion, it is essential to examine the postcolonial nations’ engagement with nationalism which basically presupposes an anti-colonialist use of ‘national space’. The treatment of national space in post-independent state is a subject of criticism by many critics due to being “an extension of colonial power, rather than the liberatory force of initial anticolonial rhetoric (*Spatial Politics* 26). Contrary to its initial claims of opposing colonial ways and practices, the subsequent nationalist tendencies in post-independent states ironically draw striking parallelisms in their spatial ordering since “[l]ike colonialism ... nationalism relies upon the ordering of space, and the subsequent overwriting of the process of construction with a discourse of natural development ... obscures the chaos and hybridity underlying the organisation of space, with the sense of a simplistic and logical arrangement.” (Upstone, *Spatial Politics* 29). In this respect, Weatherston points out “the standards of political legitimacy used by postcolonial nationalisms” (137) to replicate similar ideological dynamics with Western nation-states. The process of this nationalist ‘legitimacy’ entails “the construction of a precolonial, originary past that somehow remained intact throughout the period(s) of colonial domination ... [and] validated the integrity of the newly formed nations as communities of already-always related individuals” (137). This means that instead of undoing the fixated notion of national space in order to glimpse pre-colonial chaotic and fluid spatiality, the nationalist tendencies ironically produce the same kind of totalizations of space as those of colonialism. For this reason, postcolonial writers undertake the challenge of revisioning nations as “spaces that exist outside of and beyond the temporal frameworks of imperialism and nationalism” (Weatherston 150). In order to undo

the colonial and anti-colonial appropriation of national space, postcolonial texts thus interrogate how national space can be reconfigured to develop more liberating spatial experiences. In chapter 2 and 3, Upstone's alternative scales of *post-space* representations that have the purpose of challenging the central place of nation will be introduced prior to the textual analysis of each novel. Before moving on to textual analysis of the novels within this theoretical frame, it is important to discuss *TWV* and *TBMG* in relation to their positions in contemporary postcolonial writing and as prominent examples that subvert the 'war-on-terror' literature to facilitate plural interpretations of 9/11 phenomena.

1.3. *The Wasted Vigil* and *The Blind Man's Garden* as Contemporary Examples of Postcolonial Literature

Under his umbrella-term 'post-colonialism', McLeod gathers *three areas of reading* in postcolonial contexts: the first one is "reading texts produced by writers from countries with a history of colonialism to see the workings and legacy of colonialism either in the past or present" (33). Second is "reading texts produced by those that have migrated from countries with a history of colonialism, or those descended from migrant families" (McLeod 33) in which diaspora experience with its consequences is a commonly handled issue. The third area is "re-reading texts produced during colonialism which involves interpreting texts either directly addressing the imperial experience or seemingly not" (McLeod 33). Treating Aslam's *TWV* and *TBMG* requires the second mode of reading McLeod refers to due to Aslam's position as a migrant writer. What makes these two texts quite distinctive from many other contemporary postcolonial literary texts requiring the same mode of reading is Aslam's choice of problematization of the neo-imperialist practices and relationships characterized by the U.S. rather than the legacy of British Empire with which he has a first-hand diaspora experience. Upstone's line of thinking is explanatory on this issue regarding these two novels' engagement with global affairs such as neo-colonialism, 'war-on-terror' and Islamic fundamentalism with a specific attention to the U.S.; she puts forward that there is

a changing direction in how the new generation British Asian authors select their subject matter differently from early postcolonial migrant authors. While negotiating identities in the face of a distant ancestral homeland and immediate British culture is a dominant theme of postcolonial migrant literature, more and more British-born protagonists have emerged with confidence who don't seem to fit into classical representation of 'caught between two cultures'. According to Upstone, the fact that recent migrant writings have shown a great interest into social and global matters when compared to commonly held issues of cultural identity and diaspora experience suggests 'British Asian confidence' in postcolonial literature as a recent phenomenon (*British Asian Fiction* 8-9). A similar clarification is also proposed by Childs and Green who argue that "the cultural milieu in which the diasporic novel now situates itself has expanded to encircle the globe ... [and] contemporary writing seems more conscious of its location within a wider literary-cultural field" (97). In the light of these clarifications, this study argues that *TBMG* and *TWV* are forward-looking postcolonial novels² with their particular attention to the U.S. as a neo-imperialist power whose political, economic and military operations are likely to arise further socio-political and cultural complications. The legacy of the British empire in the postcolonial world has long been handled by early postcolonial writers for whom various issues from identity to nationality were still unsettled. Yet, rather than following the footsteps of earlier postcolonial writings, these two contemporary postcolonial novels are preoccupied with the position of the U.S. in the increasingly globalized world and addresses to a recent need to discuss the complexities emerged as a result of the American global politics. While in earlier works of Aslam such as *Maps of Lost Lovers* (2004) and *Season of the Rainbirds* (1993), Pakistani diaspora experience and the postcolonial condition

² The historiographic and political context of these novels renders this study a 'postcolonial' analysis due to postcolonialism's preoccupation with power relations between imperial powers and the third world nations, and their pre- and/or post- independence positionings. The Russian military intervention to Afghanistan in 1979 in support of the Communist government, the subsequent civil war aftermath of Russian withdrawal in 1989, the rise of Islamic fundamentalism and the Taliban movement in Afghanistan during civil war, and more recently the United States' military and political operations in the wake of 9/11 attack draw the historiographic and political frame that Aslam situates *TWV* and *TBMG*.

of Pakistan are extensively problematized, both novels under the scrutiny of this study differ by projecting neo-colonial condition in a broader geography that is not solely limited to the author's homeland. As Childs and Green put it,

Aslam's novels are not national allegories, but situated, cross-national portrayals of complex, imbricated lives that describe the movements of individuals alongside the larger military, diasporic, and economic waves that was across continents. The reference points are not narrowly colonial and national history, but diversely cultural and ethnic in ways that trace the multiple lines leading to contact zones of East and West in any parts of the globe. (123)

Aslam's novels in this sense demonstrate great awareness of a globalized world that has been manipulated by American political and economic interests. What brings additional complexity to *TWV* and *TBMG* as postcolonial texts is Aslam's cultural identity as a 'British-Pakistani' writer which renders his positioning regarding center/periphery to be even more complex. His ideological stance in the face of imperialist agendas and fundamentalism is clearly critical; yet culturally and intellectually establishing himself in the 'centre', in *TWV* Aslam reflects more overwhelmingly the impressions of a 'Western' outsider voicing the tragic and appalling circumstances in Afghanistan that are alien to those in the 'centre'. In *TBMG*, however, Aslam reconfigures his literary attitude by offering the insights of his main character, a young Pakistani man called Mikal, who represents the 'periphery' and hence challenges his previous novel in terms of how he positions himself in the East-West dichotomy. In the light of the discussions outlined above, *TWV* and *TBMG* stand out as two recent examples demonstrating how the content of postcolonial literature has been thriving and encompassing broader cultural, social and political matters now. Analysing Aslam's reconstruction of Afghanistan and Pakistan as 'postcolonial spaces' with a specific focus on the neo-imperialism, global terrorism and its implications will contribute to the discussions of spatial politics in the postcolonial writing and broaden further the wide-ranging scope of the postcolonial writing. Postcolonial literature, which now addresses to wider geographies and their complex postcolonial conditions, has

concerned itself with the global issue of 9/11 and its aftermath, which has facilitated the birth of a new literary sub-genre called ‘war-on-terror’ fiction. The following part aims at briefly outlining ‘war-on-terror’ fiction and discussing *TWV* and *TBMG* as two prominent examples that subvert this booming sub-genre.

1.3.1. Postcolonialism and ‘War on Terror’ Fiction

On 11 September 2001, not only the U.S. but also the rest of the world was shaken by a series of air-hijacking suicidal attacks organized by Al-Qaeda militants, resulting in death of thousands, incalculable damage in every sense and drastic change of global politics affecting a considerable segment of the world. The immediate U.S. response to the attacks was its declaration that this is a new kind of war with ‘a new kind of enemy’ that requires ‘exceptional’ international policies to be enacted primarily because the responsible party was not an official state to be dealt with but rather a non-state transnational network that is hard to deal with international norms of war (Ralph 1-3). The 9/11 attacks and the subsequent ‘war-on-terror’ have brought its own complexities to be untangled by many disciplines including political science, sociology and literary studies. Especially due to the political rhetoric of the Bush administration on the onset of the attacks, ‘us’ and ‘them’ binary got deepened when combined with the initial reaction of American public filled with confusion, anger and fear. While the rhetoric of ‘victimized us’ tended to legitimize American political and military operations in the Middle East launched against Al-Qaeda, ‘Muslim other’ or the ‘terrorist other’ image was kept alive by the influence of Western news media for a continuing emphatic identification with the ‘victimized us’. American presidential power has changed twice since then, but the reductive rhetoric of ‘us’ and ‘them’ binary has still been felt in global politics and media as well as in popular culture. It has operated on multiple levels³ and continues to prevail the global discourse.

³ The dichotomous categories of East/West, American/non-American or Muslim/non-Muslim are a few examples that ‘us and them’ binary in the aftermath of 9/11 has reinforced. It has also brought further complications regarding the definition of such fluid concepts as ‘civilization’ or ‘freedom’, each party asserting the legitimacy of their own conceptualization.

Gohar Karim Khan links the birth of 9/11 literature to an urge for “a collective catharsis” that can be attained by means of fiction (3). Dealing with such basic themes as the representation of violence, terror and trauma inflicted by 9/11 attacks, this new genre has already reached a considerable volume of literature and shows variety in terms of style and literary agenda. Some of the prominent examples of Anglo-American corpus of 9/11 fiction can be counted as Ian McEwan’s *Saturday* (2005), Jonathan Safran Foer’s *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005), Claire Messud’s *The Emperor’s Children* (2006), John Updike’s *Terrorist* (2006), Don DeLillo’s *Falling Man* (2007) and Joseph O’Neill’s *Netherland* (2008). This new genre has proved to be a contested one owing to the diverse range of artistic and cultural responses it has to make sense and give meaning to the 9/11 events. While some of the early examples “... have included memorializations of an idealized pre-9/11 world, commemorations of the victims and heroes of 9/11 and even some attempts at exploring the psychology of terrorist figure”, and “such fiction ... largely grounded in Euro-American discourse of hegemony ... proves insufficient in representing terrorism and violence in their proper transnational and trans-historical dimensions” (Khan 1-5), more contemporary examples of 9/11 fiction offer deeper and more complex insights into the multidimensionality of this phenomenon. Putting aside popular American war writing that heavily relies on war memoirs and nationalistic feelings, 9/11 attacks and its aftermath have propelled many writers not just from the United States but from different ethnical and national backgrounds to defy the U.S.-centric frames in which ‘war-on-terror’ is given, and investigate the multi-faceted and transnational trauma these attacks have created across a wider geography. Representation of post-9/11 reality by the mainstream Anglo-American media offers discursive and reductionist frames of war; not just the frames of war have been manipulated; reminding us Edward Said’s discussion of orientalism in relation to Islam, an inflated appetite in the Western media for the representation of Islam and Muslims has emerged, homogenizing the Muslims into one identity category and creating a ‘dangerous other’ frame.

Many early examples of ‘war on terror’ literature such as McEwan’s *Saturday* and O’Neill’s *Netherland* primarily focus on the emphatic identification with victims of the attacks and the prolonged trauma of terror and war. However, the subsequent literary texts produced along with a cynicism for 9/11 discourse aim at reframing the post-9/11 reality in contemporary fiction as well as contributing to a reframing of the event itself. O’Gorman defines this tendency as ‘unanchoring of the 9/11 novel’ from its initial reflex of dwelling primarily on the Western perception of the terror and trauma and argues that literature appeases the need of “[a] more broad-scoped reframing of reality” (10). The literary texts produced in this line “work to complicate the reductive ‘us and them’ identity binaries ... [with] a broader process of framing within which dominant media representations of violence only play a part” (O’Gorman 7-9). Along with this comes the subversion of this new sub-genre; contrary to the totalizing discourse of the American global politics that have polarized the world through its global ‘war-on-terror’ and constructs rigid identity categories, the subversion of 9/11 genre basically contains “a shared interest in difference, not only between nations, but also within them” (O’Gorman 11). Whereas the earlier examples of 9/11 genre directly deal with the attacks and their immediate aftermath, ‘war-on-terror’ fiction is now getting increasingly transnational with extended cultural, sociological and political outcomes of 9/11 distilled uniquely from the perspectives of a variety of writers.

The subversion of ‘war on terror’ fiction holds additional importance for this thesis primarily because Aslam’s two novels under the scrutiny of this study successfully exemplify the subversion of this genre. To quote from Flannery who further elaborates on this issue, “[t]o the dominant US-centric narratives of post-9/11, ... Aslam tender[s] disjunctive counter-narratives that expand the horizons of what can be stabled as 9/11 fiction” (n.p.). More specifically, this thesis attributes additional importance to how Nadeem Aslam subverts 9/11 fiction by reconstructing Afghanistan’s and Pakistan’s national spaces that have been heavily affected by pre and post-9/11 socio-political circumstances. In this respect, O’Gorman’s analysis of *TWW* argues that the novel defies “a stereotyped framing

of Afghanistan in the global media that tends to reduce the nation to its Islamist extremist elements” (20). Decentring the U.S.-centric trauma of the attacks, Aslam portrays a polyphonic space of Afghanistan that is made up of diverse social and cultural elements and manifold experiences of socio-political realities forged by pre and post-9/11 conjunctures. According to O’Gorman, such a representation can actually offer the best alternative to the nation’s problem with extremism; it is “a vision both of and for the country that is more pluralistic and globally connected that hard-line Islamists might be uncomfortable with” (20). *TBMG* also reiterates Aslam’s subversive treatment of 9/11 fiction from a different angle, this time by foregrounding the story of a Pakistani family whose members each suffer differently from the effects of 9/11 on Afghanistan and Pakistan. In this novel, Aslam subtly highlights the fact that even the simplest lives in the region that have no direct extremist or terrorist affiliations have been disrupted tragically as a result of post-9/11 regional and global politics. The novel subtly implies that if it were not for the emphatic power of fiction that can demarginalize the experience of the ordinary people, this side of post-9/11 trauma would have remained unheard due to the one-sided representations of ‘war-on-terror’ in the mainstream Anglo-American media. Aslam takes on the task to disrupt reductive frames of ‘war on terror’ with a counter representation that highlights the intrinsic plurality and heterogeneity within a nation the official politics and the mainstream media generally disregard. In his narration of both novels, the diversity of characters- Afghan, English, American, Russian, fundamentalist, pious, secular, non-believer, traditional, liberal and so on- and their unique positionings within their society besides their relationships with one another, offers a glimpse of how the region is in fact meagrely represented in the Anglo-American world. Unlike the totalizing representations of the Western mainstream media to nourish the ‘us and them binary’, the ambivalent picture Aslam draws reconfigures the perception of the ‘other side’ of the ‘war-on-terror’ in a productive way. For instance, his apt portrayal of a fundamentalist character Casa in *TWV* “challenge[s] post-9/11 Western perception about the fundamentalist figure [while at the same time

carefully] avoids playing down the existence of a certain kind of Islamist fundamentalism in the country” (O’Gorman 131) with his clear-cut criticism of its practices. With *TBMG*, Aslam zooms into the life of a young man, Mikal, who is falsely accused of being an Al-Qaeda member. His characterization lays bare the reductionist assumption that “... there are no innocent people in a guilty nation” (*TBMG* 6) and invites the reader to rethink stereotypical representations of the ‘Muslim other’ and the ‘terrorist other’. Aslam’s narration in this sense offers a careful blend of a challenge to the Anglo-American frames of ‘war on terror’ and a powerful critique of terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism. Before moving on with the analyses of *TWV* and *TBMG* within the theoretical frame outlined here, this chapter also offers an overview of Nadeem Aslam in terms of his postcolonial-migrant-writer status, his engagement with politics and his unique literary style in order to have a more comprehensive insight into his works and his unique positioning in the postcolonial literature.

1.4. An Overview of Nadeem Aslam

1.4.1. Aslam as a Postcolonial Migrant Writer

Considering the plurality the term postcolonialism itself denotes, situating Nadeem Aslam as a postcolonial writer is an ambitious project due to many complexities his case suggests. Born in Pakistan in 1966, Aslam moved to Britain as a teenager at the age of fourteen. Being a migrant whose mother-tongue is not English, he suffered from his poor level of English at school. Although his real interest was in social sciences, -specifically, literature, history and politics for which he had to better his English-, he chose to study science in which even a clumsy language could be enough to express oneself, which in fact implicitly suggests his complicated relationship with the English language in his early years as a migrant. His daring decision of leaving his Biochemistry degree to write was followed by years in financial difficulty before becoming an award-winning writer. In his interview with Amina Yaqin, he explains how he painstakingly educated

himself with canonical works and writers in English to realize his ambition of becoming an accomplished writer:

After [the publisher] said, 'We will publish your book,' I said to myself, the things that I was interested in, the things I should have studied – English, history, politics – for the next decade, I am going to do them privately. So I sat down and basically educated myself in English. I read everything by Conrad, Hardy, Lawrence, George Eliot, Joyce. I would ask people, 'Who is a great novelist?' Somebody would say 'D H Lawrence' and I would pick up the first novel by Lawrence, then the second, third, fourth, sixth, seventh, fifteenth et cetera. Then I read everything by Faulkner, Naipaul, everything. This was me teaching myself. Then I wanted to know more. Because the first novel was done really out of fear. Because I had dropped out of university. So many things, that maybe I can't even do this, maybe I don't have English. So I sat down and copied the whole of *Lolita* by hand. I wanted to see where the comma fell, what is a paragraph, when do you break off a chapter. I copied the whole of *Moby Dick*, the whole of *Beloved* by Toni Morrison, the whole of *As I Lay Dying* by William Faulkner. (40)

Aslam's reading list for his self-study deserves particular attention; the fact that it consists of mainly the major works of the Western canon suggests his conviction that it is necessary to digest the Western cannon to have a complete grasp of the English language and literature before forming his own authorial voice. This also shows us that unlike many postcolonial writers who, in defiance with the Western and colonial ways and with a precise anti-colonial sensibility, traces the pre-colonial roots in terms of content, form or style, Aslam embarks on his literary journey by following the footsteps of the major Western writers, embraces the Western influence to create his own interpretation, and perhaps more importantly negotiates his postcolonial experience of culturally being in the 'centre' with his ancestral background that suggests 'periphery'.

Aslam's meticulous use of English, combined with his Pakistani cultural background and his interpretation of Urdu language and literature, has created his award-winning novels; about this unique combination that suggests his migrant positioning, he argues that "... [English] isn't my language. It is now. This is a language I speak. This is a language I love in, a language I dream in, ... My alphabet

is bigger, it doesn't have just twenty-six letters. Mine has thirty-eight letters of the Urdu alphabet as well" (Yaqin 40). His complex relationship to the English language built up in years draws our attention to Aslam's dual positioning both as a 'British Asian' and a postcolonial migrant author. Upstone asserts that 'Asian', 'British' or 'British-Asian' are contested terms due to the complexities they signify. The term 'Asian' is problematic due to various reasons. To name a few of the problematic areas, Asian identity is commonly associated with Islam despite many other religious faiths and practices, and the Gulf War, the Rushdie affair, 9/11 attacks and London Tube bombings have subsequently had adverse effects on the reception of the Asian label. Also, there are different cultural and social connotations of the term 'Asian' in Britain and in the U.S., and which communities are/must be deemed 'Asian' is ambiguous (Upstone, *British Asian* 3). The 'British' Asian label also calls scepticism due to its contested nature; the difficulty lies in the fact that the tension between nationalist tendencies and multicultural and multi-ethnic pluralist views makes it harder to reach an inclusive definition of 'Britishness' (Upstone, *British Asian* 3). Within this frame, Nadeem Aslam rightly deserves to be called as the embodiment of "the complexities of British Asian authorship" (Upstone, *British Asian* 101). The complexity of his case first and foremost stems from the fact that his narration "fuses the conventional postcolonial themes and literary techniques with a distinctly British sensibility" (Upstone, *British Asian* 101). While maintaining his connection to the Third World, especially his homeland Pakistan, by problematizing their postcolonial condition and aptly portraying their intrinsic realities (specifically disenchantment with power relations, gender inequalities and religious degradation), he simultaneously establishes himself in the Anglo-American literary circles with his elaborate use of English and his intellectual and cultural position as a 'Westerner' that manifests itself through his narration.

Elleke Boehmer's discussion of postcolonial literature from the perspective of migrant authors associates the migrant literature with "a geographic, cultural, and political retreat by writers from the new but ailing nations of the post-colonial

world ‘back’ to the old metropolis” (230). This retreat characterized by disillusionment has prompted the migrant writers to “turn from the political to the aesthetics as a zone of imaginative transformation” (230). The economic, political and social instabilities and nationalist repression that have plagued postcolonial nations have led many migrant writers to ‘retreat’ where they can secure themselves and be advantaged by connections with Europe and America. Coming from a Pakistani migrant family, Nadeem Aslam falls into category of migrant writers. Yet he only partly fits into Boehmer’s definition of postcolonial migrant writers; for him it is not possible to talk about a self-conscious intellectual ‘retreat’ as in the case of Salman Rushdie who migrated to England in his adulthood. In his case, his family’s migration to England due to political reasons when he was a teenager rendered him as a ‘second generation’ migrant author whose intellectual world has been primarily shaped by his migrant experience rather than solely his disillusioning or nostalgic memory of ‘home’. However, it is true that the safety zone enjoyed in the old metropolis has given authors like Aslam liberty for aesthetic inquiry into matters that are directly about their Third-World background. He thus better fits in Boehmer’s definition of migrant writers as ‘extra-territorial’ rather than national. Aslam is one example of the writers who is “[e]x-colonial by birth, ‘Third World’ in cultural interest, cosmopolitan in almost every other way, ... works within the precincts of the Western metropolis while at the same time retaining thematic and/or political connections with a national, ethnic, or regional background” (Boehmer 227). In a similar vein that underlies his ‘extra-territorial’ positioning, Frawley considers Aslam as a ‘global’ novelist partly due to his divided affinities and the resistance to national assignments his works display, and partly due to his preoccupations with global processes of war and migration and his appeal to a global audience (442). While his works such as *Season of the Rainbirds* (1993) and *Leila in the Wilderness* (2010) problematize the corruption and the social stability in his home country Pakistan and *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004) is critical of the Pakistani diaspora in England, Aslam is by no means a nationalist, but indeed an ‘extra-territorial’ and ‘global’, as Boehmer and Frawley suggest, with his interest

in such large-scale matters as neo-imperialism and global terrorism. These are the dominant sources of aesthetic inquiry in *TWV* and *TBMG*, and his focus on these larger subjects that this study explores consolidates his unique positioning within the manifold literary voices that postcolonial literature harbours.

According to Boehmer, “[...] postcolonial migrant literature can be described as a literature written by élites, and defined and canonized by élites” (233). Many significant migrant writers such as Salman Rushdie or Hanif Kureishi enjoyed an advantage for their ‘élite upbringing’ which contributed both to their aesthetic attitude and their canonical position in the postcolonial literature. It also explains their reception and status as privileged migrant authors in the West; “[b]ecause of their connections or their upbringing, they have tended sooner or later to win acceptance in metropolitan élites. Essentially, by migrating, they have been able to secure themselves a different, more comfortable location in the wider neo-colonial world” (Boehmer 231). In their secure positioning, they can cast a critical eye for the third world matters, they treat the world as a heterogenous hybrid place, and freeing of voices bring their art a cosmopolitan quality and a sense of the ‘apolitical’. Looking at where Aslam stands in this regard, we see that he does not enjoy the same élite background that would provide him a sense of the apolitical or prepare him a secure position among the metropolitan élites. His father was a poet, a filmmaker and a communist in Pakistan who had to leave the country for political reasons. He constantly touches upon his humble background to explain that his connection to the First World is not maintained by a privileged background provided by his family. In one interview he remarks that he doesn’t “... come from a big kothi or a villa [but] from a muhalla. The inner city of Gujranwala ... [he] wasn’t sent to what is known as an English-medium school. [he] went to an Urdu-medium school ... So when [he] came here [England] at fourteen ... [his] English was really at that level: ‘this is a table’, ‘this is a cat’, ‘that is a dog’” (Yaqin 40-41). Yet he also acknowledges the fact that living in the West, he has benefited from the intellectually secure environment where he had the opportunity to identify himself and find his own voice. In another interview, Aslam states that he wouldn’t

have been a writer had he remained in Pakistan and “[he] would [have been] working to contribute to [his] sister’s dowry” (Hasan n.p.). From this regard, Aslam rightly deserves to be called ‘self-made’ in terms of his efforts to create a ‘space’ for himself in the hegemonic canon of English literature despite lack of socio-economic advantages.

1.4.2. Aslam and Politics

Following the line of thinking Boehmer suggests in the previous section, one can argue that adopting an apolitical attitude for the sake of being cosmopolitan does not reflect Aslam’s political stance; on the contrary, he makes use of writing to accentuate his engagement with politics and history, and reflects his concern about global politics and power relations. According to Frawley, while Aslam’s choice of Afghanistan as a setting in *TWV* and *TBMG* unavoidably renders these novels “inherently political” (442), Clements draws attention to another dimension of his political engagement in his writings by arguing that he exemplifies “a shift towards a more politically-engaged form of English-language fiction amongst South Asian Muslim (and predominantly Pakistani) writers in the years since 9/11, in part in response to media and market pressures – to a demand for explanatory stories and authentic spokespeople – but also a result of the individual authors’ desire to rewrite this ‘East’” (*Writing Islam* 25). Aslam’s works stand out as careful and elaborate commentaries on many socio-political issues ranging from gender hierarchies to global politics, and what makes these commentaries distinctive from myriads of fictional/non-fictional others is his process of reconstruction by means of his unique literariness. In his process of reconstruction, his engagement with factual world constitutes an interrogatory basis for his works:

History is important to me. Politics is important to me. I keep saying we’ve lived through an extraordinary decade, beginning with the attacks on 11 September 2001 and ending with the Arab Spring. Mohamed Atta’s suicide at one end and Mohamed Bouazizi’s suicide at the other. And between these two moments, we had the War on Terror, the call to Jihad, the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, Guantanamo Bay, Abu Ghraib, Daniel Pearl, the murder of Benazir Bhutto and the murder of Osama Bin Laden. I

keep saying this clash between an incomplete understanding of the East and an incomplete understanding of the West seems to have taken place. (Yaqin 39)

According to Aslam, who is preoccupied with socio-political conjunctures on global scale, history is a bridge to cross for glimpsing at human condition and asking for more questions in philosophical realm. His interest in factuality is a means for his fiction to offer imaginative transformation. Through political and historical phenomena he reconstructs, he lays bare the conflicting epistemologies that create the misunderstandings he refers to in the quote above. At the same time, he underscores the fictionality of his literary works in such a way that gives them a timeless quality and offers the reader new horizons of thought. As the quote below suggests, for Aslam novel is a powerful medium of bridging the distance between the world and the interpretive possibilities fiction can offer:

I was on Google not long ago and I typed in ‘Pakistan is ...’ and the auto-fail choices I was given were ‘dangerous’, ‘stupid’, ‘a terrorist country’ and when I typed in ‘America is ...’, the choices I was given were ‘not the world’, ‘evil’, ‘not a country but a business’. I wanted to find a story ... that would hold as many of these misunderstandings, as many of these events that I’ve just mentioned [like the Arab Spring, Mohamed Atta’s suicide, War on Terror, the call to Jihad, the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, and so on], in some shape or form, but without losing shape as a novel, because this is not a work of non-fiction. When I write non-fiction, it will stay non-fiction. This is a novel, so it has to have things that a novel has: linguistic excitement, narrative excitement. As a novelist, I can’t tell you what to think, I can tell you what to think about. (Yaqin 40)

In another interview, Aslam argues that “[he] vote[s] every time [he] write[s] a sentence” (Hong, n.p) to elaborate on his conviction that the problems of the world entail collective engagement, and this can be possible by the transformative power of fiction. This line of thinking also entails discussing Aslam’s literary engagement with political conjunctures, specifically neocolonialist/neoimperialist practices in Afghanistan and Pakistan and their post-independence issues, and how his unique standing calls for a revision of Boehmer’s

criticism about postcolonial migrant writers' connection to the Third world. Boehmer celebrates the idea that "[...] being 'borne across' equips 'out-of-country' authors with the materials to give imaginative form to their dislocated worlds" (234), and this lack of national rootedness in return gives them creative space and freedom for reconfiguration and imaginative transformation. However, her criticism of the migrant writers lies on the fact that establishing themselves at the 'centre', their engagement with the Third world, namely the 'periphery', remains superficial:

Indeed, in certain lights it may seem that the [migrant] writers' connections with their Third World background have become chiefly metaphorical. They can appear to concern themselves with scenes of national [and cultural] confusion ... primarily to furnish images for their art, or to deconstruct playfully the allegedly bankrupt narrative of the imagined nation. What this means, once again, is that they thus participate in the time-worn processes through which those in the West scrutinize the other, the better to understand themselves. For reasons such as these, although migrant writers are themselves often vociferously opposed to neo-colonial malformations, their work has drawn criticism for being a literature without loyalties, lacking in the regional and local affiliations which are deemed so necessary at a time of mass globalization. (232)

In Boehmer's argument, there is scepticism that calls migrant writers' relationship with the Third World 'metaphorical' as it suggests that their literary production treating the East as an intriguing subject is potentially in the service of the dominant discourse of the Western culture which still bases its epistemology on such divisive binaries as 'the West' and 'the East', or 'us' and 'them'. It is true that Nadeem Aslam does not participate in 'the representation game' in which the author has the mission of becoming the voice of his nation and his narration quintessentially acts as political and national allegories. It is also partially right to call his reconfiguration of Afghanistan and Pakistan 'metaphorical' since his experience as a member of the Pakistani diaspora in England more overwhelmingly shapes his intellectual attitude and cultural affiliations rather than his connection to his homeland and his experiences back there. Yet for Aslam this multi-positioning is not a confusing experience; on the contrary, he embraces the duality in his

background by stating that: “If you look at certain machines, they say made in China but assembled in Germany. I always say I was made in the East but assembled in the West. So I belong to both of those places” (Yaqin 43). In his interview with Hong, he reiterates his dual sense of belonging not as a displacing experience but rather an enriching one: “Emotionally, I think of a map in which Pakistan and England are fused. The Grand Trunk road passes through Lahore and Peshawar, drops down into the Khyber Pass, and emerges into Newcastle in the north of England. That is the ‘country’ I live in” (n.p). Even if his connection to ancestral homeland is weaker as a second-generation migrant writer compared to those of first generation, he defines his engagement to his Eastern background as a ‘position of strength’ through which he can reconfigure ‘tourist-board clichés’ by means of an artistic quality (Yaqin 43). He also differs from Boehmer’s classification of migrant writers in the sense that although he is highly critical of postcolonial malformations like political corruption, social inequalities and cultural deterioration prevailing the Third World, his political interests in his literary agenda is more expansive for critically treating such larger issues as neo-imperialism which causes political and economic subjugation of the Third World and global terrorism which dangerously breeds national and religious stereotypes and sharpens divisive and essentialist discourses.

1.4.3. Aslam’s Literary Style

According to Childs and Green, what makes Aslam’s literary style unique is “[his] blend of ethical scrutiny with an aesthetics of exquisite prose” (103). He offers the reader an artistic combination of content and literariness; to accomplish this, he employs various literary strategies compatible with his subject matters. For Aslam, his particular attention to the content as a reflection of his strong political engagement is one issue he primarily emphasizes in relation to his literary attitude. The ‘content’ determines Aslam’s stylistic attitude; instead of experimenting with various stylistic devices for the literary text to speak for itself; he prefers to use literary strategies that are fit for his subject matters. For this reason, he states that

“[m]y novels are straightforward novels ... I don't like to experiment too much” (Yaqin 44). To give one example of how “[t]he subject matter came first” for the author (Yaqin 41), his explanation of how he came up with the subject of *One Thousand Miles by Moonlight*, a novel he plans to write about Pakistan's blasphemy laws, is elucidatory:

I always say news is the most emotional programme on TV for me. Some writers begin with a character and explore that character and his life, then other people arrive and before they know it they have a novel. Some people say the storyline came, some people say an image came that they wanted to explore. With me, it's always the subject matter. And that is the easy thing. After I have chosen a subject, then I go and find characters who will best help me define the various complexities within it, the various despairs, the various hopes et cetera, and help me generate the possibilities within this story. Pick up a newspaper. There is the blasphemy law thing. The abuse of it is just through the roof now. I wanted to write about that. (Yaqin 41)

Nourished by factuality and politics, Aslam's fiction does not lose its effect of literariness; on the contrary, the blend of his content and style creates exquisite literature out of such grave themes as terror, despotism and suffering. In this vein, one stylistic device that he aptly employs in his narration is magical realism which is characteristically present in his novels *Maps of Lost Lovers* and *Season of the Rainbirds*, and his novella *Leila in the Wilderness*. The ongoing magical realist mode that Aslam also uses in these works have inextricably been associated with the booming postcolonial migrant writing. Boehmer explains the tendency among the postcolonial writers to appeal to magical realism by arguing that it is the best means for the postcolonial writers to “express their view of a world fissured, distorted, and are made incredible by cultural clash and displacement ... Magic effects, therefore, are used at once to convey and indict the follies of both empire and its aftermath” (229). Through *Leila in the Wilderness*, for instance, Aslam portrays the twisted minds and conventions victimizing women in Pakistan, torturing their bodies and souls alike with extreme cases of violence, and hence magical realism is the most fitting literary strategy to both ‘indict the follies’ of the patriarchal order and reconfigure women's position with the power of the

supernatural. Or as in *Maps of Lost Lovers*, magical realism functions as a tool for exposing the flaws prevailing a large community of Pakistani migrants in which narrow-minded version of Islam, bigotry as well as racism inflict deepest wounds for the characters. On the other hand, with each new work Aslam's stylistic choices surprise the reader by its variety; in *TVW* and *TBMG*, magical realism is nowhere to be seen. When contrasted with his earlier works, the narration of these two novels is consistently realistic sharing a similar bleak and cynical outlook that modernist novels display. Just like literary modernism questions the future of humanity in the face of such traumatic experiences as both World Wars and sees a decline of civilisation rather than progress, Aslam interrogates the human condition vis-à-vis global terror, religious fundamentalism and neo-imperialism, and offers little optimism for the fate of individuals which he exquisitely portrays. In this context, Aslam's realist mode of writing testifies a recent tendency of change in the form and structure that Upstone diagnoses in relation to the thematic concerns that new generation British Asian writers demonstrates:

More rooted, realist prose reflects a desire to actively represent, rather than posit alternative possibilities, but also confidence that traditional forms need no longer be subverted as acts of political rebellion. Strategies of postmodernism are inappropriate to thematic concerns less about disorder and fluidity, and more about tempering that fluidity within the context of stability and rootedness ... This may be to the detriment of the progressive potential of these texts as utopian fictions, but does increase their power as social commentaries. The dream-like visions of lost spaces pervading migrant novels are replaced with hard-hitting reflections on a directly and immediately experienced Britain. (*British Asian Fiction* 8-9)

Aslam's literary project in *TWV* and *TBMG* is to lay bare the traumatized lives in the neo-imperial geographies of Afghanistan and Pakistan, thus his authorial intentions are as important his aesthetic concerns. The gravity of the circumstances narrated, -death, torture, kidnapping and violence on various levels- is portrayed acutely in Aslam's realist prose whose descriptive power pushes the boundaries of one's imagination without needing the aid of magical realism. To enhance the effect of literariness, he follows the paths of modernist fiction that

dwells on the inner self and consciousness and portrays the alienation of the individual. The characters whose inner worlds are in turmoil testify the continuous instability and conflict prevailing in their geography. In this vein, Aslam's extensive use of 'stream of consciousness' technique as a stylistic device, adds psychological depth to his characters. The young Afghan Taliban militant Casa in *TVW*, for instance, exemplifies a very carefully constructed character whose contradictions and questionings conveyed through his stream of thoughts imply the follies of fundamentalist thinking. Through the inner worlds Aslam discloses, he prompts the reader to meditate on the nature of various issues ranging from corrupt politics to extremism.

As a final note on Aslam's literary style, his Pakistani upbringing demonstrates itself in his writings through his extensive use of imagery and lyricism. He argues that "[he is] very visual, so [his] books tend to be visual" (Yaqin 41) and in another interview, he further highlights his strong sense of visuality by stating that "[he] get[s] as much pleasure from looking at an apple as from eating it" (Hong, n.p). Thus, borrowed from Urdu literature with which he has cultural affiliations, a poetic language furnished with elaborate metaphors and abundant use of imagery creates another characteristic aspect of his prose. In his review for *TBMG* that appeared in *The Guardian*, Lasdun accentuates Aslam's dramatic use of imagery to convey human emotions by stating that:

Emotion is done imagistically, via quick, finely sketched details of light and landscape that set small precise moods. Flora and fauna are wonderfully observed – moths "like shavings from a pencil sharpener"; a tree trunk "twisted as though struggling with some unseen force" – forming a decorative braid around the frequently brutal human interactions they coincide with. (n.p)

Emotions are not the only area he fills with images; the intrinsic beauties of Afghanistan and its bitter social and political realities are juxtaposed in a lyrical manner in *TWV* and *TBMG*. On the one hand, Aslam describes Afghanistan as "[the] land that Alexander the Great had passed through on his unicorn, an area of fabled orchards and thick mulberry forests, of pomegranates that appear in the

border decorations of Persian manuscripts written one thousand years ago” (*TWV* 6); on the other hand, “It would be no surprise if the trees and vines of Afghanistan suspended their growth one day, fearful that if their roots were to lengthen they might come into contact with a landmine buried nearby” (*TWV* 6). According to Upstone, the way Aslam “recounts scenes of torture with a lyricism ... only serves to make the violence more painfully felt” (*British Asian Fiction* 103), but at the same time the coexistence of the two gives a sense of counterbalance, and hence guides the reader to a unique sense of alienation through the narration of touching beauty and unbearable violence together. Childs and Green also diagnose Aslam’s lyrical narratives to be “suffused with beauty, in terms of their imagery and their use of language” (103) and explains how highly poetic language that Aslam applies to everyday life alienates the reader as well as the content of his novels. Nevertheless, his highly visual language, ornamented with detailed imageries, testifies his meticulous manner of writing (it took 11 years for him to complete *Maps of lost Lovers*), but it more importantly suggests Aslam’s confidence with the English language which he diligently studied to have a full grasp of it. Language is not just a challenge to overcome for communicating his thoughts; it is now his strength that distinguishes him within the postcolonial literary cannon.

The following chapter focuses on the textual analysis of *TWV* with regard to Aslam’s spatial representations of post 9/11 Afghanistan and Pakistan, and his subversive strategies to reconfigure their national space. It investigates how the novel seeks alternative spatial insights to prompt rethinking Afghanistan’s and Pakistan’s stereotypical representations. In this respect, not only *small-scale* physical locations of *house* and *apartment*, but also *microstories* highlighting individual experiences of space and *neglected spaces* of cultural and natural sites in Afghanistan are to be explored for a reframing of the negative image of Afghanistan and creating a more inclusive and pluralistic representation.

