



**Karachi – A Heterotopia of Postcolonial Trauma in
Kamila Shamsie's *Kartography***
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Abstract

The paper studies Karachi (Pakistan) and the multifarious people of Karachi *Muhajirs/Bengalis* (natives and immigrants) through the lens of postcolonial trauma, after partition of Pakistan from Bangladesh. Kamila Shamsie's novel *Kartography* (2002) is closely read to aesthetically inquire into the wounds of the traumatic setback of the people as well as their "working through" in the postcolonial sense. Spatial theory of heterotopia is applied as the postcolonial trauma critique as it helps in analyzing the sense of 'othering' and social ordering represented in the text. Further, this is applied both to the social space of Karachi having specific geography and also to the textual space of the novel. Karachi as a space in Pakistan was a utopian world for all the Muslims -- Jinnah's vision of a true Muslim land. Post-Partition, the very space of Muslim unity turned into heterotopia of economic, social, cultural, and political activity and conflict. Hence, Karachi is a perfect example of how heterotopias are the fragments of utopia, or utopian debris. The key idea is to look at Karachi as a space that is fundamental to social living; this social space is producing and at the same time is produced by its inhabitants. The paper also studies the narrative of the novel as a heterotopic form as it is interspersed with non-linearity created through maps, poetry, and untranslated vernacular words.

Keywords: Postcolonial Trauma, Heterotopia, Foucault, Karachi, Pakistan Partition, Bangladesh

Introduction

Kartography (2002) written by Kamila Shamsie and its narrative constitute heterotopic spaces originating on account of the trauma of Partition of Pakistan from Bangladesh. Borrowed as a medical term Foucault calls 'heterotopia' as a

heterogeneous landscape consisting of incompatible and relational spaces full of paradoxes with an impulse to unsettle. In comparison to the unreal, ideal, and perfect utopia; heterotopia is a physical form of representation or a close likeness to a utopia, or a parallel space that consists of undesirable bodies to make a real utopian space possible. To explain this, Foucault has used the metaphor of the mirror ("Of Other Spaces" 4). Interestingly, the mirror is a utopia as well as a heterotopia in one go. The mirror creates an image that is not there, and at the same time in a real-time scenario, it projects an image that shapes how we relate to ourselves in this world. Thus, Foucault's concept of heterotopia deconstructs this duality of space through the example of a mirror, as it brings to the surface level the underlying conflict of the space.

The heterotopic spaces can be argued in the words of Kevin Hetherington as both "textual sites just as much as geographical ones" which Foucault looked into (43). Karachi as a space in Pakistan was a utopian world for all Muslims; but Post-Partition, this very place of Muslim brotherhood estranges and makes violent its very own people as represented in the novel. Karachi, as an envisioned utopia has the makings of Foucauldian 'heterotopia', as a real space of economic, social, cultural, and political activity and conflict. Further discussion in the paper will also showcase how heterotopic Karachi as a space afflicted with trauma and violence emerges out of the fragments of utopia, or utopian debris. The key idea is to look at Karachi as a space that is fundamental to social living; this social space is producing and at the same time getting produced by its inhabitants.

Kartography as a novel is not written in a linear narrative, but by using other mediums within its narrative it problematizes the genre. Moreover, it also uses certain untranslated words in the vernacular. Looking beyond the narrative forms and un-mapping the embedded non-narrative genres or clues within the fictional account of the text will help us in studying the text in the light of postcolonial trauma studies. The heterotopias

“mirror”, “reflect”, “represent”, “designate” all the spaces but at the same time “suspend”, “neutralize”, “invert”, “contest”, and “contradict” those very spaces leading to the construction of identities (Foucault “Of Other Spaces” 3).

