CHAPTER III

THE POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT OF CONTEMPORARY FICTION IN PAKISTAN AS
REPRESENTED IN SELECT WORKS OF MOHSIN HAMID, NADEEM ASLAM AND KAMILA
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Literature in any part of the world is conditioned by its political milieu. In the context of Pakistan, owing to its unstable political situation, and strict dictatorships and dictatorial democracies, their literature could not fully portray the truth of their present reality, and therefore have produced literature shielded in metaphors and abstractions. “Unlike writers from other postcolonial countries, most of the Pakistani writers have desisted from giving a powerful creative response to the socio-political conditions” (Ahmad, 2014, p.1397). This is true of most writers both in Urdu and in English. However, unlike their predecessors, recent Pakistani writers are found to be more politically engaged. The works of these new writers challenge and engage with the stereotyped images of Pakistan and Muslims in particular, perpetuated in the West, especially after 9/11. This chapter has explored the nature of socio-political conflicts present in contemporary Pakistan as represented in the selected works of Mohsin Hamid, Kamila Shamsie, and Nadeem Aslam. The novels selected for study are Moth Smoke (2002), and The Reluctant Fundamentalist (2007) by Mohsin Hamid, Kartography (2002) and Broken Verses (2005) by Kamila Shamsie, and Maps for Lost Lovers (2004) and The Wasted Vigil (2008) by Nadeem Aslam.
3.1. A brief acquaintance with the History of Modern Pakistan

The birth of Pakistan as a new nation is marked by violence and fraction. Few events have been more traumatic in history than the partition of the Indian subcontinent into India and Pakistan in 1947. But “surprisingly partition occupies an uncertain place in historical narrative even for historians in Pakistan.” “While the creation of a Muslim state in 1947 is generally celebrated in Pakistan historiography, the actual partition of the subcontinent often has about it an air of betrayal” (Gilmartin, 1998, p. 1068). One of the biggest challenges that confronted the birth of the nation was the demand of holding together two regions, divided by a thousand miles, linked together only by religion. A question that was primary at that time was whether Pakistan was to be a secular or an Islamic state. Other important issues were how to deal with the refugee crisis of Muslims spilling into its territory from India, and how to cope with the brain drain as Hindus and Sikhs flee Pakistan for India. These were issues that confronted the new nation. Another important test facing the new state was the creation of a legal framework for its governance.

The issue of the state language created a schism between East and West Pakistan during the first year of nationhood. Many in Bengal had hoped the area would gain independence as a separate state when the British withdrew from the subcontinent. In November 1947 university students in Dhaka, the capital of the province of East Pakistan, staged a protest, demanding Bengali be made the state language.

A massive blow to the new nation was the death of its founding father Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Jinnah’s role was so central that no policy or major decisions could be made unless he chaired the meeting. But Jinnah’s health had been deteriorating for several years, beset by tuberculosis and cancer. He tried to conceal his condition, but
he died on September 11, 1948. Pakistan was plunged into shock and grief. In 1951, Jinnah’s successor Liaquat Ali was assassinated. His assassination came at a time when the nation had already descended into chaos and political instability bordering on anarchy.

The inability of political leaders to overcome Pakistan’s fractious political landscape and the surmounting problems plaguing the nation invited wealthy landowners, the military and the bureaucracy in Pakistan to have powerful say in forging the nation’s policies. From its very birth Pakistan has been plagued by political instability, growing steadily into a nation dominated by assassinations, military coups, and a state of general political instability.

Since Pakistan had been founded in the name of the Muslims of India, appealing to religion was akin to appeals to Pakistani nationalism itself, and politicians often aligned themselves with Islam as a way to win over voters. The Islamic values the country would adopt as its spiritual foundation, was an important agenda for all political leaders, both civil and military. Pakistan’s problems would have been a challenge to any administration, with its poor, uneducated population; lack of public services and economic development; disparate ethnic and religious groups and sects that resisted assimilation; and intensifying estrangement between East and West Pakistan.