CHAPTER 2

SPATIAL POLITICS IN *THE WASTED VIGIL*

2.1. National Space at the Crossroad of Ideologies: Spatial Reality of *The Wasted Vigil's* Afghanistan

The entire world it seemed had fought in this country [in Afghanistan], had made mistakes in this country, but mistakes had consequences and [Marcus] didn't know who to blame for those consequences. Afghanistan itself, Russia, the United States, Britain, Pakistan? (Aslam, *TWV* 40)

Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings. (Said, *Culture* 6)

The main focus of this chapter is *TWV* and its portrayal of Afghanistan's and Pakistan's national space over a 30-year-period of time extending from the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan to the American 'war-on-terror'. Although the novel is predominantly set in Afghanistan, Pakistan is also included to the narration due to the inseparable historical, cultural and political ties between the two countries. *TWV* is highly conscious of how multiple and divergent discourses like those of the Soviet Communism, Islamic fundamentalism, and neo-imperialism have in fact one main object; domination of space whether it is on small or larger scales. The novel acutely depicts how the prolonged war between the Soviets and the Taliban prevails Afghanistan and produces a national space characterized by violence, brutality and suppression. Then the dramatic portrayal of the American neo-imperialist manipulation of space in Afghanistan and Pakistan in the aftermath of 9/11 follows, only to consolidate the fact that national space is always a target for political appropriation, and on political terms it offers little hope for resistance and transformation unless alternatively reconfigured. Therefore, Aslam experiments

with reframing national spaces in *TWV* by accentuating alternative spatialities so that a more inclusive and nuanced perception of Afghanistan and Pakistan can be achieved. In this direction, this chapter starts off with presenting an overview of the novel and outlining its non-fictional background. Then, in the first part, it focuses on the spatial representations of Afghanistan that have been shaped by the Soviet Invasion, Islamic fundamentalism and American neo-imperialism. The second part of the chapter explores the possibilities of *post-space* reconfigurations with a specific focus on *small-scale* representations of national space such as physical locations of *house* and *apartment* and conceptual spaces like *microstories* and *neglected spatialities of cultural and natural sites*.

2.1.1. Non-Fictional Background of the Novel

TWV is set mainly in Afghanistan and partly in Pakistan, covering a time span of almost a quarter of a century in Afghanistan's modern history. Lorraine Adam's review of *TWV* on *The New York Times* argues that *TWV* is "more expansive than [Aslam's] previous ones, documenting several decades intensely and several centuries tangentially. It seeks to reveal the psyche not just of one rural village or one immigrant community but of Britain, the Soviet Union, the United States and Afghanistan" (n.p). The historical and political events of the novel is of a wide range: chronologically the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the civil war upon the fall of the Communist regime and the withdrawal of the Soviets, the subsequent rise of the Taliban, and lastly American global War on Terror constitute the main framework of the political events. Afghanistan's modern history has witnessed many power interventions, local and global, one after another. It goes as far as "... the end of the nineteenth century [during which] Afghanistan became a victim of the so-called 'Great Game' played out between the imperial powers of Britain and Russia, in which the two countries captured Afghan territory, uprooted settled populations and violently intervened with the matters of the state" (Khan 103). In more recent times, in 1973, the monarchy was put to an end by Mohammed Daoud's coup who declared Afghanistan a republic with himself as its first president. His

fallouts with the Afghanistan's Communist party prompted the Soviet Union to intervene, which paved way the Pro-Soviet Marxist-Leninist PDPA to stage another coup to liquidate Daud's regime. Unfortunately, the picture got even worse for Afghanistan, as Saikal explains, by the PDPA period becoming the bearer of further turmoil:

.... violence emerged as the determining factor in state-society relations. The new masters of Kabul had to resort to the patronage of a single foreign power in order to subordinate the recalcitrant microsocieties. However, the 'fraternal ties' with a 'great and selfless northern neighbour' – the USSR – turned out to be insufficient to guarantee success and ultimately led to innumerable victims, dramatic shifts in the make-up of Afghan society and the disintegration of Afghanistan as a governable sovereign state. (187)

The new regime, pursuing the 'Godless' ideology of Communism, failed to gain credibility among the Afghans; factional fightings, organized civil and armed resistance to PDPA policies and ill-conceived reforms undermined the new regime's authority (Saikal 188-190). In the meantime, an organised Islamic opposition, later became known under the generic name of Mujahideen, started to gain strength and support. In 1979, The Soviet Union, which had already been supporting the PDPA even before the coup for its 'pragmatic' concerns, 'intervened' politically and economically to sustain the Communist regime. Within 8 years of time, the invasion proved to be a costly mistake for the Soviet Union, failing to consolidate the PDPA: "[i]t caused, both directly and indirectly, horrendous losses and devastation for the Afghan people, involving, until mid-1988, 1.24 million killed and about five million (or nearly one third of the Afghan population) becoming refugees, with approximately three million in Pakistan and two million in Iran" (qtd. in Saikal 198). Driven by its regional and international interests, the US's counter-interventionist policy soon took the stage of Afghanistan with its logistic support to the Islamic resistance forces, the Mujahideen. The Soviets withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 brought along the disintegration of the Soviet-installed government and destabilized the country further, and the authority gap was filled with the Taliban hegemony, which was born out of the

Mujahideen, causing further tragic losses, both cultural and human, for the Afghans and creating what Saikal defines as “regressive Islamic medievalism in the 1990s” (4). Within a little more than a decade, this time, U.S. intervention to Afghanistan, whose devastating repercussions are still felt even today, took place in the wake of 9/11 attacks, with the claim of Afghanistan becoming an operational headquarter of Al-Qaeda and the hub of international terrorism.

With Khadem’s words who analyses *TWV* in terms of trauma theory, “Aslam’s novel does not inquire into the post-9/11 American society, but takes a detour to Afghanistan to examine the event from the perspective of ... ‘them’” (188). In this direction, *TWV* introduces a variety of the characters from different nationalities, backgrounds and beliefs each of which contribute to the formation of the alternative perspectives into Afghanistan that Khadem suggests. Consistently narrated by the third-person narrator, the novel offers an observation of a household of characters that wars bring together, tracing the effects of a long history of global conflict on the lives of individuals in post-9/11 Afghanistan. It narrates the overlapping stories of Marcus Caldwell- an Englishman and a Muslim convert, Lara- a Russian woman in search of her brother, David Town- a CIA agent and Casa- a Taliban militant. Marcus is a doctor who was married to an Afghan woman Qatrina, also a doctor, and he has been living in Afghanistan for almost all of his adult life. Their life is tragically interrupted by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan during which their daughter, Zameen, is kidnapped by Soviet soldiers. The subsequent rise of the Taliban that ends the Soviet invasion causes Marcus to lose his wife Qatrina too, because the Taliban’s brutal conduct of religious laws sentences Qatrina to be stoned to death. The Russian character Lara has come to Afghanistan from Russia many times in search of his lost brother Benedikt who, having participated in the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, disappears like many other Russian soldiers, and in her last visit she intersects with Marcus without knowing that they actually have something very important in common. After Zameen is taken to a Soviet base, she is sexually assaulted by Benedikt and eventually gives birth to a son named Bihzad. With his son, she takes refuge in

Pakistan, but she is never able to return to her family. Following Zameen's death, Bihzad gets lost. Marcus somehow finds out about his missing grandson, and finding him becomes his only purpose in life. David Town, a former CIA agent, has been in Afghanistan and Pakistan on-and-off for years. During this time, he meets Zameen by chance in Pakistan and falls in love with her. After Zameen's death, he also searches for Bihzad who is the one and only memory left from Zameen, and this brings David and Marcus together. In the present-time of the narration, Marcus's house receives another visitor named Casa, an ardent Taliban militant who takes refuge in Marcus's house hiding his true affiliations, and gets involved in other characters' lives. Although these characters seem quite unlike each other, their common point is their suffering from the terrible afflictions that have plagued Afghanistan for over a quarter of century and their endurance of one sense of loss or another. Their lives intersect in Marcus's house, and their interactions with one another gradually reveal their past and that of Afghanistan too. Through these characters recent historical facts are woven into the narration and the intricacy of national and global forces is revealed. Here Aslam's mastery shows itself in the fact that while political and historical expositions create the danger of diminishing the effect of fiction, Aslam's unique blend of fact and fiction never loses its literariness. Episodes of recent political history are remoulded with aesthetic concerns to offer glimpses of what has been left out by 'official' history.

2.1.2. Space and the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan

Frawley's discussion of *TWV* as a critique of Eurocentric definitions of civil war defines Afghanistan as a "palimpsestic space" which inherits the tension arising from multiple cultures inhabiting the same space, and political and social strifes continuing over several generations (440-441). In this 'palimpsestic space' that suggests the multi-layeredness of history, identity, geography and politics, Aslam aptly "represent[s] civil war alongside colonial invasion and occupation" (Frawley 447) to indicate continuity and connectedness of different temporal periods and geographies in Afghanistan's specific case. In a similar vein reinforcing the idea of

manifold 'connectedness' and underlying the entanglement of global power relations in Afghanistan, the narrative voice of the *TWV* states if you "[p]ull a thread here [in Afghanistan] and you'll find it's attached to the rest of the world" (Aslam, *TWV* 432). One 'thread' that *TWV* problematizes in this context is the Soviet Union whose marks on the 'palimpsestic' space of Afghanistan is rendered with mimetic sensibility. The Soviet influence on Afghanistan is contextualized with references to the period during which the Communist regime in Afghanistan supported by the Soviet Union has weakened and the Soviet intervention consequently takes place to suppress the rebellions. The novel elaborates on how this intervention causes further conflicts, agonies and bloodshed not only for the Afghans but also for the Russian party. In *TWV*, the Soviet presence in Afghanistan's national space manifests itself mainly in one way; the brutality, either the Soviet brutality prevailing the national space to suppress the rebellion against the communist regime, or the brutality the Russian soldiers are subjected to. Though there are some characters who adopt the communist ideology as a constructive force for their national space, as in the case of Zameen's lover from her hometown Usha who argues that "[t]he Soviets are helping [them] ... Building roads, hospitals, dams" (Aslam, *TWV* 171), the implied author is clearly critical of Communism as an ideology that is fit for the needs of Afghanistan and thus subtly points out the naivete in the judgement of those who advocate this ideology to reshape their country for good. The boy Zameen fell in love with back in Usha believes that Communism "... remains the best hope for a country like Afghanistan ... There's no other way [they] can put an end to the feudal lords and the ignorant mullahs who rule [them] with their power and money, opening their mouths either to lie or to abuse" (Aslam, *TWV* 169-170). Yet, his naivete is exposed when his refugee camp where hundreds of civilians take shelter is destroyed by the Soviet forces with an excuse of the camp becoming a hub for the anti-regime guerrillas. The cynicism the novel demonstrates for Communism testifies one of its main convictions that any ideology or influence imposed with an external intervention rather than a bottom-up urge for change, disregarding the individuals for its own sake, wouldn't make

much contribution to the transformation of a country. Apart from these few references, how the communist ideology manifested itself on the national space is weakly described partly due to the fact that the narration starts when the Soviet invasion is already in decline.

The narration constantly draws the reader's attention to the brutal treatment of Soviet forces operating in Afghanistan. In contrast with the overarching statements of global politics for legitimizing their violation of the national space, through characters and their actions *TWV* articulates the hidden agendas of global politics, and their manipulation of national space and its components reflects the state politics they embody. With this invasion, space becomes a legitimate source to make use of for the Soviet forces, treating everything in space as if their own commodities, people and things alike. Also, to maintain the control of this space, any means is legitimate. A Soviet commander, for instance, captivates Zameen just because she has the same blood type as his, and in case of a need for blood transfusion, she is an available 'source' to *drain* blood. Similarly, the narration refers to butterfly mines "made of green plastic and shaped like butterflies" (Aslam, *TWV* 344) and "mines disguised as actual toys onto villages- dolls and colouring pens, bright plastic wristwatches. Things designed to attract children" (Aslam, *TWV* 344). These landmines are used by the Soviet forces to make parents think that their village is no longer a safe place and so they should vacate it. Emptying those villages that hide guerrillas and blocking their passage to and from Pakistan by this way is a strategical tool for appropriating and dominating the space. Tragically, the Soviet appropriation of space comes with a price for the civilians; it causes children to get fatally injured and die as in the case of orphaned refugee children Zameen travels with to take refuge in Pakistan.

TWV points out a collaboration between the Afghan guerrillas and the U.S. in the pre-Taliban stage to uproot the communist regime and fight against the Soviet forces. The presence of the Soviet forces, the American indirect intervention with its assistance to the guerrillas, and landlords fighting with each other over the

supremacy of more space render the national space far more chaotic in a destructive sense, and within this space characterized with different forms of brutalities of war, the Soviet soldiers have been going through “their Vietnam” (Aslam, *TWV* 111) as Lara suggests while she comments on the hatred and rivalry between the two empires. Thus the national space is characterized with utter hostility by the locals towards the Soviets. During the civil war against the communist regime, “bloodstained [shirts] ..., bloody fur hats and Red Star bandages taken from dead Soviet soldiers” (Aslam, *TWV* 407) can be found for sale in the bazaars of Peshawar and Kabul. Secretly aided by the United States, “... [w]hen the Afghan guerrillas returned a prisoner to the Soviets in exchange for one of their own, they axed off his right hand so he would not be able to fight again, and these trophies too could be found in the bazaars” (Aslam, *TWV* 407). In another case, a Russian soldier named Piotr witnesses that “a month ago three soviet soldiers were found hanging cut up in a butcher’s shop” (Aslam, *TWV* 35) and argues that a defected or captured soldier in the hands of the rebels certainly goes through indescribable tortures and a brutal death. In one respect, the novel’s emphatic representations of Russian brutality can be read as a challenge to the orientalist misconception that ‘savagery’ and ‘barbarity’ is equated with the ‘East’. However, by accentuating Russian brutality acted on Afghanistan without understating how Russian soldiers are also brutalized, Aslam in fact tries to reach a balanced representation of brutality as a prevalent reality of the national space that cannot be associated only with one party; instead, it portrays how both sides- the Afghans and the Russian- experience it painfully and how their sense of space is therefore affected adversely.

2.1.3. Islamic Fundamentalism and Its Spatial Politics

In *Culture*, Edward Said predicts the rise of Islamic fundamentalism and the Taliban with his observation of “extraordinarily intense reversion to tribal and religious sentiments all over the world [that] has accompanied and deepened many of the discrepancies among polities that have continued since ... the period of high European imperialism” (40). By means of what he defines as “the mobilizing power

of the images and traditions brought forth, and their fictional, or at least romantically coloured, fantastic quality” (*Culture* 17), in the last two decades the world witnessed the attempted formation of an ‘Islamic’ postcolonial space in Afghanistan by constructing a pre-colonial past. What is true for many postcolonial national states as for having nationalist essences to revive, admire and act accordingly is also true for the formation of the Taliban who uses Islam as their main means of manipulation. In terms of the construction of national territory to obscure chaos and hybridity, and ordering of space by making artificial boundaries, there is a clear parallelism between how Islamic fundamentalism takes up from where imperialism has left and how anti-colonial nationalism operates almost as if it is a continuation of colonialism, proving the idea that “[...] there is an inherent danger to oppositional effort of becoming institutionalized, marginality turning into separatism, and resistance hardening into dogma” (Said, *Culture* 63). In this line of thinking, *TWV* problematizes the epistemology of the fundamentalist Islam through its portrayal of the Taliban hegemony on Afghanistan’s national space, and also exposes the underlying connection between imperialism and Islamic fundamentalist regime.

TWV portrays the Soviet invasion and the subsequent rise of Taliban within a causality suggesting that the Soviets, the ‘infidels’ in the eyes of the Afghan Muslims, have been expelled by means of a sense of unity based on religious sentiment rather than nationalist feelings. The novel implies religion to be a bigger common ground for the Afghans to be united around than nationality, which explains how the Taliban’s success in their fight against the Soviet forces renders them much more dominant over the national space after the fall of the Soviet regime. The authority gap emerged upon the decline and eventual fall of Communist regime is first filled with the civil war between the landlords. In Usha where most of the kernel events of the novel take place, fighting for domination of space leads to a civil war between two figures of power; Nabi Khan and Gul Rasool: “Nabi Khan and Gul Rasool reducing two-thirds of Usha to rubble in the early 1990s, killing a third of its population as they fought for supremacy, five hundred

rockets fired into various parts of Usha in a single day. To visit certain streets was to realize that only the sky remained unchanged here” (Aslam, *TWV* 225). Control over space becomes a source of conflict for various forces across Afghanistan each of which brings their own destruction and brutal treatment on everything that makes up the national space. Then the novel implies the fact that the Taliban come with a claim of eradicating conflicts and exploitations of the civil war period, but they only add further to brutality already prevailing the national space with its additions of oppressions, restrictions, and a prevailing sense of terror. Their appropriation of national space creates a suffocating enclosure, physically, socially and psychologically. Their Islamic paradigm which produces their rigid binaries of Islamic/Unislamic and holy/unholy and decent/indecent are reverberated on all scales that make up the national space. After they put an end to the war between Gul Rasool and Nabi Khan by gaining control of Usha, they start their own practices of claiming hegemony over space. To name a few, “whipping women in the street for showing their faces, ... ban[ing] smoking, music, television, kite flying, ludo, chess, football, ... arresting men for who didn’t have beards, taking them to jail until the beards had grown, ... order[ing] shops to close at prayer time” (Aslam, *TWV* 239) are some of their initial manifestations of domination over Usha. Thus in their reconfiguration of national space, sameness in terms of belief, life style, appearance and social conduct is the main drive, anything that signifies a diverse sense of space has to be suppressed to maintain the continuation of spatial appropriation. The practices of Islamic fascism of Taliban can be elaborated in this vein; Kabul is referred as “the city where plans were being made to make the non-Muslim inhabitants- a few Sikhs and Hindus, a handful of Jews- wear clothes of specific colour, to make sure their lesser status was immediately apparent on the street” (Aslam, *TWV* 245). On another level, to create their own spatial reality, the restrictions and impositions they carry out on the individuals and social life is a strategical tool to reshape and redefine the frame of national space.

TWV problematizes terror as a powerful means for appropriating the national space by the fundamentalists. Terrorizing the space hinders any defiance

against domination. Giving detailed accounts of brutality combined with terror, the novel makes use of time anachronies in the narration to detail how the Taliban hegemony gets to prevail Afghanistan. The novel's present time sets in the 'war-on-terror' period in which The Taliban has lost its power. In Casa's recollections of the Taliban's coming to power, he elaborates on how the communist government is overthrown, the former Communist President is beaten to death, castrated, driven behind a jeep because "... it was important to terrorise the inhabitants of the city into submission" (Aslam, *TWV* 234). Taliban's dependence on public spectacle before fully maintaining the totalisation of the national space can be best explained by Foucault's propositions on the ideological and political functions of public executions and torture as theatrical spectacles. He argues that:

... from the point of view of the law that imposes it, public torture and execution must be spectacular, it must be seen by all almost as its triumph. The very excess of the violence employed is one of the elements of its glory: the fact that the guilty man should moan and cry out under the blows is not a shameful side-effect, it is the very ceremonial of justice being expressed in all its force. Hence no doubt those tortures that take place even after death: corpses burnt, ashes thrown to the winds, bodies dragged on hurdles and exhibited at the roadside. Justice pursues the body beyond all possible pain. (34)

The fact that "[T]he two swollen and bloodied cadavers [were hanged up] from steel-wire nooses on a traffic post" (Aslam, *TWV* 234) by the Taliban supports the Foucauldian insight into the mechanism of punishment as a public spectacle and in fact serves for the purpose of over-manifestation of Taliban's hegemony. The public exhibition and degradation of the President's body and its exposure to the audience hence refer to deeper semiotic meanings because as Foucault additionally suggests, "[t]he public execution is to be understood not only as a judicial, but also as a political ritual. It belongs, even in minor cases, to the ceremonies by which power is manifested" (47). This kind of manifestation of violence within the national space is thus an act against any defiance that might come from smaller scales. The narration sadly describes that with such practices of terror as spatial

politics during the Taliban reign, “Afghanistan became a land whose geology was fear instead of rock, where you breathed terror not air” (Aslam, *TWV* 241).

To explain how the fundamentalist behaviour in *TWV* operates on the national space, it is also necessary to comment on religious bigotry and manipulation based on religious sentiment portrayed as prevalent facts of Afghanistan. The novel contains a large number of examples of religious bigotry explaining how national space is reconstructed both socially and institutionally, facilitating and nurturing fundamentalist hegemony and manipulation by the religious figures. The narration consistently lays bare the follies of religious bigotry, and attacks twisted interpretation of Islam through the extreme cases it portrays. Bigotry depicted within the national space is so prevalent that at times it gives the impression that it is impossible to be narrated separably from the nation, almost as if it sunk into the national space. The area around the lake Usha, for instance, has been rumoured to be inhabited by a djinn so no one dares to go there, but the narration reveals how this area is in fact manipulated by the cleric of Usha who secretly murdered his wives and buried them there to be able to marry again. The myth of the djinn spreads among the locals and bigotry feeds more bigotry. In this case national space has been under manipulation of those who are socially and institutionally in power like corrupt religious figures who sustain their power by domination of space. Just like institutional politics brings restrictions to the use of national space, individuals in the process internalize these spatial manipulations and create their own enclosed sense of space, both physically and mentally. An extreme example of how bigotry shapes the individuals’ experience of space is a man who comes to Marcus because of his bleeding wound. The real reason why it doesn’t stop bleeding is a “... talisman [verses of the Koran ... written on the paper]. Given to him by someone at the mosque to make the wound heal. Instead of just wearing it around his neck he has inserted it into the wound, thinking it’ll speed up the process!” (Aslam, *TWV* 127). While the Taliban does not allow Marcus and Qatrina, two of the few doctors available in the area, to see patients from the opposite sex or perform their occupation as needed as a result of their restriction on society, the

Afghan people like the man referred above desperately turn to religion for their needs and distresses. In the absence of any rational means, sources or prospects to make their lives more liveable, religion is attributed an excessive value and power. For this reason, those who act as the representative of this power gains unquestionable authority over space; anything that is done in the name of God and the religion has to be welcomed without any questioning. This creates for the fundamentalist Taliban and other manipulative figures an absolute space for carrying out their agendas, people and other components within it being treated only as available sources.

TWV extends its criticism of religion as an ideological apparatus of spatial appropriation to the fact that the fundamentalist religious figures, using the power of religious rhetoric and sentiment, actually exploits the national space at most. Big in numbers, the religious actors of Afghanistan's national space are divergent yet manipulative in the same direction: "These dozens of clerics- the emir, the haji, the hafiz, the maulana, the sheikh, the hazrat, the alhaaj, the shah, the mullah, the janab, the janabeaali, the khatib, the molvi, the kari, the kazi, the sahibzada, the mufti, the olama, the huzoor, the aalam, the baba, the syed" (Aslam, *TWV* 219) all have one trait in common; the ability to appeal to the religious sentiment of the crowds to sustain their supremacy within national space. The fundamentalist figure Casa's recollections describe how these religious authorities follow a procedure of evoking powerful religious sentiment;

At the start they would recite a few verses of the Koran to signify that both the speaker and the listener were now in the realm of the sacred, but what followed was, in fact, history- a lament for Islam's glory and power, a once-proud civilisation brought low by the underhandedness of others, yes, but mainly by the loss of faith among the Muslims themselves, the men decadent, the women disobedient. (Aslam, *TWV* 219)

The rhetoric they use aims at energizing the crowds through an agitated religious sensitivity, which is in fact a strategical tool of spatial politics, so they can be manipulated for fundamentalist causes. More specifically, the novel refers to two figures of power; Nabi Khan and Gul Rasool. Influential both during re-Taliban

civil war stage and after the fall of Taliban again, the actual reason why they fight against each other is for the supremacy over Usha although they each claim to be protecting the religion, Usha and the whole Afghanistan, denouncing one another for being an ‘infidel’ or ‘traitor’. Their self-seeking characters are subtly implied through the fact that while Gul Rasool lives “in a mansion in the wealthy University Town area of the city with his family and a band of fighters ... Nabi Khan also lived nearby in that area wreathed by magnolia trees, as did other tribal leaders and warlords, holly warriors all, all made rich by the hundreds of millions of dollars pouring into the jihad” (Aslam, *TWV* 113). Despite the fact that the new government after the fall of Taliban bans planting opium poppies, Gul Rasool, an MP in the government himself, is already a poppy farmer whose activities have to be tolerated. He is also referred to be “... among the dozens of male politicians who had hurled abuse at a woman MP as she spoke in parliament, shouting threats to rape her” (Aslam, *TWV* 166). Whether it is such figures whose authority is based on their being representatives of the religion operating within the national space on smaller scales, or The Taliban whose ability to appropriate space is larger when compared and whose restrictions and impositions on the national space is much more visible, *TWV* accentuates one main argument through its depictions of fundamentalism in relation to space; religious sentiment can be an ideological tool of spatial politics, and offers almost no hope for a constructive reformation for people unless it becomes a force for good that comes from within, from smaller scales.

2.1.4. American Neo-Imperialism, “War-on-Terror” and National Space

Edward Said’s *Culture* problematizes the United States’ relationship to other states, cultures, histories and peoples. He discusses the United States as the last superpower which is by its self-definition “not a classical imperial power, but a righter of wrongs around the world, in pursuit of tyranny, in defence of freedom no matter the place or cost” (3). This self-definition brings along “the predictable disclaimer that [they] are exceptional, not imperial, not about to repeat the same

mistake of earlier powers” (XXVi), despite the fact that this disclaimer is always followed by actually making the same mistake, as in the case of Vietnam and Gulf Wars, even more recently in Afghanistan. Obscuring the realities of the empire, the self-made ‘legitimacy’ of American economic, political or military interventions “to safeguard its distant interests even to the point of military invasion” (*Culture* 41), is based on the frame of mind Said outlines as “American specialness, altruism, ... American attitudes to American ‘greatness’, to hierarchies of race, to the perils of other revolutions ... American innocence, doing good, fighting for freedom” (*Culture* 7). According to Brennan, this is also reinforced by the globalization era whose main characteristics imposed as universal norms indeed signify ‘Americanness’ (127). Hardt and Negri’s *Empire* digresses from Said’s main emphasis on the U.S. with their comprehensive commentary on a new sense of imperialism. Arguing the death of imperialism that is based on nation-state sovereignty characterized by the European overseas expansion, their concept of Empire signifies “a new form of global sovereignty” (xii), born through the global expansion of American politics, economically, politically and culturally- the domains in fact gets intertwined. While Hardt and Negri accept the United States’ privileged position in Empire, they assert the impossibility of a single nation-state’s absolute sovereignty and thus defy the idea of the United States as the new world leader. Their concept of the Empire instead gestures towards “a decentred and deterritorializing apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open, expanding frontiers. Empire manages hybrid identities, flexible hierarchies, and plural exchanges through modulating networks of command” (Hardt and Negri xii). This attitude shows great parallelism with *TWV*’s depiction of the entanglement of multiple power relations prevailing Afghanistan in the sense that in this reconfigured sense of Empire, territorial boundaries that create ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ are blurred, and the idea of “a perpetual and universal peace outside of history” (Hardt and Negri xv) is a driving force even though its practices continually causes bloodshed and suffering. After unsuccessfully repeating the classical imperialist techniques especially during the Vietnam War

and the Cold War period, The U.S. set off for a new stage in the American imperial project to distinguish itself from the European style and maintain “a global project of network of power” (Hardt and Negri 180-181). For this purpose, it adopts the role of international police or “the peace police” (Hardt and Negri 180). As for Aslam’s attitude towards neo-imperialism, it can safely be argued that his criticism of American imperialist politics is an extension of his cynicism for imperial practices: in one interview he argues that “[w]hatever the Americans are doing to maintain their power now, Muslims, Incas, Spanish, and British colonizers would also have done. This is what empires do. I am deeply suspicious of the idea of 'empire” (Chambers 147). What is more, Aslam’s sense of the United States depicted in *TWV* is closer to Hardt and Negri’s conceptualization because presenting itself “as the only power able to manage international justice, *not as a function of its own national motives but in the name of global right*” (Hardt and Negri 180, emphasis original) is one of Aslam’s main areas of criticism in *TWV* regarding the positioning of the U.S. within the global world.

The earlier British colonial rule over the region that is now separately known as Afghanistan, Pakistan and India renders today’s Afghanistan ‘postcolonial’. The novel briefly refers to Afghanistan’s colonial history regarding Marcus’s childhood. His family having British origin, he was born and stayed in Afghanistan due to his father’s post as a doctor and his mother’s as a nurse until he was five. In 1930s when he was still a child, Afghanistan was “the heart of the British Empire’s most turbulent province” (Aslam, *TWV* 41). This suggests the fact that even when Afghanistan was still a colonial territory, chaos was characteristic to its national space. The novel further argues that the chaos of the neo-imperialist period that Afghanistan wrestles against is thus not new though it comes in altered forms with the American global politics presently having a leading role in it. In this context, Upstone’s viewpoint is illuminating; she argues that “... the colonial space is the postcolonial nation” (*Spatial Politics* 30). This in fact helps understanding the problematic continuity between colonial and postcolonial conditions of Afghanistan since Upstone here implies that the postcolonial nation is a political

construct that cannot completely break free from its colonial spatial legacies despite declaring to be ‘politically’ independent. Chaos in this sense is suggested in the novel to be one spatial legacy the ‘independent’ Afghanistan has inevitably inherited from its colonial history. To extend this argument, it is possible to assert that the space in which the postcolonial nation struggles to free itself from the legacies of colonialism is in danger of becoming a ‘neocolonial’ or ‘neoimperial’ space in which manipulation and exploitation still persist only with different methods.

On multiple levels, neo-imperialist appropriation of space works with a similar logic to that of colonialism which is based on the ‘noble’ responsibility of ‘white man’s burden’ to bring civilization to the uncivilized parts of the world, bearing on as the imperialist reflex of what Said terms as “the perceived character and destiny of a particular geography” (Said, *Culture* 93). *TWV* problematizes the idea that the reason why American neo-imperialism operates on Afghanistan’s national space is its ‘self-made’ responsibility of eradicating terrorism and bringing democracy to multiple nations including Afghanistan. *TWV* in this regard critically underlines this ‘self-made’ burden and its imperial gaze with its description of American forces’ burying debris from the ruins of World Trade Center as a symbolic act of sanctifying their mission in Afghanistan:

On those quartz and feldspar heights at the end of 2001, American soldiers had ceremonially buried a piece of debris taken from the ruins of the World Trade Centre, after the terrorists up there had either been slaughtered or been made to flee. Before these soldiers flew out to attack Afghanistan, The US secretary of defense told them that they had been ‘commissioned by the history’. (Aslam, *TWV* 37)

This symbolic act of burying the debris from the World Trade Center on the spot they take control of points out the larger picture about Afghanistan in which the American military intervention is an act towards the domination of national space. Just like this symbolic act of identifying space, a similar logic is displayed in the former CIA agent David’s retrospections about his conversation with Zameen’s Communist lover from Usha. While he is still a CIA agent who

wholeheartedly advocates the necessity of American presence there, he tries to justify the American presence in Afghanistan by predicating philanthropy to it; “Just wait until the Soviets are defeated ... Then we’ll help you Afghans sweep away the landlords and mullahs” (*TWV* 171). His advice to this young Communist man outlines the American spatial politics of Afghanistan encompassing the present and the future.

Considering the fact that David, the leading representative figure of the American neoimperialism in the novel, becomes a round character with his evolving perceptions and ideas as the novel progresses, analysing James Palantine, another CIA agent whose characterization is unwaveringly static and inflexible, would produce a more truthful commentary regarding the ideological bases the American neoimperialist politics relies on in terms of spatiality. Even though David has spent all his life in the service of American global politics, his eventual inner retrospections combined with his personal identifications with Afghanistan that have strong implications of productive ambiguity renders him an eligible source of interrogating *post-space* possibilities and spatial reconfigurations. For this reason, James Palantine can rightly be considered as the embodiment of the American neoimperialist ideology with his rigid convictions and binary logic. Convinced that “the service he was performing [is] for his nation and for the world” (Aslam, *TWV* 324), he believes to be one of “... - by destiny rather than by choice- the watchmen on the walls of world freedom” (Aslam, *TWV* 277), but in fact corresponds to what Said defines as “ ‘world responsibility’ which exactly corresponds to the growth in the United States’ global interests after World War Two and to the conception of its enormous power as formulated by the foreign policy and intellectual elite” (*Culture* 345). Thus this duty of a ‘watchman’ takes on a transnational attitude that disregards the integrity and privacy of national space with regard to countries other than the U.S. The rhetoric he uses embodies a reconfiguration of ‘the white man’s burden’ within the neo-imperialist context. The underlying idea in his thinking is that the Afghan nation, just like many other Middle Eastern nations, is intrinsically ‘backward’ and ‘barbaric’, rendering the US intervention a necessity. His actions

reflect a clear-cut “them and us” binary that regards the Afghans as “the children of the devil ... [who] have no choice but to spread destruction in the world” (Aslam, *TWV* 413) while the U.S. stands for freedom and democracy. This binary thinking of him even signifies an implicit hostility towards the ‘other’ and their land, which makes him think that defence against it is a necessity despite its costs for Afghanistan and its people. The way he treats Afghanistan as a battlefield stems from a sense of threat coming from the dangerous ‘other’; he firmly believes that “These people have reduced their own country to rubble and now they want to destroy ours” (Aslam, *TWV* 413) In this respect, his negative sense of spatiality of Afghanistan revolves around one single idea that is nurtured by his irrational Islamophobia; their “... war to punish and destroy the theocratic tyranny of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda” (Aslam, *TWV* 324) is a rightful one, so anything that is to be done in this direction is rightful too. National space can be violated and reconfigured for this purpose: “... those hundreds who died by chance in [their] bombing raids, and those who are being held in Guantanamo and in other prisons—none of it is [their] fault. Osama Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda and their Islam are answerable for all that” (Aslam, *TWV* 414). Appointed to protect his country’s interests, his function in Afghanistan reflects how Afghanistan’s national space has been violated to the advantage of the American global politics.

With this frame of mind outlined above that constitutes an ideological basis, the methods of neo-imperialist spatial appropriation depicted in the *TWV* can now be discussed. Surveillance is a way Afghanistan’s national space is controlled and appropriated. Violation of the national space through surveillance is subtly referred to with the depiction of “... a faint continuous rumble from the sky above the street [that comes from] an unmanned Predator drone collecting intelligence on behalf of the CIA ... or a fighter jet the Special Forces have summoned, calling down a missile strike on a hiding place of insurgents” (Aslam, *TWV* 70). “... the sky above ... [is] full of warplanes from the British and American Army and Air Force: so many aircraft that there was a danger of them colliding with each other, of the lower ones being clipped by bombs dropped from a plane higher up” (Aslam, *TWV* 324).

These depictions of the multitude of global forces operating within Afghanistan's national space to gather information implicitly suggests nation as an artificial political construct whose integrity can easily be violated by other nations that have better means of surveillance and military resources as in the case of 'war-on-terror'. The larger picture the extensive global surveillance ongoing in Afghanistan suggests national space's inability to maintain its integrity and resist surveillance in the neo-imperialist epoch.

Another predominant behaviour of neo-imperialist ideology manifesting itself within national space is its urge to maintain a continuous sense of chaos which would destabilize the space and hence and render it more easily penetrable. Chaos in this context signifies political and social instabilities generated by civil war or external military interventions rather than enabling and productive fluidity that has been extensively discussed in postcolonial studies. Thus national space characterized with this type of chaos portrayed in *TWV* do not have positive significations, reminding us the fact that chaos on neo-imperialist context is a tool for maintaining indirect influence over national space to be politically socially and economically unstable. The novel has a number of references to how the Afghan guerrillas during the Civil War in Afghanistan were logistically supported by the U.S against the Soviets; in one case, it is in the form of "one thousand Stinger missiles [given] to Pakistan in 1986, to be passed on to Afghan guerrillas" (Aslam, *TWV* 212). In another case the cooperation between the U.S. and local power figures such as landlords, warlords and tribal leaders which in fact polarizes the region and creates further conflict is highlighted as a source of chaos. "The first CIA team that arrived in Afghanistan soon after the [2001] attacks, to persuade warlords and tribal leaders, had brought five million dollars with them. It was spent in forty days" (Aslam, *TWV* 202). Gul Rasool is one of them who "... help[ed] root out the Taliban from Usha, to help capture al-Qaeda terrorists, and to keep them at bay, the United States paying handsomely for his support" (Aslam, *TWV* 202) in addition to providing him security and a position within the new government. This collaboration only intensifies the conflict between Gul Rasool and Nabi Khan

which has prevailed Usha since the civil war period. Denouncing Rasool as a traitor and infidel for cooperating with the Americans, Nabi Khan regards this as a valid reason for fighting against Rasool and the Americans. Such polarized space constantly produces tension in different forms, and this polarization and tension are powerful tools for neoimperialist appropriation of national space. With this in mind, Gohar Karim Khan notes that “Aslam’s novel constructs a chronology of terrorism in which American culpability in both the devising and continued sponsoring of terrorism is made apparent” (107). Both cases of fundamentalism and neoimperialism, powerfully using and abusing the national space indicates the inefficiency of defining nation as political space and implies little hope for improvement. In this cul de sac of space defined on political terms, literature offers possibilities of positive reconfiguration through shifting scales of definition which would transcend the limiting frames of politics and enable discussions of post-space representations for Afghanistan.

2.2. Reconfiguration of National Space: Subversion of Nation-Bound Space through Post-Space Representations

In postcolonial studies, the significance of nation as a space of subversion and resistance has been discussed in length, yet the fact that national space has also been where colonial power hierarchies, divisions and tensions have sustained in altered forms after independence makes it an area to investigate further in order to tackle with the incomplete nature of nation. For this reason, a broader understanding of the use of national space as the signifier of political engagement is a necessity for postcolonial studies. The aim of the previous section is to expose the inefficient nature of national space as a political entity and how it can become an open target for fundamentalism and neo-imperialism. In this section, Aslam’s use of national space in *TWV* will be problematized in the spirit aspired by Upstone’s *Spatial Politics*. *TWV* firstly reinforces the idea that nation as a political space is highly questionable to the benefit of its people. Because it is extensively manipulated by various forces seeking domination both on local and global scale, the novel implies

that change in a nation's destiny must germinate in small-scale representations of national space contrary to overarching political systems which impose 'top-down' changes for nations. Thus *TWV* models an awareness regarding the multifaceted manipulation of the national space while at the same time offering alternative reframings for resistance and transformation through representation of national space on smaller scales. For these reason, the way the novel multiplies and alters our reading of Afghanistan is in line with Upstone's discussion of *smaller scales of space* for reconfiguration of nation. These small scales include *home* and *microstories* through which traditional sense of nation as political space can be redefined. As an extension of Upstone's argument of small scale representations, this study also argues that as a literary strategy Nadeem Aslam portrays detailed scenes of *neglected spatialities* such as natural beauties and rich cultural heritage in order to offer a more comprehensive alternative to Afghanistan's negative framing of a doomed nation imposed by the reductionist Anglo-American mainstream media. What makes *TWV* unique is that it demarginalizes these neglected spatialities of Afghanistan through a powerful juxtaposition with its terrible afflictions such as war brutalities and social ills to offer a reconfigured sense of Afghanistan's national space.