Karachi as a Space

The novel revolves around Karachi as a physical, mental, and emotional space for its characters. This space itself is also one of the evolving characters after Partition. Karachi develops through dialogue and polemics between two friends Karim and Raheen akin to the thinkers Eratosthenes and Strabo. Both, Eratosthenes and Strabo were juxtaposed to each other in their way of understanding geography and map-making. Eratosthenes like Karim was quite logical and calculative, whereas Strabo like Raheen in his understanding was quite descriptive and used his experience from travels to describe the various places of the world. In the novel, Karim keeps harping on about the maps of Karachi as a would-be cartographer. For Raheen, Karachi is all about lived experiences and slices of life dealing with the “realities of this place and the people in it” (Shamsie 136). This very difference in understanding of Karachi as a space at both the scientific and emotive level by the protagonists also affects the non-linearity of the narrative of the novel.

It is important to note, how maps and their cartography became essential in border formation and creation of identities in the respective nations/nation-states after decolonization. *Kartography* is a story of how wars and political disturbances not only affect the geographical boundaries but their trauma percolate the human aspects and change the intricacies of relationships. The novel maps the silenced history of Pakistan’s second Partition in 1971 with Bangladesh and the ethnic violence of the 1980s and 1990s in Karachi. The breakaway from East Pakistan (East Bengal) is the most important discontinuity in the history of Pakistan and the repercussions of which are still worked out. Muhammad Ali Jinnah demanded “amputation of India along religious lines” during its first Partition; but the Partition with East Pakistan was like a scission

within the body of Pakistan itself (Komireddi). Shamsie vividly writes, “Pakistan is split in two, but undivided” (7). Raheen and Karim born in the ‘80s cannot escape the wounds of the trauma of Partition that took place many years before their birth.

The paper further analyses the character of Karachi as a space which is divided into two: the idealistic utopian world of Muslim brotherhood and the real heterotopia with its discontents. Interestingly, The ‘K’ initial is not only synonymous to all the shops in Karachi, but also, to the title of the text. Raheen encapsulates, ““We worship at the altar of K. Haven’t you noticed all the Ks in business names in Karachi: Karachi Kars, Karachi Karpets, Karachi Kards—not to mention Karat Jewellers, Kwick Kababs, Kleen Kleeners”” (Shamsie 177). Karachi as a heterotopic space announces its being because of its alternate ordering. This alternate ordering is based on the number of utopias of Muslim-hood that come into being in relation to the tension that exists between the ideas of freedom and the ideas of control or discipline prevalent in Karachi.

Growing in the “factional violence, ethnic violence, sectarian violence and random violence” of Karachi, Raheen says, “the city said, I am a breeding ground for monsters, but don’t think that is the full measure of what I am” (Shamsie 189). For the same reason, it is also referred to as “the world’s most dangerous city” (Gayer 4). The novel brings out an episode of violence where “a domestic tragedy” turns into a “terrible ethnic fight” as the girl hit by a speeding bus was a *Muhajir* and the bus driver a Pathan (Shamsie 13). *Muhajirs* were Muslims who came from India and were discriminated against in Pakistan.

Riots like these were common to Karachi, “orchestrated to create divisions and factions” where the very same *khuda* gets *juda* (separated) for the same Muslim sensibility (Shamsie 13). The utopian Karachi existed before 1970 when Raheen’s and Karim’s parents were very close friends without any social

obligation. At the outset, the incident of the Pathan bus driver and the *Muhajir* girl lay down the foundation of Karachi as the monstrous city where there is still a distinction between the real Karachiites and the *Muhajirs* (immigrants). Hence, Karachi becomes a heterotopic counter site with the presence of the real sites of all the multiple ethnicities which are simultaneously 'represented, contested, and inverted' respectively.

The trauma of 1947 which led to the entire concept of real Muslim Karachiites and the *Muhajirs* and the civil war of 1971 which led to the further distinctions between a pure Muslim and a Bengali Muslim runs throughout the narrative of *Kartography* and the city of Karachi. Foucault writes in his essay "Of Other Spaces", that heterotopias "presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable" they are not freely accessible "Either the entry is compulsory, ... or else the individual has to submit to rites and purifications" [here pure Muslim-hood] (26). This trauma of unacceptance as a native seeps and spreads in the lives of the characters and even those who did not live through it (Raheen and Karim, the post-71 born friends).

