

Marketing Otherness: A Re-Orientalist gaze into Pakistani fiction with focus on *Trespassing* and *Typhoon*

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ABSTRACT: *This paper, drawing upon the works of Graham Huggans' The Postcolonial Exotic and Lisa Lau's Re-Orientalism: The Perpetration and Development of Orientalism by Oriental, explores the working of reduced, essentialized and skewed representation in the fictional work of Uzma Aslam Khan Trespassing and Typhoon by Qaisera Shahraz. Both Huggans and Lau have contested against the aggressive promotion of many Oriental writers by Occidental marketing pundits. Both of them are of the opinion that the works that gain recognition in international market and which have a high scope of winning prizes of international acclaim are invariably those which appease the Western thirst for the mysterious and elusive East. These fictional works are usually two pronged. They not only present such images which substantiate Western notion of East being unfathomable. But they cleverly juxtaposed these, with other, more vilifying tropes of East as necessarily backward, steeped in poverty, corruption, conservatism, a natural antithesis of the liberated West. These are some of the fixed images which are repeated with a consistency across the border. Pakistani English fiction writers are also charged with presentation of essentialized and monolithic picture of the country. The present paper, making use of interpretive and explorative analysis, seeks to investigate the workings of these exoticizing strategies in the selected texts of Uzma Aslam Khan Trespassing and Qaisera Shahraz Typhoon*

Keywords: Re-Orientalism, Exoticism, Stereotypical Representation, East as an elusive entity, Marketing of difference of East

In today's world, postcolonial literature has achieved another dynamic, which is quite contradictory to its previous role. It used to be a discourse of resistance, equipped with all the markers of its unique identity and history. However, somewhere in its struggle, probably, to impress upon its colonial masters the distinguished culture of the colonized, it has proven itself susceptible to the very powerful Western market which now is on the hunt to catch something different. This potent force is now deliberately promoting such literature which appeals to the voyeuristic demands of the western reader.

East, with its inherent elusiveness has always held a quaint kind of charm for West. For majority, the former is the natural antithesis of the latter. If West stands for everything positive; progress, development, enlightenment, rationality, then east denotes its opposite, a region marred by irrationality, backwardness, poverty and corruption. These are the fixed and essentialist images that West has about the East. In modern times, when it (West) no longer is in a position to speak on behalf of subalterns, it deliberately nurtures and promotes such Oriental writers who reinforce these perceptions. The idea of indigenous people, assuming power positions to give voice to their marginalities was highly appealing initially and had the world enthralled by its charm for quite some time. Then writers like Sara Suleri, Gayatri Spivak saw the self-contradictory nature of all resistant writings. Spivak pointed out this paradox of postcolonial literature when she criticized the intellectuals who must understand that their privilege is their loss. That is, as soon as one has gained the platform to speak for the oppressed, one does not represent them anymore (Spivak 1988). She termed this burden of representation as a kind of epistemic violence because it negates the heterogeneity of the dispossessed. There is necessarily an element of essentialism which raises a question mark against its veracity.

Huggans (1994), talks about the tendency of western literary market capitalizing on the "otherness" of marginalized people and cultures, subscribing thus to a kind of "intellectual tourism" (27). The literature which in modern times has the characteristic label of Oriental attached to it is particularly appealing for those who have a taste for a certain foreignness. They (the western readers) pursue something unique in the sense of being unfamiliar, something which reasserts their superiority over the backward East.

Lisa Lau and Anna Cristina Mendes, in their collaborated effort *Re-Orientalism and South Asian Identity Politics: The oriental Other within* (2011) notified a certain fixation of themes, in re-Orientalist writings, “a reductionist representation at the expense of holistic ones, and a deliberate process of self- othering” (Lau & Mendes13). Defining the term re- Orientalism they posit, “Re-Orientalism is based on how cultural producers with eastern affiliations come to terms with an orientalized East, whether by complying with perceived expectations of western readers, by playing (along) with them or by discarding them altogether (3).”

Lau and Huggans share the same ground against the aggressive promotion of South Asian origin authors to make a marketable commodity out of exoticizing the Orient. There seems to be an implicit understanding between the Western Market pundits and indigenous writers whereby the latter choose to focus on very selective representation of their culture.

Lau maintains that for the Orientals, their peripheral position might prove to be a covert vantage point where they deliberately maintain east as a separate identity. The attempt is to stand as intermediaries, as translator of one culture for the other. This position of being the interpreters suits them to perfection, since it gives their role heightened significance. Communication between east and west hinges on them. If there is to be any bridging of gaps between the two alienated cultures, it depends on their representation. But they cleverly manipulate this position in opening scant links of communication whereby the separateness remains intact, thus giving added justification to their roles.