2.2.1. Smaller Spaces Greater Possibilities: Personal Spaces as Small Scale

Upstone's argument of small spaces basically underlines the idea that treating national space on smaller scales enables more diverse and expansive modes of political and social exchanges as smaller spaces are more open to questioning totalizing ideologies of difference, being less tied to them in this sense. She diagnoses a tendency among postcolonial writers to "undertake essential movements away from national scales directly related to specific geographical contexts [so that] an alternative for politics located at other spatial scales develops" (*Spatial Politics* 56) and explains the importance of these scales by arguing that "[a]s the nation is replaced by smaller scales, these scales give way ... to much

larger and all-encompassing perspectives. Such representation denies ... the very specificity of the nation as the location of identity formation and political negotiation” (*Spatial Politics* 41).

In his interview with Chambers, Nadeem Aslam expresses his cynicism for ‘nation’ as a political construct by stating that “[n]ation is of little importance to me as a writer, because I come from a country that came into being in the name of nationalism, ideology, religion, and politics. As a result, one million people were killed in the violence of Partition. I am deeply suspicious of this ideology of nationhood, as I know what can happen when it gets into the wrong hands” (152). *TWV*’s treatment of nation as political space signifies a definite bleakness suggesting Aslam’s cynicism for nation as a product of politics and reflects this distrust with nation as a political product by failing nation-centred political interventions. Instead, celebrating a need for reframing nation to allow alternative forms of protest and resistance to power structures, *TWV* defies the traditional sense of nation by opening up for diverse and multiple spatial scales which limited nation-state and its state apparatuses fail to represent.

2.2.1.1. Marcus’s House

TWV’s use of home as domestic space within neo-imperialist context demonstrates distinctiveness from the postcolonial novel’s use of domesticity as an anti-imperial setting. For the postcolonial novel, the colonial household is the ‘ordered space’ that echoes the colonial project on the scale of individuals. Upstone reminds us the fact that “[n]ot only was the colony described in household terms, but the household in all its grandeur, was a microcosm for the wealth of empire and its maintenance ... by surveillance” (*Spatial Politics* 117). In postcolonial context, she argues that the home as space thus must undergo “a strategic disordering” (*Spatial Politics* 120) or, in other words, “a reinvestment of the home with chaos” (*Spatial Politics* 119) and be revisioned with a shift in representation through “removing the codes and patterns signifying conventional domestic space [and] favouring instead the turmoil and tensions that the colonial ideal obscures” (*Spatial*

Politics 124). In *TWV*, the inequalities prevailing the domestic space in general are implied not as a direct extension of neo-imperialism, but rather as a reality of the postcolonial society that needs to be challenged through subversions and reconfigurations. Here Aslam's discontent with postcolonial condition and society because of the prevailing bigotry, corruption and inequalities is sharp and consistent, and at times, it gives the impression that the novel includes essentialisms regarding the Afghan society by implying its certain characteristics to be intrinsically present. From this perspective, even though the novel seems to be reinforcing a Eurocentric representation of Afghanistan as a hostile, inferior and backward land characterized by terrorism and the predominant image as this gives little hope for improvement on national scale, implications of reformations on small scales such as home is the actual spot where the novel's emphasis lies; putting forward an epistemological departure from problematizing national space on political terms, it accentuates the fact that home is where solutions for political complexities can be put forward, suppression and totalization can be challenged, and a more pluralistic and liberating sense of space can be envisioned.

TWV's narration revolves around Marcus Cadwell's house. The importance of this house stems from the fact that it functions as the melting pot of characters, a meeting point of different ideas and a refuge from totalizations and suppressions prevailing the national space outside. As Khan also notes, "Marcus's house, anthropomorphically depicted, serves to unite the seemingly disconnected cast of *The Wasted Vigil*, and is in keeping with Aslam's own transnational position as a writer" (112). There individuals with their divergent backgrounds and opinions are valued, and personal interaction is foregrounded, which constitutes a stark contrast with the turbulent and oppressive atmosphere outside. As Flannery also suggests, "Akin to the country itself, Marcus's house by the lake becomes an international crossroads, a global meeting point that is, variously, infused with mistrust, threat, and community" (n.p). The distinctive personality the house possesses is repeatedly underlined; "[It] stands on the edge of a small lake; and though damaged in the wars, it still conveys the impression of being finely carved, the impression of being

weightlessness” (Aslam, *TWV* 10). “The house was built by an old master calligrapher and a painter in the last years of the nineteenth century” (Aslam, *TWV* 12); its six rooms are finely ornamented and decorated with drawings dedicated to five senses, and the sixth room “contained and combined all that had gone before – an interior dedicated to love, the ultimate human wonder” (Aslam, *TWV* 13). Yet the Taliban’s attempt to appropriate even the personal spaces is visible; “... out of fear of the Taliban, all depictions of living things on the walls had been smeared with mud by Marcus. Even an ant had been daubed. It was as though life had been returned to dust” (Aslam, *TWV* 13). Still, the images survive, after the demise of the Taliban, Marcus retrieves them by removing the covering of mud. The house thus proves to be “a sanctuary to the aesthetics”, as Flannery suggests. (n.p). It is additionally suggestive that “[the] highest room [that is dedicated to human love] stands completely revealed now” (Aslam, *TWV* 13), signifying the triumph of love over totalizations.

The distinctiveness the house displays is highlighted with further depictions of its interior: “On the wide ceiling are hundreds of books, each held in place by an iron nail hammered through it. A spike driven through the pages of history, a spike driven through the pages of love, a spike through the sacred” (Aslam, *TWV* 5). This scene of a house with ceilings covered with books gives the feeling of uncanny as if it were almost a magical-realist scene, yet the underlying reason of hanging the books on the ceiling signifies the capacity of the house as a site of defiance against Taliban’s totalization. After years of hardship and sufferings, Marcus’s wife Qatrina becomes mentally unstable after being forced by Taliban to amputate her own husband’s hand⁴. Losing her sense of reality, she nails all the books on the ceiling to protect them from Taliban’s harm: “Original thought was heresy to the

⁴ During the period of Civil War, Marcus and Qatrina’s house have been raided, and among the many things missing from the house are the paintings by Qatrina depicting ninety-nine names of Allah. One day, visiting a patient’s house, Marcus sees the paintings and reclaims them. While the man of the house, insisting that they belong to him, is arguing with Marcus, The Taliban witnesses this. Unable to prove that the paintings belong to his wife, he is accused of stealing and punished with cutting off his hand.

Taliban and they would have burned the books. And this was the only way that suggested itself to the woman, she whose mental deterioration was complete by then, to save them, to put them from harm's reach (Aslam, "TWV" 11). Her madness is thus her coping mechanism against brutalities inflicted by Taliban, and books on the ceiling is her defiance. The way Qatrina uses his house as a space for defiance supports the idea that "... personal subversions may act to subtly undermine absolutes at more easily accessible levels, so that regardless of oppressive national discourse, actions at more intimate levels affirm the possibility of agency" (Upstone, *Spatial Politics* 56).

With books hammered on the ceiling, this unusual appearance the interior of the house has signifies 'productive chaos' of post-space by challenging the homogenization of the fundamentalist thinking. The transformative power of it has a close link to many books it contains. According to Lara, who has come from Russia to search for her lost brother, it is "a house of readers, declaring a citizenship of the realm of the mind" (Aslam, *TWV* 87), and the variety of the books and their multiple editions she observes points out the fact that this small space potentially offers its residents an alternative spatiality in which totalitarianism prevailing outside cannot penetrate and pluralism is celebrated by means of liberating power of fiction. Even though she believes these books are "a reminder of someone who lost her reason in the face of cruelty" (Aslam, *TWV* 89), "...sometimes she imagines that being nailed to the ceilings in the house had made the books drip brilliance onto the floors each room" (Aslam, *TWV* 164)

Surpassing a nostalgic reconstruction of home to reach pre-colonial state of fluidity, Marcus's house implies the necessity of a space that transcends national and ideological borders. The turmoil, tension and brutality of the public space is juxtaposed with the harmonious private space of the house, which makes it possible to speak up openly and confidently about the realities and actual needs of Afghanistan. This enabling nature of Marcus's house corresponds to what Upstone defines as "the *positive potential* of the invasion of politics into the home: the way

in which domesticity displaces nation from centre-stage and allows alternative sites of identification” (*Spatial Politics* 131). In this space, characters negotiate different cultural, religious and ideological standpoints, and alternative points of view are exchanged which would, by no means, be allowed in the totalized national space outside the house. In this line of thinking, Flannery argues that “under the radar of ideological monitoring, silenced voices of critique and resistance are palpable in *The Wasted Vigil*. They may not assume overt public forms or forums, but it is in their determination to ‘live on’ with dignity that their subversive hope is to be found” (Flannery n.p.), and the circumstances outlined by Flannery can only be realized by the liberating atmosphere of Marcus’s house. Facilitating “a fluid frame of mind that intends to dissolve solid notions” (Upstone, *Spatial Politics* 134), identification with the domestic space gives a sense of empowerment through which totalizations and taboos can be challenged within the pluralistic atmosphere of the house. In the small space that this house offers, secularism and alternative understandings of religion is possible; Qatrina finds the chance to express her bold and unorthodox ideas towards issues of religion and gender inequalities related with it. As a secular character who is “indifferent to the idea of supreme beings and their holy messengers” (Aslam, *TWV* 39), and whose representation conveys “a fierce condemnation of the practice of fundamentalist Islam” (Khan 136), she embodies the defiance against religion as the source of restrictions and inequalities present in Afghanistan. She marries Marcus with a ceremony in which a woman performs the rites because she argues that “Nowhere does the Koran state that only men may conduct the wedding” (Aslam, *TWV* 39). Her insistence of “We have to help change things” (Aslam, *TWV* 37) and her subtle way of defying gender roles and religious dogmas through her art is possible only in their private space that promises hope of positive reconfiguration for Afghanistan. To name one example, Qatrina’s life’s work is a series of ninety-nine paintings concerning the ninety-nine names of Allah. Marcus explains to Lara Qatrina’s reason for creating them: “She represented us humans doing all the things that Allah is supposed to do. Her comment on the non-existence of God. We don’t have souls, we have cells” (Aslam, *TWV* 238).

In addition, the house makes it possible to exchange different even sometimes conflicting opinions regarding the status quo of Afghanistan and global politics with its direct or indirect influence on it. The characters put forward different causalities and diagnoses regarding events affecting Afghanistan, and “over the course of the narrative, [the house] is a stubborn enclave of resistance against repression and is a domain of liberated community” (Flannery n.p). While Qatrina adopts a harsher attitude by arguing that “[t]he cause of the destruction of Afghanistan ... is the character and society of the Afghans, of Islam. Communism wasn't solution to anything but ... her fellow countrymen would have resisted change of anything” (Aslam, *TWV* 90) and thus adopts an essentialist cynicism regarding the Afghan nation, Marcus's perspective is in contrast with her because he believes “... The West was involved in the ruining of this place, in the ruining of [his] life. There would have been no downfall if this country had been left to itself by those others” (Aslam, *TWV* 86-87). His alternative perspective sheds lights on a different causality about Afghanistan's misfortunes highlighting the fact how global power relations have victimized nation and individuals alike. Or in another case, the conversations between David and Lara touch on the American and Russian relations, the rivalry between the two countries during the cold war period and how the global politics of these two powers affect Afghanistan. As Upstone posits, “[r]ewriting the political as personal foregrounds the fact that there are some spaces the establishment cannot enter, though its influence is always found within them: spaces where resistance operates for the individual. It is in these pockets that dreams of changing the outside flourish: the neglected by the establishment- and therefore protected- spaces of the domestic interior” (*Spatial Politics* 139). From this perspective, the house hereby functions as a hub of productive exchange of ideas to create a better awareness of Afghanistan's status quo, which can possible pave way to a more confident reconstruction of its national space.

Marcus's house is also foregrounded with its multifunctionality indicating its capacity to address different needs of the national space. It is once the doctors' surgery; during the peak of the civil war, “[w]hen it overflowed the patients could

be found in the orchard, lying under trees, the drip hooked to a flowering branch” (Aslam, *TWV* 141). Within the borders of the house there is also a perfume factory that provides small space for the women of Usha. Marcus and Katrina have started it “... to give the women of Usha a chance to earn money [and to let] them to know they could have an independent life” (Aslam, *TWV* 260-261). As a typical example of how resistance can start from small scales of space is that the house has even functioned as a secret school during the time of Taliban. Once some parents who want to “... equip their sons and daughters for the possibilities of the world, rebelling against the Taliban’s insistence that wings be torn off the children” (Aslam, *TWV* 262) request from Marcus to tutor their children secretly, their house soon becomes a school where a new generation is raised to reconfigure Afghanistan.

Marcus’s house is also the place where the flaws of fundamentalist thinking as one of the biggest afflictions on Afghanistan’s national space are exposed and can ideologically be defied. This possibility of defying fundamentalism is narrated through the characterization of Casa, the fundamentalist figure of the novel, and his flawed thinking. Daniel O’Gorman, who analyses *TWV* in terms of its representation of what he refers as “historically networked post-9/11 Pakistani identity and its ambivalent attitude towards fundamentalism and global media frames”, asserts that by including a fundamentalist figure that is represented by Casa, the novel in fact “...help[s] to generate a kind of empathy with seemingly ‘fundamentalist’ figures, and, in turn, offer an understanding of fundamentalism that is potentially more sophisticated – as well as more productive in the nation’s struggle to control it – than that perpetuated through media stereotypes” (131-132). Thus, according to O’Gorman, Casa is “an exemplar of the ease with which any neglected individual can submit to the comforting perception of self-affirmation offered by fundamentalist thought” (137), and intimate insight into Casa’s mindset is a strategy to create empathy with anyone drawn to fundamentalist thinking with a sense of historicity. Casa’s stream of thoughts is elaborated in detail to point out his own intellectually and socially limited space, which, in larger picture, is a reflection of the national space appropriated and framed by the Taliban. Having

internalized the limitations the Taliban has imposed on the national space, Casa feels “[Marcus’s] house is unhinging him, asking him to look into mirrors he shouldn’t” (Aslam, *TWV* 395). He is a troubled soul who is “...searching for the most stable and most direct bridge between his inner self and the world” (Aslam, *TWV* 318), in many ways embodying the status quo of his country. For this reason, music, art or variety of opinions he witnesses there are “like stings to him” (Aslam, *TWV* 353). Combined with his insightful conversation with Marcus, he feels “as though the walls [in this house] are glowing from within. They also seem to take a step towards him” (Aslam, *TWV* 255), challenging him to push his own mental boundaries. Talking to Marcus also disturbs him, “making him feel at times that he doesn’t know much about Islam let alone other religions, that he knows little about Afghanistan let alone the world” (Aslam, *TWV* 255). Thus his experience within this house produces productive chaos inside him, an alienation from his artificial self as a militant to a more truthful questioning as to who he really is. Remembering Brennan’s commentary on ‘place’ which suggests that “... ‘place’ connotes the kernel or center of one’s memory and experience- a dwelling, a familiar park or city street, one’s family or community” (130), one can also argue that the small space Marcus’s house offers becomes a ‘place’, a site for potential identifications for Casa. The house hereby, as a whole with the other characters in it, has transformative quality in his case. The transformation that is possible for Casa promises hope for the national space if this productive chaos can be facilitated for the national space to get rid of the prevailing fundamentalist mindset.

The experience of small space where Casa is freed from the restrictions and totalizations of the national space momentarily gives him the chance of breaking with his own mental limitations, signalling the possibility of reconfiguration for him to reach his authentic self. How his short yet intense experiences in this house set his emotions free despite being momentarily points out the possibility of change in the mindset on individual scale. His traumatic childhood and adolescence combined with his hard life explain his susceptibility and negative outlook for life: “At the very core of him was the belief that human beings had little to offer beyond

cruelty and danger” (Aslam, *TWV* 221). However one day, he comes closest to surpassing his mental limitations when he finds a birdnest in the garden and takes it to David, Lara and Marcus because “... [he] had found the discovery so enthralling that he had wished to share it with another human, the momentary fascination of it making him act out of his true character” (Aslam, *TWV* 213-214). During his stay at Marcus’s house, Casa also faces with his lack of maternal affection and his longing for a maternal figure. Especially with his encounter with Lara who is old enough to be his mother, he realizes his suppressed feelings and desires or being loved and cared: “He wonders about the magnitude of the sin he is committing by looking at Lara’s face, even though his thoughts are pure. A wish in him to prolong the tenderness he is suddenly experiencing in his breast” (Aslam, *TWV* 235). Again in this house, he experiences a new emotion; his attraction to Dunia, the young school teacher who also takes refuge in Marcus’s house. His inner struggle against his attraction is fierce yet it signifies his human side that he cannot suppress completely. Casa’s realizations of his human side with his emotions despite his rigid character forged by fundamentalist way of thinking in fact answers a larger question regarding Afghanistan; if the fundamentalist way of thinking and its implications on the national space can be discarded, just like how it has happened temporarily for Casa, it by all means paves way for individuals to make more constructive and sophisticated sense of themselves and their surroundings, which would contribute reframing a more liberating national space.

2.2.1.2. Zameen’s Apartment

Zameen’s apartment in Peshawar is another small space that promises reconfiguration of national space specifically for women who have been victimized by multiple elements ranging from war, to religious oppression and patriarchy. During the civil war, Marcus and Qatrina’s daughter Zameen is kidnapped by the Soviet forces with the claim of assisting the rebels, taken to a Soviet base and kept there because of her rare blood type. There she is assaulted sexually by the Russian soldier Benedikt many times, causing her to get pregnant with her son Bihzad. The

narration reveals that Benedikt is Lara's lost brother. However, neither Lara nor Marcus gets to learn that Zameen is the mother of Benedikt's child, Bihzad, whom Marcus has been searching for. Without realizing that they have been attached through Bihzad, Marcus and Lara meet on a common sense of 'loss'. On the surface level, although this act of violation seems to be committed only against Zameen, the relationship between Zameen and Benedikt in fact tells much more about Russian invasion of Afghanistan; just like the integrity of her body is repeatedly violated, she is rendered helpless and manipulated on many levels, so is Afghanistan's national space, this reflecting only a portion of the trauma inflicted upon the whole nation and its inability to resist it. Khan extends this line of thinking by articulating that "[Zameen's] body, an important space for the writing of a transnational feminist narrative, integrates the oppression of women by Islamic fundamentalists, Soviet communists and American expansionists" (140).

After escaping from the Soviet base with Benedikt who is later murdered brutally, she is unable to find her parents in their house which has been taken over by the resistance fighters. She concludes that in Afghanistan it is almost impossible to survive amidst the civil war, the Soviet fire, diseases and hunger: "In their own country the land wanted to strike them dead so did the sky, and everyone wanted to get to a refugee camp in Pakistan where their suffering would come to an end at last" (Aslam, *TWV* 343). For these reasons, Zameen makes her way to Pakistan where she can take shelter in a refugee camp. Yet in these camps, conditions are too hard for women and children, so when she is offered to live with her son Bihzad in an apartment whose rent is paid by an aid agency, she takes refuge in this place. To highlight the liberating alternative of small spaces, *TWV* subtly juxtaposes this apartment with the Afghan refugee camps whose terrible physical and social conditions are portrayed dramatically. The Afghan refugee camps which David calls "the hell" (Aslam, *TWV* 184) have their own serious issues; to name a few, space is regulated through the fundamentalist doctrines that is a lot less than bare living. Lack of even the most basic needs such as food for children is heartbreakingly described: One evening David witnesses two children on a street in

one of these camps grabbing another little boy who has just finished a meal, chewing. These children make this boy vomit by force to eat the still-undigested food. Seeing this in horror makes David question his role in it: “He had helped create all this. No all this was the Soviet Union’s” (Aslam, *TWV* 185-186). Besides lack of basic provisions, a restrictive atmosphere reigns in these camps. “Music had been banned in several camps for two or more years now” (Aslam, *TWV* 185), fundamentalists gather children to be trained as militants or suicide bombers, and women are suppressed with the excuse of maintaining high ‘moral’ standards. In the camp where Zameen stays earlier, a corrupt cleric she also knows from Usha “had had seven women murdered for being prostitutes. He scrutinised the inhabitants of the camp for moral laxity, calling down Allah’s wrath on them through his Friday sermons” (Aslam, *TWV* 183), yet he finds a way to walk free with the help of his corrupt relations. This ineligible spatiality for women to survive is created both by physical hardships resulting from both wars and conflicts and patriarchal restrictions augmented by fundamentalism. Although these camps are in Peshawar, outside the Afghan border, what has been afflicting Afghanistan, - fundamentalist mindset, bigotry, poverty and more- persists there too, creating a simulacrum of Afghanistan’s national space in Peshawar. Thus any alternative sense of spatiality to the camps is also remedial to the national space in general.

The narration sadly underlines that in such a place where subjugations are performed in the name of religion, women who, feeling threatened, either get silenced or seek an alternative to improve their condition as in the case of those who does embroidery in Zameen’s apartment. In contrast with houses that inherently have transformative power in postcolonial discourse, refugee camps depicted in *TWV* have extensively been denounced as sites of oppression and corruption. Thus as an empowering alternative to refugee camps, Zameen’s apartment is potentially where plurality can be celebrated, individuality is possible to preserve. “... [W]omen from the refugee camps can come here and embroider in secret” (Aslam, *TWV* 169) because “[e]arning a living was declared inappropriate conduct for females, resulting in arrest for insubordination against Allah’s wish” (Aslam, *TWV*

240). It is also during her stay in this apartment that Zameen meets David who is her neighbour downstairs. She explains to David in detail the purpose and function of this apartment:

It is secret because we fear the fundamentalists who have constructed mosque upon mosque in the refugee camps and have forbidden work and education to women, so much so that a woman in possession of silk thread is branded a wanton, it being the Western aid organisations that began the embroidery scheme to give war widows a chance to earn a livelihood. The fundamentalists tell them that they must beg in the streets – that this is Allah’s way of using them to test who is charitable and who isn’t – or send their little boys out to be labourers in the bazaars. (Aslam, *TWV* 169)

Thus Zameen’s apartment functions as a liberating alternative to national space for women by offering the opportunity of resistance on the small scale. Women who are silenced in larger spaces can construct there a site of positive identifications as in the case of Zameen who in this apartment is closer to her authentic self by being self-sufficient and more confident. According to David, who gets to know and fall in love with her during her stay in this apartment, “Her fiercest loyalty had been to these women” (Aslam, *TWV* 179), which supports the idea that small spaces also nurture female solidarity in the face of patriarchy and gender inequalities, “on the basis of their courage on one hand, and their shared oppression on the other” (Khan 141). In this small space Zameen has the liberty to adopt a critical attitude towards issues ranging from suppression of women to global politics affecting Afghanistan. For instance, one of the women who gathered at her place to embroider loses several relatives upon a bombing. Zameen, feeling genuinely sorry for her react with vehemence to David when he asks if this woman would be all right: “We have to be, don’t we? Just as long as you Americans and Soviets can play your games over there- nothing else matters!” (Aslam, *TWV* 179). Confronting the ideologies victimizing her and other women alike within larger scales of space would be a fruitless endeavour with totalizations prevailing the national space too powerfully, but this alternative place on small scale gives her greater power for defiance against both social and gender inequalities and neo-imperialist practices of Afghanistan on small scale. Though temporarily, the liberty

this small space provides for Zameen and women from the refugee camps is encouraging for the future reconfiguration of the national space on the whole.

2.2.2. Post-Space Reframed Through Microstories

Even the air of this country has a story to tell about warfare. It is possible here to lift a piece of bread from a plate, and following back to its origins, collect a dozen stories concerning war- how it affected the hand that pulled it out of the oven, the hand that kneaded the dough, how war impinged upon the field where the wheat was grown. (Aslam, *TWV* 59)

TWV is critical of the fact that the entanglement of multiple local and global powers in their effort of dominating Afghanistan overshadows the sufferings and victimization of the individuals that are being treated almost simply as if pawns in a chess play. For this reason, demarginalizing microstories is an essential strategy to subvert the construction of national space by accentuating the effect of sufferings inflicted on Afghanistan. Instead of treating national space on political terms, the novel highlights microstories that are nuanced with divergent experiences of national space. It experiments how the national space can be reconfigured from ‘within’ by means of individuals and their experiences that in fact fill in the national space. The political is thus redefined by the personal for a reconfiguration of the national space so that a deeper and multi-faceted insight into Afghanistan’s realities can be achieved. To name one example, on political terms what is referred as ‘collateral damage’ with a distancing language is redefined in Lara’s story when she witnesses that Afghanistan is where “single shoes [are] being sold in Afghanistan’s shops” (Aslam, *TWV* 36) due to the landmines planted during the years of war. In her reflections, the sufferings of the civilians are highlighted contrary to official politics treating human beings as statistical numbers about war. Since the small spaces are filled with the highlights of individuals, microstories and the redefinition of national space on smaller scales are inseparable. The institutional politics are consistently and purposefully overshadowed by their consequences on

the lives of the individuals. To achieve this, the novel zooms into how the afflictions of Afghanistan have victimized the individuals as the quote suggest:

This country was one of the greatest tragedies of the age. Torn to pieces by many hands of war, by the various hatreds and failings of the world. Two million deaths over the past quarter century. Several of the lovers on the walls were on their own because of the obliterating impact of the bullets—nothing but a gash or a ripping away where the corresponding man or woman used to be. A shredded limb, a lost eye. (Aslam, *TWV* 14)

This shift in focus, as Khan aptly notes, is in fact a reflection of Aslam's larger strategy of offering "an alternative narrative to neo-imperial 9/11; ... By bringing the world into Afghanistan the novel initiates an important process of teasing and widening the scope within which the trauma of 9/11 has been traditionally represented" (109-110). A similar perspective is put forward by Amir Khadem who investigates *TWV* from the perspective of trauma theory purports that the novel's historicization of 9/11 and its aftermath in fact challenges "the monumentalization of 9/11" (191). Arguing that the Anglo-American treatment of 9/11 it as an exceptional one is reductive because "[t]he singularity of 9/11 has very little meta-historical singularity, and the magnitude of its shock, when aligned with the Afghani's daily dose of shock, is not at all unique" (Khan 192). From this perspective what is needed instead is the treatment of September 11 trauma in a geographically, historically and even psychologically widened manner in order for it to be spacious enough to accommodate plural critical observations. In *TWV* narrative that zooms into individuals, the narration distances itself from the official politics- local and global alike and adopts a highly critical attitude towards any motivation to use Afghanistan as its operational area and disregard the existence of the civilians. Through microstories, the novel also reconfigures the static communal image that the formation of nation is based on. With the polyvocality of characters exemplifying different nationalities, faiths, backgrounds and segments of society, it challenges the understanding of a homogenized national space that discourages cultural and individual differences. In theory, nation assumes cultural, historic and

political bond among those who occupy its space as a response to the colonial totality, yet the perpetual tension, conflict and instability of Afghanistan depicted in the book points out the ‘constructedness’ of this notion and impossibility of maintaining a homogenized national space. The sub-sections of this part specifically focus on three characters- Marcus, David and Dunia- because their microstories are promising due to their unique sense of national spatiality and how they make of small spaces. Through their examples, the possibility of a more pluralistic, liberal and nuanced reconfiguration of national space is optimistically implied.

2.2.2.1 Marcus

TWV’s literary strategy of foregrounding microstories is based on their potential to propose deeper identifications and meanings that can enable alternative insights and perspectives into the national space. In this vein, the narration brings Marcus to the centre due to the balance, tolerance and harmony his characterization represents. Born in Afghanistan, he descends from a British family; his father was “a doctor in the Afghan frontier and was murdered by a tribesman in 1934” (Aslam, *TWV* 40-41) and his mother was a nurse who returns to England with him when he was five years old. What brings him back to Afghanistan to live there is his love for Katrina whom he has met in one of his visits during the years of his young adulthood. Just like Afghanistan itself, the mature Marcus the narration focuses has suffered a lot; losing a daughter, a wife, a grandson and a hand is to name only a few. For this reason, his sorrow makes him feel that “[h]e is alive but has been buried in many graves” (Aslam, *TWV* 430).

Marcus’s story holds importance primarily because in the middle of a geography where war, brutality, and various social ills prevail, his stable and peaceful characterization is suggestive for a more constructive reframing of Afghanistan. In Lara’s eyes, “Marcus seemed one of those few humans who lent dignity to everything their gaze landed on. Like a saint entering your life through a dream” (Aslam, *TWV* 38). While elaborating on Marcus’s story, it is impossible to

separate his from that of Qatrina since the example Qatrina and Marcus display in their house as a couple is an indicator of how resistance to totalisations of space can start on small scales and how microstories can in fact function as small spaces on a different level to free national space from restrictive thoughts and practices. Their unique lifestyle defies the rigid cultural and religious norms that are based on restrictive abstractions of space. They are quite similar in many respects such as their open-mindedness, their perception of religion and their critical attitudes towards totalizations. However, this part more specifically concentrates on Marcus as his characterization promises the stability, tolerance and harmony that the implied author suggests as the utmost necessities for Afghanistan's reconfiguration. This study also argues that the reason why Qatrina, who is quite sharp in intelligence and defiant in opinions, is given a secondary position when compared to Marcus is that the bitter realities of Afghanistan and how she makes sense of them is in a sharp conflict, which results in her sad victimization. This suggests the difficulty of a constructive reframing through her microstory when compared to that of Marcus who outstands better in this respect with his more moderate and compatible character that is insightful in various matters.

In one interview Nadeem Aslam states that "since a very early age [he has] been acutely aware of the various different ways in which one can be a Muslim" (Chambers 153). In another, he demonstrates a cautious attitude towards Islam claiming that "America is the sole superpower and as such it must be kept an eye on. But Islam is a great religion which means it, too, is open to abuse" (Brace, n.p). These two respects raised by the author about Islam explain the novel's overall cynicism for religion for its potential to be manipulated and to become a restrictive tool, and hence the implied author's favouritism with secular characters like Marcus. In this sense, Marcus is distinguished from the mainstream society of Afghanistan for both being more educated and sophisticated and secular. Bigotry combined with ignorance is counter-balanced with his secular and sophisticated characterization, and his secular and liberal standing is suggested by the implied author as a consistent and constructive one. The details of his marriage to Qatrina

uncovers that “[h]e believes in no god but had converted to Islam to marry Katrina, to silence any objection” (Aslam, *TWV* 39). As a further elaboration of the sense of secularism he shares with Katrina, Marcus himself further asserts that “[n]either [Katrina nor he] believed in an afterlife. When you are dead, you decay and become part of the earth. It is no disrespect to the dead to say that their bodies have been consumed by creatures in the soil. It makes [them] cherish this life and this world more” (Aslam, *TWV* 238). In this sense, Marcus’s unique interpretation of faith is progressive, nuanced and embracing, based on greater knowledge of religions than that of fundamentalists like Casa. For instance, when Casa asks him why he keeps the Buddha head in the perfume factory, implying it to be disrespectful to Islam, he explains that “The Koran itself says that the race of djinns belonging to Solomon had decorated his cave with statues” (Aslam, *TWV* 229) to highlight the fact that fundamentalist mindset is reductionist in its interpretation of religion to its own benefit while Marcus is more knowledgeable in many respects including religion. His nuanced and embracing understanding of religion is in contrast with what he describes as “the believer’s anxiety about pollution- of not wishing to be infected or contaminated by their surroundings” (Aslam, *TWV* 231). As in the case of Marcus who in fact has his own version of secularism and faith, the novel implies the idea that religion as one of the major influences shaping the national space should be flexible enough to be open to personal adaptations. Considering the fact that fundamentalist interpretation of Islamic faith is one major factor holding Afghanistan back from progress, the religious standing Marcus adopts is implied to be remedial for a transformation into a religiously more tolerant and pluralistic society.

Besides his secularism, Marcus’s multi-cultural standpoint is also a conciliatory one for national space due to his first-hand experiences of both Eastern and Western cultures. His microstory in a way challenges Eurocentric perception of Afghanistan thanks to being someone with an ‘insider’s’ point of view. Although he still retains his cultural bond with the West, he chooses to become a part of Afghanistan for most of his life. When the narration zooms into Marcus’s story and

his reflections, stereotypical representations of Afghanistan are challenged by a redefinition of national space on individual scale. Zooming into his story tells more than what official politics states about Afghanistan, and reading his reflections offers new causalities regarding neoimperialist power relations and cultural taboos. In this context, the quote below that outlines Marcus's attitude towards global power relations helps the reader to see a larger picture of Afghanistan's status quo and enables a better understanding of the other side of the coin:

‘A daughter, a wife, a grandson,’ Marcus had been saying earlier. ‘you could say this place took away all I had’ ... ‘I could so easily appear to be one of those unfortunate white men you hear about, who thought too lovingly of the other races and civilisations of the world, who left his own country in the West to set up among them in the East, and was ruined as a result, paying dearly for his foolish mistake. His life smashed to pieces by the barbarians surrounding him. ... But you see, The West was involved in the ruining of this place, in the ruining of my life. There would have been no downfall if this country had been left to itself by those others. (Aslam, *TWV* 86-87)

This alternative causality Marcus suggests above about the status quo of Afghanistan brings us to the question of how he makes sense of the national space and how his sense of spatiality can be illuminating for its post-space representations. In his inner reflections, metaphorically Afghanistan is sadly a demolished construct under which each and every one is buried under their own tragedy:

Afghanistan had collapsed and everyone's life now lies broken at different levels within the rubble. Some are trapped near the surface while others find themselves entombed deeper down, pinned under tons of smashed masonry and shattered beams from where their cries cannot be heard by anyone on the surface, only – inconsequentially- by those around them. (Aslam, *TWV* 39)

Marcus's tragic story exemplifies how global power relations and their local repercussions like the Taliban have victimized nation and individual alike even when this is someone with Western background. His insightful remarks are

diagnostic regarding the ills that bring Afghanistan's misfortunes. In one case, he sarcastically remarks that "[t]he heroes of East and west are slaughtering each other in the dust of Afghanistan" (Aslam, *TWV* 426), to point out supremacy and domination as the source of the conflicts; in another he criticizes the rivalry between the U.S and Russia by arguing that "[t]he Cold War was cold only for the rich and privileged places of the planet" (Aslam, *TWV* 37), which highlights the fact that the hostility and rivalry between the two super powers have victimized greater geographies than their own national borders. His political opinions basically put forward that global neo-imperialist politics operate at the expense of individuals, in fact it is individuals that have the power of reframing national space out of its restrictive political terms.

With his feelings and conscience foregrounded, Marcus ultimately represents what is purely 'human' and thus what has long been overshadowed by overarching politics of power and the mainstream media. With his irretrievable losses, he embodies the losses Afghanistan is inflicted with, even if one day national space is ultimately settled with peace. What is more important in relation to the post-space possibilities his microstory represents is that he promises hope and optimism despite all. As Khan also suggests that "Marcus simultaneously represents both the horror and danger of living in Afghanistan and the optimism and prospects of restoration in this part of the world" (Aslam, *TWV* 113). He signifies a sense of post-space in which the ideological borders get blurred and a common sense of 'loss' reconfigures the national space. To explain Marcus's sense of loss as a uniting experience, the narration makes reference to ancient Greek literature: "Both sides in Homer's war, when they arrive to collect their dead from the battlefield, weep freely in complete sight of each other. Sick at heart. This is what Marcus wants, the tears of one side fully visible to the other" (Aslam, *TWV* 426). The post-space possibility Marcus envisions here is an embracing one by dwelling on the felling of loss regardless of which party, and aiming sympathy and greater understanding for each other's pain. On the very same issue Flannery remarks that "Marcus's recourse to Homer, firstly, reveals his belief that in witnessing mutual suffering, humanity

can achieve some degree of redemptive unity. And, secondly, this moment alerts us to the key roles that art and language will play as part of the redemptive processes within the novel” (n.p.). In this way, the national space is no longer polarized with the claim of legitimacy and supremacy. His story ends with an open-endedness that suggests naive optimism despite all. He refuses to leave Afghanistan because he argues that “I don’t just live here because I don’t have an alternative” (Aslam, *TWV* 416). Determined to find his grandson Bihzad since his house and indeed what the house represents “must be passed onto him” (Aslam, *TWV* 416), he is to meet someone who could be Zameen’s son although the reader is aware of the futility of it, knowing from the hints across the narration that most probably Zameen’s son is Casa who has exploded himself at the end of the book.

2.2.2.2 David

David is one of the representatives of American neoimperialism operating in Afghanistan as CIA agents. He has a good knowledge of Afghanistan and Pakistan that he has accumulated through his gemstone interest, and CIA has benefited from it by assigning him as an agent in disguise as a gem merchant. His brother Jonathan fought as a part of the U.S. military force in Vietnam War, yet he disappeared in Vietnam leaving no trace behind despite David’s efforts to find him. This tragic loss of his brother is a destabilizing experience for him that the narration occasionally elaborates on. In Peshawar he meets Zameen and Bihzad and falls in love with Zameen. Losing someone he loves becomes a recurrent motif in his story because ultimately David loses both of them too. After years of search he only learns Zameen’s tragic murder by Gul Rasool, yet Bihzad is still nowhere to be found. His long years of search for Bihzad across Afghanistan brings him closer to Marcus and retains his emotional bond with Afghanistan although he is no longer a CIA agent in the narration’s present time.