The Space of Partition--Immigrants/*Muhajirs*/Bengalis

Partition and border changes made millions of people not only homeless but perpetual outsiders in an alien land where they settled to call it their homeland eventually. Pakistan thus became the 'heterotopia of crisis', a sacred and privileged place in which the Muslims who were facing a crisis in respect to their place in society could take shelter. After Partition the new Pakistan created was thus formed with multiple ethnicities. Karim's mother Maheen is a Bengali Muslim who moved to West Pakistan. His father, Ali a Punjabi is from the north of British India. While Raheen's father Zafar is a *Muhajir*, who immigrated to Pakistan from North India. Her mother, Yasmin, a Pathan, belonged to a local Pakistani family. Pathan ancestry came from Pashtun people of East Iranian origin who settled mostly in Afghanistan that shared its border with Pakistan. The conundrum of these ethnicities creates tensions and conflicts

both within the private lives of all the protagonists as well as their public lives. Contrarily, the space between Raheen and Karim is untouched by the contemporary riots. Rather, both of them are deeply affected by the latent ethnic secret of their parents and the second Partition that their own love story gets charred midway.

The Muslims who came from India as *Muhajirs* in Pakistan were initially welcomed by the Muslim fraternity of Pakistan but later were abhorred by the ones who welcomed them and thus felt alienated. The hate and dislike come to light when Laila tells Ali:

‘Do you hear the way people like Zafar and Yasmin talk about “their Karachi”? My family lived there for generations. Who the hell are these Muhajirs to pretend it’s their city!’ (Shamsie 35)

In Karachi, the Muhajir political movement surfaced in 1984 and clash of *Muhajirs* with the local population has ravaged Pakistan since then. For *non-Muhajirs* in Pakistan, the *Muhajirs* had “no understanding of ties to a place” (Shamsie 34). They cannot have feelings about land, because they all left their homes during Partition. Hence, *Muhajirs* have never been accorded the status of natives. In this context, the displacement and subversion of the identities of *Muhajirs* are bound to have heterotopic appeal as they disrupt the normative identities and relationships in a Muslimland. Hence, heterotopias can be seen as subversive spaces in which socializations or alliances can be grounded in hostile emotions about the ‘other’ and hence get transgressed in turn.

Raheen after listening to the derogatory conversation from her aunt Laila is saddened at the thought of being an outsider. She fails to understand how after four decades of crossing the border too they were still termed as immigrants/*Muhajirs*. It marks an impression on her mind and she wonders,

‘What kind of immigrant is born in a city and spends his whole life there, and gets married there, and raises his daughter there? And I, an immigrant’s daughter, was an immigrant too.’ (Shamsie 35)

A discussion between Zafar and Asif reveals the jealousy for the *Muhajirs* as they were better educated and struggled hard to make Pakistan their homeland. Zafar asserts many times that his family came to Pakistan to become ‘Pakistani’ and not to remain ‘Sindhi’. Reiteration of one’s identity too becomes psychologically traumatic because of the sense of ‘othering’ at the hands of the natives from Pakistan.

Maheen suffers immensely because of her Bengali identity as Bengalis were being murdered for their betrayal of Jinnah’s vision around the civil wartime. People used to turn away from her at parties. When she entered the room, the conversations would stop. She lived through the same resignation all her life. The worst came when an “old beggar woman spat at her” (Shamsie 142). The endurance and maintenance of her identity as a Muslim makes her and many like her (Bengalis/*Muhajirs*) live on the edge in West Pakistan. Enduring in this very blurry margin of Karachi happens to make it an alternate heterotopic space that unsettles both social and spatial relations. The terror of suffering amidst survival for Maheen on this edge is like “the sites ... in which humans experience their limits of their existence and are confronted by its sublime terror” (Hetherington 46).