This phenomenon of playing upon a different, unfamiliar culture for the sake of exoticization has developed simultaneously in both countries i.e. Pakistan and India. Both share a common history of colonization. Indian critics, like Meenakshi Mukherjee (1993) have expressed her ire at Indian writers’ obsession with depiction a real India on their pages. Discussing her reservations against this trend she notes:

[...] the complicating factor being that English is not just any language -- it was the language of our colonial rulers and continues even now to be the language of power and privilege. It is not a

language that permeates all social levels or is used in subaltern contexts. (168)

Mukerjee is quite candid in admitting the mediocrity of majority of Anglo-Indian writers. Failing to compete with the high standards set by writers like Rushdie and Rao, they desperately try to catch the inkling of quasi-Indianness in their works. The charge list against these writers runs quite long: “exaggeration, typecasting, stereotyping, exoticizing, pandering to western tastes, demands and expectations, selling out, having mercenary motives, playing to the gallery, to more sophisticated misrepresentations of totalizing, essentializing, subalternism, marginalizing, and most recently of all, re-Orientalizing. All these are in some form or other critical of English fiction in India for failing to represent faithfully and comprehensively, of being guilty of skewed, partial, and selective representation, or wilful misrepresentation altogether, and at worst, outright betrayal” (Lau 30).

The scenario is not much different from Pakistani literary scene. If Indian writers are excessively preoccupied with establishing their authenticity, the readership that they aim to impress is never the native Indians. It's the western reader who must be given a peep into Oriental culture through the reductionist lens of these native Orientalist. It is either exotic presentation of Orient or an engagement in subversive criticism of one's traditions; the ultimate motive is to please the colonial masters. And this is the same tale repeated across borders with scant variation.

Research Questions & Research Methodology

The present paper draws upon two works, that of Graham Huggans *The Postcolonial Exotic* (2001) and Lisa Lau's *Re-Orientalism: The Perpetration and development of Orientalism by Oriental* (2009). The object of its inquiry is to find out;

How far and to what extent Pakistani English fiction writers subscribe to western market?

How far Pakistani English fictional works are impacted by re-Orientalism which still celebrates the west as center?

Two fictional works, namely *Typhoon* by Qaisera Shahraz and *Trespassing* by Uzma Aslam Khan will be analysed using the exploratory and interpretive techniques of qualitative research paradigm. These two novels are almost written in the same period and the writers are both female. However, *Typhoon* is written against the backdrop of Pakistani village and *Trespassing* is an amalgam of city and country life. This gives them certain similar characteristics, though both take up different issues. What intrigues the writer about these novels is the repetition of certain themes, for example the emphasis on the backwardness of villages, the stereotypical presentation of women, the exotic and detailed portrayal of some of the customs and rites.

The interpretation of texts will be through reading of texts but external means such as interviews of the authors at different occasions can be cited as evidence of their intentions about their works. Their biographical histories and critical reviews on their works will also be drawn on.

Literature Review:

Since the topic is a study of re-Orientalist reading of selected Pakistani English fiction, this portion deals with the reviews of works in the field of re-Orientalism.

As the research paper is based upon the theory of re-Orientalism, it seems appropriate, at this point to familiarize the reader with its characteristics. Re-Orientalism is in many ways an extension of Orientalism. Re-Orientalism (Lau) mainly draws its inspiration from Orientalism theory. It focuses on the issue of representation as it is done by the Orientals themselves. With decentralization of power, the East was too keen to take upon itself the task of representation. But that representation has been criticized for its reductionist tendencies. In other words the decolonized Orient once again had started playing in the hands of its imperial masters. Aamir Mufti (2000) is right in concluding that the critique of colonial culture is double-sided, "If, on the one hand, it is meant to interrupt the manner in which something called *the West* narrates itself and its Others, it is also a warning against the possibility that Orientalist descriptions take hold within the very societies that they take as their objects" (100). The Orient is now perpetuated and represented by those who think they are "authentic" in their representation.

Lau has not been the only writer to voice her discontent with the portrayal of Orient on the pages of fiction. Many critics have given their insights about this new manifestation of orientalism in a perverted way. Anis Shivani (2006) observes the iterant recurrence of some themes in Indian English fiction written primarily for western market consumption. She writes of how this new form of Orientalism violates the integrity of literature, recycling and reinforcing the shallowest of stereotypes; may this be the empowering and subversive whether intentionally so or otherwise) response of 'orientals' who deliberately design material for easy even if non-nourishing consumption, as a response to being applauded and lionized not for the intrinsic value of their art, but out of postcolonial guilt? She calls it "exoticized Orientalism" wherein found a tedious elaboration of some of the cultural practices such as food, as if Indians spent the greater part of their lives pondering the taste and timing of their food intake" (2). On the other hand, foreign-sounding expressions are used in order to create a sense of a different culture. This myriad use of re-orientalism, neo-orientalism or popular orientalism share a more commonly used term for the same issue of reductionist representation which is called "exoticism." Graham Huggans (1994) in his work *Postcolonial Exotic* refers to the term exotic for those occidental publishers and readers who are obsessed with portrayal of foreign cultures. The difference is celebrated and the most sought after commodity for easy market consumption. (27) He asserts such "exotic" literary products have been cherished in late-twentieth century western multicultural contexts for their convenient 'levelling out of different histories, and [their] aestheticized celebration of diversity that disguises the lack of sociohistorical change' (117).