The issue of the state language burst forth again in 1952, when thousands of low-echelon government employees in East Pakistan staged a demonstration demanding Bengali be named their official language. On February 21 students staged an illegal protest that was broken up by police who used tear gas and fired into the crowds. Some students were killed. As a result of these events public support for the Bengali
independence movement increased dramatically. The loss of its East Wing was a devastating blow to Pakistan, deepening its antagonism towards India.

Although the constitution allowed freedom of religion to members of other faiths, Pakistan was founded as a parliamentary democracy with Islam as the state religion. The hardening of Pakistan as an Islamic nation took place during the leadership of Zia-ul-Haq. With the tacit support of the United States, which sought to undermine the Soviet regime in Afghanistan, he encouraged the formation and activities of militant extremist groups.

Islam became a significant force in opposition politics in the 1970s, as a reaction to Z.A. Bhutto’s secular stance, and in the late 1970s Zia’s programme of Islamization—supported by the US as a strategy against the Soviets in Afghanistan—would profoundly change the social environment in Pakistan, and leave effects which are still being felt, especially as concerns women (Waterman, 2015, p.16).

General Zia’s sudden death in 1988 brought about a return to civilian rule in Pakistan and for the next decade a series of leaders struggled to establish firm control over the government. Two rivals dominated the political landscape: Nawaz Sharif, and Benazir Bhutto. Bhutto went on to become the first woman to lead a Muslim country. In her first address to the nation as Prime Minister, Bhutto presented her vision of a Pakistan that was forward-thinking and democratic but guided by Islamic principles. However, amid charges of corruption and incompetence she was dismissed in 1990. After two terms as Prime Minister at various times, Benazir Bhutto was assassinated on 27th December 2007. In the National Election of 1990, Benazir lost to a coalition of right wing parties and Nawaz Sharif was sworn in as the next Prime Minister of Pakistan.
During the eleven-year democratic era (October 1988-October 1999), secular leaders of two mainstream parties made no effort to reverse trends of militarism in the form of Kalashnikov and drug culture and sectarian war. They remained too engrossed in letting down each other. Islamic revolution in neighbouring Iran fuelled sectarianism in Pakistan. With no dearth of weapons and with drug trade booming, society got radicalized and gave birth to number of sectarian religious groups duly supported by Iran and Saudi Arabia. . . . Fires of sectarianism and ethnicity impacted upon governance and economy of the democratic era. (Raja, 2011, n.pag.)

The third military era in Pakistan began with the regime of General Musharraf who overthrew Nawaz Sharif in a coup d’etat in 1999. From the time of his takeover Musharraf faced international pressure to restore democracy, but priorities changed in the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Pakistan was led into United State’s “War on Terror” in spite of the fact that its partnership with the United States was bitterly opposed in Pakistan. Pakistan’s history since Independence has been dominated by political turmoil with civil and military governments alternately taking control of the country’s rein. This is compounded by regional unrest and religious extremism.

3.2 The Pakistani Novel in English

Like India, Pakistan also inherited the legacy of the British Raj in the form of the English language. It may not have been the language of choice for a country built on everything patriotic, but there was no escaping from the influence of English literature and language. Though Urdu was declared as the national language of Pakistan, English did not lose its hold, especially among the elites of Pakistan. As it is in all the countries of the
Indian Subcontinent English is the language of prestige, power and privilege. It became the choice medium for literary and intellectual expression for those writers who were educated in England or in elite institutions in Pakistan.