Space of Traumatic Betrayal

The Partition of 1971 led people to change their loyalties in the name of ‘wrong/impure blood’. Raheen’s father Zafar was supposed to marry Karim’s mother Maheen, but left her to marry his friend as he yielded to the prejudice against Bengalis. Not only *Muhajirs* from India but also Bengalis coming from East Pakistan too suffered strong hostility from the rest of the Muslim population in Pakistan. The novel aptly states that the “distance is not about miles and kilometres; it is about fear”

(Shamsie 7). Zafar as a *Muhajir* who was educated could not take a stand for Maheen when he was constantly abused for dating an ‘outsider’ by his fellow Muslim friends. During the civil strife, Ali tells Zafar how women were being raped all over East Pakistan and people in Karachi were applauding “this attempt to improve the genes of the Bengalis” (Shamsie 143). Zafar is taunted as “a Bingo lover” by his friends and he succumbs to the hardened feelings of ethnocentric prejudice against Bengalis (Shamsie 238). Shafiq’s brother, Bilal, is killed by the Bangladeshi Resistance (*Mukti Bahini*) which fought against the Pakistan Army in the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971. Shafiq abuses Zafar for planning “to marry one of them” (Shamsie 238). Zafar confesses afterwards, how he too turned into an animal and said to Shafiq in anger that by marrying Maheen, he will be “... diluting her Bengali bloodline” (Shamsie 172).

This betrayal and the hurt of the racist thought led to their breakup. Finally, this caused couple swapping between friends, whereby Zafar wedded Yasmin and Maheen married Ali. The censored history of couple swapping is an important metaphor in terms of how the repression of Bengalis and the violence of Civil War in East Pakistan was manipulated as well as excised from the official history of Pakistan. Zafar’s take is symbolic of the injustices perpetrated by Pakistanis against Muslim Bengalis. The ‘otherness’ that is created through swapping and its existence within Karachi makes the whole arrangement of living heterotopic. The feel of the heterotopia is not only in the place but in the adjustment within the relationships. Due to the trauma of Partition and the vision to endure the pure Muslim bloodline in Pakistan, the capital city of Karachi as well as the relationships prevailing within the city become incongruous sites and display “different modes of ordering” (Hetherington 8). Hetherington while discussing heterotopia keeps it away from the notions of transgression and resistance, but describes it as either ‘alternate’ or ‘alternative’. The alternate ordering is created because of the difference and the sense of othering that the space creates. For Foucault, there are two modes of

ordering: through resemblance and similitude. Similitude is very much associated with heterotopia, where signs are juxtaposed to each other as they culturally are not seen as going together. Resemblance is anything that goes together because of social expectations developed over time. He also explains that the resemblance cannot “remain stable within itself; it can be fixed only if it refers back to another similitude, which then, in turn, refers to others” (*The Order of Things* 34). Similitude, provides an ordering that takes place through a counter placement of signs (between a Muslim from Pakistan and a Muslim from elsewhere) which results in a relationship that is new and also incongruous. This similitude challenged the conventions of representation but still goes into making up the idea of social order. Thus, the monolith Muslim faith that was endorsed could not be easily attached to the referent of Pakistan as a space for Muslims. This quest of similitude thus led to the trauma of disorder giving Karachi a false sense of normalcy - the “apparent normality of the abnormal” and as a city of “ordered disorder” (Gayer 2).

Here, the ‘working out’ of relationships under the impact of disruption of conscience, because of the Partition, involved the uneasy amalgam of “Ordering and disordering ... as do centres and margins, in ways that are tangled, uncertain and topologically complex” (Hetherington 7). The traumatic secret of the incongruous relationship and the friendship between the couples come to the surface and affect the friendship between their children Raheen and Karim years later. After learning about the reason for his mother’s broken engagement with Zafar, Karim could not come to terms with the fact. He felt betrayed by Uncle Zafar and also expected the same breach of trust in the current times by his daughter Raheen. For years he remains unaware that his friend Raheen had no clues about the past. He leaves for London without an intention to come back to Karachi or communicate with Raheen. His cutting of the cord and an experience of self-exile is a personal response to the traumatic private and public history of Pakistan.