Such "exotic" literary products have been cherished in late-twentieth century western multicultural contexts for their convenient 'levelling out of different histories, and [their] aestheticized celebration of diversity that disguises the lack of sociohistorical change' (117). According to him postcolonial critics may, unconsciously, contribute to a "global commodification of cultural difference", and become part and parcel, unwittingly, of course of a "booming alterity industry" (344). Huggans special emphasis had been on the significance attached to Man Booker Prize, awarded to outstanding fiction since the end of the 1960s. He notes down the apparent dichotomy "between the Booker's postcolonial winner and the company's high colonial background in the Caribbean sugar trade" (xii).

Amit Ray in his paper on 'Indianness' and Contemporary Cosmopolitan Fictions: Of Bookers and 'Spice' and Everything Nice," sardonically observes the "disproportionate emphasis on India." He finds the "celebration of literary postcoloniality" rather ironic. He draws parallels between Booker Prize and Noble Prize awarded to Kipling and Tagore. "Both authors regularly trafficked in the characteristic cultural and geographical essentialisms of the time" (129). The pattern which he derived from it was "of first endorsing the exoticist representations of an Indian landscape as fictionalized by a "European" authorial perspective, then rewarding an ensuing Indian author's representation via the same Western cultural institution" (129). Man Booker Prize has continued the tradition by awarding prize to Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, the most celebrated of all Booker Prize winners. In 1993 *Midnight's Children* was awarded the 'Booker of Bookers,' as the most influential novel to receive the literary prize in the first twenty-five years of its existence (130). Rushdie should be given credit for cleverly playing with the expectations of his readers, "proffering snake charmers and stammering siddhus, characters and descriptions of exoticism that offer sly gibes at those who might simply consume his fiction for its 'otherness'" (Ray 132).

Huggans comments on the novels' fabulous success were, "The novel reveals to its Western readers their hunger to consume: it feeds their desire for entertainment; satiates their keen exoticist appetites; but it never fails to mock them for their complicitous enjoyment (Huggans 28).

In the case of Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of small things*, Ray is awestruck how "American culture—music, movies and cars—begins to punctuate the novel, offering ostensibly 'familiar' semiotic markers within a cadence of exoticism"(132). But he arrives at a conclusion different from his initial presumption. "I would like to think the novel is defamiliarizing the reader from their assumptions about that which they perceive to be their own—displaying that familiarity as 'elsewhere' and pointing out how, in turn, those very same markers of familiarity are themselves subject to similar exoticist manipulation"(132).

Timothy Brennan is critical of intentional maligning or softening image of Orient to gain foothold in western market. He is depreciative of such literature calling it "politico-exotico." These writers are afflicted with "nostalgia for democracy as a vision of pluralistic inclusion" (qtd. in Huggans 11-12). They might adopt such devices which would either,

give a demonized version of the native culture, or an exaggerated picture of its glories. The objective is clear, to gain recognition in the global market.

In a similar vein Meenakshi Mukharjee (2000) strongly criticizes this anxiety of Indianness with which the modern Indian English fiction is obsessed. The Indian English fiction writer of present day, according to Mukharjee, is only capable of presenting homogenized or essentialized perspective of India as a nation. Mukharjee compares the enterprise of Indian English writings to "one-string instrument", which even in the hands of a master like R.K.Narayan "cannot become a sitar or a veena". According to her, the much-hyped Malgudi of Narayan lacks local colour, and therefore it very easily lapses into "a metonymic relationship with India as whole"(170). Present day writer cannot bring out the polyphony of Indian character. In a heated exchange of words, between herself and Vikram Chandra, (qtd.in Chandra) she attacked his excessive use of foreign words like 'Artha,' 'Dharma 'to signal Indianness in the west. Vikram Chandra backlashed in his heated response famously known as *Cult of Authenticity* (2000) "I sputtered, I used these titles because of the energy inherent in them, in the electric charge between the abstraction and the concrete". According to him the use of these words is just a sign that the artist "delights in the mundane". His conclusion is, therefore, entirely different. Vehemently defending the authors' license to portray whatever they want to, he observes, "We're living through this precarious time when great changes are happening. "The India he grew up in felt like "a little bubble at a far distance from the rest of the world." But in the India his 7-year-old nephew has inherited, "the West as a presence is completely available every day -- and his expectations of his place in the world are very changed." He proudly advises all those writers who are similarly attacked: "Do what it takes to get the job done" (Chandra).

The debate between two groups, whether Anglo Indian writers are trapped in the myth to portray the real India, or is it just a reflection of the effects of a global culture which knows no boundaries, is also pertinent to Pakistani literary scene. The "Pakistani literature" which makes it to America or the UK speaks from one upper-middle class perspective to another. It has similar concerns about the world, Islam, and American foreign policy and speaks to a global ideology. The danger is the American middle-class finds in it a perfect representation of Pakistan. A number of writers from Pakistan give America and the UK

exactly what they want. For example, Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers* has every single stereotype about honor killing. It also serves as a foil between a safe world, America, and a dangerous world, Pakistan (Shingavi par.1).