Kamila Shamsie (2007) feels that Ahmed Ali is the father of the Pakistani novel in English. He was born in Delhi but moved over to Pakistan where he lived for the rest of his life. His novels and short stories examine Islamic culture and tradition in Hindu-dominated India. Co-founder of All India Progressive Writers Association (1936), Ali earned international acclaim with his first novel *Twilight in Delhi* (1940). It nostalgically chronicles the passing of the traditional Muslim aristocracy in light of encroaching British colonialism in the early 20th century. The first woman novelist who wrote in English in Pakistan is Mumtaz Shahnawaz. She died in a plane crash in 1948, leaving behind a draft of her novel *A Divided Heart* written on the theme of the partition of India, which was published posthumously in 1959 by her family. Decades later, in 1961 Attia Hosain published her novel *Sunlight on a Broken Column*, portraying the life of a young Muslim woman in pre-partition India. In 1967, Zulfikar Ghose wrote *The Murder of Aziz Khan*, a novel that captured the prevailing socio-political conditions immediately after Independence. “This was the first cohesive, modern English novel written by a Pakistani author.” (Naem, 2005, n.pag.)

Pakistani novel in English received recognition internationally with the publication of *The Crow Eaters* by Bapsi Sidhwa in 1978. Born in Karachi in a prosperous Parsi family, her novel presents the life of Pakistan’s Parsi community. Her most successful novel *Ice-Candy Man* (1988) highlights the tragic events of Partition seen through the eyes of a young girl. Sidhwa’s work, according to Kamila Shamsie (2007) “offered a rare spark of
light” in the days of the Zia-ul-Haq dictatorship with its atmosphere of censorship and political Islam. “Zia’s military rule ignited Urdu feminist writers but had little impact on their Anglophone counterparts” (Shamsie, 2007, n.pag.).

By the 1980s, Indian writers were attracting attention world-wide, and being an Indian novelist had become a viable source of livelihood. “Pakistan continued to think gloomily that, in novels as in tourism, the world was far more interested in India. One Pakistani writer might slip through the cracks here and there, but received wisdom had it that our 'Midnight’s Children moment' would never come” (Shamsie, 2007, n.pag.)

There may not be a ‘Midnight’s Children’ moment in the history of Pakistani fiction, but there were quieter successes that were gradually building a canon of national literature. The 1990s began a new chapter in Pakistani novel in English. It began with the publication of Sara Suleri’s Meatless Days in 1989, a novel that stitches together intensely biographical moments with national history. In 1993, Nadeem Aslam published his debut novel Seasons of the Rainbirds, which won the Betty Trask and the Author’s Club First Novel Award. Born in Pakistan, Nadeem Aslam migrated to UK when he was thirteen. Another major novelist with Pakistani identity is Hanif Qureshi. Born in England in 1954, he is son of a Pakistani father and an English mother. His first novel was The Buddha of the Suburbia (1991). A whole generation of young writers appear on the Pakistani literary scene in the 1990s onwards establishing Pakistani writing in English in the world stage. Mohsin Hamid’s Moth Smoke (2000) set in the summer of 1998, tells the story of the rich and wealthy in Pakistan, a tale of love and betrayal, of guns and drugs and of the nuclear tests in India as well as in Pakistan. His second novel The Reluctant Fundamentalist (2007) discusses the radicalization of a young Pakistani in the aftermath of 9/11. His latest novel
is *How to get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* (2013). Kamila Shamsie, born in Karachi and divides her time between Pakistan, the US and UK publisher her first novel *A City by the Sea* (1998) set in Karachi was shortlisted for the John Llewellyn Rhys Prize. Her second novel is *Salt and Saffron* (2002). Her third novel *Kartography* published in 2004 and *Broken Verses* (2005) her fourth novel both won the Patras Bokhari Award from the Academy of Letters in Pakistan. Her next novel *Burnt Shadows* was shortlisted for the Orange Prize for Fiction in 2009. Her latest novel is *A God in Every Stone* (2013). Mohammad Hanif’s *Case of Exploding Mangoes* (2008), a satirical novel about the mystery surrounding the death of general Zia-ul-Haq in a plane crash created a storm in the literary world. The novel was even long-listed for the Booker Prize. Other writers like Uzam Aslam Khan, and Bina Shah, Daniyal Mueenuddin, and Ali Sethi are among a long list of young Pakistani writers who have brought visibility to the Pakistani novel in English.