It is essential to discuss David’s microstory as small space in conceptual sense to interrogate post-space possibilities for Afghanistan because of the ‘productive ambiguity’ it contains. While his position as a CIA agent makes him a

representative of the neoimperialist arguments and agenda of the U.S., his personal relations and his experiences of Afghanistan have integrated him into its national space in such a unique way that at times it causes him to question his own positioning vis-à-vis Afghanistan. This duality is productively ambiguous for the reader because there are moments his personal reflections that sharply contradict with the ideology he represents and his contemplations on the practices of his country hence expose their flawed nature. Considering the fact that it is essential to strip off the legacies of neoimperialism to achieve post-space re-visioning of Afghanistan, the ambiguity he embodies becomes a powerful critique of American neoimperialism, and his microstory hence defies the arguments of neoimperialism from 'within' as a former CIA agent on duty in Afghanistan for years and thus playing a part in the chaos prevailing it. On the one hand, he demonstrates a tendency for Eurocentricism in how he makes sense of Afghanistan; a binary logic occasionally displays itself in his speeches, referring constantly to Afghanistan as 'this part of the world' (Aslam, "TWV" 101). In one instance, "[he] had heard the truck explode from a mile away. Elsewhere he would have thought it was a thunder, but in this country he knew what it was, what it had to be" (Aslam, *TWV* 75). On the other hand, sometimes he displays an insider's positioning; his personal experience of Afghanistan mostly manifested in his stream of thoughts blurs and challenges his cultural and official positioning as a Westerner and a CIA agent:

What did they, the Americans, really know about such parts of the world, of the layer upon layer of savagery that made them up? They had arrived in these places without realising how fragile were the defences that most people had erected against cruelty and degradation here. Conducting a life with the light from a firefly. (Aslam, *TWV* 184)

Similarly, in a refugee camp in Peshawar David meets Zameen's lover from Usha who turns out to be an ardent Communist and a dissenter of American global politics. David disputes with him about the condition and future of Afghanistan and argues that "Communism wasn't the only way to end inequality" (Aslam, *TWV* 171) to imply that his country- the United States- is also egalitarian so there's no such social stratas as the priests and landlords that causes inequalities and suppression of

lower ones too. The answer David gets from him is quite sharp in pointing out how neo-imperialism in fact has local agencies for maintaining indirect influence: “Then why are your people actually *supporting* them here, giving them money and weapons?” (Aslam, *TWV* 170). With his evolving sense of Afghanistan, David proves to be a round character contrary to other CIA agents like James and Christopher Palantine whose static characterizations and fixed adherence to American official politics are deliberately juxtaposed to highlight David’s gradual transformation in his feelings and ideas. Although his established convictions regarding the U.S. and its official politics intervene his process from time to time, he gradually gains a greater awareness of how neoimperialism in fact promotes only its own interest at the expense of nations and individuals. His evolving characterization reflects the shifting and changing of ideas and meanings the post-space promises, and his inner turmoils create the ‘fractured’ and ‘chaotic’ space necessary for post-space revisioning. In the novel there are moments David forces himself to take the official politics for granted believing that “the explanation for some events existed in another realm, a parallel world that had its own considerations and laws ... Strange sacrifices were required in that shadow-filled realm, strange compromises” (Aslam, *TWV* 106), or feels an automatic urge to speak for the ‘legitimacy’ of American intervention to Afghanistan when confronted. However, as in the case of witnessing two children in a refugee camp making another boy vomit by force to eat the still-undigested food, he has bitter moments of realizing the extent of harm done to Afghanistan. The sympathy these moments create starts to shatter David’s earlier convictions of American ‘rightfulness’. Seeing the misery these children in the refugee camp embodies makes him confess that “[h]e had helped create all this. No all this was the Soviet Union’s fault because ... because ... He could not complete the thought. He had before and he would later but not just then” (Aslam, *TWV* 185-186). Such reflections become a powerful tool for demonstrating the undeniable share of the global power relations in Afghanistan’s doom that is more visibly traceable in individuals’ sufferings.

Another essential element in David's story is his relationship with Lara who has utter cynicism for any ideology that prioritizes maintaining dominance over space at the expense of individuals. Through their conversations, the novel sheds light to the rivalry between the U.S. and the Russia; especially Lara's remarks indicate the restrictive and oppressive spatiality that Soviet Russia and Communism creates. She is one character that challenges David's arguments with strong counter arguments. While he is still an agent, David learns beforehand that the Soviets are going to bomb the refugee camp where Zameen's lover from Usha stays. CIA let this bombing happen, killing hundreds of people die because it is regarded as an 'opportunity' to demonstrate the Soviet brutality to the rest of the world. To make the matters worse, journalists are sent there to broadcast it. Lara, enraged upon learning that David considers this as a kind of 'sacrifice' for "saving future generations of Afghanistan and the world from Communism" (Aslam, *TWV* 390), reproaches him for dedicating his life to a "myth" (Aslam, *TWV* 392) that in fact makes him alone in an illusion and lays bare for David how neo-imperialism disregards the value of individuals' lives: "I can't ignore the fact that nobody asked them if they wanted to sacrifice their lives. For all I know probably all of them would have willingly gone to their deaths to secure a better future for their land, for the world. But no one asked them" (Aslam, *TWV* 391). The fact that David's voice gets weakened vis-à-vis Lara's arguments is a deliberate narratological strategy of the novel to accentuate its criticism for American global politics which in fact promises little hope for a better future for Afghanistan. In a similar direction, it is possible to argue that "David's political coming of age, as it were, slowly begins to align him with Aslam, their voices merging into free and indirect speech, with little need for the author to attempt any distinction between the two" (Khan 127). This strategy of David's shifting understanding in return strengthens Aslam's biting condemnation of American neo-imperialism and state terrorism with criticism coming from 'within'.

Perhaps the most striking moment in terms of David's altering sense of Afghanistan is that his investigation of Zameen's murder by Gul Rasool brings him

to a bitter truth about himself and the CIA because "... [F]ollowing the trail of her murderers, David would realize, he had been stepping on his own footprints" (Aslam, *TWV* 189). After his colleague Christopher Palantine has learnt the intimacy between her and David, he "... allowed her to be killed because he thought she posed a danger to the interests of the United States" (Aslam, *TWV* 385). This devastating piece of information is climactic regarding the duality David experiences because after years of serving for the overseas interests of his country, he now learns how he is manipulated; this truth is kept from him so that he would keep working with them. In a moment of loneliness upon this revelation, the lines he reads from *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* ironically overlaps with his situation and summarizes his eventual positioning: "*FROM ENTHUSIASM TO IMPOSTURE the step is perilous slippery ... the demon of Socrates affords a memorable instance of how a wise man may deceive himself, how a good man may deceive others, how the conscience may slumber in a mixed and middle state between self-illusion and voluntary fraud*" (Aslam, *TWV* 388). Thus his ultimate feelings and opinions are suggested in a veiled way, and the drastic change in his stance is promising in terms of how this refutation of neo-imperialist ideology on small scale can also trigger a larger one attacking the very foundations of it.

2.2.2.3 Dunia

Dunia is one of the characters referred as "the planet's future" (Aslam, *TWV* 368) besides Casa and James Palantine. What each of them stands for has a symbolic meaning for Afghanistan; while Casa embodies the fundamentalism and James Palantine is a representative of American neoimperialism, Dunia's characterization indicates a promising position of women in Afghan society. She is "the twenty-two-year-old daughter of the doctor in Usha, the young teacher who is in charge of the small school" (Aslam, "TWV" 280). Her microstory appears in the post-Taliban period of the novel in which social and political instabilities are still felt considerably and "[w]omen in this country are still anxious even though the

Taliban is gone” (Aslam, *TWV* 281), which indicates the fact that the appropriation of space for genders still continues despite the change of status quo. The novel attempts to concretize the feeling of unsafety and uneasiness the women experience with a reference to women in Usha who “... have always felt that they could sink into the earth any time. The strata beneath the surface are as insubstantial as the transparent layers of water that form the lake” (Aslam, *TWV* 289). With condition of women portrayed as such, the narration focuses her microstory after she takes refuge in Marcus’s house for being threatened by the fundamentalists. She is publicly accused of being dissolute by the cleric at the mosque who has in fact long been planning to uproot the school. The rumours that she has “an illicit lover” forcibly shut down the school- the small space that has the power of liberating her. Worried about her own safety, she resorts to another small space- Marcus’s house- in the temporary absence of her father.

Dunia is another favoured character of the novel for her liberal and forward-looking qualities. According to Khan, what gives her characterization a special positioning is that among all the characters that collectively reflect Afghanistan’s political and social complexities, Aslam’s voice is perhaps heard most clearly through Dunia who is capable of “simultaneously exposing America’s involvement in Afghanistan as well as rejecting all affiliations with radical Islam (130). She holds significance in terms of *TWV*’s spatial politics because her prototypical representation as a strong and confident female character indicates the need for greater spatial liberty for women within the national space for a possible reconfiguration of gender roles in Afghanistan. Her microstory is the small space where an interrogatory alternative for women to the oppressive nature of the national space is hinted. In this sense, her occupation as a teacher is of additional importance because totalizing mindset of fundamentalist thinking stands against schools as liberal spaces where resistance can spring on small scale. Her father considers her decision of becoming a school teacher as ‘too dangerous’ for a woman in Afghanistan and thus tries to dissuade her, yet her forward-looking and insightful character asserts itself with her reply: “The bullet that has hit us Muslims today left

the gun centuries ago, when we let the clergy decide that knowledge and education were not important” (Aslam, *TWV* 289). In her reply, she both diagnoses the source of Afghanistan’s major problem as ignorance and implies a remedial solution with her subtle emphasis on education.

The interaction between Dunia and Casa is of significance in terms of recognising the depth of Dunia’s characterization. What makes Casa surprised about Dunia is the ease with which Dunia makes her feelings and opinions known to others in Marcus’s house as “[h]e himself always has to hide things” (Aslam, *TWV* 333). With his remark, Casa in fact underlines Dunia’s most distinctive quality that makes her example an encouraging one for women; her well-grounded confidence which becomes visible through her ideas on fundamentalism and global politics on Afghanistan. Dunia belongs to the same geography and faith with Casa, but her unique sense of Afghanistan and her more liberal interpretation of Islam distinguished her. Both being Muslims, Afghans and of the same generation, these two characters are aptly juxtaposed to highlight the fact that while they make sense of the same space differently, Dunia’s characterization is eligible for a post-space revisioning of the Afghan society in terms of women. As Adam Mars-Jones writes in his review of *TWV* “Nadeem Aslam sees the reasons for fundamentalist misogyny as pragmatic rather than doctrinal, the simplest way of giving vulnerable, uneducated recruits a sense of power” (n.p). From this perspective, Dunia’s strong characterization as opposed to Casa’s rudimentary personality stands out a powerful subversion of gender politics in Afghanistan.

What features Dunia further is that in Marcus’s house where the interrogatory power of small spaces is present, she confronts the CIA agent James Palantine when he tries to justify the U.S. presence in Afghanistan by claiming “We are here to help your country. We came to get rid of the Taliban for you”. She firmly interrupts him to argue that “The Taliban regime had been in place for years and no one was particularly bothered about getting rid of it. You are not here because you wanted to destroy the Taliban for us, you are here because you wanted retribution

for what happened to you in 2001. I am glad they are gone but let's not confuse the facts" (Aslam, *TWV* 374-375). Here Dunia, as a young generation Afghan, demonstrates a significant awareness about the American global politics and its influence on Afghanistan. The novel subtly suggests the idea that this confrontation that takes place on the confident atmosphere of a small space has the power to trigger change on a larger scale for Afghanistan. Similarly, she challenges Casa's fundamentalist mindset when he talks about destroying America to protect Islam. Her sophisticated reasoning puts forward a causality which Casa fails to see and accentuates the detrimental role of fundamentalism in religious feeling of Muslims: "The Soviet Union was hated by its own people. The USA is loved by its people so it can't be destroyed ... Muslims love Islam. But Muslims hate fundamentalism. *That* can be destroyed ... What we have to make sure is that Muslims don't fall in love with the ways of the fundamentalists, then we'd be in trouble" (Aslam, *TWV* 319). In another instance she boldly criticizes Osama bin Laden and suicide bombings for their manipulation of Islam:

These suicide bombings don't further the cause of Islam as he claims- they save him and his followers from death, from being handed over to USA for reward. He is being protected by people who are promised millions of dollars in exchange of him. It is in his to keep making and releasing these tapes, to make sure people don't forget about him and his so-called jihad. The moment the Muslim world says, "Osama, who?" is the moment that terrorises him ... Stability is the insecticide he fears. (Aslam, *TWV* 335)

For Casa, Dunia's bold confrontations together with his experiences in Marcus's house makes him question his inner self to find his real self, yet he sadly proves to be an irreconcilable figure, "[v]iewing the world in very stark terms" (Aslam, *TWV* 357) and hence promising little hope for change since he considers changes in himself as being "infected" (Aslam, *TWV* 404). For this reason, when compared to Casa's failure of transformation, the prototype Dunia represents is more needed for a constructive transformation of the national space despite the fact that she is kidnapped at the end of the novel and disappears forever. Also echoing the concept of 'productive chaos' in postcolonial terms, the clash between the two

celebrates the possibility of how the national space can be remodelled through the confrontation of different interpretations of the same faith before it productively settles for a more embracing modelling.

In his interview with Chambers, Aslam explains the significance of the diversity of his characters in *TVW* that invite contrasting readings; he argues that “[a] novel is a democracy” (142) in which he has the responsibility of “making the reader understand every character [and] make everybody human” (142). With Dunia’s sad disappearance, it is possible to interpret this as the novel’s cynicism for Afghanistan’s becoming a national space that is empowering and liberating for women to be as influential and powerful as Dunia. Yet the variety of microstories that have the potential to create the ‘democratic’ space Aslam intends to help question the limiting spaces of ideologies and official politics from multiple angles. When the microstories are intertwined, different visions are productively brought together and totalizations of space are shaken with diverse experiences of the same space. From this perspective, what is of greater importance is not the end of Dunia’s story, but its capability of offering the reader plural perspectives into various issues ranging from gender issues to global politics that hint reconfiguration. Dunia’s confident and sophisticated prototype has the potential to become a site of change and empowerment for women by encouraging a social, political and religious awareness as hers.

2.2.3. Neglected Spatialities: Demarginalizing the Beautiful Afghanistan

TWV distinguishes itself within the contemporary postcolonial literature with its power of life-like and acute portrayals of Afghanistan’s sufferings from a combination of adversities ranging from social ills like gender inequality, bigotry, ignorance, to larger issues such as Islamic fundamentalism and political manipulations both on global and local scale. Among these, the portrayals of brutality in different forms stands out as one of the novel’s main strength of narration with their disturbingly detailed imageries, forged by Aslam’s “poetic

realism, ... mimetic craftsmanship that [renders his novel] mirror-written” (Clements, *Writing Islam* 93). While such flesh-and-blood portrayals of adversities make the overwhelming feeling of the novel quite dark and bleak, Aslam’s exquisite use of the language makes the reading a pleasure. On the other hand, as a purposeful literary strategy the novel also highlights what’s left by the margins of Afghanistan’s national space such as its natural beauties and rich cultural and human heritage, and hence experiments with a new sense of national spatiality that defies reductionist representation of Afghanistan. Juxtaposition of its beauties with its adversities creates a sharp contrast that adds to the reader’s sense of alienation and suggests a more holistic sense of the national space that is nuanced and inclusive of all aspects. Mohammed Hanif’s review of *TWV* that appeared on *Independent* confirms this dual framing arguing that “[t]he book is beautiful and brutal; butterflies, moths, flowers, gems, paintings, poetry and stone Buddhas keep erupting in the middle of this desolate landscape” (n.p). *TWV* puts special effort to present this alternative framing of Afghanistan to defy essentialisms that construct an *imaginative geography* of Afghanistan in Saidian terms⁵, reducing the region to an absolute space for terrorism or fundamentalism even if its main area of criticism lies on them. With this literary strategy, *TWV* hereby challenges static Eurocentric representations of the East as an essentially hostile and backward place, and prompts the reader to reframe their perception of Afghanistan with a more inclusive manner.

Nadeem Aslam treats war brutalities as a predominant theme in *TWV* that comes in different forms and from different sources to occupy the national space of Afghanistan. Dramatic imageries of murder, torture and rape almost as if everyday realities are woven into the fabric of the novel with a distinctive lyricism, which

⁵ Saidian concept of “imaginative geography” refers “[the] universal practice of designating in one’s mind a familiar space which is ‘ours’ and an unfamiliar space beyond ‘ours’ which is ‘theirs’” (*Orientalism* 54). Geographical distinctions outside one’s own familiar space bring social, cultural and ethnic identifications, suppositions and associations regarding the unfamiliar one, and help the mind intensify its own sense of itself through distance and difference. Imaginative geography hence legitimates “a vocabulary, a universe of representative discourse peculiar to the discussion and understanding of Islam and of the Orient” (*Orientalism* 71).

adds to the effect of violence felt by the reader. It is subtly suggested that with its multiple sources brutality occupying the national space of Afghanistan is not intrinsic to one region, one nation, one group, one ideology or one period; as Hanif suggests it is in many ways an extended commentary of “the destructive urges that bind us together” (n.p). These portrayals cover a quarter-century period of warfare starting from the Soviet invasion, and extending to the Taliban hegemony and the American global War on Terror; “... a period during which some vultures in Afghanistan have developed a taste for human flesh- whenever there was a dead animal with a human corpse next to it they’d ignore the animal” (Aslam, *TWV* 379). The graphic portrayals of civilian deaths by the Soviet soldiers is one example that pushes the boundaries of one’s imagination:

Human flesh was caught in the tracks [of their tanks] from a week ago when a number of inhabitants of a village, suspected of harbouring rebels, had been made to lie on the ground and had had the tank driven over them. The meat and bones were decomposing and the unbearable stench had meant that the tank had to be taken to the river. They used sticks to work loose the bits of clothing and bodies. (Aslam, *TWV* 363-364)

In another case that refers to post-Taliban stage of chaos, the aftermath of a suicide bombing that targets a school depicts “the gangs who roam the streets looking for children to kidnap, to harvest their eyes and kidneys, had attempted to drag away several of the half-dead ones from the site of the explosion” (Aslam, *TWV* 90). No matter how disturbing such scenes make the reading of the novel, Mohammed Hanif points out the larger picture they suggest as being “a literary quest to find humanity in the most unlikely of places” (n.p). Moreover, regardless of its source and motivations, the implied author of *TWV* is equally critical of brutal practices in any form that violates the integrity of human body and any one’s right to life. The disturbance these graphic portrayals create prompts the reader to question the role of the official politics, state and non-state violence as their real sources, which is where the novel’s actual literary agenda lies.

The bleak picture of Afghanistan on the one hand, *TWV* confuses the reader with a sharp contrast of an alternative spatial framing that is nuanced with

Afghanistan's natural beauties, cultural aspects and a nostalgic recreation of the past as a more liberating, pluralistic and harmonious space. In his interview to Sunil Seth, Aslam describes Afghanistan "a beautiful country, but it is a beautiful country that has been torn to pieces" (351) and explains that he feels obliged to bring the cruelties afflicting Afghanistan to the surface as they were through his fiction. The coexistence of the two versions creates a unique sense of alienation from the stereotypical representations of Afghanistan in mainstream media. Decentring the nation-bound space on political terms, the novel highlights these marginal spaces; to remind the reader that Afghanistan also possesses rich cultural and human heritage as well as its natural beauties. Thanks to his lyrical prose, Aslam spotlights this aspect of the national space which has been left out by the mainstream media representations. Sometimes an organic picture of Afghanistan that is isolated from its social and political realities is evoked by references to simple details such as cranes; Marcus wistfully remarks that "There used to be many more ... especially on the shore. They have been passing through here for millions of years, but the war in Afghanistan- all that flying metal in the air, the bullets and planes- and then the war in Chechnya, has meant that they get lost easily, trying to change their paths" (Aslam, *TWV* 294). Similarly, while its rich cultural potential is hinted with reference to "[t]he men and women of Afghanistan [who] share between them a store of tales so extensive, so rich and ancient, that it has been said unrivalled by any other land" (Aslam, *TWV* 72), a picturesque depiction of Jalalabad expresses a nostalgic feeling for its peaceful past: "The city centre down there is full of citrus trees, this valley being famous for its orange blossom, verse makers from across Afghanistan gathering in Jalalabad in mid-April every year for a Poet's Conference to recite poems dedicated to the blossom" (Aslam, *TWV* 58). A rich cultural history harbouring different beliefs and cultures despite the singular adverse stereotype of Afghanistan is also emphasized to point out how national space was filled by diverse elements prior to the neo-imperialist era, which, according to Clements, is an attempt "to recall and commemorate the hybrid and unorthodox traditions of Muslim lands ... [evoking] a model of moderate Islamic enlightenment, which

foregrounds Islam's originary and historic emphasis on the values of self-knowledge, tolerance, compassion, humanity and justice as a possible focal point for rehabilitation and reform" (*Writing Islam* 97). In a similar direction Flannery argues that "... as illusion to myth, storytelling and natural beauty attest, the history of this country is something out of which a more hopeful future can be imagined and manufactured" (n.p.). In this vein, the head of a great Buddha excavated during the construction of Marcus's perfume factory near his house is not a surprise as "this province was one of the most important pilgrimage sites in the Buddhist world from the second to seventh centuries AD- over a thousand Buddhist stupas in the area echoing to the incantations of the monks back then" (Aslam, *TWV* 22-23). The head, too heavy to move, stays within the factory, creating an interesting ambiance in terms of politics of space and signifying religious tolerance and diversity. It is also important that Marcus introduces it to Casa as "part of Afghanistan's past" (Aslam, *TWV* 228), which is a challenge to the Taliban's policy of totalizing faith and eradicating Afghanistan's pre-Islamic heritage. The Buddha head is also thematically important because it stands for "Aslam's refutation of the Taliban's destruction": "[Aslam] says of the Taliban, 'although I may not have been able to stop you in real life, in my mind and my book you won't succeed in destroying this Buddha'" (qtd. in Chambers 139). Within this frame of demarginalized spaces that is inclusive of the plurality of various cultural, religious and historical elements, an authentic post-space Afghanistan is promisingly envisioned so that "re-cultivation of Afghanistan's spiritual and aesthetic connections ... may bring emotional release and spiritual solace to isolated Muslim communities ruled by Americans, warlords and Taliban, ...[and] could salve the traumatised and corrupted psyches of civilians and militants caught in the crossfire of international forces on the thresholds of their Afghan homes" (Clements, *Writing Islam* 106).

While the narration predominantly sets in Afghanistan, a considerable portion is spared for Peshawar in Pakistan especially with regard to Zameen's story after her escape from Soviet base. The narration focusing on Zameen thus transpasses the national border of Afghanistan, reminding at the same time of the

reader the cultural and historical connectedness of the two countries. Peshawar is another place whose multifaceted representation is based on the same strategy outlined above for Afghanistan, with a nuance of an additional emphasis on its present-day political positioning. While it is referred as “the prime staging area for the jihad against the Soviet invaders, rivalling East Berlin as the spy capital of the world by 1984” (Aslam, *TWV* 151) and becomes the hub where “the secret agents from all over the world began to congregate” (Aslam, *TWV* 151). The city is also portrayed as harbouring rich and diverse cultural background. It was “the second home of Buddhism, the city could count Lotus Land among its almost forgotten names, the peepal tree under which the Enlightened One was said to have preached continuing to grow in a quiet square. The City of Flowers. The city of Grain” (Aslam, *TWV* 151). A sharp contrast of present-day Peshawar and how it was before implies that the spatial perception can be altered according to the scales used, and with the intervention of politics, the space becomes less inclusive of diversity. “For most of its history [Peshawar] was one of the main trade centres linked to the Silk Road, and now the United States was sending arms into Afghanistan through here” (Aslam, *TWV* 151). It is now the city towards which “Makeshift ambulances filled with the wounded and the dying raced through the mountain passes ... carrying at times children who had been set alight by Soviet soldiers to make the parents reveal the hiding places of guerrillas” (Aslam, *TWV* 151). Such dual portrayals in fact imply the human culture and heritage as enabling spaces to redefine Afghanistan on positive terms, and aim “... to shatter the myth of Afghanistan and Pakistan as being inherently and historically violent regions of the world” (Khan 125). In contrast with its condemnations for war brutalities and critique of political degradation, the novel’s lamentation for an organic and culturally more ‘spacious’ Afghanistan thus suggests a post-space reconfiguration in which the natural flow of life wouldn’t be violated by global politics and wars.

Outlining *TWV*’s spatial politics, one can argue that the novel’s problematization of Afghanistan on multiple spatial scales in fact points out a larger problem regarding Afghanistan as national space; the national space conceptually

contained within definite geographical borders and defined on political terms has reconfigured into a new spatial reality with direct and indirect influence global politics and its negation of the nation's political integrity. When politically defined, nation is 'time-bound' and 'illusory', and thus can easily be manipulated and violated, just like multiple element of powers depicted in the novel each of which claims to operate for the benefit of the nation but in fact cause its very destruction. On visiting Ground Zero, Aslam asked himself "... whether in [his] personal life and as a writer [he] had been rigorous enough to condemn the small-scale September 11s that go on every day" (Brace, n.p). This study offers a reading of *TWV* as Aslam's condemnation of small scale September 11 that happens every day for Afghanistan. In this direction he lays bare the deficiencies of political use of space by multiple power structures through literary narration and celebrates other spatial scales- small spaces, microstories and demarginalized spatialities- to facilitate empowering reconfigurations of Afghanistan with its *post-space* revisionings.

In the next chapter, *TBMG*, Aslam's other novel under the scrutiny of this study, will be analysed in the same spirit, only with some nuances regarding the alternative spatial scales to redefine the nation. In contrast to *TWV* which is mostly about Afghanistan, *TBMG* predominantly narrates the post-9/11 Pakistan although Afghanistan is also referred as an inseparable component. Reframing nation through *small spaces* and *microstories* is a common ground of these two novels in terms of Aslam's spatial politics, yet Chapter 3 discusses *TBMG* also in terms of another alternative scale that is *larger-than-national* spaces. In this respect, *journey* as a motif that facilitates *post-space* representations that are *larger-than-nation* will also be explored in *TBMG*.

CHAPTER 3

SPATIAL POLITICS IN *THE BLIND MAN'S GARDEN*

3.1. Representing Post-9/11 Spatiality of Afghanistan and Pakistan in *The Blind Man's Garden*

This chapter focuses on *TBMG* in terms of its spatial representations of Afghanistan and Pakistan and explores its *post-space* implications to reframe these two nations. The novel portrays the national spaces of Afghanistan and Pakistan as two connected entities in terms of politics, culture and history. While in *TBMG*'s Pakistan, the fundamentalist Islam, rigid patriarchal norms, and postcolonial instabilities prevail, Afghanistan's national space is described as being manipulated by the American neo-imperialist politics, the Taliban's despotism and warlordism as an arbitrary manifestation of power. Although both national spaces are portrayed in rather bleak terms and characterized with xenophobic intolerance, *TBMG* subtly suggests the possibilities of reconfiguring the national spaces by means of alternative spatial scales of representation. Just like *TWV*'s *small-scale* representations that has *post-space* implications, *TBMG* designates Rohan's *garden* and *schools* as small spaces that signify resistance and trigger positive transformation for the Pakistani nation. Also, both novels highlight *microstories* as small spaces with transformative power where a more liberating sense of national space for individuals can be experienced. On the other hand, what is characteristic about *TBMG* is that it exemplifies reconfiguration of national space by means of *larger-than-national* spaces. The motif of *journey*, which offers an alternative sense of spatiality in this sense, is explored to demonstrate that *larger-than-national* spaces can break free from restrictive political, ideological and even physical boundaries circumscribing nations and promise a more liberating sense of space.

3.1.1. Non-Fictional Background of the Novel

In order to have a better understanding of Afghan-Pakistani connectedness accentuated in *TBMG*, the non-fictional background of the novel needs to be reviewed. The history of complicated relations between the two countries in the 20th century can be traced back to the Durand Line, which was designed by the Great Britain in 1893 to delineate the border between the Afghanistan and British India. The formation of Afghanistan as a separate land originated from the Great Britain's attempt to separate Russia from the British India by creating "a British buffer zone against further Russian aggression and encroachment into India" (Runion 89). More recently, Pakistan and Afghanistan are collectively associated with fundamentalist Islam and terrorism. For Pakistan, this notorious involvement has its roots back in General Zia-ul-Haq's aggressive Islamization policy during 1980s. Having ruled the country between 1978-1988, General Zia firmly held the belief that an Islamic state inherently possesses "the integrating factor that linked Pakistanis with one another, and also Pakistan with the Muslims of Afghanistan" (Ziring 176). His idealization of forming the 'original' Pakistan that is based on Islamic reforms and indoctrination and the exclusion of Western values and thoughts uprooted the secular structure of his predecessors. His aggressive Islamization policy hence paved the way for Pakistan's becoming a seedbed for fundamentalists who have had a long-term impact on both Afghanistan and Pakistan. Especially, the madrassa formations during Zia's rule with their fundamentalist curriculum consolidated the Taliban to grow bigger in number with the madrassa students in Pakistan who crossed the border to support their Afghan brethren (Runion 122) since "the output from these schools of religious instruction became the willing recruits for a steady stream of jihadis." (Ziring 302). Under his regime, liberal and oppositional politicians, artists, intellectuals and communists were persecuted. Nadeem Aslam's father, a poet and a Communist, is one of them who had to flee from the regime to England. As opposed to his idealization of an Islamic resurrection and renaissance, Zia's Islamization policy realistically did little to address the major problems of

Pakistani people such as corruption, social inequalities and poverty let alone creating an Islamic renaissance.

In 1980s, the Afghan-Pakistani relations gained a different dimension with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. To escape the cruel treatment of the Soviet forces and the brutalities of the civil war “[t]hroughout the late 1980s, almost one-third of the Afghanistan people were forced into exile as refugees. The majority of these refugees settled in Pakistan and Iran” (Runion 8). During General Zia’s regime, Pakistan collaborated with the US in the American cold-war policy of fighting against Communism and supported the formation of the mujahedeen guerrillas against the Soviets. General Zia read the Soviet intervention to Afghanistan as a threat to Pakistan as well and hence actively used Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence Agency (ISI) as Pakistan’s extension in Afghanistan to set the stage for the rise of the Taliban with its logistic and political support. For the ISI, consolidating the Taliban, which evolved out of the mujahideen fighters, is of great importance because “... the Taliban was made the instrument not only to end the fighting in Afghanistan, but to bring the country under Pakistani control” (Ziring 284). On the other hand, the U.S. initial expectations of the Taliban for bringing a stabilizing effect on Afghanistan proved to be a downplay of its fundamentalist tendencies. In return for his help to consolidate Taliban’s domination over Afghanistan, the ISI and the Taliban allowed Bin Laden to attract Muslim fighters around the world to be deployed in Afghanistan, set up jihadi training camps and al-Qaeda bases. Pakistan has additional importance for the fundamentalists of al-Qaeda in Afghanistan because “[it] provided them with access to the larger world” (Ziring 303), functioning as a gateway for their global activities. Besides facilitating al-Qaeda’s practices prior to the 9/11 attacks, the Taliban soon adopted a rhetoric of ‘holy war’ against the Western world, and “[o]nce the Taliban united with the fundamentalists of al-Qaeda, Afghanistan was thrust into an Islamic maelstrom of darkness and despair” (Runion 132). In the wake of 9/11 attacks, Pakistan adopted a double-dealing attitude towards the Taliban and the United States; while the Musharraf Government had agreed to stand with the American ‘war-on-terror’, the

ISI continued its stealth connections with the Taliban and al-Qaeda. On the other hand, the official alliance of the Pakistani government with the U.S. was condemned by the conservative religious circles of Pakistan, and calling on people to join the Taliban in jihad against the Americans was voiced extensively across Pakistan. Moved by the religious sentiment dictating that “Islam’s proud past beckoned believers to choose between the satanic forces of neocolonialism and those calling for the Kingdom of God” (Ziring 200-201), a large number of Pakistanis took sides with Afghanistan and were recruited in the war against the Americans. By November 2001, the Taliban had been removed from power as a result of the American military intervention. With the fall of the Taliban, Afghanistan was dragged into political and social chaos again; a period of ‘wardlordism’ re-emerged as it did after the liquidation of the Communist government in 1980s. The fall of the Taliban and the lack of an effective central government meant Afghanistan would continue to suffer from social and political instabilities.

Outlining the political and historical background of the novel above, it feels necessary to give an overview of the novel before moving on with its textual analysis. Published in 2013, *TBMG* is Nadeem Aslam’s fourth novel. While it shows parallelism with his previous novel *TWV* in terms of its contextualization of American ‘war-on-terror’, its main focus is Pakistan’s positioning in the post-9/11 world and its inseparable and problematic connectedness to Afghanistan both culturally and politically. As a writer who is ethnically and culturally tied to Pakistan, Aslam explains in his interview to Amina Yaqin why he decided to write *TBMG*, arguing that it was not possible in *TWV* to tell Pakistan’s story sufficiently so writing a separate novel for this was a necessity: “I wanted to tell the story of what happened to Pakistan, because Pakistan has paid a huge price for what has happened during the last ten years but also during the Afghan jihad” (43). For this reason, as Kanwal rightly suggests, “*The Blind Man’s Garden* can be read as a continuation of *The Wasted Vigil* by featuring the Afghan War and its impact on Pakistanis and Afghans” (188). The novel blends the history of a Pakistani family

with those of contemporary Pakistan and Afghanistan. Just like *TWV*, *TBMG* is consistently narrated by the third-person narrator. Contrary to the *TWV* which is set in a large time span of almost 30 years of Afghanistan's recent history, it portrays the immediate aftermath of 9/11 attacks, covering a more condensed time period with a specific attention to Pakistan. It encapsulates the dramatic changes in the lives of local characters in the aftermath of 9/11 phenomenon to broaden the reader's perspective of the East and the 'other'. The novel, which starts off in a town called Heer in Peshawar, -a location from which it is easy to cross over from Pakistan to Afghanistan-, moves back and forth between Heer and Afghanistan. At the centre of the narration are Rohan's family and the old premises of the school of Ardent Spirit which Rohan founded with his wife Sofia to revive the glory of Islam but has been taken over by the Islamic fundamentalists and adopted a radical outlook. Rohan, the 'blind man' of the title and a devout Muslim, continues to live in the old premises of the school with his trainee doctor son Jeo and Jeo's newly-wed wife Naheed. Rohan's wife Sofia, a forward-looking, open-minded and intellectual character, dies in apostasy, which is a great source of agony and distress for Rohan. Mikal and Basie are Rohan's adopted sons whose father, a Communist, had gone missing, probably murdered during Zia regime. Rohan's daughter Yasmin is married to Basie, and they both teach at the Christian school in Heer. The novel gains momentum with Jeo setting off for a dangerous journey into Afghanistan with his adopted brother Mikal who is a mechanical and practical mind with a virtuous character. They have no actual intentions of fighting for the Taliban but helping the wounded across the border. Nevertheless, they have been betrayed and thrown into a situation where they had to fight with the Taliban in a conflict. The fight causes Jeo to die and Mikal to be captivated by a warlord. In the meantime, Mikal is secretly in love with Jeo's wife Naheed who happens to be in love with him too despite marrying Jeo. His agonising love for Naheed on the one hand, he finds himself entrapped in a dead end in which he is persecuted by the warlords, the fundamentalists and the American forces alike. Back in Heer, Naheed strives to survive and realize herself as a young widow in the patriarchal society of Pakistan.

She is raised fatherless by her mother Tara who internalizes the established patriarchal values of the Pakistani society. The narration eventually encompasses both Afghanistan and Pakistan by simultaneously portraying Mikal compulsorily journeying for survival in Afghanistan, and the family members in Heer striving to lead their lives despite numerous adversities affecting Pakistani society. The novel is rich in its description of combat scenes especially in relation to Mikal, and the urgency of the combat scenes destabilizes one's sense of time and space regarding Afghanistan and Pakistan. All in all, through the lenses of a Pakistani family, *TBMG* points to a larger picture in which conflicting ideologies, greed and violence plague the geography that Pakistan and Afghanistan share. The novel's spatial scope inseparably encompasses both Afghanistan and Pakistan not only as geographically but also historically, culturally and politically linked spaces. This linkage is predominantly emphasized with some common grounds Afghan-Pakistani relations are contextualized like the Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan, Pakistan's logistic and political support for the Taliban especially during the post-9/11 period and a common sense of chaos, social ills and poverty. Themes such as discontent with the postcolonial society, traumatic experience with Islamic fundamentalism and post-9/11 neo-imperialist global politics are projected abundantly in the novel especially in the spatial representations of Afghanistan and Pakistan. With *TBMG*, Aslam shifts his spatial focalization from Afghanistan to Pakistan within the context of 'war-on-terror' to offer an alternative perspective to comprehend complicated issues ranging from American neo-imperialism to Islamic fundamentalism with Pakistan's involvement being highlighted.

3.1.2. The American Presence in post 9/11 Afghanistan and its Spatial Reflections

“The opposite of war is not peace but civilization, and civilization is purchased with violence and cold-blooded murder. With war”.

(Aslam, *TBMG* 143)

TBMG's discussion of imperialism goes back to the British colonial presence in Afghanistan with references to the Mutiny against the British in 1857.

When compared to *TWV*, *TBMG* has little mentioning of the period of Soviet invasion except for such occasional references as a “ fort [that] was used in the 1980s by Soviet soldiers to torture and imprison the population, and there is graffiti in Russian on several walls [and] ... a skeleton chained to the wall in an underground chamber” (Aslam, *TBMG* 69) or “a graveyard of planes and helicopters [that Mikal comes across], Russian MiGs and Hinds, all resting at odd angles with cockpits slung open and the glass smashed, the tyres ripped and rotted” (Aslam, *TBMG* 166). While references of multiple imperialist forces such as Britain, Russia and the US and their intricate power relations imply the continuities between European colonialism and neo-imperialism, they also indicate the multi-layeredness of history and politics that have brought about the devastation of present-day Afghanistan. *TBMG* puts the U.S. as the primary imperialist power under the spotlight with a specific focus on the post-9/11 period. Criticism of America’s arbitrary use of power in Afghanistan and its neo-imperialist strategies to maintain control over Afghanistan’s national space are to name a few issues through which the US is contextualized in Aslam’s fiction. The novel particularly takes on a highly critical attitude towards the United States’ justification of its military intervention with what Aslam defines as a reductive logic of “... there are no innocent people in a guilty nation” (Aslam, *TBMG* 6).

TBMG describes the American forces in a constant patrolling and human-hunting across Afghanistan looking for the Al-Qaeda and Taliban figures during the feverish times of post- 9/11 period. The present-time of the narration suggests that “[t]he Taliban are still in power in Afghanistan, but the Americans have sent in Special Forces soldiers ... All the while the air and the sky are being traversed by jets and bombs weighing tens of thousands of pounds” (Aslam, *TBMG* 27-28). The overwhelming advantage of the US over resistant groups with its cutting-edge military technologies is emphasized with “[l]aser-guided bombs ... falling onto [Afghanistan’s mountains and hills], missiles summoned from the Arabian Sea, from American warships that are as long as the Empire State Building is tall” (Aslam, *TBMG* 14). The narration is critical of the fact that using such technologies

unavoidably creates an unequal war victimizing especially the civilians: “The US casualties number twelve in the two-month war, whereas countless thousands of Afghanistans have perished, fighters as well as bystanders” (Aslam, *TBMG* 142). As a result of the US manhunt for the terrorists, “it is the buildings, orchards and hills of Afghanistan that are being torn apart by bombs and firebombs” (Aslam, *TBMG* 6). The American forces who are in zealous effort to liquidate Taliban’s hegemony and in search of their listed terrorists and “a possible Osama bin Laden hideout or gravesite” (Aslam, *TBMG* 162), are portrayed to have already created an overwhelming presence in Afghanistan’s national space. As Mikal observes, “the soles of several boots [of the American soldiers] have left deep imprints on the muddy ground of the bend. America is everywhere. The boots are large as if saying ‘This is how you make an impression in the world’” (Aslam, *TBMG* 162). While the imagery of boots symbolizes growing American dominance over Afghanistan, a similar manifestation of power by the Americans over the national space is symbolically referred with “... a brick from the pulverised home of Mullah Omar⁶ [that] has been flown to the United States as a war trophy for the White House” (Aslam, *TBMG* 27). This symbolic act of collecting ‘war trophy’ implies the demise of the Taliban and the beginning of a new era for Afghanistan that is to be open to American influence. Such subtle symbolisms as this as a manifestation of power is a recurrent motif in Aslam’s fiction since *TVW* also elaborates on the symbolic meaning of “a piece of debris taken from the ruins of the World Trade Centre” (Aslam, *TBMG* 37) and buried in Afghanistan to conveying a powerful criticism of American domination of Afghanistan’s national space both literally, -by means of military operations-, and metaphorically with such symbolic acts of supremacy.