Snehal Shingavi is not the only one to voice his discontent. Many renowned critics echoed his sentiments:

Mohsin Hamid's second book, "The Reluctant Fundamentalist", completely turned over this position. Although it was written before 9/11, it ended up becoming a template of sorts for a seemingly unending raft of Pakistani fiction that was tied into the US, Islam, Pakistan, and terrorism. Every subsequent novel seemed to have one or all of these signifiers in their title, and many of these were about the trauma of well-adjusted upper-class Pakistanis in the West facing the fallout of the attacks. (Naqvi)

In the light of above discussion, this study aims to analyse and interpret Pakistani English fiction for its essentialist and stereotypical representations. It is a rich and ambivalent mixture of reality and fiction but this kind of fiction is endorsed because it finds a ready market amidst foreign readers, primarily because of the apparent authenticity of these texts (the publishers making all out efforts to establish the writers as authentic spokespersons of the said culture). The writers prefer that the objective truth should be filtered through the subjective lens of personal attitudes.

A quick glance at the blurbs of some of these fictional works would let us have an idea how the western reader is trapped into reading a beguiling picture of Orient. For example the review on the back page of *Midnight's Children* runs, "at last a literary continent has found its voice,". Aijaz Ahmed (1987) in his famous essay *Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the National Allegory* states "The blurbs on the Vintage paperback edition of *Shame*-based partly on a quotation from the New York Times-compare him with Swift, Voltaire, Stern, Kafka, Grass, Kundera and Marquez" (5). A little later he quotes another example of Richard Poirier's praise for Edward Said in *Raritan Quarterly*, "It is Said's great accomplishment that thanks to his book, Palestinians will never be lost to history"(5). This remark is full of irony and as Aijaz Ahmed interpreted it is an "upside-down world of the camera obscura"

(5). The reverse of it is true, Palestine will not assume significance because of Said, but he will be remembered in history because of the country. The fact is that the retribution visited upon the head of an Asian, an African, an Arab intellectual who is of any consequence and who writes in English is that he/she is immediately elevated to the lonely splendour of a "representative of a race, a continent, a civilization, even the "third world." It is in this general context that a "cognitive theory of third-world literature" based upon what is currently available in languages of the metropolitan countries becomes, to my mind, an alarming undertaking" (5).

Nadeem Aslam's *The Wasted Vigil*, (2008) for example, is lavishly praised in the front page of the novel as the best novel available on the current situation in the Middle East. The jihadists, the warlords, the crusading Americans – all are given voice in calm, relentless, shatteringly beautiful prose that reveals the essential wrongness of the current conflict from every angle. There's no whitewash or caricature here, just authentic writing that delivers the world – and a range of extraordinary characters. *Library Journal* (starred review) *New York Times* critic Akash Kapur considers it to be 'infused with an anger that is occasionally overdone, yielding passages that read like an assault on the religion from which all the characters unhappiness seems to originate.' As such it contains echoes (though much milder in nature) of *Satanic Verses* which had an appeal in the west, because of its irreverent handling of Prophet and Islam. It reinforces stereotypes and thus to facilitate the transformation of what Malak terms the 'literary product' into a hot-property commercial 'item' attractive to 'anti-Muslim consumers'(110). In the next section, text analysis of the primary texts is made, in order to perceive the working of re-orientalism in these two.

Analysis of the texts:

This paper focuses on two primary texts namely *Typhoon* by Qaisera Shahraz and *Trespassing* by Uzma Aslam Khan. The analysis is qualitative based on interpretive and explorative paradigm. A brief introduction of writers would be followed by a detailed analysis of texts.

Typhoon is written by Qaisera Shahraz. Qaisra Shahraz was born in Pakistan and brought up in Manchester; England. She studied English and Classical Civilization at the University of Manchester and went on to gain two Master Degrees at the University of Salford - in English and

European Literature and in Scriptwriting for Television and Radio. Qaisra Shahraz's first novel: *The Holy Woman* (2001) is the compelling drama of Zarri Bano – a glamorous, passionate, intellectual young woman who falls in love with Sikander, a Karachi businessman. Her father takes a jealous irrational dislike to the man and uses the sudden death of his son to break up the relationship. He resurrects an ancient family tradition of forcing his daughter to remain celibate by becoming his clan's 'holy woman'. Shahraz's second novel, *Typhoon* (2003), told through the voice of a strong, omniscient, female narrator, is equally tightly structured and covers the events of four days whose implications stretch over 20 years. The power of the story is captured by short, fast moving scenes focusing on the outcomes of two key events: the first when a strange woman is seen in the arms of another woman's husband. This causes a storm which culminates in the second powerful scene: a public trial or *kacheri*. At the heart of the narrative are the anguish of betrayal and the effects of a triangular relationship involving the sacrifice of one woman to another. Regarding her novels, the writer's own words are:

The rural world I have created in *Typhoon* is far removed from that of Manchester, my home city. This 'other' world simply enchanted me and I drank it all in. It was Pakistan but so different. The class divisions are so obvious. Here the landowning families dominated the rest of the village householders. The latter were made to know their place in society and adhered to it. This is a world of inequality, male domination, patriarchal tyranny with strict control over other people's lives – of tight-knit relationships among men and women. It is a place where huge imposing marble villas dominate the rural scene; thereby dwarfing the other humbler dwellings...I am an outsider, peeping into this serene world. (Khan)

This postulation, coming from the writer's own mouth assumes heightened significance. She is admitting her role as an outsider, having a peep into a culture she might not have any deep empathy with. It is just the interest of a stranger who is trying to acquaint herself as well as her readers, with a culture that is remote and alien to the western eye.