An issue that bothered literary criticism in Pakistan is the problem of defining who is a Pakistani writer and what qualifies someone to be a Pakistani writer. There are Pakistani writers born in Pakistan, but never lived there, born and brought up in Pakistan but live elsewhere, left Pakistan at an early age and is presently living in England, or neither born or living in Pakistan but has close cultural ties to the country. Kamila Shamsie’s answer to this is: “My take on all this is simple: if someone is willing to claim Pakistan for themselves and for the development of their creativity then it seems ridiculous to deny them - and the nation - that right” (2007, n.pag.)

Pakistani writers like their Indian counterparts, have similar thematic concerns, often writing about the self and the nation. Some are preoccupied with the memories of Partition, the War of 1971 or the Islamization of the state. Others
write about the immigrant experience, chronicling the history of Pakistanis that continues with migration and exile. Almost all of them explore issues of identity, hybridity, home and exile. Above all they collectively counter the singular representation of Pakistan, revealing the nation’s multiplicity (Cazmi, 2009, p. 37).

Borrowing an expression from Muneeza Shamsie, Cara Cilano (2009) writes that Pakistani writers who choose to write in English are “writing from the extreme edges of both English and Pakistani literature” (p.184). Moreover Pakistan’s proximity to India and its cultural imaginaries and interlocked histories influence critics and reader in how they approach Pakistani English literature. Born after the creation of Pakistan the younger generations of writers are impatient with postcolonialism and the fixation on Partition, they want to explore questions of democracy, civil war, ethno-linguistic multiculturalism, Islamization, nuclearization, consumer culture and extremism. (Cilano, 2009, p.189).

3.3. Conflict in Mohsin Hamid’s Moth Smoke and The Reluctant Fundamentalist

Born in Lahore, Mohsin Hamid has spent half his life there and much of the rest in London, New York, and California. He is the author of three novels, Moth Smoke (2000), The Reluctant Fundamentalist (2007) and How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia (2013). The two novels of Mohsin Hamid selected for this study are Moth Smoke (2000) and The Reluctant Fundamentalist (2007). Moth Smoke won the Betty Trask Award, was a finalist for the PEN/Hemingway Award, was shortlisted for the Commonwealth Writers Prize for Best First Book, and was named a New York Times Notable Book of the Year. The novel is
a powerful critique of the ruling elite of Pakistan. It depicts the life of a small but powerful minority in Pakistan who controls its economy and power structures. In 2007 his second novel, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, was published and shortlisted for the 2007 Man Booker Prize for Fiction. In 2008, it won the South Bank Show Annual Award for Literature and was shortlisted for the 2008 Commonwealth Writers Prize (Eurasia Region, Best Book) and the 2008 James Tait Black Memorial Prize (for fiction). A novel written in the form of a dramatic monologue, it recounts the radicalization of a brilliant young man identified only as Changez. It is the story about how the event of 9/11 makes the protagonist relook at his identity as a Pakistani Muslim in America.

### 3.3.1. Class Conflict in *Moth Smoke*

*Moth Smoke* is an analysis of class conflict in the Pakistan of the 1990s. Pakistan like most countries in the Indian subcontinent is a heavily class oriented society where the elite have great influence over, and manipulate the government, its power and its resources. Traditionally the elite in Pakistani society constitute of the landed feudal group which was a part of the ruling elite after Independence. However, over the years member from the military establishment and the corporate world have joined to constitute the new elite. *Moth Smoke* is a look into the “power structure of society that has shifted from the old feudalism, based on birth, to the new Pakistani feudalism based on wealth” (Desai, 2000, n.p.). Mohsin Hamid’s novel is a powerful critique of the ruling elite of Pakistan. It depicts the life of a small but powerful minority in Pakistan who controls its economy and power structures. The novel portrays the life of the ultra rich with their Pajeros and Black Labels, drugs and guns, adultery and betrayal that mark post-Independence Pakistan.
Darashekhoh Shezad (Daru) and Aurangzeb (Ozi) were the best of friends and virtually grew up as brothers very much like the characters from history that they are named after the sons of the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan. Their fathers were best of buddies in the army, and when Daru’s father died, Ozi’s father looked after Daru, paid for his education and sent him to an elite school with his son. After finishing school, as most children of upper class Pakistan do, they applied for foreign universities; Daru does better than Ozi in the examinations, but couldn’t get admission due to his financial constraints. “I’d studied with the richest boys in the city, been invited to the homes of the best families. And money had never felt like a chain until the summer they all left” (Hamid, 2000, p.139). When Ozi goes abroad to get a foreign degree and he had to settle for GC (Government College), Daru is justifiably angry.