The novel subtly implies that the American neo-imperialist behaviour also exhibits itself with its cultivation of chaos across the country for easier domination and control. Besides using military means against The Taliban and al-Qaeda, the

⁶ Mullah Omar was the leader of the Taliban whose cooperation with Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden brought about US military intervention to Afghanistan. The ties between Omar and Laden is alleged to go back to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan during which they were both resistance fighters.

US efforts to maintain utmost control over the national space involves “Special Forces soldiers ...[who] are building alliances among the local population and orchestrating rebellion” (Aslam, *TBMG* 28) and “... Taliban loyal[s] who [are] now with the Americans ... [bought with] the black canvas bags ... no doubt full of dollars” (Aslam, *TBMG* 62). The collaboration of the warlords who rise in power again with the weakening of the Taliban and who are paid by the Americans “millions of dollars ... for the militia [they] must have raised to fight the Taliban and al-Qaeda soldiers alongside American Special Forces” (Aslam, *TBMG* 143) is another way the novel unravels how the US implements a neo-imperialist tactic of creating chaos to maintain its indirect influence more easily. The chaotic atmosphere of the country is forged not only by the battles between the US forces and the resisting groups from Taliban, but also by “...[local] people [who] are rising up, encouraged by America’s covert help ... [as] the Special Forces soldiers are moving on horseback from village to village between towns and cities, dressed in shalwar kameez and shawls and woollen caps, emboldening, bribing and arming the population” (Aslam, *TBMG* 52). All these tell us that Afghanistan’s portrayal under US invasion creates a sense of spatiality that is shaped by an overwhelming military presence of the US, prevalent chaos cultivated as a neo-imperialist strategy and a never-ending cycle of uncertainty and instability intensified with American ‘war on terror’.

3.1.3. The Post 9/11 Stage, Political and Social Instabilities and Space in Afghanistan and Pakistan

3.1.3.1. The Postcolonial Space of Pakistan

Though it is not the primary focus of the novel to problematize Pakistan as ‘home’ in postcolonial context, *TBMG* still can’t be read in isolation from Pakistan’s post-independence afflictions troubling the nation. Aslam constructs his novel specifically on Pakistan and its standing vis-à-vis global politics and power relations. However, prevailing issues of the postcolonial Pakistan such as religious bigotry, patriarchy, and corruption is also where Aslam’s discussion of Pakistan

extends to. The novel's discussion of corruption in the official institutions is one issue that negatively frames Pakistan as a postcolonial space. More specifically, the Pakistani police is under the novel's scrutiny as it basically signifies one dysfunctional portion within Pakistan's postcolonial space that should be exposed. To emphasize the notorious connotations that the use of torture and violence by the Pakistani police creates for Pakistan, the implied author puts forward that "[i]t is difficult to suppress a shudder every time the police solve a crime in Pakistan. There is no knowing if the confession is genuine, and there is no knowing how many innocents have been tortured to get even that" (Aslam, *TBMG* 284). In a similar vein, the novel mentions a joke known by the Pakistanis about a man who loses his horse. After trying each and every way to find it, he finally goes to the Pakistani police. The next day the police comes with an elephant that is severely beaten, barely walking but screaming "'I am a horse, I am a horse'" (Aslam, *TBMG* 286). This joke in itself is an implication of how the bad reputation of the Pakistani police is closely linked to its cruel and inhumane methods of interrogation. Aslam's novel describes the Pakistani police as an adverse reality of postcolonial Pakistan, points at its malfunctioning nature and hence diagnoses a need for a reconfiguration of the national space through the capacity and power of fiction.

TBMG extends its critique of the Pakistani police by problematizing its notorious association with bribery. Naheed goes missing for days, and the family finally goes to the police despite possible misogynist assumptions about missing women in Pakistan. The police officer, by his self-definition "one of the moral guardians of this land" (Aslam, *TBMG* 338), displays a complete indifference towards Naheed's case because it might mean "... wast[ing his] time with a girl who has run away from home" (Aslam, *TBMG* 288). The implied author is critical of the fact that for a crucial official institution like the police to perform their assigned duties, bribery is a must. When demanded bribery by the police for proceeding his sister-in-law's case, Basie can't help expressing his indignation about the Pakistani police: "Bribes exist in other countries too, he knows, but there they are an incentive towards performing illegal acts. Here they must be paid to

induce an official to do what he is supposed to do” (Aslam, *TBMG* 288). After Naheed turns up, the same police officer, the self-defined ‘moral guardian’ who earlier has shown indifference to Naheed’s whereabouts threatens the family to take her into custody for ‘moral’ laxity that her going missing suggests. However, he immediately steps back after being bribed by Tara, which suggests the failure of his ‘morality’ when his personal interests are in question. All in all, Aslam’s critical portrayal of the Pakistani police in *TBMG* reveals an undeniable factor shaping Pakistan’s postcolonial space unfavourably. His novel thus challenges this negative sense of spatiality by exposing the dysfunctionality of the official institutions to be able to discuss them critically and constructively.

As an elaboration of his discontent with Pakistan’s postcolonial state, Aslam argues that “If I am critical of Pakistan in my writing then it is only of the power structures – the generals, the venal politicians, the unholy holy-men” (Granta n.p.). Aslam’s mistrust with hierarchical categories that dissociate Pakistani society is projected through not just his rebuttal of self-seeking politics and officials, but also his commentary on social ills ranging from manipulative sense of religion to financial inequalities victimizing ordinary Pakistanis. Another instance where Aslam’s critical portrayal of postcolonial Pakistan can be found is the time Mikal is tortured in the American prison in Afghanistan. There he has a vision of ‘a white man laughing at him’. Humiliated by “a laughter tinged with contempt for him and his nation” (Aslam, *TBMG* 214), he goes through an intense moment of questioning the adverse image of Pakistan that suggests

a country full of people whose absolute devotion to their religion is little more than an unshakable loyalty to unhappiness and mean-spiritedness, and the white man continues to laugh with eyes full of hatred and accusation and hilarity and mirth at this citizen of a shameless beggar country full of liars, hypocrites, beaters of women and children and animals and the weak, brazen rapist and unpunished murderers, torturers ... delusional morons and fools who wanted independence from the British and a country of their own, but who now can’t wait to leave it, emigrate, emigrate, emigrate to Britain, USA, Canada, Australia, Dubai, Kuwait, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Japan, China, New Zealand, Sweden, South

Africa, South Korea, Norway, Germany, Belgium, Chile, Hong Kong, Holland, Spain, Italy, France, anywhere, anywhere, anywhere, anywhere but Pakistan, they can't wait to get out of there, having reduced the country to a wasteland, their very own caliphate of rubble. (Aslam, *TBMG* 214-215)

Here the incessant form the narration takes on artfully implies authorial frustration with Pakistan's varying postcolonial issues that remain unsolved. On the other hand, while the white man's laughing suggests him a lot about postcolonial Pakistan on many levels, the image of Pakistan that Mikal envisions has rather blurred implications since it both contains Anglo-American perception of Pakistan as a backward and hostile land and some of the bitter realities in fact plaguing Pakistan's postcolonial space. It is a sure fact that the implied author conveys his criticism of Pakistan and its post-independence political and social failures through the novel's reconstruction of Pakistan, but the fact that it is blended with the Eurocentric gaze for Pakistan creates a productive ambiguity requiring the reader's active involvement to create meaning. In this way, *TBMG*'s portrayal of Pakistan as postcolonial space which basically suggests Aslam's discontent about Pakistan's persisting political and social issues also problematizes stereotypical framings of the nation that creates a negative sense of spatiality.

3.1.3.2. Taliban's Decline in Power and Its Spatial Reflections

Afghanistan in *TBMG* is described as worn-out land, both physically and psychologically as a result of Taliban's oppressive rule. The sections of the novel which narrates Afghanistan's post-9/11 atmosphere signifies a spatiality that is chaotic and unsafe. Unlike the centrality of Heer as for the parts narrating Pakistan as space, the sense of space as for Afghanistan is blurry and destabilized due to a negative sense of fluidity caused by prolonged wars and conflicts. War has become such an intrinsic part of the nation that Afghanistan is referred as "[t]he territory of clans and tribes. Where along with jewellery and land, children inherit missiles" (Aslam, *TBMG* 39). The Taliban who came to power with the claim of "... creating the only country in the world where there are no man-made laws" (Aslam, *TBMG* 63) is designated by the novel as one of Afghanistan's major calamities causing it

to dissolve culturally, intellectually and politically. A similar yet extended remark is made by Ziring who argues that “[w]hat the Soviets began in shattering the social veneer of Afghan society, the Taliban finished. The Taliban was not only a totally new Afghan experience, it came very close to replicating the Communist aim, albeit in fundamentalist Islamic character, of re-engineering society” (289). While Taliban’s destructive influence over the national space as pointed out by Ziring is a broader matter of inquiry for *TWV*, *TBMG* focuses more specifically on the post-9/11 reflections of Taliban’s presence which with its decline in power.

Nojumi’s exploration of the Taliban entails an international context to discuss its rise and fall which “depended upon crucial shifts in the international context” (90). While Taliban was born as a reaction to the Soviet invasion and the corruption of the mujahideen forces fighting against the Soviets, its demise was prepared by its affiliation with al-Qaeda and subsequent American invasion of Afghanistan. Regarding the pre-9/11 period of Afghanistan Nojumi contends that financial difficulties as a result of international embargos on Afghanistan, ongoing conflict in the country and the country’s inability to produce human and capital resources created a serious dependency on al-Qaeda’s financial and military support (112-113). This eventually paved way for Afghanistan to be spatially exploited by al-Qaeda who used the country almost as its headquarter. The tendency of the global politics to equate Afghanistan with al-Qaeda on the one hand, Kanwal contends that when compared to *TVW* which vaguely distinguishes the Taliban from al-Qaeda, *TBMG* implies the American culpability in Afghanistan’s associations with terrorism by “highlight[ing] the shift in US policy in Afghanistan from pro-Taliban to anti-Taliban in a more nuanced way” (188).

TBMG portrays the Taliban as having lost its central authority over the national space in the aftermath of the American invasion: “Defeated and banished, Taliban and Al-Qaeda gangs are roaming Afghanistan, and of course the place is full of Western soldiers” (Aslam, *TBMG* 137). Hence the national space under the declining control of the Taliban is characterized with even greater oppression and

cruelty intensified by its efforts to regain control: “It’s mayhem in Afghanistan. The Taliban are ruling with an iron fist, punishing traitors, informers, spies and those inciting rebellion” (Aslam, *TBMG* 52). At the very beginning of their journey into Afghanistan, Mikal and Jeo come across a man executed by Taliban. “... [A] piece of carboard is held in place on his chest by the broken-off tip of a spear, driven into him between the fifth and sixth ribs ... [On the carboard] It says, *This is what happens to those who betray Allah’s beloved Taliban*” (Aslam, *TBMG* 58-59). Also proving the Foucauldian insight into the principle of punishment to be visible to others, this execution is in fact an extension of the paranoid air in the national space. Created by the suspicions of “spying for the Americans” (Aslam, *TBMG* 68), American paranoia can result in such extreme cases as that “... people have been beaten for knowing English, suspected of being American informers” (Aslam, *TBMG* 398).

Taliban’s effort to reclaim Afghanistan also brings the jihadi propaganda into perspective, which is visibly everywhere across Afghanistan’s national space: “On the boulders on the riverbanks the words *Jihad is your duty* are daubed, white against the grey and black ... *Victory or Martyrdom. Telephone now for jihad training. There is a phone number*” (Aslam, *TBMG* 138). As an extended commentary on the novel’s treatment of jihad, Aslam is especially critical of Pakistan’s involvement in jihadi training in Afghanistan with its logistic and political support. The novel describes jihadi fighters training by “firing bullets into telephone directories of Pakistani cities soaked in water, proof that the Taliban were supported and funded by the Pakistani government and military” (Aslam, *TBMG* 69), and thus implicitly underlies the manipulation of Afghanistan’s national space by Pakistan as well as the US.

What is also characteristically true for post-9/11 spatiality of Afghanistan is the denouncement of the declining Taliban by the ordinary people. With a subtle cynicism embedded, the narration mentions the radio bulletin of the day Kabul falls: it says, with the flight of the Taliban from Kabul “Afghanistan is liberated and

American troops are being handed sweets and plastic flowers by the free citizens of Kabul” (Aslam, *TBMG* 127-128). Although the novel’s overall attitude implies that the flight of the Taliban doesn’t mean ‘liberation’ and there is a long way ahead of the citizens of Afghanistan before they are actually ‘free’, the instance described by the bulletin is a manifestation of welcoming a new prospect for the country without the Taliban. The Taliban-stricken psychology of the country from years of oppression and cruelty exhibits itself within the nation space also through violent acts as in the case of lynching two Taliban figures by the Afghan people in the novel. It is suggested that lynching can be read as an expression of the ordinary citizens’ massive frustration with

[e]very ounce of rage- every rape, every disappearance, every public execution, every hand amputated during the past seven years of the Taliban regime, every twelve-year-old boy pressed into battle by them, every ten-year-old girl forcibly married to a mullah eight times her age, every man lashed, every woman beaten, every limb broken [which] was poured into the two men by fist, club, stick, foot and stone. (Aslam, *TBMG* 53)

A similar reactionary attitude is implied when Mikal and Jeo come across a fort used as a Taliban headquarter in a village in Afghanistan. The fort is referred as “the most hated and feared place in the region” (Aslam, *TBMG* 66), and thus “[t]he people in the village will show no mercy when they come in with American reinforcement and weaponry” (Aslam, *TBMG* 66). In Aslam’s reconfiguration of Afghanistan, national space is no longer welcoming for the Taliban, and it grows more and more precarious with the Taliban’s efforts to reclaim control against growing American influence on the one hand, and anti-Taliban reactions among people on the other.

TBMG also draws attention to the rise of the warlords with the declining power of the Taliban. A warlord, by definition, is a local ruler or a bandit leader usually where the central government is weak, and whose execution of power and authority is arbitrary. “The warlords ... claim certain territories as their own [and] enslave the inhabitants of that region and for the most part operate beyond the control of the government. Removing the Taliban from power gave the warlords

the opportunity to quickly claim these abandoned territories” (Runion 133). In the novel, the influence of warlords in the reconfiguration of post-9/11 Afghanistan is commented lengthily especially in relation to their arbitrary use of power and authority over people in the absence of a central power. The fear factor across the national space is now represented through the practices of warlords who almost replace the Taliban in terms of their oppression and brutality. Almost mimicking the colonial pattern of slavery, warlords in *TBMG* capture people and then either sell them to the American forces if they are on the US ‘wanted’ list, or contact with their families for a ransom in exchange of their freedom. The novel elaborates on this issue with Rohan’s help for the birdpardoners’⁷ son, whose name also happens to be Jeo, to be saved from a warlord in Afghanistan by purchasing his freedom. The birdpardoners’ son states that the prisoners are kept in underground prisons that “smell... of sweat, urine and excrement, of rotting wounds and flesh” (Aslam, *TBMG* 144) and subjected to unimaginable abuses by the warlords and their men including torture and rape - “things ... that make you want to kill yourself” (Aslam, *TBMG* 135). With the specific case of birdpardoners’ son, Aslam laments on the fact that thousands of young Pakistanis fuelled by religious sentiment have gone to Afghanistan to assist Taliban to assist jihad, yet many of them have ended up being Afghan warlords’ prisoners, becoming simply trade items. The author’s indignation about the warlords is also felt about the fact that during the post-Taliban stage “[t]he well-known warlord status of powerful individuals and their involvement in local and regional conflicts and rights violations does not preclude their participation in national politics” (Nojumi et al. 15), which the novel criticizes with portrayal of warlords who collaborate with the Americans and endeavour to take part in the new government to be founded. All in all, with the fall of the Taliban, spatial reality of Afghanistan in *TBMG* is reshaped by Taliban’s effort to regain power by terrorizing

⁷ At the very beginning of the novel, the birdpardoners appear in Rohan’s garden and asks for permission to put up snares on the trees to catch birds to sell them in town for it is believed that “the freed bird says a prayer on behalf of the one who has bought its freedom” (Aslam, *TBMG* 7). He doesn’t come on the time he promised, so the birds entrapped in snares suffer. Aslam uses symbolism of the birds entrapped with subtlety to highlight the situation of the birdpardoners’ son who is captivated in Afghanistan and cannot be freed without Rohan’s help.

the people and propagating jihad, yet its decline in power bring about such changes for the national as anti-Taliban reactions and warlords all of which ultimately intensifies the negative sense of chaos prevailing the national space.

3.1.3.3. Xenophobia in TBMG's Pakistan and Its Spatial Manifestations

In his interview with Hong, Aslam elucidates “[t]he impulse behind *The Blind Man's Garden* ... [which conceptualizes] the extraordinary decade beginning with 9/11 and ending with the Arab Spring” (n.p). This period is, according to Aslam, the product of “[the] clash between an incomplete understanding of the East and an incomplete understanding of the West” (Hong, n.p.), characterized by polarizing tendencies of Islamic fundamentalism and Anglo-American neo-orientalism. To overcome this clash, Aslam puts faith in fiction for bridging these two parties lacking sympathy and insight for each other. A similar diagnostic explanation regarding the gap between the East and the West is put forward by Stierstorfer who investigates the linkage between the postcoloniality and fundamentalism and sets out to reach a ‘postcolonial explanation’ for fundamentalism. He argues that “the root causes of fundamentalism as a socioreligious phenomenon in its present constellation are often traced along the fault lines where Western concepts clash with “other” traditions and religious orientations” (102). Stierstorfer’s insight is useful for explaining fundamentalist tendencies especially in Pakistan as depicted in *TBMG* which intend to homogenize the national space by imposing a singular sense of nation and religion that is unwelcoming for the ‘other’. The spatial representations of Pakistan in *TBMG* distinctively suggest a xenophobic atmosphere that feeds from hatred and mistrust for the ‘other’, and should be noted as a demonstration of how Pakistan’s national space is in fact deeply polarized.

The novel underscores the idea that xenophobia in Pakistan becomes much more severe by what Nojumi calls “the Talibanization of the region and the formation of a center of gravity, especially one that influenced Pakistan” (115). The

polarization of the national space in Pakistan, aggravated by the war in Afghanistan, is constantly kept alive by the propagation of such dichotomies as Christian/Muslim and Western/Pakistani-Afghan. The incomplete understanding causing prejudices and stereotyping on the 'Eastern' side is based on such essentialist assumptions about the Americans as those exemplified by the old servant that Mikal comes across at a warlord's place after being caught with the American soldier. The old servant points out an unsurmountable epistemological gap between the 'East' and the 'West' that would be the source of an ever-lasting conflict between the two parties; he argues that "[w]e can't know what the westerners want ... To know what they want you have to eat what they eat, wear what they wear, breath the air they breathe. You have to be born where they are born ... The Westerners are unknowable to us. The divide is too great, too final. It's like asking what the dead or the unborn know" (Aslam, *TBMG* 441). The voice of the old servant which is implied to reflect the mainstream mindset of the Pakistanis reflects how a deep sense of distrust embedded in the texture of the Pakistani society equates West with the unknowability and unrelatability.

TBMG also designates propaganda as a tool to create religious homogeneity across the national space which would also unite people under an anti-American sentiment. The novel describes several vehicles roaming around Heer with "the sound of a loudspeaker fixed on top ..., telling everyone that it is a critical moment for the holy war in Afghanistan, encouraging them to join the jihad" (Aslam, *TBMG* 114). To promote a divisive religious sentiment in the national space even further, "[t]he day after the West invaded Afghanistan, a piety discount was introduced [in Heer] for those who wished to buy the weapon to go to the jihad" (Aslam, *TBMG* 17). The Pakistani society depicted in Heer is where anti-American demonstrations in Peshawar take place, fuelled by the same xenophobic mindset feeding hostility against anything Western or un-Islamic. For this reason, the town becomes a venue for "... a crowd of demonstrators, the roads suddenly filled with men of all ages, holding placards and banners. A display of support for victims of the war in Afghanistan" (Aslam, *TBMG* 50).

Such a polarized space unsurprisingly produces violent acts of hatred as a result of intolerance for anything that is Western and un-Islamic. Nadeem Aslam who constantly expresses his deep concern for religious tolerance and blasphemy laws in Pakistan and also problematizes these issues more extensively in his latest novel *The Golden Legend* (2017) subtly exposes in *TBMG* the twisted mindset that carries out the attacks on churches and Christian schools in Heer: “Those claiming responsibility had said that since Western Christians were bombing and destroying mosques in Afghanistan, they were beginning a campaign to annihilate churches in Pakistan” (Aslam, *TBMG* 94). In addition, this mindset that has zero-tolerance for the ‘other’ aims to homogenize the national space also through fundamentalist redefinition of ‘Muslimhood’. The fundamentalist scale of space that is reductive of plurality and tolerance for other religious groups compels the ordinary Muslims to conform to their redefinition of being a Muslim; otherwise it would mean “... approv[ing] of the West’s actions in Afghanistan, and follow[ing] it into this Crusader war by providing material and verbal support, [and hence that person] is an apostate who is outside the community of Islam ... as worthy of death as any American general with his braided glory...” (Aslam, *TBMG* 323). In such a repressive atmosphere, individuals feel compelled to hide their true feelings and opinions about such taboo issues as religion since one’s personal space is constantly violated by the religious appropriations of public space. Basie, for example, fears to announce that he is not a believer since he knows very well that “[he’ll] be beaten to death by a mob for being an infidel, or taken to jail and shot dead in the middle of the night by policemen or set upon by other prisoners” (Aslam, *TBMG* 291). He thus pretends to conform to the rest of the society just to protect his own well-being. All these suggests that the xenophobic appropriation of Pakistan’s national space that sees plurality in faith and opinion as a threat and inflates anti-Americanism through manipulation of religious sentiment is where Aslam’s sharpest criticism regarding Pakistan’s post-9/11 reality lays.

3.1.3.4. Women, Gender and Fundamentalist Politics of Space

Not just *TBMG*, Aslam's writings in general are sincerely preoccupied with the condition of women who fall victim to male-dominant and patriarchal societal systems and suffer from various calamities such as honour killing, sexual harassment, gender discrimination and forced marriage. As Mars-Jones' review for *TBMG* suggests, "... the marginalisation of women ... is a theme of this novel as well as its predecessor" (n.p.) with a specific attention to the fact that there is little or no space for women in Afghanistan and Pakistan to be free in real sense. The spatial representations of both Pakistan and Afghanistan with regard to women thus gives a highly claustrophobic feeling. Although the actual emphasis of the novel lies on the misogynist appropriations of space in Pakistan, the adverse circumstances of women in Afghanistan are also reflected in *TBMG*. In Afghanistan where the Taliban is on the decline in power yet its doctrination of radical Islam persists in everyday life, segregation of sexes across the national space is deeper and more traumatic compared to Pakistan. In the Afghan village that Mikal and Jeo are taken to, they witness the brutal punishment of women in burka because of wearing "a bangle or an earring. An item of *audible* jewellery ... attracting the men of faith by [their] wiles" (Aslam, *TBMG* 64). The novel vividly describes the horrifying incident of how all the women who happen to be on the street at the time are whipped brutally by a Taliban soldier:

The women huddle together and [the Taliban soldier] whips this mass of dirty blue fabrics several times, running around to aim at whoever cries out, while with the stock of his AK-47 the other soldier tears open the head of a man who dares to intervene ... The fighters in the truck view the punishment with a sense of justice on their faces. (Aslam, *TBMG* 64)

This horrific scene of women brutalized in fact points to the larger picture for women in Afghanistan who are deprived of their individuality and are in the mercy of their male oppressors. On the other hand, the narration interestingly remarks the unchanged positioning of women in Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban by US military intervention. The news on the radio Tara listens to

announces that with the fall of the Taliban in Kabul, "... while men are shaving of their beards, the women are choosing to remain hidden in their burkas for the time being" (Aslam, *TBMG* 128). Tara reflects on this news about Afghan women's choice of keeping their burkas as a practically wise choice for their survival rather than a religious one considering the patriarchal norms ingrained into Afghanistan social fabric causing continual aggression towards women in many forms. She voices the bitter fact that "more often than not there are no second chances or forgiveness if you are a woman and have made a mistake or have been misunderstood" (Aslam, *TBMG* 128). She sadly thinks of hearing of women murdered brutally by their male family members or some men, though distantly related, in the name of honour, shame or religion. Thus, burka almost functions as a survival tool enabling them invisibility within the aggressively male-dominant national space of Afghanistan. In this vein, wearing burka can be interpreted as a 'small space' on a different level that enables women to resist misogynist aggression within the patriarchal public space. Also, the gloomy picture outlined above for Afghan women reinforces the idea that the Anglo-American claims of freedom for ordinary Afghans by means of 'war on terror' in fact does not mean much for women whose oppressors are primarily patriarchal societal and cultural norms rather than global politics.

On his article "Where to Begin" in *Granta*, Aslam reiterates the significance of fiction to react against gender inequalities and oppression of women in Pakistan; he argues that "I cannot help feeling that a work of art can be a powerful instrument against injustice. A necessary source of courage. If not in the present, then one day in the near or distant future" (n.p.). By means of his mirror-like realist fiction, Aslam's fiction brings an acute sense of identification with the pain and agony inflicted on women, and thus what the reader gets involved is "... not 'watching' ... [but] 'witnessing'" (Granta n.p) complexities of being a woman in a patriarchal society. In Pakistan's case, the significations of being a woman in the society of Heer in *TBMG* are sadly commented, and the suppressive configuration of the national space for women is harshly criticized. Patriarchy prevails the societal

norms regarding genders that gives women an inferior position in society. This explains why having “[a] girl whose upbringing will have to be provided for, whose honour and virginity protected, for whom a dowry will have to be given one day” (Aslam, *TBMG* 119) is a burdensome issue for many Pakistani families. Also, being a woman in Pakistani society might mean potentially being accused of immorality and unchastity at any time. Tara, who very well knows the notorious significations of being missing for a woman in Pakistan, initially opposes the idea of going to the police because it might mean “tattoo[ing] the word ‘prostitute’ on her forehead ...[because] A charge of decadence and wickedness might have to be brought against her” (Aslam, *TBMG* 288-298). Aslam’s indignation with the increasingly limited amount of the national space allowed for women in Pakistan is felt more acutely with his almost-hyperbolic narration of the ban on women’s entrance to cemeteries. After Jeo’s death, Rohan, Naheed, Tara and Yasmin go to the cemetery to say prayers for him. Yet at the entrance they are stopped by “four women veiled from head to toe in black and holding yard-long sticks” (Aslam, *TBMG* 104) claiming with aggressiveness that “[w]omen are not allowed into graveyards according to our religion” (Aslam, *TBMG* 105). As response to Rohan who explicates that women have been visiting graveyards for centuries, they purport that “[t]his is an innovation ... [and] it is Allah’s wish” (Aslam, *TBMG* 105). The critical treatment of the female guards who seems to have internalized the patriarchal segregation of women on the one hand, the religious manipulation of the public space to deny women freedom is where Aslam’s actual area of criticism regarding the positioning of women in Pakistan lies. In this way, the novel sadly laments on the fact that by means of male-dominant spatial appropriations, the national space of Pakistan is hence rendered unwelcoming and claustrophobic for women.

3.2. The Post-Space Possibilities in *The Blind Man’s Garden*

While laying bare the bitter social and political actualities, Aslam does not fail to accentuate “things to celebrate” (Granta n.p.) that are promised by the transformative power and capacity of fiction. For Aslam, fiction holds special

significance due to “the amount of resistance that ... [it offers] to the various corruptions of society” (Granta n.p.). In a similar direction, Upstone’s conceptualization of ‘post-space’ which constitutes the theoretical frame of this study, accentuates the power of fiction to defy “the colonial overwriting of the diverse landscape with a myth of absolute space (*Spatial Politics* 62) and, in postcolonial context, challenge “the absolute nation-state as a space that continues to embody colonial patterns” (*Spatial Politics* 63). In *TBMG*, while Aslam artfully portrays efforts by American fundamentalism and Islamic fundamentalism to maintain a sense of absolute space in Afghanistan, and lays bare the patterns of ‘absolute nation-state’ in the specific example of Pakistan whose postcolonial condition he is critical of, his novel is also capacious to investigate Upstone’s *post-space* possibilities and trace the implications of alternative spatial scales for resisting neo-imperialist *overwriting* of national space and redefining nation in non-political terms. This part of the study explores possibilities of reframing national spaces in *TBMG* with such alternative scales as small-scale representations of nation through *garden*, *school* and *microstories* in addition to *journey* as a ‘larger-than-national’ spaces.

3.2.1. Small-Scale Representations

3.2.1.1. The Blind Man’s *Garden*

Also appearing in the title of the novel, the garden of Rohan’s house has significance in terms of being a promising spatial location for national reconfiguration. In his interview to Yaqin, Nadeem Aslam explicates his symbolic use of garden with a subtle reference to Pakistan as a nation; he asserts that “... the boundary wall of the garden is draped in poet’s jasmine, which is Pakistan’s national flower. For me the garden is Pakistan” (42). Keeping Aslam’s symbolic use of garden as Pakistan in mind, this study argues that the spatial representation of the garden that stands out with its myriad of flowers and plants, each one having a personality of its own yet collectively creating the picturesque and harmonious

canvas, in fact signifies Aslam's idealistic reconfiguration of Pakistan in which plurality is celebrated, tolerance prevails and chaos is felt in a constructive sense.

In both *TWV* and *TBMG*, Aslam counterbalances brutality with beauty with his artful juxtapositions that bewilder the reader. To explain why he portrays beauty in coexistence with the overall darkness of the books above, he asserts that “[o]n a day-to-day level, if shootings and car bombs are happening, you wouldn't be able to get out of bed if you didn't, for five minutes, think how beautiful the trumpet vine flower is or how beautiful your child's smile is” (Hong n.p). In this sense, the harmonious representations of the garden vis-à-vis the oppressively homogenized public space appropriated by fundamentalist mindset reflects Aslam's politics of space in search of post-space possibilities. “[The garden [with] the blossoms beautiful as Eden” (Aslam, *TBMG* 360) has abundant references that are scattered all across the narration indicating its richness and creating almost an idyllic scene. Aslam embellishes the bleak narration of *TBMG* with descriptions of flowers and plants like “[m]usk, cinnamon, river-mud, ether, blood, monsoon moss” (41), “hibiscus blossoms ... the berries of the Persian lilac trees (102), “[h]imalayan orchids” (176), “bougainvillea” (151), [b]anana grove” (178) “pink mulberry that has a honey-like taste” (173) “bamboo grove, their delicate tresses littering the paths” (347), the water lilies (280) and “the poet's jasmine on the boundary wall” (354). The variety of the plants in the garden is presented in such a way that plurality is celebrated as the creator of harmony.

Details from the garden are also offered when the characters go through crucial moments in their lives. To name a few, when Naheed thinks she has seen Mikal's ghost, “[j]acaranda (Aslam, *TBMG* 218), “walnut tree (Aslam, *TBMG* 219)”, “the banyan (Aslam, *TBMG* 219)”, “the cypresses” (“Aslam, *TBMG* 219), the apple-green poplars (Aslam, *TBMG* 219), and “the peepal” (Aslam, *TBMG* 219) decorate the scene. While Naheed and Rohan are talking about her future after Jeo's death, an elaborate depiction of “the tamarind tree” (Aslam, *TBMG* 230) comes into the view. “the red blossoms of gulmohar trees ... [and] the hundred water lilies”

(Aslam, *TBMG* 342) intervenes in the narration when Naheed and Mikal encounters after Mikal's long absence. Upon Mikal's presumed death, Naheed's last memories of him is blended with sites from garden including "the crepe myrtle ... the thorny pink cassia ... the Rangoon creeper" (Aslam, *TBMG* 454). Also at the end of the novel the reader learns that Naheed has a son from Mikal Along with the portrayal of "[t]he irises [which] enlarge their colonies [year by year]. Three erect petals with three sepals- each blossom on its hollow stem is slate blue with veins of a darker shade, and a cavity of silk at the centre" (Aslam, *TBMG* 459). Characters like Rohan, Naheed, Jeo and Mikal go through crucial moments of deep inner-retrospections within the liberating space of the garden in which they feel free to act and think as they wish without feeling suppressed by cultural and religious norm. As opposed to the homogeneity prevailing the public space outside the garden and silencing the characters in many ways, the garden is where individual thoughts and feelings are valued, and the individuality and heterogeneity of the characters are celebrated.

While the tranquillity and harmony the garden possesses has a balancing effect when juxtaposed with the chaotic and unfavourable spatial representation of the public space, its spatial significance is particularly highlighted with regard to Sofia's death and Rohan's grief about losing her, described almost having a personality like a human being:

... for several years after she was gone the garden looked as though something important had befallen it. The limes and the acacia trees seemed to mourn her, the rosewood and the Persian-lilacs, the peepal and the corals, and all their different fruits, berries and spores, the seeds tough as cricket balls, or light enough to remain afloat for half an hour. Inside the earth, the roots mourned her even without having seen her, and the white teak whose bark came off in plates the side of footprints, the lemon tree that produced twenty-five baskets of fruit each year. [Rohan] was sure that all of them ... were mourning her with him ... In grief he had whispered her name as he walked the red paths set loose in the garden. (Aslam, *TBMG* 49)

What is figuratively significant about the garden in relation to Sophia who would be the black sheep of the Pakistani community of the novel if her apostasy

had been made public, is her being acknowledged and embraced for who she is within the intimacy of small space that the garden facilitates. The garden is hereby implied to possess the tolerance and respect for plurality that the outer space lacks due to the politics of absolute space imposing sameness in thinking and behaviour. The variety intrinsic to the garden is represented almost as if a celebration of plurality as opposed to the homogenizing tendencies prevailing the national space. Aslam uses garden as a subversive tool to help us notice the beauty that comes with individuality and plurality. For this reason, Aslam's "garden where a near-thousand flowers are opening" (Aslam *TBMG* 293) signifies a timeless note of optimism and is essentially 'post-spatial' for its subtle revisioning Pakistan as a pluralistic and broad-minded national space in which individuality is celebrated and characters can feel liberated from oppressive social structures.

3.2.1.2. Schools as Spaces of Reconfiguration: The School of Ardent Spirit and the Christian School in Heer

In *TBMG*, Nadeem Aslam juxtaposes three schools that have different instructional agendas: The School of Arden Spirit founded by Rohan, the present-day Ardent Spirit administered by the radicals, and the liberal Christian School of Heer. Considering the influence of schools over the national space and the mindset of its people as seedbed for ideas and practices, exploring Aslam's conscious choice of schools as spatial locations is essential. These schools exemplify 'heterotopic spaces' that Foucault designates which metonymically "bring into focus the social, cultural, and political systems that form identities; set in motion the transgression of borders; and, in effect, generate the story, the unfolding of events" (qtd. in Friedman 199) and "relate to larger cultural structures of crisis, deviation, incompatibility, juxtaposition, compensation, or continuity" (qtd. in Friedman 199). In this vein, Aslam juxtaposes different, -even contradictory on some level-, educational outlook of these schools to offer a critical examination of various ideologies the Pakistani society is exposed to. This critical examination of the schools as small spaces endowed with transformative power opens up ground for

discussing Aslam's revisioning of a post-space Pakistan which can potentially break free not only from a nostalgic sense of 'Islamic glory' hindering development and progress, but also, and more importantly, from fundamentalist Islam as the primary source of Pakistan's negative global image identified with terrorism, hereby to adopt a more liberal and forward-looking national outlook.

The school of Ardent Spirit is originally founded by Rohan who set the school's initial instructional agenda on a nostalgic idea of Islamic renaissance to revive of the glorious days of Islam. For this purpose, he first visited "the cities of Mecca, Baghdad, Cordoba, Cairo, Delhi and Istanbul, the six locations of Islam's earlier magnificence and possibility" (Aslam, *TBMG* 9) and brought a handful of "the soils of Allah's six beloved cities" (Aslam, *TBMG* 12). Scattering it in the air and feeling as if "belief, virtue, truth and judgement slipped from his hand and settled softly on the ground [constituting a] purifying line ... where he had dug the foundations" (Aslam, *TBMG* 9), he figuratively conjures the glory of the earlier Islamic civilizations to the school he is to open. The crescent-shaped school building has "six pairs of rooms, ... [e]ach pair is named after one of those six centres of Islam's bygone brilliance" (Aslam, *TBMG* 21). Each room carries a tablet explaining the scientific contributions of the Islamic scholars to the world to "... remind the children of their legacy, Islam's long inheritance of knowledge and achievement" (Aslam, *TBMG* 21). For instance, while the Mecca House informs the students about the contributions of the Islamic civilizations to the development of mathematics, geometry, trigonometry, the tablet outside the Cordoba house records that "the Muslim of Spain had manufactured the first paper in Europe around 1150 ...- paper having become associated in Europe with Muslims" (Aslam, *TBMG* 22). On the other hand, the Cairo House proudly mentions "The Fatimid palace library" with its vast collection of manuscripts and its "staff comprising mathematicians, astronomers, physicians, grammarians, lexicographers, copyists and readers of Koran" (Aslam, *TBMG* 22).

Although the original Ardent Spirit sets out idealistically to follow the successful examples of Muslim achievements, its reductive reliance on Muslim intellectual heritage only is implied to be the reason behind the failure of Rohan's educational agenda. The novel sadly remarks how this excessive reliance eventually renders the school unprogressive and susceptible to radicalized version of Islam, which as Mars-Jones suggests, has eventually transformed it into "a virtual nursery for jihad" (n.p.). With the novel's focus on the radical transformation of the school of Ardent Spirit, Aslam opens up ground for conveying his criticism of 'madrasa formations' as a repercussion of General Zia's Islamization policy and its adverse effect on the socio-political fabric of in Pakistan by sustaining fundamentalist Islam. The novel briefly narrates that when the number of students outgrows the initial building, a new building nearby has to be founded as the main building of the school, and "[t]he crescent-shaped house was the original building of Ardent Spirit ... then became Rohan and Sofia's home" (Aslam, *TBMG* 21). Then "Rohan was forced out [from the new building of Ardent Spirit], the place taken over by a former student [Ahmed the Moth] who could no longer tolerate Rohan's criticism of what the children were being taught" (Aslam, *TBMG* 30). The clash between Ahmed and Rohan largely stems from the fact that "[u]nder Ahmed the Moth, the Ardent Spirit had developed links with Pakistan's intelligence agency, the ISI. Pupils were selected to be trained in combat at jihadi camps run by the ISI, and ultimately sent to carry out covert operations in go" (Aslam, *TBMG* 34). Almost mimicking the radical transformation of Pakistan itself under Zia rule, the school has gone through radical changes in its outlook and practices with the change of administration. The new flag Ahmet the moth designed has thematic significance in this sense, figuratively laying bare the new agenda of the school: distorting Rohan's initial use of crescent-shaped layout for the school, "[a] green flag was designed with six flames arranged in a curve at its centre, each flame rising out of a pair of crossed swords ... The six centres of vanished glory, whose loss is to be avenged with blade and fire" (Aslam, *TBMG* 47). With Ahmed's death, Major Kyra takes over the administration of the school who epitomizes the vision of the school

arguing that “[t]he aim of Ardent Spirit is to teach decency and love of Islam to the young” (Aslam, *TBMG* 196). By this way, the Ardent Spirit under new administration contributes to the polarization of the national space further with its indoctrination of fundamentalist Islam and covert sustenance of violence.