Her favorite subject is to show her protagonist ostracized by society as a result of some rebellious act on her part. It shows how she (the protagonist) struggles to assert her independence. The society that her

western readership is given a glimpse of is, of those backward people who make their women wed to Holy Quran, who kill them mercilessly in the name of honor. It is a sketch of a society where women live in margins, as essentially Othered as Orientals are by their western counterparts

The portrayal of women as marginalized figures denied of any voice, or independent life is a reaffirmation of western beliefs. They, the westerners have a pretty fixed image of third world female living an extremely miserable life. The Oriental woman needs to be “freed” from the constraints of male domination, and none other than the liberated West can play this role of “knight in shining armor” (Rahman).

Baba Siraj Din is the epitome of the feudal and patriarchal system, a system which thrives on strictly abiding and maintaining the class difference. His decision against Naghmana ruins her life. The decrees of giving three talaqs (divorce) in one go is a typically lopsided decision, not giving any weight to Naghmana version. He is the “bazarug” but quite characteristically his vision is not flexible enough to have any sympathy for female voice. The portrayal of a chauvinistic character is a kind of reaffirmation of the fixed notions that west has about eastern males

The western reader is desperate to have snippets of authenticity of Oriental culture which are least taxing to his intellect. He wants to learn but without any direct engagement. As Anis Shivani so succinctly remarks, “You can safely dip your toes into the exotic mystical waters of the East and not have to worry about being drowned” (Shivani 5).

Typhoon presents us with many trivial, mundane details of the rural lifestyle. The details are given on the pretext of establishing the novel firmly in local colour, though there is another, more covert aim, to vie for the much coveted authenticity:

Dust and crushed leaves caked the walls and floor of the small square-shaped courtyard and the dimly lit hallway. Cobwebs were meshed over every crack in the brickwork where the cement had eroded from the rain. They clung in long fragile ropes around the pillars supporting the small verandah and along the washing line. Rolled insects lay trapped in them. Only the *tandoor*, the mud-baked oven used by the neighbor. Naimat

Bibi for her business, stood distinctly apart from the rest. The area around it was kept meticulously tidy. The rim of the oven itself had a newly baked look with its sleek layer of mud. The inside was coated with inches of soot. (14)

This truly is would be a sight tempting to Western voyeuristic tastes. Not many of them can claim to have even a nodding acquaintance with “tandoor”, “the sleek layer of soot” all are appealing for Western readership. A few pages ahead we have the typical rustic scene of milking cows painted in all its minute details:

In Sardara’s large dairy courtyard, five black milk buffaloes stood placidly enduring their morning milking, gently turning their heads from side to side as Sardara’s eldest son and his two young local helpers milked them, with the aid of modern appliances. Large steel containers filled with fresh creamy milk were lined up, as well as smaller vessels, like jugs left by the two neighboring families, against the courtyard wall. All were covered with clean muslin cloths. (34)

English language has always has been a marker of imperial hegemony and as such is considered an untrustworthy tool to express the antagonism or the peculiarities of one’s cultural heritage. Indigenous writers therefore twist and turn English language to serve their ends. This according to Ashcroft & Griffith (2002) takes one of the two forms, either abrogation or appropriation. The former entails a rejection of the supremacy of English, the later converting and transforming it to suit ones purpose. This attempt, as Raja Rao puts it, is to ‘convey in a language that is not one’s own the spirit that is one’s own’ (v).

In accordance with the tradition of keeping up the Oriental myth, *Typhoon* also has a lavish sprinkling of desi words. This use of native language not only creates an aura of unfamiliar and hence mystical, but also gives an authentic picture of East. Words like bazarug, Talaq, Kacheri, Haram, rishta, kuramni, Lassi, chaddors, are freely used and add to the indigenous flavour, so much in demand in the Western market.

Coming to the second fictional work written by Uzma Aslam Khan, *Trespassing*,¹ one must admit that she has a much wider canvas of Pakistani society than Qaisera Shahraz. Her works encompass both urban and suburban precincts of Pakistan. She is another writer who has won

acclaim on international literary scene through her detailed pictures of Pakistan characterized by contradictions.