Raheen, lives in Karachi with its daily violence and yet believes it to be her safe haven. She happily returns to her city after graduating from the United States. And later on, learns about the reality of Karim's lack of interest both in Karachi and her. As a consequence she realizes the brunt Aunty Maheen faced due to the rift created under the impact of the nationalist ideologies:

Aunty Maheen. Young, beautiful and in love, but with a heart that was daily further cleft by emotions more complicated than anything conjured up by the words 'politics', 'patriotism', 'loyalty'. (Shamsie 175)

Post-Partition Space

The trauma of Pakistan's double Partition is aptly highlighted in Zafar's letter to Maheen in which he commemorates her as his war story, and asserts that through her the horror of Partition memories are still afresh that rest of them try to forget.

The letter echo the horrors of Partition, the censorship of violent history, and the ill treatment of the *muhajirs*. It reflects the pain of a nation divided, crippled, and paralyzed by the horrors of displaced identities with their lack of belongingness within the same nation. The letter testifies that the cost of memory of the Partition trauma may suffocate not only the ones who experienced it but also the ones who heard only the stories of it as 'children of liberation'.

The post-Partition space was not only shared by Sindhis, *Muhajirs*, and Bengalis but other multiple ethnicities of Pakistan, including sects which under the policy of the State could not live in solidarity with one another. The conflict and trauma of Partition due to the 'difference', 'ethnicity', the vision of 'two-nation theory' was now something permanent, something that slipped into daily life, perpetually gnawing, diminishing, and weakening the life of Karachiites. Raheen reveals how Muharram was all about Shia-Sunni fights and many deaths occurred due to which the schools remain closed in

August until things turned back to normal (Shamsie 104). Every year there was a rage of these sectarian riots. In another context Raheen explains Karim how for marriage “The background. Class, sect, ethnic group” everything was considered barely being a Muslim or resident of Pakistan was not enough, the so-called *biradari* was always looked into (Shamsie 59).

In the post-Partition space after 1947 and 1971 turmoils people try to live happily to forget the ordeal both on the physical and the emotional plane. While there is persistent ethnic violence and riots on the outer folds of Karachi being perpetrated out on the streets, inwardly the people indulge in parties to forget or be oblivious of the hate simmering between them and the ‘other’ Muslims. Raheen describes the lavish and bloated invitation cards and says, “Dholkis, mehndis, mayouns, milads, sham-e-rangs, ganas, shadi receptions, valimas—among the absurdly extravagant there is a card for each occasion (except the actual wedding ceremony itself, which hardly anyone attends)” (Shamsie 55). Even Aroosa Kanwal in her critique of *Kartography* finds Karachi “simultaneously vibrant and violent” and “the only city in Pakistan that exemplifies what Soja describes as urban spatial specificity” (114). Karachi is an important city space in almost all the novels of Shamsie evokes the nostalgia of its people for their homeland. As a historical social space or as a spatial specific of urbanism, Shamsie has showcased it as a place with ““mappable patternings of land use, economic wealth, cultural identity, class differences, and the whole range of individual and collective attributes, relations, thoughts, and practices of urban inhabitants”” (qtd. in Kanwal 114). Thus, according to Soja, most of the urban spaces where we live are socially constructed. This indicates that there is big impact on our daily lives as human beings not only influence other human beings by their living, but in turn the construction of cities and social spaces.

The happiness in the space after Partition is superficial that works as an “alternate ordering” for living which cannot be built on the past baggage of history of loss and sorrow. We

witness Maheen divorcing Ali because of incompatible ghosts of their past. Further, there is emotional separation between Raheen and Karim because of the cryptic secret of their parents. Thus, heterotopias like this can “offer no resolution or consolation”; the promise of a free and united land of love is thus a mirage; they either disrupt one’s notion of oneself, or become a bone of contention; and further leads to clash with the prevalent forms of domination (Johnson 87).