As an extended commentary on the effects of madrassas on Pakistan, Kanwal’s analysis of contemporary Pakistani fiction suggests that “... [the] radical atmosphere [in these school] has shaped the nation’s way of reacting towards any offences against Islam, whether these offences are global Muslim concerns such as the “Rushdie Affair”, the Danish cartoon controversy, the derogatory YouTube video *Innocence of Muslims* (2012), or indigenous protests against the Blasphemy Laws or the Hudood Ordinance⁸” (137). Kanwal’s insight into the influence of these schools over the radicalization of Pakistan’s national space helps explaining why the graduates of the present-day Ardent Spirit in *TBMG* who are described as “jobless young men sitting outside the shops, angry and humiliated, ... they look longingly at every girl who passes by, frustration and unemployment causing them to erupt into passion and violence at any time” (Aslam, *TBMG* 114), become ready to commit violent acts in the name of religion, as a result of their radically indoctrinated mindsets. With both portrayals of the Ardent Spirit, the novel in fact diagnoses the need to break free from the adverse influence of the religious indoctrination that creates unprogressive and even radicalized spatiality for Pakistan if a post-spatial revisioning is in question.

The positioning of the implied author of *TBMG* regarding different schools and their agendas also needs to be commented for a complete analysis of the schools as significant spatial locations. Rimmon-Kenan defines implied author as “the governing consciousness of the work as a whole, the source of the norms embodied in the work” (86). She suggests that unlike the narrative voice, the implied author is voiceless and silent, and it is “a construct inferred and assembled by the reader

⁸ Hudood Ordinance were a set of laws implemented during the General Zia regime pertaining to sexual offences. This ordinance was particularly notorious for its misogynist content and facilitating crimes against women such as honour killings.

from all the components of the text” (Rimmon-Kenan 87). Narratologically, analysing the implied author is of significance because the impression that the implied author creates reflects the world-view behind the text. From this perspective, in both *TWV* and *TBMG*, the ideological stance the implied author establishes “firmly set against the destructive aggression of the Taliban and its battle against free thought, culture or education” (Childs and Green 116). Especially in *TBMG* the way secular liberal religious figures and institutions are represented more favourably as opposed to those that are radicalized points out the implied author’s cynicism for the radicalized Islam and its associated institutions. Aslam’s implied author is keen to point out the failure of the fundamentalist Islam and condemn its abuses by creating a juxtaposition of a liberal sense of religion and fundamentalism which underscores the first party as the promising one. An explicitly stern yet necessary critique of religious manipulations is conveyed consistently throughout the narration, and the novel pessimistically puts forward that twisted epistemology of religious fundamentalism will never embrace a form of humanity that celebrates pluralism, tolerance and individualism. *TBMG* and *TWV* are complementary to each other in this sense by demonstrating a singularity of pessimistic tone in treating issues of religious fundamentalism and the abuses of Taliban, but they also subtly engage with a broader Islamic belief that embraces tolerance and plurality, which is implied through liberal religious figures and secular institutions. In this respect, The School of Ardent Spirit in *TBMG*, with its former and present-day representations both problematizing religion-based instruction on different levels, is juxtaposed with the Christian School of Heer whose liberal outlook is subtly favoured by the narration. With the inclusion of the Christian school as a small space that can counteract the limited visions and radicalized opinions bred by the madrassa instruction, the novel implies enabling post-space possibilities by means of liberal education. Within this context, it is not a coincidence that favourable characters of the novel like Yasmin, Basie and Father Mede who constitute the educated and liberal-minded minority of the novel work there. Regarding the novel’s favouritism of such characters, Clements aptly

accentuates their significance by arguing that “Aslam’s world fiction is weighted subtly but significantly in favour of educated, open-minded, socially responsible and slightly privileged ‘good’ (Muslim) characters ... [who] are cognoscent of a heterodox (and unscripted) Islam and able to let sensual, aesthetic, spiritual affinities shape their understanding of faith” (*Orienting Muslims* 153-154). These favoured ‘Muslim’ characters are in fact insinuated as those who can reconfigure the national space by setting examples with their liberal, open-minded and forward-looking qualities. On the other hand, in terms of Pakistan’s post-space reconfigurations that the novel seeks, the Christian School of Heer is somewhat problematic due to the fact that the school, also referred as St Joseph, signifies Pakistan’s persisting colonial legacy of the British Empire; its founder Father Mede is “... descended from Joseph Mede, the Cambridge don and teacher of Milton, and ... [whose] family is from Wiltshire, [and yet whose] childhood was here in Punjab during the Raj” (Aslam, *TBMG* 273). Despite the fact that persisting colonial legacy means an absolute sense of space, the school is still favourably commented for harbouring religious tolerance, embracing plurality of faith and inviting open-mindedness. Thus, it is subtly designated by the narration as a possible site for reconfiguring radicalized spatiality of Pakistan. Besides its favoured staff, the narration also underlies its function of promoting religious tolerance: “[a]lthough St Joseph is a Christian school, it is no longer a mission school as in a previous age and both the Bible and the Koran are read at public functions, the festivals of both faiths marked through the year” (Aslam, *TBMG* 225).

Considering the transformative power of schools over the national space with its influence on individuals, the Christian School of Heer is unsurprisingly subjected to acts of hatred by those who aim to create a homogenous national space appropriated in line with their ideological and political agendas. An overt spatial manifestation of hatred takes place with the siege of Christian School, carried out by radicals some of whom have affinities with the present-day school of Ardent Spirit. The siege is based on the conviction that “... the founder and the headmaster of the school, Father Mede, is an infidel. The teachers at the school are Muslim but

traitors to Islam, filling the heads of the children with un-Islamic things like music and biology and English literature. And the students too are traitors” (Aslam, *TBMG* 194). The Christian school is targeted for creating an obvious connection with the West and also for being obstacle in the path of fundamentalist appropriation of the national space. What Aslam actually aims to underlie with this overt expression of hatred for un-Islamic ways is the problematic reception of modernity within Pakistan’s national space as a ‘Western secular product’. Stierstorfer elaborates on the same issue and remarks that:

...modernization is primarily perceived as an import from the West and hence as a foreign subversion of [the fundamentalist’s] culture and values. This makes the fundamentalist struggle not only an internal affair, but a fight against “Westernization” or “westoxification,” as it has punningly come to be called ... Islamic fundamentalism becomes the struggle not only against secular modernization, but also against Western influence within postcolonial society today. (104-105)

Stierstorfer’s commentary on fundamentalist reaction to ‘westoxification’ elucidates not only the hostile behaviour against the Christian school for being the representative of the western secular modernity, but also the immediate spatial appropriation within the school under the siege. The implied author takes its side against the siege with a deliberate word choice for describing the school under the siege as acquiring “the look of a zone of infection” (Aslam, *TBMG* 319). Almost a mirror image of the national space framed by aggressive gender and minority politics is created on smaller scale with the portrayal of the school under siege where, besides segregating all Christian, Shia and Ahmadiya teachers and children from others, “... the males and females are [immediately] separated to either side of the hall and they sit in rows with the stillness and silence of the haunted animals. The women and girls are made to face the wall so as not to provoke lustful thoughts in any of the males, and all boys have been told to take off their neckties, a symbol of the West” (Aslam, *TBMG* 305). In a similar direction, “the library has been trashed, the books full of Western knowledge pulled out of shelves and thrown onto the floor, the page upon page loud with lies about the story of the world, nothing

but the blood-soaked abstractions of so-called civilised world” (Aslam, *TBMG* 320) as an open denunciation of anything that can be associated with the West. The attack on the library as an overt condemnation of the Western knowledge and culture reiterates problematic aspect of the reception of the Western modernity; at this point Hafid Gafarīti’s insight into the complicated history of aesthetics in Islamic tradition partly explains why the fundamentalist discourse positions itself firmly against anything Western and secular whether be it literature, scientific knowledge of Western origin or schools with Western affiliations. According to Gafarīti the manner in which the western secular knowledge and culture is denounced as in the case of the plunderage of the school library in *TBMG* is an example of “[fundamentalist] denial and rejection of modernity as it has been conceived and actualized by the Western world” (136) just like the denunciation of modern art and literature as secular mediums of Western knowledge. More importantly, he adds on arguing that with its “obsession with unity” (Gafarīti 137), Islamic fundamentalism predicates their ideological positioning on the idea that the modernized instruction of such schools as that of Christian school in the novel “introduce impurity into the Muslim community and disorder in the human soul ("fitna"), which is by far the sin of all sins” (Gafarīti 137) by promoting secular scientific knowledge of creation, free thought and art- “perverse expression” (Gafarīti 137) of Western origin. All in all, the school siege as a small-scale act can be taken as a mirror image of the fundamentalist domination over the national space on larger scale both in terms of its ideological bases and its methods of appropriation.

The representation of religious schools in *TBMG* should be read within the context of absolute space which consolidates its power with the instruction of sameness in thinking, believing and behaving. For this reason, the novel is cynical of instruction with religious bases for reinforcing absolute space even if it is like that of Rohan’s Ardent Spirit which essentially had no radical inclinations. Partly reflecting Aslam’s religious cynicism, a need for a liberal and secular schools where forward-looking and open-minded individuals can be nurtured and western modernity is negotiable is implied with favourable representation of the Christian

School of Heer. Although it is difficult to understate the Christian school's problematic affinity with colonial legacy of Pakistan, the novel subtly implies the potential of the Christian school to create favourable influence over the national space with its liberal outlook that is in reconciliation with Western modernity. It is thus underscored as a potential site of reconfiguration where a post-space Pakistan can possibly be revisioned. In this sense, schools of *TBMG* are both obstacles and means for a reconfigured spatiality of Pakistan depending on their instructional agenda.

3.2.2. Post-Space Representations Through Microstories

In both of the novels that this study analyses, Aslam adopts a critical attitude towards politics of power which operate at the expense of individuals and hence overshadow their suffering. Kirkus review for *TBMG* makes the same observation about the author arguing that “Aslam sympathizes not with causes, but with people” (n.p.). His fiction intends to offer a drastic shift from ‘history’ to ‘human experience’ as he himself explains in one interview on *TBMG* that “[w]e begin at the top of the novel with history and politics but, as we read, we end up in the philosophical realm. What is a human being? How do I get over grief?” (Yaqin 39). In order to highlight the human experience suggested above, demarginalization of microstories in *TBMG* stands out as a literary strategy to challenge the absolute sense of space that the politically framed nation signifies. While *TVW* suggests a redefinition of the politically-configured national space through the microstories of its polyvocal and multinational characters, *TBMG* zooms into the characters who, despite all being Pakistani, -have diverse experiences with the same national space and hereby suggests the multi-dimensionality of the regional and global realities. What Aslam is preoccupied in *TBMG* is “the problems that Muslims face in the post-9/11 period due to their national or territorial affiliation” (Kanwal 196). The microstories in this regard are Aslam’s canvas to portray these problems ranging from issues with complications of Muslim identity to women and gender issues and hence reframe the politically-defined nation to be spacious enough to accommodate

plural critical observations regarding the socio-political realities of Pakistan. In the sub-sections of this part, the microstories of Rohan and Naheed will be focused for their potentials to reconfigure the national space from within. While highlights of Rohan's story indicates problematic aspects of religion and Muslimhood as overwhelming influences over the national space, through Naheed's story silenced women of Pakistan is given voice and power against the patriarchal established order. On the whole, both microstories enable critical observations regarding the afflictions of Pakistani society so that absolutisms appropriating the national space can be challenged.

3.2.2.1. Rohan

As much as Rohan's house has spatial significance for being a small-scale spatial representation, Rohan himself is also of importance in terms of how his microstory offers an insight into the national space that is burdened with a strict and unevolving sense of religion. Considering the microstories' potential to propose deeper identifications and alternative reading into spatiality, Rohan's microstory is suggestive for a more constructive reframing of Pakistan with its subtle criticism of religious rigidity which is at the same time implied as what holds Pakistan from progress. Thus, by laying bare Rohan's microstory that is characterized with mainstream understanding of the religion in Pakistan, *TBMG* gestures towards a reframe of the national space that has a remedial understanding of Islam with more flexibility and tolerance included.

Nadeem Aslam describes Rohan as a complicated character whose strict sense of religion is in occasional conflict with his human side. To elaborate on Rohan's contradicting nature, Aslam argues that:

He loves his wife, but you could argue that he doesn't respect her (lack of) beliefs, and tries to impose his own on her during her illness. He cares about his students, but expels a boy because his mother is a prostitute. A person has many layers to his personality - - sometimes you fail on a moral level, sometimes you fail on a spiritual level, sometimes you fail on an ethical level. Just because

you are religious doesn't mean all your acts are in accordance with your religion. (Hong n.p.)

For this reason, Rohan is portrayed as a character whose human side is constantly interfered with his unbending sense of religion and thus “[a] drop of his bloody soul struggles” (Aslam, *TBMG* 102). Kanwal also points out the duality that Rohan’s characterization suggests by describing him “both enlightened and traditional in certain respects” (196). She further argues that “[o]n the one hand, as a moderate Muslim, Rohan leaves Ardent Spirit when it becomes a breeding ground for fanatics and extremists. On the other hand, he withholds his wife Sofia’s medicines ‘till she let go of her doubts, forcing her to embrace Allah once again before it was too late’” (Kanwal 196). His daughter Yasmin describes him as “so strict, a disciplinarian” (Aslam, *TBMG* 283), which he also eventually realizes and admits that “...[he] enforced an extreme form of piety on [himself] and on [his] children, making them pray and keep fast, revealing to them things inappropriate for their ages. The transience of this life, the tortures of Hell and, before that, of the grave. I stopped eventually, seeing the error, but it must have marked them” (Aslam, *TBMG* 98). Despite his momentary self-questionings and moments productive ambiguity in his thinking, Rohan doesn’t show a character evolution in a true sense contrary to one might expect during reading. Lasdun, who points at the same issue in his review of *TBMG*, attributes this to the novel’s lack of psychological depthness regarding the characters: “This isn't the kind of novel in which characters change or evolve much: they are what they are. Complexity tends to be more outward than inward, resulting from the wide variety of human types portrayed ... rather than from individual psychological richness” (Lasdun n.p). Rohan’s almost static characterization can be read allegorically in relation to the rigid sense of religion prevalent in Pakistan. Rohan’s blindness which the novel’s title also suggests, can be interpreted as both literal and figurative considering his outlook for life blunted by his understanding of religion. Within this context, his narrow-mindedness, unwillingness to depart from established opinions and conventions to a large extent projects the mainstream understanding of the Islamic faith in Pakistan which Aslam

implies it to be one reason for Pakistan's unfavourable postcolonial state, hindering the country from progress.

Considering the implications of Rohan's characterization in terms of religion as an influential factor framing the national space, Aslam consciously juxtaposes Rohan with Sophia whose secularism shows parallelism with the author's ideological positioning. "Aslam's concern about the exploitative and corruptive potential of organised and orthodox religion and his profound belief in the enduring power of art" (Clements, *Orienting Muslims* 149) is a recurrent issue both in *TWV* and the *TBMG* in which religiously sceptical characters such as Qatrina and Sophia are woven into the fabric of the narration. Also, it is not a random choice for Aslam to choose his religiously sceptical characters as women; these women who do not fit in orientalist female stereotypes with their intellectual background are given additional power with their defiance of social and religious norms. When compared to Rohan's mentally restricted space that he creates for himself with his rigid sense of religion, Sophia cherishes "... this world that she had loved and called the only Paradise she needed" (Aslam, *TBMG* 48). She dies as an unbeliever, which is a great source of agony for Rohan because he believes that the punishment for apostasy is eternal torment in Hell. For this reason, every day he feels an irrepressible need to "read a chapter of Koran for the repose of Sofia's soul" (Aslam, *TBMG* 45) as he is convinced that she will be in intense suffering until she is resurrected, will be tormented for her disbelief, and finally be cast to Hell. However, Sophia's positioning as an unbeliever is unwavering and confident; she declares Rohan her disbelief and never steps back despite his efforts, yet her apostasy remains a secret for it is "punishable by death in Pakistani law" (Aslam, *TBMG* 46). Even in her dying moments "she knew what she was rejecting" (Aslam, *TBMG* 46), which renders Rohan's efforts to change her mind futile. Without doubt, the implied author of the novel aligns itself with Sophia's ideological stance who is implied to have stronger and more realistic intellectual bases when compared to that of Rohan whose nostalgia for an Islamic revival is implied to be not quite promising for Pakistan. For these reasons, Sophia, when juxtaposed with Rohan, indicates the

need for a reconfiguration of a religiously more nuanced national space which can break free from the regressive effect of strict religious understanding.

In Aslam's fiction, "Islam is revealed as replete with alternative affinitive dimensions – and in this sense 're-cultured'" (Clements, *Orienting Muslims* 155). While Rohan's version of Islam is one dimension that is not much favoured by the novel for suggesting little hope for reconfiguration, by introducing Major Kyra and his fundamentalist understanding of Islam, Aslam introduces another affinitive dimension of Islam that is controversial on global scale. He makes special effort to distinguish Rohan from the radical Islamists whose adverse effect on the national space is unquestioned. From this perspective, Rohan's microstory holds importance for challenging the stereotypical representations of Muslim identity that reductively presupposes terrorist affiliations for all Muslims. Kyra is a character who is convinced that 9/11 "was all staged, to invent an excuse to begin invading Muslim lands one by one" (Aslam, *TBMG* 33) and his sense of enmity and seeing US as a threat go as far as claiming that the US "would bomb [them] back to the Stone Age" (Aslam, *TBMG* 232-233) if Pakistan did not participate in their fighting Al-Qaeda and the Taliban. He legitimizes the use of violence, and manipulation of the school for jihadi recruitment, which causes controversy between him and Rohan as Rohan's version of Islam is by no means aggressive. In this respect, Alek Baylee Toumi's discussion of the necessity of dismantling the interchangeable use of 'Muslim' and 'Islamist' is illuminating to clarify Aslam's point with juxtaposing Rohan and Kyra who both claim to have faith in the same religion; according to Toumi while 'Muslim' generally refers to the mainstream Muslims who are diverse in their perception and practice of Islam, the latter suggests those who are the followers of "a political ideology called Islamism ... a totalitarian political movement which hides under the Muslim religion, hijacking it in order to achieve political power" (128) and carry out religious hatred and violent acts in the name of Islam. Defining Islamists as "anti-intellectuals who are against any form of critical thinking that would challenge their narrowminded interpretations" (130), Toumi argues that "the role of literature and of writers is first to inform public opinion

because very often the media are absent or not doing their job [and] also to clarify some complex contexts and unmask Islamist terrorists and their allies, especially those who wear sheep's clothing” (130). Sharing a similar concern with that of Toumi to distinguish mainstream Muslims from those radicalized Islamists, Aslam’s juxtaposition of Kyra and Rohan is thus not coincidental. Rohan has his own personal failures whose repercussions are traceable within his private space, yet Islamists like Kyra has destructive agendas to affect the entire national space. In Rohan’s specific case, the criticism lies on the internalized version of religious bigotry compared to the institutionalized fundamentalist Islam that has aggressive agendas. The coexistence of Rohan and Kyra within the same national space accentuates the fact that it would be reductionist to define Pakistan’s national space only in association with the radical Islamists. The novel’s representation of the mainstream Muslims like Rohan who are also the occasional victims of hard-line Islamists aim to dismantle Western stereotypical configurations of Pakistan and gesture towards a more nuanced perception of Pakistan in terms of Muslim identities.

Clements puts forward that with his representation of a variety of moderate Muslims including Marcus and Dunia in TWV and Rohan in TBMG whose sense of religion is certainly peaceful, “Aslam nostalgically promotes a secular, aesthetic, Sufistic Islam, now seen as crumbling and moth-eaten, or hidden from view, while ... surveying other cultural manifestations and theological interpretations of Islamic faith with suspicion” (*Orienting Muslims* 57-58). In *TBMG*, what Aslam suggests with Rohan’s failure to be promising Muslim figure despite his mild representation is “the need for ultra-orthodox Muslims to change” (Clements, *Orienting Muslims* 192) if a more enabling sense of national space is to be reconfigured for Pakistan. The centrality of Rohan’s microstory points out religion as an influential frame to describe Pakistan, so Aslam subtly suggests that reconfiguration should start at one’s perception of religion by becoming more tolerant of different understandings of faith. Although where Rohan seeks reconfiguration for the nation is technically right- the school where young minds can be offered correct modelling, the way he

idealizes the Islamic past is problematic and his understanding of Islam is not inclusive enough. The spiritual and ideological fissures in Rohan's mindset is a reflection of Aslam's secularism that does not give much credit to a sense of religion that tends to appropriate both public and private space. For this reason, Clements rightly argues that Aslam's "... attitude to individual spiritual experience is considerably more yielding" (Clements, *Orienting Muslims* 149) when compared to institutionalized religion. He thus allegorically uses Rohan's microstory that embodies traditionalist attitude and religious rigidity to pinpoint what the national space needs to break free in terms of religion for a positive reformation.

3.2.2.2. Naheed

It is interesting to note that Aslam challenges gender politics by introducing strong self-reliant female characters like Qatrina in *TVW* and Sophia in *TBMG* whom he particularly favours by portraying them as intellectuals and non-believers. As in the case of Sophia, who believes that "'God is just a name for our wonder'. There was no soul, only consciousness. No divine plan, only nature, and we were simply among the innumerable results of its randomness" (Aslam, *TBMG* 49), these female characters are at odds with the established norms of the society and for this reason have to conceal their true opinions and feelings on issues such as religion and oppression of women because of the fundamentalist appropriation of space in which individuality is not welcomed and diversity is seen as a threat. These strong female characters in fact show a subtle defiance against established norms of gender in Pakistan that are based on female inferiority while at the same time conveying a critique of religious intolerance. In *TBMG* Sophia is given further credit with her story of taking off her burka⁹ at university to convey Aslam's criticism of burka as

⁹ Sophia's characterization is partly based on autobiographical information from Aslam's familial background. Aslam's mother, encouraged by his father to go to university, couldn't adjust and came back home just like Sophia. His father, also a cleric, told her to take off her burka to adapt better arguing that "shame and modesty isn't in a garment, it's in your behaviour and in your eyes" (qtd in Khalid n.p.). Even after taking off her burka, Aslam's mother still couldn't adapt and dropped out of school. In Aslam fiction, Sophia thus realizes what his mother failed to do by completing her education and becoming a self-reliant woman.

a means for female oppression. At Punjab University at Lahore, “she felt a sense of exclusion from the other students, the modern Lahore girls and boys, a few of them laughed at the way she dressed and spoke, laughed at her burka” (Aslam, *TBMG* 222). Her father tells her to take off her burka arguing “Modesty and decency dwell in the mind, not in a burka” (Aslam, *TBMG* 223). However, the fact that Sophia isn’t alive at the present-time of the narration, -just like Qatrina of *TVW* who also dies during the Taliban period-, is suggestive for the fact that her idealized prototypical representation is not realistically promising in terms of revisioning Pakistan for women since it does not quite correspond with the condition of women in Pakistan who do not generally enjoy the same opportunities such as education and familial support as hers. For these reasons, Naheed’s microstory is particularly significant in terms of exemplifying a more truthful prototype of women in Pakistan and promising a post-space revisioning for women with her distinctive outlook despite the adversities surrounding her.

In his interview with Nouman Khalid, Aslam comments on the preoccupation of his novels with “the silencing of women” (n.p) arguing that his female characters have an important function for “representing the resistance” (n.p) against forces acting on them in Pakistani society. In this perspective, Naheed’s microstory exemplifies one of these characters who, as a young widow, struggles to realize herself despite the oppressive social and religious norms. At the very beginning of the novel, she becomes a widow upon Jeo’s death in Afghanistan. For a widow, social norms in Pakistan dictate her remarrying because the patriarchal mindset, voiced by Sharif Sharif who harasses her to marry him, argues that “[i]t is not good for young girls to be without a man once they have been with a man. It can cause them to seek out what they have once had any which way ... A woman’s heart is soft and trusting. She can be corrupted all too easily” (Aslam, *TBMG* 181). In such a misogynist public space where patriarchal mindset prevails, Naheed’s microstory in many ways can be considered as a subtle resistance to the patriarchal appropriation of space. She resists marrying again by taking refuge in Rohan’s house, -the small space where she feels more liberated from societal impositions on

women. Despite Naheed's mother's pressure of re-marrying Naheed, Rohan guarantees that she will be welcomed in his house as long as she wishes, and hence the house frees her from the patriarchal obligations of the society. Despite her disadvantageous positioning in the patriarchal society of Pakistan as a young widow with an incomplete education, she does not internalize the patriarchal norms; on the contrary, she is critical of the inferior position given to women even in everyday language. When a note of feedback from the mosque's loud speaker starts off with "Gentlemen, please listen to the following announcement ... Naheed mutters to herself, 'And what about us ladies?'" (Aslam, *TBMG* 86), silently protesting against the gender discrimination taken for granted in society. As a response to her mother Tara who suggests marrying as the only prospect for Naheed, she objects to her by saying that "It's not the only way, Mother. There are a thousand other ways" (Aslam, *TBMG* 237). Tara is a character who internalizes the patriarchal order of the society and describes the world as a dangerous place for a widow, yet Naheed protests against being silenced with fear and defies her mother with a note of optimism and courage: "I'm tired of being afraid all the time ... Caution is one thing but you filled me with terror ... Mother, you can't be this afraid. The world is not going to end tomorrow" (Aslam, *TBMG* 237). As Wijngaarden indicates in her analysis of *TBMG* with regard to 'neo-orientalism', "[i]n Aslam's novel, ... the stereotype of Muslim women's oppression is complicated [as in the case of Naheed who] ... does not fit into the traditional picture of an oppressed Muslim woman" (54). The novel hence insinuates the fact that Naheed's defiance against a prevalent sense of terror targeted especially at women for easier manipulation is promising for a reconfigured national space in which women can speak up against the patriarchal impositions such as forced marriages.

Just like Sophia's characterization through which Aslam conveys his criticism of strict sense of religion, Naheed also displays religious cynicism and even defies established religious norms that create a restricted sense of spatiality both physically and mentally. Her sense of religion signifies an individual spiritual experience that is eligible for personal interpretations rather than a set of strict

religious rules that regulate one's life. For this reason, she does not hesitate to switch off Tara's alarm set for the morning prayer for her to get more rest arguing that "... what if she misses a prayer? Allah understands" (Aslam, *TBMG* 77). She challenges her mother's bigoted sense of religion with scepticism by asking "Who listens to our prayers?" (Aslam, *TBMG* 235) when her mother resorts to praying, clerics, and talismans in the face of adversities. She implies the constructedness of religious laws regulating Pakistan's national space and reacts against being persecuted by them when Tara confronts her by saying that praying eased her time in prison¹⁰: "It was Allah and His laws that put you there in the first place" (Aslam, *TBMG* 236). Unlike Sophia who describes herself as a non-believer, Naheed is by all means culturally a Muslim, yet she personally does not approve of religious bigotry besides being critical of persecution and oppression done in the name of religion. Her microstory thus implies the need for a greater spatial liberty for accommodating alternative religious understandings in Pakistan as opposed to religious homogeneity promoted by the fundamentalist thinking.

Naheed's microstory with its potential for a post-space revisioning of Pakistani women is foregrounded with her efforts to become self-reliant. Unlike already self-sufficient female characters like Sophia whom the narration tends to overidealize or Yasmin who is "an oddly sketchy presence, introduced late and never emerging as a character in her own right" (Mars-Jones n.p.), Naheed's prototypical representation more truthfully overlaps with the condition of Pakistani women who suffer from similar gender inequalities. Her determination for becoming self-sufficient sets an example that can potentially trigger empowerment of women on the larger scale of the nation. Instead of re-marrying, she plans to "... get a diploma and become a teacher" (Aslam, *TBMG* 116). Rohan supports her decision of becoming a teacher by declaring that "I have raised one daughter who

¹⁰ An external analepsis in the story line informs the reader that Tara is put in prison because of committing adultery when she is unable to prove that she is sexually assaulted.

makes an honest and honourable living, and I will make sure Naheed takes that path if she wishes” (Aslam, *TBMG* 182).

During the school siege where she is also taken hostage, Naheed experiences a momentary alienation from the present spatial reality surrounding her and wishfully thinks that “*There must be a place where it doesn’t happen like this*” (Aslam, *TBMG* 332, emphasis original). At the end of the book, Naheed is implied to be closer to her wishful thinking in her small-scale spatial reality in which a bright prospect awaits her: “By the time [Father Mede’s school] is ready, Naheed herself will have qualified as a teacher” (Aslam, *TBMG* 459). She also resists the established social and moral norms of the society by raising a child herself out of wedlock: “the parentage of Mikal and Naheed’s son is a secret from the neighbourhood ... It’s a lie no one would rather tell but there is no alternative” (Aslam, *TBMG* 461). Also, with Naheed’s personal success as a self-reliant and resourceful local woman notwithstanding the restrictions in many respects, Aslam also defies what Butler calls as “the liberation of women [as] ... a rationale for [the Anglo-American] military actions against Afghanistan, [and] a sign of the extent to which feminism, as a trope, is deployed in the service of restoring the presumption of First World impermeability” (Butler 41). While subtly criticizing global and local forces manipulating women for different purposes, Naheed’s story hereby testifies the fact that the national space can be remodelled for women by women if they are given greater spatial liberty to realize themselves.

3.2.3. Postcolonial Journeys as an Alternative Spatial Scale

While examining small-scale spatial representations is one way towards reappropriation of the national space by means of fiction, Upstone’s *Spatial Politics* also explores “the role of larger-than-national space in the form of journey” (22-23) to decentre and relocate nation as a political body. While journey in colonial context includes the territorial expansion of the empires and the Middle Passage- the notorious forced voyage of the enslaved Africans, the postcolonial journeys may vary from voluntary immigration for economic reasons to political exile. Novel as

a genre has a special place exemplifying journey in relation to colonial endeavours, which can be traced back as early as Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) (Upstone, *Spatial Politics* 58). According to Upstone, journey as a frame to experience larger-than-national spaces is based on the act of 'movement', which is experienced by the colonizer, colonized and the postcolonial citizen differently:

Movement is not only a way for the colonised to escape the confines of the nation through migration; it is also a necessary feature of the coloniser's practice of conquering territory: it is by its very nature a transferral of bodies and resources from one space to the other. Violent travel such as indentured labour or slavery exposes the very unequal ways in which postcolonial citizens themselves experience movement. (*Spatial Politics* 58)

In postcolonial context, what the movement suggests is a chaotic sense of spatiality that can "challenge stable constructions of place" (Upstone, *Spatial Politics* 57). Considering the fact that the ultimate objective of the colonial journey is to define and control the indigenous territory, and transfer the colonial values, journey is of additional importance for the postcolonial author who aims to expose the colonial myths and subvert them by means of fiction. John Phillips who discusses the difference between the colonial and postcolonial travel writing thus rightly defines the postcolonial author as "an identity produced disjunctively, out of fragments, in travel" (76), reiterating the centrality of journey in postcolonial identity reconfigurations as opposed to colonial notions of stable identity. The postcolonial author's problematization of journey thus intends to undermine "the absolutism of colonial space" (Upstone, *Spatial Politics* 24). Transgressing the absolutes of colonial spatial ordering, journey is a convenient frame to explore the concept of post-space for its potential to create "... almost a non-space, beyond the confines of boundaries and mapping and therefore approaching something far more fluid, indefinable and chaotic" (*Spatial Politics* 58). As a literary strategy, the postcolonial author exposes the fallacy of colonial spatial appropriation through mimicking colonial patterns of journey for subversive purposes. Borrowing from Anuradha Dingwaney Needham, this is strategically what Upstone calls as "re-

play” (*Spatial Politics* 67), which aims at undermining the colonial regularity and appropriation. By means of re-playing the colonial pattern of journey, the postcolonial writing can thus break free from the limits of the national space and even achieve “a representation of transnational and unbordered engagement with space” (Upstone, *Spatial Politics* 57). For these reasons, Upstone regards journey and its re-play as “the pivot – the fulcrum – upon which post-space turns (*Spatial Politics* 83) for accommodating an unbordered space, -an ambivalent site- where the plurality of visions is possible, and identities are negotiable.

3.2.3.1. Mikal’s Journey for Survival

In his article that appeared in *Granta*, Aslam states that “[a]s a writer I have to be on the side of ordinary Pakistanis” (n.p). Mikal’s characterization is most likely the outcome of this authorial sensitivity to open up a window to see the perspective of the ordinary people who are victimized by the entanglement of power relations. At the beginning of the novel Mikal embarks on a journey that lasts throughout the narration, firstly from Pakistan to Afghanistan where he loses his freedom, then his journey back to his hometown Heer takes up a significant portion of the novel. His journey decentralizes the narration from Rohan’s house and the garden as opposed to *TWV* in which Marcus’s house functions as the kernel of the narration. While this journey as a motif is essential in terms of reminding us of the organic bond between Afghanistan and Pakistan regarding their shared geography, history and culture, it also showcases the status quo of Pakistan and Afghanistan in the post 9/11 era and hence should be explored in the light of Upstone’s discussion of journey as an alternative scale for post-space reconfigurations. Mikal’s journey defies Eurocentric essentialisms that reductively and adversely frames Afghanistan and Pakistan. His traumatic experiences during this journey as a war captive and a war prisoner suspected to be a terrorist broaden one’s understanding of ‘war on terror’ critically by laying bare its controversial spatial appropriations. His unique ethical positioning vis-à-vis American neo-imperialism and Islamic fundamentalism is promising in terms of negotiating different perspectives with an

emphasis on common humanity. In this way, Mikal's experience of space through his journey challenges restrictive political and ideological frames defining Pakistan by offering a 're-play' of Anglo-American misconceptions stemming from 'us' and 'them' binary.

Mikal exemplifies one of the 'ordinary Pakistanis' whose story Aslam aims to demarginalize through fiction. While Clements criticizes *TWV* for "... propos[ing] a contemporary cultural hierarchy, placing the enlightened European characters with their compassionate minds ... at the top as the custodians of the apparent best remnants of Afghan and Pakistani heritage" (*Orienting Muslims* 188), with the centralization of Mikal and his journey as an average Pakistani local *TBMG* stands clear of any such criticism by featuring the local experience of the geopolitics of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Mikal's father is described as a Communist who is arrested, never to return. After his mother's death, Rohan becomes his and Basie's guardian. He is a favoured character whose human side is highlighted with his love for Naheed and his urge to survive. As Lasdun suggests, "[h]is dramatic reversals of fortune constantly test (and affirm) his superior courage and decency" (n.p.). Besides his highly mechanical mind and dexterity, "[his] watchfulness and self-containment" (Aslam, *TBMG* 16) are the characteristics that help him survive. That he is positioned equally away from global politics or prevalent ideologies in Pakistan and Afghanistan also suggests Aslam's intended vantage point to discuss Afghanistan and Pakistan apolitically. The journey that he sets off with Jeo for Afghanistan separates him from Pakistan for quite a long time during which he experiences the bitter realities of 'war on terror'. He first becomes "the prisoner of an Afghan warlord, who cut off the trigger finger on each of his hands" (Aslam, *TBMG* 110) so that he won't be able to use a gun again. Then he is sold to the Americans as a 'suspected terrorist'. After being released from the American prison for quite a long time, he kills two American soldiers as a mistaken act of self-defence, and thus his return to Heer which, as a place, signifies intimacy and security, becomes problematic. For him, space surrounding him feels threatening, so he keeps telling himself to "get out of here" (Aslam, *TBMG* 374) to be able to

go back to Heer where life can be reconstructed on small scales. Heer as his ultimate destination is the place that signifies intimacy. However, killing the American soldiers, his sense of space becomes even more problematic; he feels “[h]e is still trapped, the cage is just bigger” (Aslam, *TBMG* 251). He can’t settle in Heer even after arriving at Pakistan for possibly being hunted by the American forces. He knows for sure that killing a US national means the end of his life too. He thus unwillingly becomes a “fugitive from international justice” (Aslam, *TBMG* 351) despite his non-violent characterization. The neo-imperialist and fundamentalist appropriations of space controls Mikal’s movements to such an extent that he feels “he is an exile in his own homeland, his eyes filled with uncrossable distance” (Aslam, *TBMG* 251). Kanwal also draws attention to how the global and local politics of power in Pakistan displaces him forever by asserting that “[i]n the same way as Zameen’s homeland in *The Wasted Vigil* becomes a terrorised place for her in the wake of Soviet occupation, the American presence in Afghanistan and Pakistan makes Mikal’s distance from his home insurmountable in *The Blind Man’s Garden*” (163).

Upstone makes a distinction between “journeys that are chosen and freeing and those that are enforced or enforcing” (*Spatial Politics* 65). She suggests that without freedom journey lacks empowering consequences because “simply moving is not itself empowering because of violence that underlies travel” (Upstone, *Spatial Politics* 64). Mikal’s journey is recurrently compulsory due to the fact that it is almost impossible for him to escape the violence and conflict prevailing the region, -“the sense of absolute space [that is] inexorably attached” (*Spatial Politics* 65). His journey exemplifies more of a “forced displacement ... [rather than] a voluntary journey of discovery” (Upstone, *Spatial Politics* 59) or economic migration, yet it is not ‘simply moving’ or one that lacks ‘empowerment’ because of his personal resistance and unique ethical positioning. Also, rethinking Mikal’s journey in terms of space partly departs from Upstone’s analysis of conventional postcolonial writings in which narrative strategies to reframe space revolves around the subversion of coloniser’s journey into the indigenous land, the re-play of Middle

Passage narratives, slave narratives and their traumatic journeys and migrant travels. However, Mikal's journey entails discussing journey as spatial scale within the context of neo-imperialism. It better fits in what she calls as "the harsh realism of postcolonial journeys of necessity ... rather than the celebratory journeys of the postcolonial writer" (*Spatial Politics* 63). His narrative of survival can be discussed more fittingly as "the chaotic re-play" (*Spatial Politics* 68) of the colonial journey within the neo-imperialist context with its insider protagonist foregrounded.

Mikal's journey captures acute moments demonstrating the entanglement of multiple powers in their fight for domination of national space. By means of his journey, Aslam conveys a sense of space that is characterized with instability, insecurity, chaos and conflict as opposed to the sense of absolute space intended by multiple ideologies to create utmost control. During his journey through Afghanistan, Mikal witnesses the bitter reality of the forced displacement of people when he comes across other refugees travelling like him escaping from the fighting in Afghanistan, "smelling more like wild animals than humans, entire families from Arab countries, destroyed-looking women and children. They have been on the run since October, making various journeys towards places of safety, to find some path back to their homelands" (Aslam, *TBMG* 173). As a warlord captive, Mikal is victimized by the arbitrariness of power prevailing Afghanistan and persecuting ordinary people every day: "... he has been bartered and sold among various warlords ... Every warlord has told him that he would have to be ransomed. He had refused to give any of them a contact address ... The only way anyone could gain financially from him was to send him to work on construction sites every day- a school being built, a prison for women being extended" (Aslam, *TBMG* 158). The fact that he has to survive within this insecure and chaotic space makes his journey a compulsory one in which he is treated not more than a commodity, and his sense of space becomes even more traumatized by his multiple forced displacements.