The novel is set in the summer of 1998, the year that both India and Pakistan revealed their nuclear capability. That summer Ozi returns from America with his beautiful wife Mumtaz, and the two friends are reunited. However, their circumstances have changed so much that they virtually seem to occupy the two extreme ends of the spectrum of society. Ozi comes home to inherit his father’s vast wealth, while Daru works in a bank, a job that he soon loses. The loss of a job is a mere catalyst for the discontented Daru to slide down into drugs, crime and adultery. In a society that runs on connection and corruption, Daru is unable to find a new job because he doesn’t have “a foreign degree and an MBA” (Hamid, 2000, p.53). After several rejections when he is finally given an interview its only to tell him that, “Unless you know some really big fish, and I mean whose name matters to a country head, no one is going to hire you” (Hamid, 2000, p.53).
As his money runs out Daru finds himself slipping deeper and deeper into an eddy of marijuana and heroin addiction, and drug peddling.

The extremes of wealth and poverty in Pakistani society are represented by the miserable condition of Daru and the affluence of the jet set society that he moves around in. Hamid’s Pakistani elites are westernized young men and women, who enjoy a life of excess and affluence with big cars, smart houses, foreign liquor, drugs and endless parties with food flown in from abroad and exclusive music mixed by a Dj in London. Ozi justifies his lifestyle by saying:

> You have to have money these days. The roads are falling apart, so you need a Pajero or a Land Cruiser. The phone lines are erratic, so you need a mobile. The college are overrun with fundos who have no interest in education, so you have to go abroad. . . . Thanks to electricity theft there will always be shortages, so you have to have a generator. The police are corrupt and ineffective, so you need private security guards. It goes on and on” (Hamid, 2000, p.185).

Ozi feels that “there’s nothing to be guilty about” (Hamid, 2000, p.185). Since it is not possible to change the corrupt system one has to learn to accept it and finds alternatives. “I’m wealthy, well connected, and successful. My father’s an important person. In all likelihood, I’ll be an important person. Lahore is a tough place if you are not an important person” (Hamid, 2000, p.184). Daru is a victim of not being an important person.

If Ozi represents the corrupt elite, at the other end of the spectrum, is Murad Badshah, a Masters Degree holder in English, a drug dealer in the guise of a rickshaw service
provider. Murad justifies his action of robbing cab drivers and conducting hold ups in high end boutiques as “redistribution of wealth” (Hamid, 2000, p.63).

You see, it is my passionately held belief that the right to possess property is at best a contingent one. When disparities become too great, a superior right, that to life, outweighs the right to property. Ergo, the very poor have the right to steal from the very rich. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that the poor have a duty to do so, for history has shown that the inaction of the working classes perpetuates their subjugation. (Hamid, 2000, p.64).

Hamid uses the air conditioner as a trope to represent this class division. Professor Julius Superb, Daru’s economics professor in university, has developed a theory about the use and non-use of the air-conditioner as a marker of class in Pakistan. He lectures:

There are two social classes in Pakistan. . . . The first group, large and sweaty, contains those referred to as the masses. The second group is much smaller, but its members exercise vastly greater control over their immediate environment and are collectively termed the elite. The distinction between members of these two groups is made on the basis of control of an important resource: air-conditioning. You see, the elite have managed to re-create for themselves the living standards of say, Sweden, without leaving the dusty plains of the subcontinent. . . . They wake up in air-conditioned houses, drive air-conditioned cars to air-conditioned offices, grab lunch in air-conditioned restaurants (rights of admission reserved), and at the end of the day go home to their air-conditioned lounges and relax in front of their wide-screen TVs (Hamid, 2000, pp. 102-103).
The complexity of class is nowhere more evident than in the character of Darashikoh himself. His friendship with Ozi allows Daru to experience the lives of the Pakistani elite, without really being a part of it. Inhabiting the fringe of high society, he is both an outsider and an insider into that world. This in-between space that he inhabits makes him extremely conscious of the wealth around him, and of what he is missing. He sees all around him the privileges that money brings with it. His “disappointment sours into resentment” (Lahiri, n.pag.). Though he is contemptuous of the rich and their excessive life style, he has no qualms in enjoying their fine food and scotch. According to Jhumpa Lahiri (2000), “Daru's fatal flaw” lies in the fact “that while he's contemptuous of the idle rich, he feels nevertheless entitled to join their ranks” (n.pag.). Daru is very class conscious and snobbish about his attitude towards people he considers belows his own class level, about Murad Badshah he says: “I don’t like it when low-class types forget their place and try to become too friendly with you” (Moth Smoke, p.42). In the New York Times Review of Moth Smoke Jhumpa Lahiri (2000) writes:

Despite his indictment of the jet set, he is himself a snob who condescends to the poor. When the going gets rough he beats his servant and withholds his pay. He turns his back on his well-meaning middle-class family, though not before asking them for a loan” (n.pag.).

It is not only the city elites that are exploitative; the feudal landlords in the rural areas have always held the position of power to abuse at their will. Giving an interview to Zulfikar Manto (Mumtaaz), Dilaram, the brothel owner at Heera Mandi, the red-light district of Lahore, tells her how as a child the landlord of her area had threatened and raped her and later on sold her to a man who makes her work in a brothel till she earns
the fifty rupees for which he had bought her, after which she becomes a professional prostitute.

At another point in the novel Daru finds himself agreeing with many of the things that the ‘fundo’ Mujahid Alam tells him. “Our political system’s at fault. Men like us have no control over our own destinies. We’re at the mercy of the powerful” (Moth Smoke, p.225). Under different circumstances, Mujahid would have been despised as a backward looking ‘fundo’, but reeling under the strain of poverty and despair Daru finds his words comforting. “We need a system, . . .where a man can rely on the law for justice, where he’s given basic dignity as a human being and the opportunity to prosper regardless of his status at birth” (Hamid, 2000, p.225).

The historical allusion of Darashikoh and Aurangzeb sort of prepares the reader for how the story is going to develop. The rivalry between Daru and Ozi represents the relationship between Pakistan and India, and the woman that they are fighting over can be a representation of Kashmir. Hamid may not have named his female protagonist accidentally when he named her Mumtaaz Kashmiri.

The novel is structured in the form of a trial – the trial of the protagonist Darashikoh Shezad, framed for running over and killing a child. Each of the main characters, Ozi, Mumtaz and Murad, is allowed to narrate the story from his or her own perspective. “This polyphony of voices – some more, some less reliable – releases information about the plot progressively” (Elia, 2012, p. 61). In the final analysis it becomes clear that no character is absolutely honest even with himself or herself. The character that can be viewed with the least scepticism is that of Mumtaaz. The contrast of
excessive affluence and utter poverty alienates the mass from the elites fomenting anger in the deprived and the less fortunate.