Uzma Aslam Khan was born in Lahore. Most of her childhood was spent in travelling between different cities, Karachi, Lahore, Manila, and Tokyo. *Trespassing* (2003) was her second novel. She was barely able to complete it before the momentous September 11, 2001 attacks in New York. Regarding her consistent travelling, her own words are:

I was born in Lahore and grew up mostly in Karachi, though I travelled a lot as a child two years in Japan, two in Philippines, three in England. Happily, the travel bug hasn't deserted me. After writing and reading, it's what I love to do the most, and I tend to gravitate to places on the cusp, places that defy easy categorization. (Khan)

It is hard to miss the emphasis on movement, fluidity, going transcultural, and very obviously that entails a privileged status. Apart from that, the last part of the quotation she 'loves to be in places that defy easy categorization', gives her the role of an observer, a spectator, rather than a resident of any particular place. She can shed her identity of being a Pakistani and then from the vantage point of an outsider, look at the problems that plague Pakistan, generation after generation. In other words she might, unwittingly; be playing the game of, in the words of Huggans, "global commodification of cultural difference" whereby writers from indigenous cultures, "have capitalized on its perceived marginality while helping turn marginality itself into a valuable intellectual commodity" (viii). Adopting this multicultural identity is likely to give her a detached look, the look which a tourist might have.

In one of her interviews, given to Dawn Newspaper, she denied any pandering to Western ideals for the sake of successful marketing of her works, "My books with homes in the West have found very different homes, and taken different periods of time to find them. Also, because my books take four to six years to write, by the time a new one is submitted, the market has changed" (par. 5).

These remarks have a clear nuance that she is aware of the issues that resonate in the current literary market. Despite her avowal to the contrary, there might still be a chance that in her fictional works, consciously or otherwise; she discusses such issues which might be of high interest to the west. In other words, she might be picking up such themes which intrigue the western mind. Only a detailed analysis of the text *Tress* can make one configure how much pandering is there to occidental tastes?

Karachi of 90's serves as a backdrop for the novel, with all its political turmoil, seething corruption, raging terrorism, the helplessness of masses. It is an intricately woven story (the metaphor of silk exploited to the full) painting for its readers the complications of privileged, as well as the marginalized class. With remarkable dexterity, the writer sketches the, complex religious, social and economic conventions that beset each class. Her discussion of social malaises of Pakistan contains clear overtones of writers like Kamila Shamsie and Mohsin Hamid. In other words the novel adheres well to the literary norm of social realism portrayed in fictional works, but is it just a depiction of stark brutal realities in the tradition of veteran like Habib Jalib², or is the writer merely following a more recent trend of satiating the Western "tourist appetite" for a detached knowledge of the East? In most of the modern English fiction coming from South Asia these days, the reader usually has "a bit of everything", the ubiquitous tales of marginalized women, the almost unbridgeable gap between privileged and non-privileged, the details of riots, chaos, the incumbent lack of security, strikes, lockouts, shutter downs. It is repeatedly a clever mixing up and rearrangement of ingredients that are pretty fixed and without any serious entailment to it.

This rehashing of same worn out themes is nothing new. One sees these images carved in novel after novel with certain perseverance. Even the most acclaimed of writers like Tariq Ali and Mohsin Hamid cannot keep them aloof from this repetition of rhetorical, reductionist images of Pakistan. In an interview given to Bilal Rasheed Snehal Shingavi (2013) criticizes the fixation of Pakistani English writers with Zia regime as particularly tyrannical as opposed to Bhutto's or Musharraf's more liberal eras:

It is because people writing in English in the 90s and 2000s grew up under the Zia administration. They are concerned about the state, military, and mullahs and their critique is right. We should be critical of Zia and Musharraf, but they tend to over-emphasize those things and under-emphasize the actual nature of Pakistan, which is also heavily invested in fighting against them.... There is no doubt that Zia did terrible things but Bhutto nostalgia dominates much of this fiction. (Shingavi)

One of the charges Pakistani English fiction is faced with is its preoccupation with politics. There rarely is a novel that would keep itself free from the political turmoil of the country. If Indian novel is charged for its obsession with authenticity, Pakistani literary scene is confronted with the criticism of overemphasis of current affairs. Perhaps, through depiction of political upheavals, Pakistani English fiction writers are playing a second fiddle to their western counterparts who deem Pakistan primitive in every sense of the word.

Politics figures in the novel *Tress* quite resonantly. It is written against the backdrop of long era of dictatorship of Zia, the Russian invasion of Afghanistan and how this adversely affected its neighboring country Pakistan. The military regime is often blamed for most of the ills the country is infested with even today. Violence, terrorism, factionist riots, and the ascendance of mullahism are all attributed to the policies of this administration. *Tress* frequently alludes to the disturbed state of affairs in the country. Karachi seems to be the hub of riots and factional divide. The characters are living in perpetual awe of either being kidnapped or, worst even, of losing their lives. Strikes and lockouts claim a tall order from its citizens. Dia has to think twice before risking her life going out when it has been a call for strike by the opposition party. Danish's uncle persistently talks about the American invasion of Iraq. Salamat's character takes us into the underworld of guns, ammunition, murder and kidnapping. All this is allegedly done at the behest of political leadership. The characters, major or minor, cannot have themselves free from the effects of politics. Anis Shivani (2006) presents us with an altogether different angle of the role of politics in these fictional works:

There is also no sense of the characters being anything more than derivative caricatures representing different parts of Indian society,

helplessly engaged in a timeless struggle with no beginning, middle or end. But even this struggle is that of individuals with their own selves, not against outside forces as members of a class. The underlying claim seems to be, plus 'ca change, plus c'est la meme chose. Best to accept things the way they are. (4)

In other words the magnitude of problems is discussed on the pages just for the sake of giving an authentic picture of Pakistan. This portrayal is rarely linked up with a desire, either in writers or in a character's, part to rectify this sorry state of affairs. One can clearly demarcate such manifestations from the more genuine discussions by great literary giants, such as Manto and Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi³. There, the individual is seen as struggling against forces that are far more powerful than him. It is the pathos of 'a no win situation' that make the reader feel an empathy for the character. In contrast the current Pakistani English fiction presents us with is a whole array of problems; the society is enmeshed in, with an apparent detachment on the writer's part. The people are shown struggling but it is more at a personal level. It is as if the writers as well as the characters have left every hope of redemption. Or perhaps redemption and a desire for reformation are not within the agenda. This kind of literature is lavishly praised for its miniaturist description but its intention is nothing more than to feed the western desire of knowing the east. To quote Shivani (2006) again, "reviewers repeatedly mislabel the desultory, superficial cataloguing of alien cultural facts as finely detailed writing. Imagine an entire novel of this sort of trivial exchange, which, when written by Indian writers, somehow assumes the status of dignified cultural information" (25).

A typical case of stereotypical representation is a glimpse of the extreme squalor that makes western reader flinch and wince at this unwholesome sight. This portrayal is very much in the nature of poverty tourism described by Lancaster (2007) as employing deprivation for exploitation and exhibition. This kind of depiction is harshly criticized for glamourizing the slime in order to make it sell. Duncan and Korte(2011) have termed it as 'slum poverty', 'slum tourism', 'poverty porn', 'slum chic', 'ghetto picturesque', 'poverty tours' and 'armchair tourism' (5).

Salaamat becomes the representative of marginalized class in the novel *Trespassing*. He rarely occupies the centre of the stage but through his eyes the reader has a peek into a significant part of Pakistan that is

seldom given a voice. The dispossessed that we come across are the subalterns of Spivak, lacking any agency. It is through his eyes that the reader has a glimpse of the fishing villages and beaches, the work sheds, the huts where life is reduced to its very basic. The foreign trawlers have destroyed the unique charm, “have stolen the sea space”, engendering bitterness in young Salaamat that he retains till the end. The inactive males of a patriarchal society compelled the women to work for foreigners, “for the enemy” who exploit their skills for “as low as five rupees for every kilo of stolen shrimp” (124). Salaamat has assumed the role of native informer giving the reader detailed pictures of a far off locale but definitely appealing to western ideals who want a first-hand acquaintance of foreign culture.

One of the many techniques that are used by re-Orientalist is a contrast between this world which is less developed, characterized by poverty and slums, with the shining, dazzling and developed world of West. In *Trespassing* the reader has this contrast repeated with a consistency. Danish has recently returned from America and has got used to its indifference and lack of intrusion. But he finds himself ill at ease when he has to accommodate to his exceedingly frank uncles and aunts who consider it their right to share his suffering at the death of his father, to ask him questions of extremely personal nature. In Pakistan, his privacy is constantly intruded upon and with no sense of guilt. One has a very despicable picture of how the traditionally brought up girls are unpalatable for the “Amreeka” returned Danish. “Sweeping dupattas, kurtas clutching in chairs, shalwar cuffs slipping over stilettos, hair in salan, salan in nails (173).” It’s clear the covert comparison is with the western women who do not indulge in such cumbersome details.

Danish has to fight for something as basic as having to register for a water tank. In the office he has to suffer the alienating attitude of his countrymen who refuse to see him as one of them. He is Othered by his own folks for having spent three years in America. There is complete lack of order, “no sidewalks, no zebra crossing”, in the municipal office it’s even worse, “as soon as two people tried to stand in series, the one at the back stuck his head forward, which led to the first nudging the second back in line by popping out himself” (329).

This chaotic picture is a reincarnation of Forster’s *A passage to India*. It is a reaffirmation of the fact that the East in its disorderliness, its lack of sophistication and manners cannot match the refined sophistication of

Western tastes. This portrayal of corruption, misuse of power and authority might be alien for a Western society but this is precisely the picture they have of East in their minds. This is a reaffirmation of Linda Nochlin(1989) words, who succinctly notes “another important function, then, of the picturesque – Orientalizing in this case – is to certify that the people encapsulated by it, defined by its presence, are irredeemably different from, more backward than, and culturally inferior to those who construct and consume the picturesque product. They are irrevocably Other” (51). Western readership gets a satisfaction of their literary tastes by reading about the strange, the unfamiliar.