The effect of trauma is such that it transforms a victim into a potential perpetrator.. Thus, heterotopias are the likely sources of transgressive spaces in which ‘normal’ identities or practices may be subverted or dissolved, allowing the boundaries of normatives to be overcome (Hetherington). The subverted identities or identities beyond the normative stance even in the contemporary Karachi are marked by the half Bengali identity of Karim and Aunty Runty’s stark question to Raheen that if tomorrow Karim was seen as a husband material so how will his half Bengali identity taken by Raheen’s father. Even after years of Partition, the *Muhajirs* and Bengalis, as the diaspora with the utopic dream of better settlement and a home, always remain displaced or placeless, without any sense of belongingness. Although heterotopias may spatially encode certain impulses towards a better life, but is always carried out in negotiation within the parameters of material existence, however messy and complex. The loss and fear attached passes from generation to generation with the ingrown seeds of lack of trust in one another.

It is not only Maheen who suffered because of her Bengali identity, but Zafar and Raheen too face the onslaught of being *Muhajirs*. There are many instances of anti-*Muhajir* dialogues uttered by Uncle Asif, Aunty Laila, Aunty Runty and other characters. The quota system in Karachi was prejudiced against *Muhajirs* who had no claims to any residential space outside the city. Moreover, the *Muhajirs*’ had no scope to earn government jobs and government-run university places that were allocated according to the urban-rural divide (Shamsie 134).

Karim deals with the traumatic baggage of 1971 and the ensuing violence during '80s amidst his nostalgia for Karachi. He expresses his feeling of liminal death to Raheen of saying goodbye to Karachi at the same time being nostalgic about it. However, he successfully fathoms how to overcome his sense of tragedy as well as dislocation from Karachi through his obsession with map-making.

Narrative Space

The art of cartography of Karachi stands as a metaphor of mapping the traumas of every character. Juxtaposing it David Waterman contends, "The notion of a cartography which excludes "other" elements of the story, or which attempts to tell a single, fixed, definitive story, is a form of violence in itself; Karim's maps are, according to Raheen, doing just that" (5). For Karim, the act of mapping is technical, but for Raheen it's more about "hearing the heartbeat of that place" and the stories that the place has to tell (Shamsie 136). Both of them map the traumas which they experienced and inherited- the collective trauma of 1971. There is silence as well as the absence of the narratives of 1971. In order to cover the loss of Bangladesh, Pakistan harped on Jinnah's vision of Pakistan as Muslim homeland to omit the identity of Bangladesh completely from its land and cultural memory. The separation from Bangladesh was a big blow to Pakistan's ideologies that brought out the shallowness of the State and consequently, both its people and the authorities veiled themselves in silence about the event.

Shamsie has used non-narrative forms such as Urdu lyric poetry and maps to interrogate the multiple layered and insidious anxieties created via State through drawing maps that affect life and censor history of a nation and its violent struggle at its birth. Raheen reads the map of Karachi at a personal and familiar which neither consists of official names as per official maps nor includes the layman's understanding of the city. She makes her own individual utopic heterotopia out of Karachi that is exclusive as well as private to her distinctive approach to the landmarks in the city. For her, the way to Kindergarten is "...

straight straight straight straight straight and then turn right just after the Metropole, and when you see a church, stop” (Shamsie 126). Karim’s logic of asynchronous map-making arises out of his effort to forget the trauma of 1971 and the subsequent disintegration of his family. He is aware that his genealogy is similar yet different from Raheen; though Raheen covers it up saying, “He’s a muhajir. / He’s not Bengali” (Shamsie 60). This dialogue is congruous with postcolonial trauma which surfaces when the differences are not accepted rather censored and are written over by cartographic endeavours to endorse national unity.