Aslam uses Mikal's captivation as a powerful subversion of the colonial pattern of slavery by which Aslam grants Mikal power to resist. The subversion of colonial slavery persists with Mikal's transference to the American prison in

exchange of money. In his review of *TBMG* on *The Spectator*, Parker underlines this issue suggesting by arguing “[t]he buying and selling of freedom is one of the principle threads in the book: people are released from the crude shackles of warlords, only to find themselves zip-locked, hooded and quite literally caged in American detention centres” (n.p). He further adds that this new form of slavery that has emerged in the neo-imperialist era renders ‘war on terror’ more brutal than other wars “because of the United States policy of paying large bounties for ‘terrorist suspects’ in a desperately poor country. The result is that almost anyone can be captured or kidnapped and sold on to warlords who are guaranteed \$5,000 a head for handing them over to American troops” (n.p). The part of the journey that takes him to the American prison demonstrates the American manipulation over Afghanistan’s national space and its repercussions on the lives of the ordinary people like Mikal. The treatment in the American prison almost mimics the colonial pattern of slavery by keeping people from different nationalities ranging from Algerian, Sudanese, Russian to Saudi Arabian and Moroccan in metal cages, buying and selling them.

What is especially significant about Mikal’s imprisonment in relation to the novel’s post-space visions is that as an ordinary Pakistani yet with a unique ethical positioning, he displays a subtle and firm defiance against the American neo-imperialism and its essentialist politics which consolidate orientalist misconceptions and stereotyping about non-Western people. In other words, his urge for survival can be read as his personal act of resistance against any hegemonic appropriation of national space that surrounds him regardless of its source. Just like he refuses to give any information to the warlords, as a way of resistance he renders himself unreachable in the American prison as well. As much as he despises American neo-imperialist intervention of Afghanistan, he is equally critical of fundamentalist mindset, questioning the fundamentalist logic and its violent agendas including assassinations and attacks on global scale. When he finds out by chance some violent projects by the Islamists while staying with Akbar whom he meets at the American prison but only later learns about his radicalized side, he

feels “[a] sense of defilement [that] runs in his body. They want the birth of a new world, and will take death and repeat it and repeat it and repeat it until that birth results” (Aslam, *TBMG* 312). His journey that is shaped by the entanglement of different hegemonic power offers a truthful account of the postcolonial subject’s traumatic experience with neo-imperialist appropriation of space.

TBMG problematizes torture and mistreatment carried out by the American forces in post-9/11 Afghanistan. Especially with the parts narrating Mikal’s time in Afghanistan, the novel highlights the fact that the American spatial manipulation of Afghanistan takes its most extreme form with the notorious prisoner abuse during US custody to extract information. In this perspective, Mikal’s journey can be discussed as a larger-than-national space that projects the use of torture as a manifestation of power unacknowledged by the official politics. The depiction of tortures carried out in the American prison evokes the scandalous photos of the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse in Iraq in 2004, and the types of torture Mikal is subjected to includes staying in

[a] sleep deprivation cell ..., being severely beaten during interrogation for 'his threatening behaviour' ..., [r]estraint on a swivel chair for long periods, loud music and white noise played to prevent him from sleeping, lowering the temperature in the room until it was unbearable ... Threats made against his family including female members, strip searches and body searches sometimes ten times a day, forced nudity, including in the presence of female personnel, threatening to desecrate the Koran in front of him. (Aslam, *TBMG* 204-244)

The tortures in the American prison recapture the European colonial violence in the 18th and 19th century during which the indigenous populations had gone through unbearable abuses by the colonizer powers who came with the claims of civilizing missions. The novel implies that the same pattern repeats itself within the context of neo-imperialism this time by the U.S. which legitimizes its imperialist practices with humanistic causes of liberating people of oppressive regimes and bringing democracy. On the very same issue, Judith Butler’s *Precarious Life* (2004), which discusses the positioning of the U.S within global

community in the aftermath of September 11, criticizes the arbitrariness of American hegemony during the ‘war on terror’ and problematizes the “acts that are justified in the name of self-defence, but by a noble cause, namely, the rooting out of terrorism” (6). In this respect Aslam introduces representative voices of American imperialism whose flawed and reductive thinking indicates a larger problem regarding the official politics. Ironically the agent interrogating Mikal believes they are not torturing him because they believe torture is “wrong and uncivilised” (Aslam, *TBMG* 208). The narration challenges this flawed thinking by highlighting Mikal’s traumatic experiences during his detention. The mindset exemplified by the agent reflects the rhetoric adopted by the Bush administration which is known for their legitimizing efforts of the use of torture for the suspects and detainees in Afghanistan and Iraq. These include ‘rhetorical’ replacement of words such as ‘torture’ with ‘robust interrogation program’ or as in the case of Dick Cheney who replaced ‘dunking’ instead of waterboarding¹¹ to alleviate its inhumane significations. Aslam touches upon the very same issue to express his discomfort with the manipulation of language for legitimizing abuse and asserts that “...one of the most humiliating things I have had to witness over the past decade has been the corruption of language. The American regime tells us of something called ‘extraordinary rendition’ -- what they mean is kidnapping. Say it. They talk of ‘enhanced interrogation’ -- what they mean is torture. Say it.” (Hong n.p). Through Mikal’s compulsory journey, *TBMG* presents the American prisons as sites of oppression and problematizes their notorious use of torture as an extreme case of imperialist violence towards the domination of space by disregarding the dignity and integrity of human components of the national space. Mikal’s personal resistance to subjugation and his unique ethical positioning as a local figure with is in fact empowering for tracing the post-space reconfigurations for the whole nation.

¹¹ Waterboarding is a simulation of drowning in which the victim’s nose and mouth is filled with water while he or she lies on an inclined platform, causing him/her to be unable to exhale. As a form of torture, waterboarding became illegal with the adoption of the third Geneva Convention of 1929. Waterboarding is known to have been used in CIA secret facilities during the ‘war-on-terror’.

Aslam replays the terrorist stereotype through Mikal who is erroneously suspected to have terrorist affiliations. This replay that Mikal's journey represents responds the question of how the national space can be remodelled by dismantling neo-imperialist us/them binary that defines the second party as 'terrorist' while the Anglo-American 'us' is characteristically democratic and humanitarian. With Mikal's ethically superior character, the Western gaze to Afghanistan as the land of terrorists is subverted to re-present it as a more nuanced space defying orientalist essentialisms of identity. Kanwal's analysis of second-generation writers of Pakistani origin in terms of their politics of Muslim identity elaborates on this issue further by diagnosing in Aslam's fiction "[a] paradigmatic shift from an Orientalist epistemology to a terrorist ontology" (158). The 'terrorist ontology' Kanwal suggests refers to "a post-9/11 climate in which 'Muslimness' has become synonymous with terror(ism) and violence and in which every Muslim can easily be labelled as a terrorist" (3). This paradigmatic shift in fiction that Kanwal points out demarginalizes the human side of those stereotyped as terrorist even though they are not so in reality, -while simultaneously acknowledging the existence of radical Islamists who act violently in the name of religion-, and present a counter-reality to what is not purposefully covered by the mainstream Anglo-American media. Deconstructing the terrorist stereotype Aslam's Pakistani protagonist embodies hereby is one way to liberate the national space from its reductive and negative identity frames which creates a monolithic sense of spatiality as for Pakistan.

Wijngaarden rightly puts that "Aslam's [TBMG] humanizes the 'Others', giving them a face and thus enabling the reader to recognize their suffering and losses as well" (49). The parts narrating Mikal's time in the American prison focuses on him as a human being who is victimized by the neo-imperialist violence. As opposed to allegations of being a terrorist, he insistently responds to the interrogators that "[he is] just a prisoner. At first someone else's, now yours" (Aslam, *TBMG* 203) While his response draws attention to the oppression of ordinary people at the expense of overarching politics, more importantly it suggests

the oppression of the whole national space in the larger picture. The way Mikal responds to these negative frames prompts one to reconsider the Anglo-American sentiment that the ‘war on terror’ is based on by accentuating the experiences of the ‘other’. During the interrogation, he is asked how he feels about 9/11 attacks, he defines them as “a disgusting crime” (Aslam, *TBMG* 216), but the interrogator doesn’t find it credible arguing that most Pakistanis think otherwise. Mikal challenges this stereotyping he is subjected to by saying that “Do you want me to base my opinion of *your* people on the ones that I have met here?” (Aslam, *TBMG* 216). The way Mikal is subjected to pressure of confessing any terrorist affiliations and national and religious stereotyping in fact points out the Anglo-American treatment of a whole nation that is essentially deemed dangerous and terrorist. Considering the fact that the reader knows better about Mikal and his ethical outlook as “a representative of moderate Muslims” (Kanwal 195) that Aslam celebrates, allegations of Mikal to be “a hardened terrorist, most probably belonging to the upper echelons of al-Qaeda ... a threat to the United States and to peace in this region” (Aslam, *TBMG* 376) constitute a bitter irony. As a counter-act for stereotyping him as a remorseless terrorist, the novel underscores the way he sympathizes with the grief of the ‘other’ when he sadly acknowledges that “[t]he men I killed had mothers, fathers, probably wives and children. I killed them and must pay for the crime” (Aslam, *TBMG* 364). That Mikal is able to evaluate matters on personal scale rather than adopting an ideological attitude without questioning and build up emphatic identifications is what distinguishes him from the radicals depicted in the novel and, more importantly, promising for a reformation of a mindset towards a post-space Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Starting as a captive of warlords, Mikal’s journey continues as a ‘suspected terrorist’ held by the Americans. It is significant in terms of embodying the perspective of the innocent and their victimization by the entanglement of global political agendas on Afghanistan. Constructing such characters as Mikal in *TBMG* and Casa in *TWV* is, according to Clements, is Aslam’s “attempts to respond in writing to the fears, preconceptions and curiosities about Islamic identities which

have dominated western discourses over the course of the post-9/11 decade” (*Oriental Muslims* 60) even if with each one of these characters Aslam refers to a different angle of this problem. As opposed to the dehumanizing representations of the terrorist stereotype on the Anglo-American media, *TBMG* shed lights on the human experience of being a detainee by the Americans; it powerfully creates emphatic identification not only with Mikal’s traumatic detention, but also with other detainees who are to be transported to Guantanamo Bay even if their fundamentalist afflictions have not been ascertained. The novel aptly visualizes the imperialist displacement of the prisoners who, out of distress for being transported to Guantanamo Bay, are “sob[ing], ... howling and shouting something in English, ... [k]issing the hands of the white men, ... [or] just walking, resigned to their fate, reciting the verses of the Koran” (Aslam, *TBMG* 210-211). Butler’s indignant commentary on American activities in Guantanamo explains the distress of the prisoners depicted in the novel since she argues that the prisoners detained in Guantanamo are devoid of any legal rights such as “the rights to counsel, means of appeal, and repatriation stipulated by the Geneva Convention have not been granted to any of the detainees in Guantanamo” (51), which means being imprisoned for an indefinite future until they are proven not risky for the US security. How the ‘other’ experiences the American domination over Afghanistan’s national space demonstrates the intensity of the imperialist violence that goes as far as forced displacement and hence undermines the legitimacy of the American invasion that is based on so-called humanistic causes.

Like Aslam, a number of contemporary postcolonial writers reconfigure the representations of ‘terrorist’ figure by the politics and media to demonstrate the multi-faceted reality of the post-9/11 world. Mohsin Hamid is another author whose protagonist Changez in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) can be compared to Mikal in this respect. As Meenakshi also notes, Changez typifies cosmopolitan Pakistani men who “... with 9/11 and subsequent backlash on Muslims, are forced to reconsider not only their relationship with America, but also themselves as Muslims, as Pakistanis” (81). While both novels show similarity in their exploration

of the impacts of 9/11 on the lives of individuals with no organic affiliations with Islamic terrorism, Changez's experience of post-9/11 reality is located in the West where he is culturally and emotionally integrated while Mikal is essentially a local figure with moderate background. Changez grows resentment upon the changes in America in the aftermath of the attacks and becomes one of the "broken, battered individuals [who] distinctly veer towards a reactionary extremism" (Meenakshi 81), but Mikal consistently positions himself somewhere above the official politics and maintaining his ethical outlook despite being persecuted. With Mikal, Aslam aims to dismantle the stereotypical representation of Pakistan as a terrorist country while at the same time acknowledging the existence of Islamist radicalism and terrorism which victimizes the ordinary people as much as the neo-imperialist violence.

Scanlan's investigation on the 'terrorist' novel from a postcolonial perspective for alternatives to dominant rhetoric following 9/11 underscores the strength and capacity of fiction to challenge "the treacherous fault-line between the binaries of terrorist discourse, between ... native and alien, or between Islam and the secular West" (267) and "transform that fault-line into a living, breathing space in which the human consequences of rigid and lethal polarities become visible" (267). She argues that once these binaries are dismantled and these polarities are negotiated, the 'terrorist' novel also regenerates "a breathing space between two identities that have become fused; the terrorist and the migrant, for example, or the Muslim and the fanatic, or even the American and the Bush administration" (Scanlan 277). From this perspective, the intimacy between Mikal and the anonymous American soldier is a purposeful strategy towards post-space reframing of Pakistan by creating this 'breathing space' Scanlan refers to and dismantling the identity categories based on neo-imperialist binaries. The last part of Mikal's journey involves his spontaneous encounter with the anonymous American soldier. The narration implies the fact that one of the soldiers Mikal has killed is his brother. Thus seeking personal revenge is his motivation to come to Afghanistan besides his official post as a soldier. As his anonymity also suggests, his characterization is symbolic as he seems to have internalized the causes of American intervention to

Afghanistan and believes in the legitimacy of the American military intervention because it is “about the survival of America itself” (Aslam, *TBMG* 377). The idea voiced by the American soldier is an internalized version of what Anne McClintock calls “the paranoid empire” (qtd in Deb 36), which suggests a neo-imperialist rhetoric of terror to direct its citizens into common sense of threat against their wellbeing as a nation. Mikal finds him wounded on the way and takes him along with him. For the Afghan and Pakistani people in the novel, an American soldier means the representative of the US itself and thus must be blamed and punished for everything his country controversially commits in the name of ‘war-on-terror’. Ironically, Mikal becomes the sole protector of the American soldier when he is about to be lynched or kidnapped and even facilitates his eventual rescue at the expense of his own life. “Mikal’s ambivalence, almost tenderness towards the soldier” (Aslam, *TBMG* 439) is confusing and even suspicious for the mainstream Pakistani people, which testifies the negative framing of the US across Pakistan’s national space.

Amin Malak’s exploration of Muslim writers writing in English celebrates “literary ‘site[s] of encounter for cultures and peoples on equal terms’, ... ‘demystifying’ and ‘de-alienating’ Muslims and Islam, oft-maligned post-9/11 (qtd in Clements, *Orienting Muslims* 29). The journey that brings Mikal and the American soldier together can be considered as such a site where the gap between the East and the West can be overcome with a sense of spatiality that is not polarized by nationalistic and religious binaries. Even Mikal’s tenderness alone towards the American soldier is a subtle defiance against the perception of the ‘other’ as the dangerous and atrocious one; as opposed to the prevalent xenophobia that minimizes the contact between the two parties, Mikal feels that “the white man’s eyes are a doorway to another world, to a mind shaped by different rules, a different way of life” (Aslam, *TBMG* 419). The eventual dialogue between Mikal and the American soldier promises a mindset that can build up a more tolerant national space that would free itself from prevailing xenophobia on both sides. The journey the two shares has the potential to overcome the distance created by politics and

ideologies. At one point, out of frustration and exhaustion, the American soldier starts singing a song which creates a common space for him and Mikal to meet at the same sentiment. For the soldier, the song signifies “an ecstasy of praise for everything he knows- he, Mikal, everything all humans know in fact- and in the next moment a lament, by turns tender and bloody, a weapon forged out of steel of woe stabbing at him from the very heart of suffering” (Aslam, *TBMG* 430). Mikal also feels overwhelmed by the sentiment of this song whose language is unknown to him, and makes him feel that “there’s nothing else at all in the wild hills and deserts but that song and its careful singing and its subtle colours of permanence, the unafraid resonance connecting the two of them across the heat-thinned air” (Aslam, *TBMG* 430). That moment opens up for a sense of spatiality that is liberated from political and social constructs, and reframed by common human feelings like suffering, frustration and longing. Similarly, the novel describes a moment where Mikal, also feeling overwhelmed by the adversities surrounding them, momentarily feels emancipated political and cultural impositions and pure human experience triumphs time and space:

Looking through the broken window between them he is suddenly overwhelmed, not by any emotion he knows, suddenly feeling himself unequal to so wide a chase, so remorseless a life. He is shocked to find himself close to weeping, a few initial sobs escaping. He wipes the tears but can’t stop and he covers his face with his incomplete hands and weeps loudly, uncontrollably. He reaches out a hand and places it on the man’s shoulder and, his mouth full of failed words, tells him about Naheed, the sidelong gold of her look, and about Jeo, and about his incarceration by the Americans and by the warlord who mutilated his hands and sold him to the Americans for \$5000. About Rohan’s blindness. About the death of Basie. (Aslam, *TBMG* 431)

Such a moment in which space is redefined on personal terms opens up a new cognitive model for knowing the ‘other’ that is based on human experience and emotion contrary to fundamentalist and neo-imperialist appropriations of defining the ‘self’ and the ‘other’. A similar moment occurs while Mikal is crossing a burning bridge with the American soldier, facing death so closely. At that instant, crossing the physical bridge ahead of him becomes a symbol of reaching his ‘post-

space'; "... the bridge is the bridge between the innermost part of him and the American's, something that can't be consumed or rendered meaningless even by fire, a bridge to his parents and Basie, to a world where Jeo is still alive and where Tara never went to prison" (Aslam, *TBMG* 437). Feeling liberated by a similar 'post-space' perception, he declares that "...at that moment he loves the American soldier, and he loves the two he killed ... so much so that he feels his heart will not bear the weight of it" (Aslam, *TBMG* 437). Such moments as these shared by Mikal and the American soldier create a common emotional space where experiences are relatable and differences are negotiable.

Despite the dominant discourse of 9/11 demands to choose a side from George W. Bush's dichotomous discourse of "Either you're with us or you're with the terrorists" (Transcript n.p) and dictates the idea that "to oppose the war [means] to some that one somehow felt sympathy with terrorism, or that one saw terror as justified" (Butler 2), fiction offers an enabling option "to hold a position which one opposes both and queries the terms in which the opposition is framed" (Butler 2). Clements argues that 'war on terror' has brought pressure upon transnational and diasporic writers of South Asian (and particularly Pakistani) Muslim origin to "'disclose' to western readers 'where their identifications, the centres of their subjective universe lie' ..., either directly or through their characters" (qtd in *Oriental Muslims* 44). In this respect Aslam's *TBMG* establishes a firm stance of being against both sides of 'war on terror' especially due to the victimization of the ordinary people at the expense of political and ideological agendas. Bearing the interconnectedness of Afghanistan and Pakistan in mind, this study endeavours to analyse *TBMG* in terms of its spatial politics in the light of Upstone's theoretical frame of postcolonial spatiality. *TBMG* aptly portrays how postcolonial Pakistan as a space is used and abused while simultaneously drawing an elaborate picture of Afghanistan in the post-9/11 climate characterized by the American military aggression and the declining power of the Taliban. Societal issues prevailing Pakistan such as xenophobia and misogyny are also addressed lengthily with their projections on the national space. Since social and political instabilities of

Afghanistan and Pakistan depicted in the novel are discussed in continuum going back as early as the 15th century, little hope is offered for these nations when they are defined solely on political terms. On the other hand, Upstone's conceptualization of 'post-space' through redefining nation on alternative scales is applicable to Aslam's novel with its small-scale representations of 'garden' and 'school' which are each celebrated for their transformative qualities. Also in common with *TVW*, it accentuates microstories in a similar direction where nation can be reframed on non-political terms with individual experiences foregrounded. What is characteristic about *TBMG* is that Mikal's journey which takes up a considerable portion of the narration represents another alternative scale to redefine nation; journey as a larger-than-national space showcases the politically and socially destabilized spatiality of Afghanistan and Pakistan by offering broader perspectives and multiple insights into the post-9/11 realities of these two nations. While the difficulty of Mikal's journey translates the neo-imperialist condition of Afghanistan from a wider angle, it is still empowering in the sense that a sense of space larger than national is offered to dismantle the binaries of fundamentalism and imperialism. All in all, analysing Aslam's novel in terms of postcolonial spatiality testifies fiction's capacity and strength to reframe nations in a more empowering and liberating way.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, two of Nadeem Aslam's novels, *TWV* and *TBMG*, are analysed in terms of how they represent the postcolonial spaces of Afghanistan and Pakistan in the post-9/11 epoch. The national spaces in these novels are portrayed to be under incessant manipulation of multiple socio-political forces ranging from Islamic fundamentalism and the Taliban to American neo-imperialism and local warlordism. These novels as recent examples of postcolonial writing subvert the colonial/imperial spatial appropriations, and to explore the implications of this subversion, this study employs the theoretical framework proposed by Upstone who conceptualizes *post-space* to discuss postcolonial spaces in terms of their transformative quality. This concept basically celebrates a sense of spatiality that resists colonial spatial totalizations and reconfigures space in such a way that foregrounds diverse experiences of postcolonial spaces. *Post-space* representations thus embody postcolonial writers' endeavour to reconfigure national spaces so that it resists the colonial absolutes of space and promises a more nuanced and inclusive postcolonial spaces. To attain a *post-space* sense of spatiality, Upstone proposes to reframe national spaces by alternative scales such as locations that are *smaller-than-national* and *larger-than-national*. Within this theoretical framework, physical locations like *home*, *school* and *garden* and conceptual spaces like *microstories* and *neglected spaces of cultural and natural beauties* exemplify the small spaces of *TWV* and *TBMG* that enable more liberating representations of national space while *journey* as another alternative scale that is *larger-than-national* spaces also suggests the possibility of reconfiguring politically-bounded national spaces. Besides bringing the inherent potentials of their postcolonial spaces to light, reframing Afghanistan and Pakistan in this way essentially challenges the reductive 9/11 discourse, lays bare the essentialist binaries and stereotypes forged by it, and

counteracts the adverse representations of these two nations in the Anglo-American world with an empowering alternative spatial reality created by fiction.

The first chapter of this thesis draws a theoretical frame of 'space' in postcolonial literary studies. With the positive influence of 'Spatial Turn' in social sciences, space has become an enabling tool to facilitate interdisciplinary connections for literature and a significant context for literary studies to discuss various issues ranging from human experience, power relations to negotiations of identity. For postcolonial studies, space has been essential to discuss postcolonial experience considering the intricate relationship between the geography and the empire, and thus postcolonial spaces have recently arisen much interest in literary studies for their interpretive capacity. Upstone's conceptualization of *post-space* holds importance with regard to postcolonial writers who seek to subvert colonial frames of space and reconfigure postcolonial experience to resist colonial spatial ordering. Considering the constructed nature of nation as a political body that suppresses heterogeneity and promotes simultaneity, redefining nation using Upstone's alternative scales that are *smaller-than-national* or *larger-than-national* offers glimpses of more pluralistic and nuanced postcolonial spaces that are productively chaotic and fluid as opposed to the homogenized and ordered spaces of colonialism. The first chapter also discusses the significance of Aslam as a postcolonial migrant writer who has a distinct literary style and unique authorial sensibilities. It also elaborates on *TWV* and *TBMG* with regard to contemporary postcolonial literature, and more specifically, as prominent examples of 'war-on-terror' fiction which explores socio-political and psychological complexities of post-9/11 period.

The second chapter offers an analysis of *TWV* within the frame of postcolonial space outlined in the first chapter. In the first part of this chapter, spatial reality of *TWV*'s Afghanistan is portrayed. National space of Afghanistan is depicted as the crossroad of ideologies whose incessant conflicts over domination has brought chaos and instability. The spatial politics of various forces including

the Soviets, the Taliban and the U.S. have projections on Afghanistan's national space, all of which in fact aim to dominate the space for further power and manipulation. As a subversive strategy, the novel subtly suggests *post-space* possibilities for reconfiguring Afghanistan's spatial reality. Personal spaces of Marcus's house and Zameen's apartment are small spaces that are inherently resistant to spatial absolutisms for being more open to questioning totalizing ideologies. In this respect, microstories are also discussed as conceptual small spaces that signify transformative power by specifically highlighting human experience of space. Marcus, David and Dunia are the characters analysed in this vein whose microstories help reframe Afghanistan's national space with a specific focus on religion, neo-imperialism and gender politics. What also holds significance in terms of small-scale representations that promise post-space reconfigurations is that Aslam aptly portrays *neglected spatialities* of cultural and natural beauties to demarginalize the 'beautiful Afghanistan' as opposed to Afghanistan's provocatively adverse and meagre representations in the mainstream Western media. With these subversive strategies to 're-present' national space, Aslam invites the reader to revise their perception of Afghanistan while at the same time drawing acute portrayals of the nation's ongoing afflictions such as political and social instabilities and religious fundamentalism.

The third chapter focuses on *TBMG* in terms of its portraits of postcolonial spaces of Afghanistan and Pakistan. This chapter essentially draws attention to the cultural, historical connectedness of Afghanistan and Pakistan, and hence national borders occasionally gets blurred in their spatial representations. Yet, the main focus of the novel is on Pakistan because of Aslam's authorial intention to elaborate specifically on Pakistan's experience of post-9/11 period. While the parts that focuses on Afghanistan's national space is characterized with American military intervention in the aftermath of 9/11 attacks and the Taliban's subsequent decline in power, spatial representations of Pakistan are explored with regard to a greater variety of considerations such as Pakistan's postcolonial condition, prevalent xenophobia in its public space, and condition of women and gender politics. *Post-*

space possibilities *TBMG* suggests shows parallelism with those of *TVW* in terms of their common treatment of *small-scale* locations as sites of empowerment; the *garden* that the title of the novel also suggests and *schools* are small-scale physical locations that inherently possess potential of reconfiguration for the national space. Just like microstories of David, Marcus and Dunia where post-space implications can be traced, conceptual spaces of microstories that Rohan and Naheed exemplify are also explored to reframe national space by featuring individual perception of space. On the other hand, *TBMG* differs from *TWV* in terms of its elaboration of *journey* as a significant motif which can be read as a *larger-than-national* space within the context *post-space* representations. Analysing Mikal's compulsory journey demonstrates the neo-imperialist and fundamentalist hegemony over Afghanistan's national space, but it is also a crucial way to defy the artificial boundaries of nation and thus create an 'unbordered' space that has *post-space* significations. What is more, within the unbordered space that is created through Mikal's journey, the colonial pattern of slavery and terrorist stereotype is re-played. While Aslam subverts the colonial slavery by reproducing it neo-imperial context with Mikal's imprisonment by the American forces, by foregrounding his spatial experience and redefinition of national space he also prompts rethinking the 'terrorist' stereotype of 9/11 discourse that dehumanizes the 'other'. His journey as an ordinary Pakistani thus challenges Eurocentric essentialisms of identity and invites rethinking 9/11 discourse from the perspective of the innocent.

Overall, this study basically foregrounds Nadeem Aslam as a postcolonial author who distinguishes himself from the older generations of British postcolonial authors by problematizing larger-scale issues like American neo-imperialism and Islamic fundamentalism. Aslam in this sense is an example testifying the 'British Asian confidence' among the new generation migrant authors who chooses to experiment with a diverse range of social and global matters rather than commonly held issues of cultural identity and diaspora experience. Besides, Aslam's unique positioning as an author with double perspective of an 'insider' and 'outsider' enable his works to offer a wider horizon of thinking regarding both the 'East' and

the 'West'. While he is a migrant author who retains his bonds with his homeland Pakistan through his writing and demonstrates a great sensibility towards the Third world issues, his cultural and intellectual background has been considerably shaped by the Western canon. This in fact proves to be a fruitful duality for his writings which are hence rich in different insights. This study also draws attention to the fact that Aslam is an under-analysed author academically, especially with regard to his recent works such as *TWV* and *TBMG*. Considering the expanding geographical and temporal scope of postcolonial studies, he stands out as a promising author with his increasing volume of works that take on a diverse range of subjects.

Focusing on two examples of 'war-on-terror' fiction narrating post-9/11 period, this study primarily contends that the 21st century direction of postcolonial literature has been growing out of having 'home-based' concerns towards more global ones affecting broader geographies. Global issues like neo-imperialism, global terrorism and religious fundamentalism entails rethinking postcolonial world on a larger scale that also includes geographies that the 'war-on-terror' and global terrorism have had detrimental effect on. This almost means creating an 'unbordered' space to discuss postcolonialism considering the scope and influence of these two global phenomena. Within the limited space of this study, the necessity of problematizing 9/11 discourse through literature is highlighted because just like the earlier colonial and imperial discourses that have bred reductive essentialisms and false binaries, 9/11 discourse of today polarizes the world and create new dangerous stereotypes that would create further prejudices and controversies. This study ultimately argues that the intersection of literature and spatial studies might suggest hope thanks to the power of fiction to challenge national stereotypes and accentuate the potential of postcolonial spaces to be more empowering, negotiable and pluralistic sites that are tolerant of differences.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adams, Lorraine. "Torch Song for Afghanistan." *The New York Times*, 11 Oct. 2008, www.nytimes.com/2008/10/12/books/review/Adams-t.html. Accessed 30 Dec. 2017.

Ashcroft, Bill. "Forcing Newness into the World: Language, Place and Nature." *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, vol. 36, no.1-2, 2005, pp.93-110.

Aslam, Nadeem, and Sunil Sethi. "A Conversation with Nadeem Aslam." *India International Centre Quarterly*, vol. 35, no. 3/4, 2008, pp. 348-361, *JSTOR Journals*.

_____, "Leila in the Wilderness". *Granta: The Magazine of New Writing* 16 Sept. 2010: 9-53. Print.

_____, *Maps for Lost Lovers*. London: Faber and Faber, 2004.

_____, Interview by Terry Hong. "An Interview with Nadeem Aslam". *Bookslut*. July 2013. Web. 21 July 2017.

_____, Interview by Marianne Brace. "Nadeem Aslam: A Question of Honour". *Independent*, 10 June 2004, www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/nadeem-aslam-a-question-of-honour-731732.html. Accessed 31 Dec. 2017.

_____, Interview by Nouman Khalid. "From Jaipur With Love: Nadeem Aslam's 'The Blind Man's Garden' (part two)". *Huffingtonpost*. 01 Apr. 2013. www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/nauman-khalid/from-jaipur-with-love-nad_b_2977314.html. Accessed 19 Apr. 2018.

_____, *Season of the Rainbirds*. Random House India, 2012.

_____, *The Wasted Vigil*. London: Faber and Faber, 2008.

_____, *The Blind Man's Garden*. London: Faber and Faber, 2013.

_____, *The Golden Legend*. New York, Vintage International, 2017.

_____, "Where to Begin." *Granta The Online Edition*, 29 Sept 2010, granta.com/where-to-begin. Accessed 16 Apr 2018.

Bakhtin, M. M. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, Edited by Michael Holquist, Translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981.

Boehmer, Elleke. *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Brennan, Timothy. "From Development to Globalization: Postcolonial Studies and Globalization Theory". *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*, edited by Neil Lazarus, Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 120-138.

Butler, Judith. *Precarious Life*. New York: Verso, 2004.

Chambers, Claire. *British Muslim Fictions: Interviews with Contemporary Writers*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

Childs, Peter and James Green. *Aesthetics and Ethics in Twenty-First Century British Novels: Zadie Smith, Nadeem Aslam, Hari Kunzru and David Mitchell*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.

Clements, Madeline. *Writing Islam from a South Asian Muslim Perspective: Rushdie Hamid, Aslam, Shamsie*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

_____, “Orienting Muslims: Mapping Global Spheres of Affiliation and Affinity in Contemporary South Asian Fiction.” Dissertation, University of East London, 2013.

Deb, Basuli. *Transnational Feminist Perspectives on Terror in Literature and Culture*. New York: Routledge, 2015.

DeLillo, Don. *Falling Man*. New York: Scribner, 2007.

Flannery, Eoin. “Internationalizing 9/11: Hope and Redemption in Nadeem Aslam’s *The Wasted Vigil* and Colum McCann’s *Let the Great World Spin*.” *English: Journal of the English Association*, vol. 62, no. 238, 2013, pp. 294–315, doi.org/10.1093/english/eft010. Accessed 10 Feb 2018.
Foer, Jonathan Safran. *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books, 1995.

_____, “Of Other Spaces”. Translated by Jay Miskowiec. *Diacritics*. vol. 16, no. 1, 1986, pp. 7-22.

Friedman, Susan Stanford. “Spatial Poetics and Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things*”. *A Companion to Narrative Theory*, edited by James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz, Wiley-Blackwell, 2005, pp. 193-205.

Frawley, Oona. “Global Civil War and Post-9/11 Discourse in *The Wasted Vigil*”. *Textual Practice*, vol.27, no.3, 2013, pp. 439-457, Taylor&Francis Online, doi: 10.1080/0950236X.2013.784024 2013. Accessed 08 Feb 2018.

Gafarīti, Hafid. “Islam and the Administration of Aesthetics.” *Religion & Literature*, vol. 43, no.1, 2011, pp. 133-139. *Jstor*, Accessed 12 April 2018.

Hamid, Mohsin. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Hanif, Mohammed. "The Wasted Vigil, by Nadeem Aslam." *Independent*, 11 Sept. 2008, www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/the-wasted-vigil-by-nadeem-aslam-5469154.html. Accessed 30 Dec. 2017.

Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri. *Empire*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000.

Hasan, Ayesha. "A Life in Writing: 'Had I been in Pakistan, I wouldn't be a writer'". *The Express Tribune*, 23 Feb. 2013, tribune.com.pk/story/511207/a-life-in-writing-had-i-been-in-pakistan-i-wouldnt-be-a-writer/ Accessed 25 July 2017.

Johansen, Emily. Introduction. *Cosmopolitanism and Space: Spatial Forms in Contemporary Anglophone Literature*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, pp. I-X.

Kanwal, Aroosa. *Rethinking Identities in Contemporary Pakistani Fiction: Beyond 9/11*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

Khadem, Amir. "Cultural Trauma as a Social Construct: 9/11 Fiction and the Epistemology of Communal Pain." *Intertexts*, vol. 18, no. 2, 2014, pp. 181-197.

Khan, Gohar Karim. "Narrating Pakistan Transnationally: Identity, Politics and Terrorism in Anglophone Pakistani Literature after '9/11'". Dissertation, University of Warwick, 2013.

"Kirkus Reviews." Review of *The Blind Man's Garden* by Nadeem Aslam. *Kirkus*. Apr 2013, <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/nadeem-aslam/blind-mans-garden/>. Accessed 15 Apr. 2018.

Lasdun, James. "The Blind Man's Garden by Nadeem Aslam-Review". *The Guardian*. 31 Jan. 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/jan/31/the-blind-mans-garden-review>. Accessed 3 June 2017.

Mars-Jones, Adam. "Anything to See Those Paper Eyes." *The Guardian*, 12 Oct. 2008, www.theguardian.com/books/2008/oct/12/fiction2. Accessed 30 Dec. 2017.

_____, "The Blind Man's Garden by Nadeem Aslam-Review." Review of *The Blind Man's Garden* by Nadeem Aslam. *The Guardian*, 11 Feb 2013. www.theguardian.com/books/2013/feb/11/blind-mans-garden-aslam-review. Accessed 17 Apr. 2018.

McEwan, Ian. *Saturday*. London: Jonathan Cape, 2005.

McLeod, John. *Beginning Postcolonialism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000.

Meenakshi, Bharat. "The English Novel and Terrorism." *India International Quarterly*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2013, pp. 79-90. Jstor, Accessed 22 Feb 2018.

Messud, Claire. *The Emperor's Children*. Vintage, 2006.

Nojumi, Neamatollah, et al. *After the Taliban: Life and Security in Rural Afghanistan*. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009.

_____, "The Rise and Fall of the Taliban." *The Taliban and The Crisis of Afghanistan*, edited by Robert D. Crews and Amin Tarzi, Harvard University Press, 2008, pp. 90-117.

O'Gorman, Daniel. *Fictions of the War on Terror: Difference and the Transnational 9/11 Novel*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

O'Neill, Joseph. *Netherland*. New York: Pantheon, 2008.

Parker, Peter. "The Blind Man's Garden, by Nadeem Aslam – Review." Review of *The Blind Man's Garden* by Nadeem Aslam. *The Spectator*, 16 March 2013. www.spectator.co.uk/2013/03/between-a-rock-and-a-hard-place/. Accessed 17 Apr 2018.

- Phillips, John. 'Lagging behind: Bhabha, Post-Colonial Theory and the Future.' In *Travel Writing and Empire*. Ed. Steve Clark. London: Zed, 1999. 63–80.
- Ralph, Jason. *America's War on Terror: The State of the 9/11 Exception from Bush to Obama*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Rimmon-Kenan, Shlomith. *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Politics*. London: Routledge, 1983.
- Runion, L. Meredith. *The History of Afghanistan*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 2007.
- Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*. London: Vintage, 1994.
- _____, *Orientalism*. London: Penguin Books, 1978.
- Saikal, Amin. *Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Survival*. New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004.
- Soja, Edward. *Thirdspace*. Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1996.
- Scanlan, Margaret. "Migrating from Terror: The Postcolonial Novel After September 11." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, vol. 46, no. 3-4, 2010, pp. 266-278. *Taylor & Francis Online*, doi.org/10.1080/17449855.2010.482372.
- Stierstorfer, Klaus. "Fundamentalism and Postcoloniality: Beyond 'Westoxification'?" *The Future of Postcolonial Studies*, edited by Chantal Zabus, Routledge, 2015, pp.101-113.
- Teverson, Andrew and Sara Upstone, editors. *Postcolonial Spaces: The Politics of Place in Contemporary Culture*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

Toumi, Alek Baylee. "Literature and Power: Muslims vs Islamists." *Religion & Literature*, vol. 43, no. 1, 2011, pp. 126-132. *Jstor*, Accessed 12 April 2018.

"Transcript of President Bush's Address to a Joint Session of Congress on Thursday Night." *CNN* 20 Sep. 2001.
<http://edition.cnn.com/2001/US/09/20/gen.bush.transcript/>

Updike, John. *Terrorist*. New York. Alfred A. Knopf, 2006.

Upstone, Sara. *British Asian Fiction: Twenty-First-Century Voices*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010.

_____, *Spatial Politics in the Postcolonial Novel*. Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009.

Weatherston, Rosemary. "Embattled Grounds: Resistance, Representation and the Literary Landscaping of Postcolonial Space". *Journal of the Australasian Universities Language and Literature Association*. vol. 96, no.1, 2001, pp. 135-153, DOI: 10.1179/aulla.2001.96.1.009.