Use of foreign sounding words and expressions are deliberately employed by indigenous writers with the covert aim to impress upon the foreigners the different culture of their native land. As Anis Shivani notes, “a notion of exotic culture is sometimes evoked not only by providing the descriptions of cultural practices, but sometimes foreign-sounding expressions are used in order to create a sense of a different culture” (Shivani 2).

Trespassing abounds in such pictures and use of language which is novel for the Western audience. In the chapter titled Salaamat, there is a very elaborate description of hookah, a purely Eastern commodity:

The urn was of glass, shaped like a large water drop; with bands of colored thread twisted around the middle[...] she passed the hookah to the woman on her far side. Then, slowly, she took a long sip of her famous tea. He alone knew the reason for its fame: liquor. She brewed her own. The row of elderly women was almost intoxicated. (123)

A couple of chapters ahead, the reader has a feast of colors waiting for him. It's the typical cultural practice of decorating the trucks in the most lavish fashion. “Fish dancing, storks wading; a lofty crown; parrots with girlish eyes, preening” (127). The bottom edge of the bus was ringed around with chains ending in hearts. Wings figured elaborately everywhere: there were flying horses painted near the head lights and a sculpture of an eagle with a foot long wingspan attached to the fender.....attached to one wing was a national flag, while on the other a sign read: PIA” (130).

This is something that immediately strikes one as exoticization of East for Western commodification. This is what Huggans denounces in *The postcolonial Exotic* as a deliberate evoking of cultural difference for consumption in the Western market.

The use of unfamiliar language is another technique used by re-Oriental writers to please their Western audience. The western readership would just be pleased to come across words that sound strange and different. We have a whole array of Urdu words, such as “Wah, Qul, Qurankhawani, Siparah, beti, bhai jaan, and meri jaan, a machera, ajnabi, chachoo, phoopa, bijli, lungi, and muezzin. The list goes on. The use of indigenous language serves two functions, to establish the novel firmly in local color, and to give the Western reader a taste of the unfamiliar and hence exotic.

The discussion above proves the point that Uzma Aslam Khan has at many places, consciously or otherwise, resorted to techniques which come under the category of re-Orientalism. Her intention may be to introduce the local picture to the foreign audience, but in so doing she has succumbed to the lure of pandering to western ideals. As Lau puts it, “re-Oriental writers set themselves up as ‘translators’, translating one culture to/for the other, have the dual role of opening the channels of communication, but also of holding the two sides separate because it is this very separation which lends heightened significance to their role” (585).

Conclusion:

The interpretive analysis of two primary texts makes us arrive at the conclusion that the process of self othering continues throughout the two novels. The success of these works and many others like them partly hinge on their portrayal of a different culture, a culture which distinguishes itself because of its negativities and its strangeness, rather than its affinities with the Western culture. Through these texts we have a glimpse of a society which is strictly bound by age old customs, is backward, irrational, reeking with corruption and poverty.

Culture is introduced through language and ethnic practices. The elaborate details of many things delineate a tendency to exoticize the culture for foreign readership. This bespeaks of a certain amount of fixation of themes. The positive is frequently excluded from this cultural

representation, and if it is included at all, the emphasis is necessarily on the trivial or else the odd and unfamiliar. The inclination is to avoid a holistic picture and stress the superficial. This paper therefore reaffirms the fact that Pakistani English fiction writers, consciously or otherwise, resort to techniques of re-Orientalism in projecting the indigenous cultures. The ostensible aim might be to vie for a much stronger and more established Western market.

The irony behind all such representation is that it predicates on an element of truth but the so called comprador intellectuals who choose to take up such themes are infested with the desire to package this truth in such a manner that it serves the interests of the empire. Their exaggerated treatment of the topic suggests as if it is the only truth that exists about the country they have chosen to speak of. The rehashing of themes lends a suspicious aura to Pakistani writers' commitment. Graham Huggans seems to have some weight in his argument when he says that postcolonial world, has capitalized on its perceived marginality while helping turn marginality itself into a valuable intellectual commodity (Huggans viii).

One can only hope that this tendency to delineate partial truths proves only a temporary phase in the development of Pakistani English fiction. Given time it would mature and would be completely independent of its former mentors.

Notes

1. Uzma Aslam Khan's second novel written in 2003, translated into 13 languages. She got nominated for commonwealth award of 2003 for this novel. Heretofore referred to as *Tress*
2. Jalib's poetry is considered an emblem of reflecting the problems of the oppressed people. Coming from an ordinary background he refused to compromise his ideals and was constantly under attack by the privilege
3. Both are veterans of Urdu fiction. Their short stories of Manto have been translated in English by Khalid Hassan (2008) under the title *Bitter Truth*. Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi was an Urdu poet, short story writer and a literary critic. A translation of his selected short stories has been made by Sajjad Shaikh. Such stories as 'Thanda Gosht, Theri Lakeer (Manto) and Gandasa, Kapas Ka Phool (Qasmi) are deemed among the classics of Urdu literature.

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