In response to Calvino story that Raheen shares with Karim, he reads it through the lens of Faiz and writes to her, “It’s like that Faiz poem, you know, *mujh say pehli si muhabat*, when you’ve seen the sorrows of the rest of the world you can’t go on pretending none of it matters, you can’t pretend two people can really live in isolation telling themselves their love is all that matters” (Shamsie 113). Interestingly, Faiz’s *nazm* in its progressive revolutionary colour evokes the nostalgia of halcyon past and its obscurity somewhere in the contemporary times. It echoes the ghost of traumatic past that Karim is fighting with (the division of his identity fixed and stable as a Muslim yet separated and divided as a Bengali). Karim supports what Faiz endorsed in his *nazm* that more than friendship or love, the tyrannical and exploitative social fabric in which they breathe is far more important to tend. The poetry of Faiz not only cuts the linear narrative of the novel but creates a mirror like heterotopia. The dilemma of Faiz that he and many others were going through during 1947 being divided between the private and public self is replicated in the post-71 *Pakistani* self too; especially in Zafar’s betrayal of his beloved. Caroline Herbert terms this fusing of maps and poetry by Shamsie as “lyric maps”. She affirms that “The fusing of two non-narrative forms – the map and the lyric poem – enables an articulation of post-Bangladesh Pakistani subjectivity which complicates narratives that censor 1971 in order to construct a continuity

between the nation's founding values and its contemporary identity" (165).

Hence, the narrative of the novel becomes asymmetric due to polyphonic voices, maps, letters, Urdu poetry, Raheen's creative writing assignments, and testimonies of the Partition. The technique of using anagrams and untranslated Urdu words also obstructs the linear progression of the novel and brings in some hidden meanings and wit alongside. The nonlinearity of the novel reflects the unfolding of heterotopia at the level of language as brought out by Foucault in the 'Preface' to his *The Order of Things*.

Heterotopias are disturbing, [...] they [...] undermine language, [...] they shatter or tangle common names, because they destroy 'syntax' in advance ... heterotopias [...] desiccate speech, [...] contest the very possibility of grammar at its source; [...] and sterilize the lyricism of our sentences. (xix)

The text of the novel thus showcases the presence of atopia (unusualness/placelessness of syntax) and aphasia (silence and different way of interpreting history due to inter-generational trauma) in its written narration lamenting the loss of what was 'common to place and name'. Some anagrams like "oh, me" for home, "hack air" for Karachi (Shamsie 19) are common between Raheen and Karim. These anagrams are also symbolic of the arbitrariness of order all around Karachi since Partition. The narrative and its cause and effect relationship give closure to trauma but the inclusion of non-narrativity creates tension and add dialogical appeal to make trauma untraceable as 'one particular event'. It also aids in reconciliation as there is no presence of one dominant, coherent, monolithic voice. Postcolonial theory is about destabilization and displacement, similarly heterotopias are also sites whose purpose is to unsettle, displace, and marginalize the dominant discourse. Further, the postcolonial impact is also suggested through the

usage of Urdu words to showcase that the novel is in “an/Other language” (Ashcroft et al 64).

Shamsie abrogates and appropriates the language to fill in some gap through remoulding the language with the vernacular, for instance “have to chhilo ghutnay” (Shamsie 56), “Hear you’re thinking of khisko-ing from the country, packing up in Paki-land” (Shamsie 59), “Everything theek-thaak?” (Shamsie 79) and the like. The absence or gap in the language not only localizes Karachi but “represents the difference through which an identity (created or recovered) can be expressed” (Ashcroft et al 62). Thus, it helps in reinscribing identity after decolonization. The language interspersed may be local and marginalized but it pushes the international readers into a heterotopic space of exoticness and an unknown realm to make the flow of trauma credible by destroying the syntax.

The state censorship on history under Zia regime was undertaken to “avoid having to answer” difficult questions (Shamsie 40). Maheen too remarks “it is less than two years since Bangladesh was born, and already we in Pakistan have become so efficient at never speaking about it. That scares me more than anything else. When we do refer to ‘yi, it’s as personalised stories ... over tea and biscuits” (Shamsie 225). There is no official statement on the national history of 1971 Partition and its loss and tragedy is reduced to a farce of “waltzing couples changing partners” (Shamsie 40). Thus, the agenda of national sameness creates suppression of identity and culture which gets depicted in the character of Maheen.