Wijngaarden, Tinka van. "(Neo-) Orientalism in Post 9/11 Fiction and Film". MA thesis, Leiden University, 2015.

Yaqin, Amina. "Nadeem Aslam in Conversation." *Wasafiri*, vol. 30, no. 3, Sept. 2015, pp. 39-44. *Taylor&Francis Online*, doi: 10.1080/02690055.2015.1044785

Ziring, Lawrence. *Pakistan at the Crosscurrent of History*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2003.

APPENDICES

A. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Bu tez Pakistan kökenli İngiliz yazar Nadeem Aslam'ın *Viran Ülkenin Bekçisi* (2008) ve *Kör Adamın Bahçesi* (2013) kitaplarını, Afganistan ve Pakistan'ın postkolonyal uzamlar olarak temsilleri ve yeniden kurgulanışları bakımından inceler. Afganistan ve Pakistanın postkolonyal uzamlarının sorunsallaştırılmasında, köktenci ve neo-empyralist gündemlerin hüküm sürdüğü, zorbalığın ve manipülasyonun dini duygudan beslendiği ve egemenlik amaçlı çoklu çatışmaların bölgeyi şekillendiren etkili bir güç olduğu gerçekleri ele alınır. Bu çalışma teorik çerçeve olarak Sara Upstone'un uzam-sonrası (*post-space*) kavramını esas alır, ki bu kavram temelde farklı postkolonyal uzam deneyimlerini öne çıkartarak empyralizmin uzamsal totalizasyonlara karşı koyan ve bu anlamda kolonyal çerçeveleri yıkıp yeniden kurgulanışlar öne süren bir uzamsallık algısı ifade eder. Romanlardaki uzam-sonrası (*post-space*) temsillerinin bu doğrultuda incelenmesi bu çalışmanın odağını teşkil eder. Politik bir kurgu olarak ulusal uzam sorgulanırken, alternatif uzamsal alanlar üzerinden yeni bir çerçeve çizilmesi amaçlanır. Aslam'ın bu çalışmada incelenen romanları *ulusal-uzamdan-küçük* ve *ulusal-uzamdan-büyük* alanları ön plana çıkartarak ulusal uzamı incelikli bir yeniden şekillendirmeye tabi tutar. Doğası gereği ulusu indirgeyici nitelikteki tasvirlerle direnç gösteren bu alternatif uzamsal alanlar *ev*, *okul* ve *bahçe* gibi küçük fiziksel uzamların yanı sıra *küçük-anlatılar*, *ihmal edilmiş doğal ve kültürel uzamlar* gibi kavramsal küçük uzamlar ile *ulusal-uzamdan-büyük* bir alanı işaret eden *seyahat* motifini de kapsayan bir çeşitlilik gösterir. Nadeem Aslam'ın *Viran Ülkenin Bekçisi* ve *Kör Adamın Bahçesi* 11 Eylül sonrası sosyo-politik karışıklıklarını ele alan terör edebiyatının öne çıkan iki örneğidir. Bu iki romanın işaret ettiği doğrultuda ulusu yeniden çerçevelenmesi, özcü ulusal klişeleri ve ikilikleri besleyen 11 Eylül sonrası söylemlerinin temelini aşındırırken okuyucuyu

Afganistan ve Pakistanın ana akım Anglo-Amerikan tasvirlerini yeniden düşünmeye davet eder.

Uzam çalışmaları özellikle 21. yy'ın ikinci yarısında sosyal bilimlerde ve edebiyatta etkisini hissettirmeye başlamıştır. 'Uzamsal dönüş' olarak adlandırılan yeni epistemolojik yaklaşım uzam, alan ve mekan gibi kavramları sadece fiziki ve coğrafi analizler sunan disiplinlerin tekelinden çıkarmış ve sosyal bilimler ve edebiyat gibi alanların insan deneyimleri, güç ilişkileri ve kimlik konularının tartışması için disiplinler arası yeni bağlamlar ortaya çıkarmıştır. Uzam çalışmalarının yükselişiyle birlikte, zaman kavramının edebi analizlerdeki baskın yeri de sorgulanmaya başlamıştır. Uzam kavramının tam olarak kapsayıcı bir tanımına erişmek işaret ettiği çok çeşitli anlamlardan dolayı oldukça güçtür. Bu sebeple uzam kavramını sadece fiziki ve coğrafi anlamda kullanmak yeterli olmazken, uzamın çok çeşitli yorumlamalara açık anlamları edebiyat, siyaset bilimi, felsefe ve sosyoloji gibi pek çok disiplini uzamın yorumlanması, yeniden kurgulanması ve uzlaştırılması noktasında harekete geçirmiştir.

Postkolonyal edebiyat için ise uzamın postkolonyal deneyimin ayrılmaz bir ögesi olduğu ileri sürülebilir. Bu bağlamda Edward Said'in *Oryantalizm* (1978) ve *Kültür ve Emperyalizm* (1994) kitapları coğrafya, edebiyat ve anlatsal uzam arasındaki karşılıklı ilişkiyi incelemesi bakımından öncü niteliğindedir. Bu yapıtlarda emperyalist uzamsal davranışın kolonileştirilen ulusların uzamları üzerindeki yansımaları ve Batı-merkezli anlatsal uzamların kolonicilik ve emperyalizme nasıl hizmet ettiğine işaret edilir. Said'in işaret ettiği doğrultu, postkolonyal edebiyatı kolonyal ve postkolonyal deneyimleri uzamsal açıdan daha geniş ve çok yönlü incelemek noktasında harekete geçirmiştir. Güncel bir yapıt olan Sara Upstone'un *Postkolonyal Romanda Uzamsal Politikalar* kitabı ulusal uzamın kolonyal kullanımına ve postkolonyal uzamların olanak ve direniş alanları olabilme kapasitelerine vurgu yapar. Upstone göre postkolonyal uzamların analizi vasıtasıyla kolonileştirmişlerin bastırılmış sesi tekrar duyulabilir, çoğulcu sesler ve deneyimler vurgulanabilir ve yeni pozitif kimlikler deneyimlenebilir. Ulusal uzamlara bu yönde

bir yaklaşım kolonyal uzamsal düzen mitine sorgular ve daha üretken bir yeniden kurgulanışı işaret eder.

Kolonyal uzamsal düzeni sorgulamak aynı zamanda koloni öncesine dair uzamsal bir akışkanlığı ve pozitif anlamda uzamsal bir kaosu var olduğunu varsayar. Kolonyal davranış bu akışkanlığı ve kaosu düzenleyip homojenize eder ve böylece uzam üzerinden kendi hegemonyasını yansıtır. Upstone aynı zamanda postkolonyal dönemdeki ulusalcılığın da benzer bir refleksle değişmez ve özcü bir ulusal kimlik inşa etmek amacıyla postkolonyal uzamları düzenleyip homojenleştirme eğilimlerine işaret eder ve bu bağlamda kolonyal ve ulusalcı ideolojilerin uzamsal davranışlarındaki hegemonik benzerliği eleştirir. Uzamın neo-emperyalist bağlamda ele alınışı ise bu tartışmayı çok farklı bir noktaya getirir. Postkolonyal uzamlar hem kolonyal hem de neo-emperyalist uzamsal politikaların etkisi altındadır ve postkolonyal yazarların neo-emperyalist coğrafyaları ele alıp yeniden kurgulaması bu nedenle çok daha zorlayıcı ve iddialı bir girişimdir. Aynı zamanda uzam-sonrası yaklaşımda kaos koloni öncesi uzamsallığa erişmek için olumlu bir araçken, neo-emperyalist bağlamda üçüncü dünya uzamlarının manipülasyonu çoğu zaman kaos vasıtasıyla olur. Bu sebeple politik ve ulusal sınırların kalkması aslında çoğu zaman neo-emperyalist çıkarlara hizmet eder.

Koloni öncesi uzamların doğası gereği çeşitliliği ve çoğulculuğu barındırdığını farz eden böylesi bir uzamsal anlayış, postkolonyal uzamların kendi içinde değişim ve dönüşüm gücünü barındırdığını ve gerçeğin bu yolla farklı yorumlanıp deneyimlenebileceğine hükmeder. Bu yaklaşım aynı zamanda ulusal uzamın resmi sınırlarla bölünüp düzenlenmesi ve ulusun politik bir kurgu olması gerçeklerine eleştirel yaklaşıp. Ulus miti bireyler arasında kurgulanmış bir zamansal ve uzamsal eş zamanlılığı dayatır. Bu da ulusal uzamın totalize edilmesi ve homojen hale getirilmesi demektir ki bu uzam-sonrası yaklaşımın savunduğu çoğulcu ve çok-türlü uzamsal deneyime aykırıdır, ve esasında ulusal uzamın hakimiyetine yönelik bir kurguya işaret eder. Bu noktada postkolonyal anlatılar hem kolonyal

hem de ulusalcı uzamsal politikalara meydan okumak adına ulusal uzamın nasıl daha özgürlükçü ve çoktürlü kurgulanabileceği konusunu sorunsallaştırır.

Bu tezin giriş bölümünde *Viran Ülkenin Bekçisi* ve *Kör Adamın Bahçesi* romanları aynı zamanda güncel postkolonyal edebiyatın örnekleri olarak da irdelenir. Nadeem Aslam Pakistan göçmen bir aileden gelen İngiliz bir yazardır. Diaspora deneyimlerini aktardığı ilk yapıtlarının aksine, bu iki romanında Aslam birincil deneyim sahibi olduğu İngiliz imparatorluğunun etkilediği coğrafyalar yerine Amerikan neo-emperyalizminin etkilediği coğrafyaları ele almıştır. Göçmen bir yazar olan Aslam'ın Amerikan emperyalizmi, İslami köktencilik ve global terör gibi daha geniş ölçekli konuları ve küresel sorunları işleme Upstone'a göre Asya asıllı İngiliz yazarlar arasında giderek yaygınlaşan 'Asyalı İngiliz özgüvenine' bir örnektir. Aslam Pakistan ile olan kültürel bağları, kullandığı dildeki Urduca etkileri, Pakistan'ın postkolonyal durumunu ve Pakistanlı diasporanın deneyimlerini sıkça ele alması bakımından Asya kökenli bir yazar hassasiyeti gösterse de yapıtlarındaki entelektüel ve seküler duruşu ve İngilizceyi oldukça etkili kullanması yönüyle batılı bir yazar izlenimi de uyandırmaktadır. Bu ikili konumlanma Aslam'ın eserlerini zenginleştirip farklı bakış açıları sunmasına olanak sağlamıştır. Bu bağlamda Aslam ve yapıtları, postkolonyal edebiyatın konu ve uzam olarak gün geçtikçe genişleyen ve zenginleşen kapsamını işaret eder.

Viran Ülkenin Bekçisi ve *Kör Adamın Bahçesi* romanları güncel postkolonyal yapıtlar olmasının yanı sıra 11 Eylül sonrası ortaya çıkan 'terör edebiyatı' alt-türü olması açısından da önemi bir yere sahiptir. 'Terör edebiyatı'nın ilk örnekleri 11 Eylül'ün Anglo-Amerikan dünyasında nasıl deneyimlendiğini, kurbanların ve geride kalanların travmalarını ve 11 Eylül öncesi dünyayı idealize etmesiyle bilirse de bu alt-türün çok çeşitli yazarlar tarafından kaleme alınmış güncel örnekleri 11 Eylül olgusunu daha kapsamlı ve çok boyutlu yorumlamanın yollarını aramaktadır. Bu yapıtlar Amerika'nın 11 Eylül sonrası terörizmle savaşını Amerikan-merkezli çerçevesinden çıkartıp bu olgunun çok yönlü ve çok uluslu travmasını ön plana çıkarmayı hedeflemektedir. Özellikle 11 Eylül sonrası

söylemlerin pekiştirdiği katı kimlik kategorilerini ve indirgeyici ‘biz ve onlar’ ikiliğini hedef alan bu yapıtlar 11 Eylül ve sonrası gerçekliğini Anglo-Amerikan ana akım medya tasvirlerinin etkisinden kurtarıp daha geniş kapsamlı bir çerçevede sunmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, *Viran Ülkenin Bekçisi* ve *Kör Adamın Bahçesi* romanları 11 Eylül sonrası pekişen Afganistan ve Pakistan’ın olumsuz uzamsal temsillerini yeniden düşünmeye davet eder. Bu romanlar, bir yandan Afganistan ve Pakistan’ın İslami köktencilik, politik ve toplumsal iktidarsızlık ve cinsiyet eşitsizlikleri gibi daha birçok sorununu asla hafife almazken bir yandan da bu ulusların çeşitli sosyal ve kültürel elementlerden oluşan çok sesli ve heterojen uzamlarını vurgulayarak Afganistan ve Pakistan’ı İslami-köktenci unsurlarına indirgemeye çalışan anlayışı açığa vurur ve karşı temsilleriyle meydan okur.

Nadeem Aslam birçok yönüyle kendi kendine başarıya ulaşmış bir postkolonyal yazardır. Bir göçmen olarak geldiği İngiltere’de zayıf İngilizcesi onu başta biyokimya eğitimi almaya itmiş olsa da, asıl ilgi alanları olan sosyal bilimler ve edebiyattan vazgeçmemiş ve bu uğurda İngilizcesini ve yazma becerilerini geliştirmek için kendi kendini eğitmiştir. İngiliz dilini titiz ve güçlü kullanımı Urdu dili ve edebiyatına getirdiği özgün yorumla birleşince ödül kazanan yapıtlarını ortaya çıkarmıştır. Birçok erken dönem postkolonyal yazarın aksine, Aslam ayrıcalıklı bir geçmişten gelmemektedir ve yapıtları kozmopolit olmak adına apolitik olmamıştır. Tam tersine, Aslamın yapıtları sosyo-politik meselelere ciddi bir farkındalık göstermektedir. Özellikle konu seçimi ve yapıtlarının içeriği Aslam için büyük önem arz etmektedir. Yazar kurgusallığın gücünü ustaca kullanarak global ölçekte sosyal ve politik konjonktüre dair çoğulcu anlayışlar sunmayı amaçlarken yapıtlarının edebiliğinden ödün vermemesine özen gösterir. Aslam edebi tarzı açısından da kendini özgün bir noktada konumlandırmaktadır. *Kaybolan Sevgililere Yollar* gibi ilk yapıtlarında biçimsel tarz olarak ‘büyülü gerçeklik’ ön plandadır, fakat *Viran Ülkenin Bekçisi* ve *Kör Adamın Bahçesi* romanları son derece gerçekçi ve mimetik bir tarzda kaleme alınmıştır. Ölüm, işkence ve şiddet gibi vahim konular ve daha fazlası Aslam’ın gerçekçi anlatısında büyümlü gerçekliğe gerek duymaksızın çarpıcı bir şekilde tasvir edilmiştir. Bunun yanı sıra, modernist

yazarları anımsatır nitelikte bilinç akışı tekniği yazar tarafından yaygın bir şekilde kullanılarak karakterlerin derinliği pekiştirilmiştir. Urdu dili ve edebiyatının Aslam üzerindeki bir etkisi olarak, her iki roman da imgelemeler ve şiirsellik bakımından oldukça zengindir.

Tezin 2. Bölümü *Viran Ülkenin Bekçisi* romanının postkolonyel uzam çerçevesinde metin çözümlemesini içerir. Roman Afganistan'ın Sovyet işgalinden Amerika'nın 11 Eylül sonrası terörizmle savaşına kadar uzanan 30 yıllık dönemini konu alır. Her ne kadar romanda anlatılan olaylar ağırlıklı olarak Afganistan'da geçse de Pakistan, Afganistan ile olan ayrılmaz tarihi, kültürel ve politik bağlarından dolayı hikâyede yerini alır. Roman temelde hikayeleri birbiri ile kesişen bir grup insanı anlatır. Marcus Cadwell sevdiği Afgan Kadın Qatrina için din değiştirip Müslüman olan ve neredeyse tüm yetişkinlik hayatı boyunca Afganistan'da yaşamış olan İngiliz bir doktordur. Rus bir kadın olan Lara Afganistan'da kardeşinin izini sürmektedir. David Town Afganistan'da görevlendirilmiş eski bir CIA ajanıdır. Casa ise kendini gizleyen bir Taliban militanıdır. Marcus'un evi bu karakterlerin kesişme noktası olur. Sovyet işgali, Taliban hegemonyası ya da 11 Eylül sonrası Amerikan işgali, bu karakterleri farklı şekillerde mağdur eder; Marcus Sovyet işgali sırasında kaçırılan kızı Zameen'i, Taliban yönetimi esnasında ise kendisi gibi doktor olan eşi Qatrina'yı kaybeder. Sonradan kızı Zameen'in Bihzad adında bir oğlu olduğunu öğrenir fakat kaybolan Bihzad'ı bulma çabaları da sonuçsuz kalır. Lara, Sovyet işgali sırasında Afganistan'da asker olan ve kayıplara karışan kardeşi Benedikt'in acısını yaşamaktadır. David şans eseri Zameen ile tanışır ve ona âşık olur, fakat Zameen'in öldürülmesi ve Zameen'den kalan tek yadigar Bihzad'ın kaybolması David'i derinden sarsar. Köktenci militanlar tarafından manipüle edilen Casa ise aslında Zameen'in kaybolan oğludur, fakat bu gerçekten habersiz, o da bir aileden, köklerinden ve aidiyet duygusundan yoksundur. Bu karakterlerin hayatları Marcus'un evinde kesişir ve birbirleriyle olan ilişkileri hem kendi geçmişlerini hem de Afganistan'ın geçmişini gözler önüne serer.

Viran Ülkenin Bekçisi Afganistan ve Pakistan'ın uzamsal gerçekliklerini Sovyet işgali, İslami köktencilik ve Amerikan neo-emperyalizmi ve terörizmle savaşı çerçevesinde çizer. Komünist ideolojinin Afganistan'ın ihtiyaçlarına gerçekçi olarak cevap veremediği iması ile birlikte Sovyet işgalinin uzamsal yansımaları karakteristik olarak vahşet tasvirleri üzerinden aktarılır. Bu tasvirler vahşetin kaynağı ve doğrultusu bakımından çok yönlüdür; Afganistan'daki Sovyet güçlerinin ulusal uzamda azami hakimiyetini temin etmek amacı ile her türlü uzamsal öğeyi istismar etmesi eleştirel bir dille aktarılır. Bunun bir uzantısı olarak vahşet olarak nitelendirilebilecek pek çok uygulamanın Sovyetlerce meşrulaştırılması ve bunun sivil halk üzerindeki travmatik sonuçları çarpıcı bir şekilde tasvir edilir. Öte yandan, romanın kurguladığı Afganistan'ın ulusal uzamı Sovyet düşmanlığı ile karakterize olmuştur. Yerel halkın ve Afgan gerillaların yakaladıkları Sovyet askerlerini maruz bıraktıkları vahşi muameleler, vahşetin tek bir grup ya da millete indirgenemeyeceği mesajını taşır. Bu anlamda yazar sadece tek bir grubu ya da ideolojiyi işaret etmeksizin, dengeli bir temsille vahşetin ulusal uzamın çok rastlanan bir gerçeği olduğu fikrini ima eder. İslami köktencilik de aynı Sovyet varlığı gibi Afganistan'ın ulusal uzamında fazlasıyla etkilidir. Aslam Sovyetlerin yenilgisiyle ortaya çıkan otorite boşluğunu dolduran Taliban'ın ulusal uzam üzerinde oluşturduğu baskı, şiddet, korku ve hegemonyayı şiddetle eleştirir. Bunu mümkün kılan bağnaz din anlayışı ve dini duygunun ideolojik bir araç olarak manipülasyonu yazarın eleştirilerinin odağındadır. Nasıl Sovyetlerin uzamsal etkisi vahşet ile ilişkilendirilebiliyorsa, Taliban da 'korku' ve 'baskı' üzerinden ulusal uzamda hakimiyet sağlar. Özellikle, romandaki ceza mekanizmasının uzamsal olarak görünür olması Taliban'ın hegemonik gücünü pekiştirmeye yöneliktir. Amerikan emperyalizmi ve terörle mücadele savaşı ise yazarın Amerika'nın kendisine biçtiği 'uluslararası polis' rolünü ve bu doğrultudaki uzamsal manipülasyonlarını eleştirmesi bağlamında ele alınır. Bu rol bir bakıma kolonyal söylemin 'beyaz adamın yükü' düşüncesini yineler çünkü Amerika'nın askeri müdahalelerine terörizmi sonlandırmak ve demokrasi götürmek gibi insancıl hedefler atfederek ulusal uzamlardaki neo-emperyalist gündemlerini perdelemesi

ineden inceye eleştirilir. Roman Afganistan'ın ulusal uzamını şekillendiren Amerikan neo-emperyalizmini yerel figürlerle olan gizli iş birliği ve çıkardığı örtülü kaosu üzerinden sorunsallaştırır. Sovyet etkisi, İslami-köktencilik ya da Amerikan neo-emperyalizmi-, her üçünün de ulusal uzamla olan problemlili ilişkisi aslında ulus kavramının nasıl yetersiz bir kurgu olduğuna ve bu kurgunun kolaylıkla manipülasyonlara açık nitelikte olduğuna işaret eder.

Viran Ülkenin Bekçisi romanının uzamsal gerçeklikleri ana hatlarıyla tasvir edildikten sonra, ulus algısını yeniden kurgulamak adına uzam-sonrası (post-space) tasvirleri ele alınır. Bu tasvirler temelde politik anlamda tanımlanan ulusal uzamların şaibeli ve yetersiz olacağı bu yüzden de daha kapsayıcı, postkolonyal deneyimleri farklı okuma imkânı sağlayan ve çok-türlü bir yeniden tanımlamaya gidilmesi ihtiyacını işaret eder. Öncelikle romandaki *ulusal-uzamdan-küçük* alanların önemine ve işlevine dikkat çekilir. Bu doğrultuda küçük ölçekli fiziksel uzamlar olan Marcus'un evi ve Zameen'in Peşaver'daki apartman dairesi irdelenir. Küçük alanlar, ulusal uzamı etkisi altına alan ideolojilerin ve güç yapılarının kolaylıkla nüfuz edemediği, bu sebeple de direnişin ve güçlenmenin mümkün olabildiği yerler olarak ön plana çıkar. Marcus'un evi bu nedenle karakterlerin neredeyse sığındığı ve özgürleştiği küçük ölçekli bir uzamdır. Farklı geçmişlerden ve uluslardan gelen karakterler burada kendileri gibi olabilmektedir; baskılanmış ve sınırlandırılmış kamusal uzamların aksine, burada karakterlerin bireyselliği ve özgünlüğü ön plandadır. Ulusal ve ideolojik sınırların kalktığı bu evde farklı fikirlere ve bakış açılara hoşgörü ile yaklaşılır. Bu küçük ölçekli uzamın temsil ettiği çoğulculuk ve hoşgörü, esasında Afganistan'ın ulusal uzamının yeniden kurgulanmasında bir model teşkil eder. Zameen'in apartmanı ise özellikle kadınların ulusal uzamla olan sıkıntılı ilişkisi bakımından umut vadeder. Zameen, Afganistan'dan kaçıp Pakistan'daki mülteci kamplarına sığındıktan sonra aslında bu kampların da son derece baskıcı ve kısıtlayıcı uzamlar olduğunu anlar. Mülteci kadınlara nakış işi yapma imkânı sunan bir yardım kuruluşunun yönlendirmesiyle bir apartman dairesine taşınır ve burası diğer pek çok kadının da nakış işleri yaparak ekonomik güç kazanmasına olanak sağlar. Bu bağlamda Zameen'in apartman

dairesi kadınlar için ataerkil normlar üzerine kurulmuş ve onları birçok yönden mağdur eden ulusal uzama bir alternatif teşkil eder. Fiziksel uzamların yanı sıra küçük ölçekli kavramsal uzamlar da ulusal uzamı yeniden yapılandırabilme kapasiteleri bakımından ele alınır. *Küçük-anlatılar* bireysel ve özgün uzamsal deneyimleri vurgularlar. Ulusal uzamı etkisi altına alan ideolojiler ve güç ilişkileri en çok da bireyleri mağdur etmektedir. Roman bu perspektiften ulusal uzamın bireylerin deneyimleri esas alınarak yeniden kurgulanabileceği düşüncesini barındırır. Bu bölümde Marcus, David ve Dünya'nın küçük-anlatıları ulusal uzamları nasıl anlamlandırdıkları ve ulusal uzamı yeniden yapılandırmadaki işlevleri bakımından incelenir. Bu doğrultuda tartışılan bir diğer küçük-ölçek ise Afganistan'ın *ihmal edilmiş kültürel ve doğal uzamlarıdır*. Özellikle 11 Eylül sonrası Anglo-Amerikan ana akım medyası Afganistan ve Pakistan'ın tek yönlü, ulusu radikal dinamiklerine indirgeyen olumsuz temsillerini ön plana çıkarmıştır. *Viran Ülkenin Bekçisi* ile bu olumsuz tasvirlerle Afganistan'ın sahip olduğu zenginlikleri ve güzellikleri de kapsayan alternatif bir temsille cevap verir. Bir yandan vahşet ve şiddet ulusal uzamın inkâr edilemez gerçeklikleri olarak anlatılırken, bir yandan da bu kasvetli ve karanlık resim doğal güzelliklerin ve kültürel zenginliklerin şiirsel bir dille ön plana çıkarıldığı bir karşı-temsil ile dengelenir. Tüm anlatı boyunca serpiştirilmiş bu detaylar ulusal uzamın aslında nasıl çeşitli elementleri bünyesinde barındırdığına fakat bu yönüyle temsil edilmediğine işaret eder. Bu da esasında ulusal uzam algısının daha geniş, kapsayıcı ve çok yönlü olarak yeniden kurgulanması ihtiyacının altını çizer.

Tezin 3. Bölümü ise *Kör Adamın Bahçesi* romanını yine aynı doğrultuda fakat bu sefer Pakistan'ın uzamsallığını merkezine alarak inceler. Afganistan ve Pakistan'ın kültürel, coğrafi ve politik bağları bu romanda da vurgulanır ve Pakistan tasvirlerinin yanı sıra Afganistan'ın uzamsal realiteleri ele alınır. Roman Afganistan sınırına yakın bir kasaba olan Heer'de başlamaktadır. Anlatının odağında Rohan'ın ailesi ve karısı Sophia ile birlikte kurdukları 'Çoşkulu Ruh' okulunun eski binası vardır. Kitabın adında geçen kör adam olan Rohan, görme yetisini giderek kaybeden dindar bir Müslümandır. Karısı ile birlikte İslami bir

Rönesans hayali ile kurdukları okul bir süre sonra köktencilerin kontrolüne geçer ve Rohan da okul yönetiminden uzaklaşıp okulun eski binasında yaşamına devam eder. Rohan'ın karısı Sophia ileri görüşlü, açık fikirli ve entelektüel bir karakterdir. Dindar bir Müslüman olan Rohan için Sophia'nın dinsiz olarak ölmesi büyük üzüntü kaynağıdır. Rohan'ın oğlu Jeo bir tıp öğrencisidir ve Naheed ile kısa bir süre önce evlenmiştir. Rohan'ın ayrıca kendi çocuklarından ayırmadığı Basie ve Mikal adında iki üvey evladı vardır. Heer'deki Hristiyan okulunda öğretmen olan Basie, Rohan'ın kızı Yasmin ile evlidir ve o da aynı okulda öğretmendir. Mikal ise kitabın baş karakteri olup 11 Eylül sonrası konjonktürün mağdur ettiği orta-direk bir Pakistanlıyı çağırıştırır. Pratik zekâsı ve sarsılmaz etik duruşuyla öne çıkan Mikal canından çok sevdiği Jeo'nun eşi olan Naheed e karşı umutsuz bir aşk beslemektedir. Romanın anlatısı Jeo'nun sınırı geçip Afganistan'daki yaralılara yardım etme kararı ile ivme kazanır. Bunu öğrenen Mikal Jeo'yu yalnız bırakmaz ve insancıl niyetlerle birlikte Afganistan'a giderler. Fakat Afganistan'a adım atar atmaz kendilerini bir çatışmanın ortasında bulurlar. Bunun sonucunda Jeo ölür, Mikal ise Afganistan'daki otorite boşluğunda tekrardan güçlenen mahalli diktatörlere esir düşer. Mikal Afganistan'da hayatta kalma mücadelesi verirken, Heer'de Rohan ve ailesi de postkolonyal Pakistan'ın türlü sıkıntıları içinde hayatlarını devam ettirmeye çalışmaktadır. Roman Pakistanlı sıradan bir ailenin gözlerinden çatışan ideolojilerin, aç gözlülüğün ve şiddetin kol gezdiği bir ulusal uzamı tasvir eder. Özellikle Pakistan'ın 11 Eylül sonrası konumlanması ve çözümlenmeyi bekleyen postkolonyal meseleleri irdelenir.

Aynı *Viran Ülkenin Bekçisi* gibi *Kör Adamın Bahçesi* romanı da Afganistan'daki neo-empyralist Amerikan varlığını sorunsallaştırır. Keyfi güç uygulamaları ve ulusal uzam üzerindeki azami güç oluşturma çabaları eleştirel bir hassasiyetle tasvir edilir. Amerikan askeri güçleri 11 Eylül sonrası Afganistan'ın uzamsal bütünlüğünü yürüttükleri terörist avıyla ve yerel unsurları manipüle ederek oluşturdukları kaos ortamıyla ihlal ederler. Taliban ise bir önceki romanın aksine Amerikan askeri müdahalelerinin sonucunda gücünü giderek kaybeden bir varlık olarak temsil edilmektedir. Bu nedenle de ulusal uzam üzerindeki tesirini yeniden

temin etmek için baskı ve şiddetin dozunu arttırmaktadır. Öte yandan romana göre uzun yıllar Taliban zulmü altında yaşamış yerel halk Taliban'a karşı ayaklanmakta ve Amerikan güçleriyle iş birliği içine girmektedirler. Taliban'ın bu gibi eğilimleri şiddetle ve açıktan cezalandırışı romanın şiddet tasvirlerinin önemli bir yer teşkil etmektedir. Böylesi bir otorite boşluğu ve kaos neticesinde mahalli diktatörlerin ortaya çıkması ve bu diktatörlerin keyfi güç uygulamaları sonucu Afganistan'ın ulusal uzamının daha da olumsuz şekillendiği gerçeği işlenmiştir. Romanın Pakistan'a dair uzamsal tasvirleri ise temel olarak Pakistan'ın postkolonyal meselelerini yansıtır. Resmî kurumlardaki yozlaşma, kadınların ataerkil toplum düzeninde ezilmeleri ve 11 Eylül sonrası dini duygunun sömürülmesiyle pekiştirilen yabancı düşmanlığı yazarın Pakistan'ın postkolonyal durumuna dair memnuniyetsizliğini ifade ettiği çerçeveyi oluşturur. Özellikle yabancı düşmanlığı ve bunun getirdiği şiddet eylemleri romanın başlıca eleştiri alanlarından biridir. Pakistan'ın kutuplaşmış ulusal uzamında yabancı düşmanlığı köktencilerin medrese oluşumlarıyla daha da körüklenmektedir. Bu okulların yabancı düşmanlığını canlı tutmak ve Afganistan'daki 'cihad' a lojistik destek sağlamak için propagandayı yaygın bir araç olarak kullanması yazar tarafından ustaca eleştirilmektedir. Böylesi şekillendirilmiş bir ulusal uzamda elbette nefret eylemlerinin gerçekleşmesi sürpriz değildir.

Kör Adamın Bahçesi'nin ulusal uzama dair sadece karanlık ve umutsuz bir portre çizmez. Aynı *Viran Ülkenin Bekçisi* romanı gibi uzam sonrası temsiller ulusal uzamın yeniden yapılandırılması ve çerçevelenmesi noktasında umut vadeder. Bu doğrultuda Rohan'ın *bahçesi* ve *okullar ulusal-uzamdan-küçük* olup değişim ve dönüşüm gücünü içinde barındıran fiziksel alanlar olarak ele alınabilir. Rohan'ın bahçesi içinde barındırdığı çeşitlilikle adeta tekelleştirip homojenize edilen ulusal uzama alternatif olmaktadır. Tüm anlatı boyunca serpiştirilmiş çok çeşitli bitki ve hayvan detayları ve bunların birbiriyle uyum ve ahengi ulusal uzamın daha çoğulcu ve hoşgörülü bir şekilde yeniden kurgulanması için model teşkil etmektedir. Diğer taraftan, okulların ulusal uzam üzerindeki etkisi hem olumlu hem de olumsuz örnekleriyle irdelenmiş, medrese oluşumlarının ulusal uzam üzerindeki

yıkıcı etkisi gözler önüne serilmiş, din temelli müfredata sahip okulların ulusal uzamı pozitif şekillendirmekte başarısız olduğu ima edilmiş ve bu sebeple romanın zımni yazarı daha liberal, özgürlükçü ve dışa dönük bir alternatif olan Heer'in Hristiyan okulundan yana tavır takınmıştır. Bunun yanı sıra, *Küçük-anlatılar* ve bunların ulusal uzamı alternatif şekilde deneyimleme noktasındaki önemi bu romanda da tartışılabilir. Bu yolla ulusal uzam ve insan deneyimi arasındaki karşılıklı etkileşimi irdelemek, ulusal uzama dair çoğulcu yorumları mümkün kılar. Rohan'ın küçük anlatısı din algısının uzamsal yansımaları hakkında bize fikir verirken, dini duygunun ulusal uzamı yeniden şekillendirmek noktasında nerede konumlandırması gerektiği sorunsalını işaret eder. Naheed'in *küçük-anlatısı* ise kadınların ulusal uzam içerisindeki konumlarına dair güçlü bir eleştiri barındırır. Pakistan'ın ataerkil toplumunda genç yaşta dul kalan bir kadın olan Naheed, kendi kendine yetebilme becerilerini geliştirerek ve ataerkil dayatmalara boyun eğmeyerek ulusal uzamın yeniden çerçevelendirilmesi açısından neredeyse bir prototip teşkil etmektedir. Son olarak, Mikal ile özdeşleştirilebilecek *seyahat* motifi, diğer uzamsal alternatiflerden farklı olarak *ulusal-uzamdan-büyük* bir ölçeği işaret eder ve bu ölçek ulusal uzamı kısıtlayan yapay sınırların ortadan kalkıp neredeyse tam bir uzamsal özgürlüğe erişilebileceğini gösterir. Özellikle Pakistan ve Afganistan arasındaki güçlü bağlar düşünüldüğünde, sınırlara karşı koyan bir uzamsal anlayış pek çok farklı bakış açısını mümkün kılar. Mikal'in seyahati bu iki coğrafya üzerindeki uzamsal manipülasyonları tüm çıplaklığıyla sergilemesi bakımından önem arz etmektedir. Bu seyahat esnasında suçsuz olmasına rağmen hem Afgan mahalli diktatörler hem de Amerikan güçleri tarafından tutsak edilmesi Aslam'ın kolonyal kölelik modelini neo-emperyalist bağlamda yeniden kurguladığını gösterir. Aslam'a göre Mikal'in Amerikan cezaevlerinde gördüğü kötü muamele ve işkence de aslında kolonyal şiddetin neo-emperyalist versiyonudur. Mikal yerel halktan olup hiçbir radikal bağı olmayan sıradan bir Pakistanlıyken, birdenbire 11 Eylül sonrası özcü stereotiplerinin ve kimlik kategorilerinin kurbanı olup terörist olarak etiketlenir, fakat herşeye rağmen kendine özgü etik duruşundan taviz vermez. Mikal'in özgün etik anlayışı ulusal

uzamın basmakalıp temsillerine aslında bu yolla karşı koyulabileceğini ima eder. Tüm anlatının Mikal etrafında dönmesi, ulusal uzamı Mikal'in zorunlu seyahatleri üzerinden yeniden tanımlanması, onun güçlü ve sarsılmaz karakteri ve etik anlayışı bir bakıma terörist stereotipinin altını aşındırmakta ve bizi Anglo-Amerikan ana akım medyasındaki basmakalıp temsilleri bir daha düşünmeye davet etmektedir.

Sonuç olarak bu çalışma öncelikle Nadeem Aslam'ın güncel postkolonyal edebiyat içerisindeki özgün yerine işaret ederken aynı zamanda Aslam'ın İslami köktencilik, global terörizm ve Amerikan emperyalizmi gibi büyük ölçekli konulara olan ilgisi postkolonyal edebiyatın 21. yy yönelimleri konusunda da fikir verir. Postkolonyal göçmen bir yazar olarak Aslam ve bu konuları işlediği yapıtları henüz akademik olarak geniş kapsamlı bir şekilde incelenmemiştir. Bu da bize yukarıda bahsi geçen global ölçekli konulara dair daha pek çok edebi çalışmanın yapılabileceğini ve bu çalışmaların sunacağı farklı perspektif ve kavrayışların olabileceğini işaret ederken, postkolonyal edebiyatı daha geniş coğrafyaları da ele alacak şekilde yeniden ele almanın gerekliliğini de ima etmektedir. *Kör Adamın Bahçesi* ve *Viran Ülkenin Bekçisi* romanları ise 11 Eylül sonrası ortaya çıkan terör edebiyatının iki önemli güncel örneği olmasının yanı sıra bu yapıtların içerdikleri alternatif bakış açıları ve çoğulcu deneyimler ile 11 Eylül sonrası gelişen ayrılıkçı ve kutuplaştırıcı söylemlere karşı koyduğu da görülmektedir. Sonuç itibarıyla, uzamsal çalışmalar ile edebiyatın kesişme noktasını esas alan bu çalışmaya göre ulusal uzamların indirgeyici ve yanıltıcı temsillerine karşı konması ve bu uzamların yeniden tanımlanmasında, edebiyatın postkolonyal uzamların değişim ve dönüşüm potansiyellerini irdelemesi büyük önem taşımaktadır.

TEZ İZİN FORMU / THESIS PERMISSION FORM

ENSTİTÜ / INSTITUTE

- Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü / Graduate School of Natural and Applied Sciences
- Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü / Graduate School of Social Sciences
- Uygulamalı Matematik Enstitüsü / Graduate School of Applied Mathematics
- Enformatik Enstitüsü / Graduate School of Informatics
- Deniz Bilimleri Enstitüsü / Graduate School of Marine Sciences

YAZARIN / AUTHOR

Soyadı / Surname :

Adı / Name :

Bölümü / Department :

TEZİN ADI / TITLE OF THE THESIS (İngilizce / English) :

.....

.....

.....

TEZİN TÜRÜ / DEGREE: Yüksek Lisans / Master Doktora / PhD

1. Tezin tamamı dünya çapında erişime açılacaktır. / Release the entire work immediately for access worldwide.
2. Tez iki yıl süreyle erişime kapalı olacaktır. / Secure the entire work for patent and/or proprietary purposes for a period of two year. *
3. Tez altı ay süreyle erişime kapalı olacaktır. / Secure the entire work for period of six months. *

* Enstitü Yönetim Kurulu Kararının basılı kopyası teze birlikte kütüphaneye teslim edilecektir.
A copy of the Decision of the Institute Administrative Committee will be delivered to the library together with the printed thesis.

Yazarın imzası / Signature

Tarih / Date