The duality and contradiction within a heterotopia thus endure in between the space of liberation and oppression. The trauma in the postcolonial sense is exclusive; it excludes those who are not part of it. Foucault too mentions, “Everyone can enter into these heterotopic sites, but in fact that is only an illusion – we think we enter where we are, by the very fact that we enter, excluded” (“Of Other Spaces” 26). Apart from the exclusion of Maheen in the society, *Muhajir* Raheen’s

exclusionary memory maps to reach a destination in the city are also for the people who know her and beyond comprehension for the people who do not share the same history.

Conclusion – The Space of Postcolonial Reconciliation

The novel deftly clinches the pulsating nature of trauma that travels, is silenced, and at the same time is actively lived with: “How many walls can one nation erect and sustain, Ali wondered. Is it possible to circumnavigate one wall without crashing into another?” (Shamsie 43). A text dealing with trauma always contemplates the avalanche of the past injustice and its percolation down the ages. The discussion in the paper sums up Karachi as a heterotopic site of postcolonial trauma.

The paper brings out the application of postcolonial trauma theory by Stef Craps, as the novel recognizes the sufferings of “non-Western” others than the White people. Secondly, the Eurocentric trauma theory largely relies on psychoanalysis or deconstruction. On the contrary, this paper examines the geographical and the narrative textual space of the novel by using the theory of ‘heterotopia’. Further, postcolonialism is not about vulnerability, victimhood, silences, and wounds; but aims to invoke the obscure recuperation, social activism, and psychic integration through articulatory “working through” when “one is living here and now with openings to the future” (LaCapra 61). The character of Raheen makes an initiation in this direction. Stef Craps posits the existence of critical commitment in postcolonial studies “to make visible the creative and political” rather than the “pathological and negative” in trauma literature (127). The creative and the political transpires through the “alternative ordering” where “the other” could flourish and the ‘heterotopias of crisis and resistance’ turn into ‘heterotopias of becoming’. We also come to learn how the dialogic and the binaries together are reconstructed and recombined in the ‘third space’ to create a space of “working through/out” for the characters.

Hence, in the light of the postcolonial treatment of the trauma theory, the role of forgiveness/obliviousness/solidarity out of chaos provides an alternative to the dominant trauma aesthetics. The novel ends on unsaid acceptance from all the marginalized characters like Maheen and Raheen. Though acceptance/forgiveness is thought to end the traumatic process, but in *Kartography* it is seen as a process to 'swim through/working out' the traumatic experiences attached to one's identity. Maheen continues with her friendship with Zafar through family bonds obscuring her trauma of separation. Raheen sees how her father Zafar also tried to 'workout' the psychological trauma through his epistolary bond with Auntie Maheen at the same time taking the responsibility for his wife Yasmin and daughter Raheen.

The novel also highlights the irony of a divided nation united by the people who actively divide it and yet keep it together to prevent it from falling apart:

If we had more reliable systems of law and governance, perhaps our friendships would be shallower. But with no one to rely on except one another, Karachiites come together in times of crises with attitudes which suggest that no matter what else we are in our lives ... our real vocation is friendship. (Shamsie 156)

In the postcolonial conundrum of conflicts, Herbert sees that Karim's interactive cartography makes Karachi a "potentially productive site for a process of reconciliation" by opening "a space for difference and non-identification"; hence "towards reconciliation between Pakistanis of different generations and different social and ethnic backgrounds" (171). Karim's maps thus become an important trope in 'working out' the concept of ethnic identities within Pakistan. He tries to redefine his own spatial social boundary that his parents could not. Karim's interactive internet mapping with the help of Raheen can be perceived as a solution to adapt and accept the traumatic history of Karachi; of knowing the latent history, as

well as, accepting and adapting to the changing nuances of the city. Thus, the map “allows for space, memory, community, and healing together” (qtd. in Herbert 171). To conclude, here the heterotopic is not only about the removal from life (the critical negativities) but also about the deepening and extension of its possibilities (the journey of forgiveness/reconciliation, vulnerability, and trans-ethnic knowledge).

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