3.3.2. Identity formation in The Reluctant Fundamentalist:

Moshin Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* registers the complex engagement of the ethnic presence in the USA with their identity. “In this century’s climate of Islamophobia, wars of questionable legality, and oppressive counter-terror legislation, more writers are representing Muslim identity than ever before” (Chambers, pp. 127-128). *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* offers a counter-narrative to the monolithic image of the “Muslim” as perpetuated in public discourse and in the media. The novel is written in the form of a ‘dramatic monologue’ and, the speaker Changez, is a brilliant Princeton graduate, employed in a prestigious firm in New York, and is literally living the American dream. However, the Al-Qaida attack on the World Trade Centre and the American mood in its aftermath compels him to have a relook at himself and his identity as a Pakistani Muslim in America. Changez then pursues a path of self-determination, rejecting fixed identities based on his ethnicity, yet finds himself up against a dominant culture that attempts to impose a fixed identity on him (Reed, 2011, n.pag.). Changez, addresses an unnamed American who he encounters in a cafe in the Old Anarkali district of Lahore, and shares a sumptuous Pakistani meal with him. He narrates to him his “failed love story with the US, ranging from his pre 9/11 success-story, through his disillusionment, to his return to Pakistan and his turning to a ‘reluctant’ form of fundamentalism” (Munos, 2012, p.400).
The central event in the novel is the bombing of the Twin Towers in New York. When 9/11 happened Changez was on a business trip to Manila, and sees the event on TV: “I stared as one – and then the other – of the twin towers of New York’s World Trade Centre collapsed. And then I smiled. Yes, despicable as that may sound, my initial reaction was to be remarkably pleased” (Hamid, 2007, p.72). He explains his reason for the smile to his American interlocutor by saying: “I was caught up in the symbolism of it all, the fact that someone has so visibly brought America to her knees” (Hamid, 2007, 73). When he returns to New York from Manila he has to confront the drastically changed face of America from an inclusive to an exclusive society. He becomes acutely aware of being viewed with extreme suspicion: at the airport he is stripped down to his boxers and interrogated by a hostile officer before he is let off. “I flew to New York uncomfortable in my face” (Hamid, 2007, p.75). Changez “. . . sees that September 11 has turned him from a successful immigrant into a terrorist suspect” (Scanlan, 2010 p.275).

Post 9/11 America plunges into a “dangerous nostalgia” surrounding itself with myths that exclude Changez. New York is awash with flags and uniforms, a deluge of patriotism that excludes Changez and alienates him further, crushing his American dream. Reluctant to let go of his dream, he ignores the rumours he hears at the Pak-Punjab Deli: of Pakistani cab drivers being beaten, of the FBI raiding mosques, shops and even people’s homes, and of Muslim men mysteriously disappearing. He avoids watching the television coverage of America’s “War on Terror” repulsed by “the sports-event-like coverage given to the mismatch between the American bombers with their twenty-first century weaponry and the ill-equipped and ill-fed Afghan tribesmen below”, (Hamid, 2007,p.99). Clad in his “armour of denial” he fervently plunges into his job receiving
exceptional reviews for his performance, while at the same time being “increasingly marginalised within the post-9/11 US milieu” (Hartnell, 2010, p.336). When he does watch a newscast of an American raid on a Taliban command post, he is furious. He thinks: “Afghanistan was Pakistan’s neighbour, our friend, and a fellow Muslim nation besides . . .” (Hamid, 2007, p. 100).

Changez’s disillusionment with America is not just a reaction to the hostility after 9/11, his distaste for American economic dominion and his subsequent rebellion against it is foreshadowed much earlier in the novel. On a trip to Greece with his Princeton classmates, he is appalled by the self-righteousness with which they order someone twice their age, “as if they were the ruling class of this world” (Hamid, 2007, p. 21). During his assignment in New Jersey Changez is filled with doubts about the ethicality of the job he is doing, and feels uncomfortable with the ‘exploitative’ nature of his work. However, he is reminded to “focus on the fundamentals” (Hamid, 2007, p.98) instead, which mandates him to work with single-minded attention to financial details and has no place for compassion towards soon-to-be redundant workers.

“At various points in the novel Changez is shown to be conflicted in his identity; on the verge of inclusion into American society but also constructed as an outsider to it.” (Andrews, 2010, p.14). He fluctuates between the desire to identify himself with the Americans and his inability to do so because of his very different sensibility as a Pakistani. When Changez arrives in New York to join Underwood Samson he feels like he was “coming home” (Hamid, 2007p.32); the diversity of population he finds in New York immediately makes him feel welcome and he has no problem identifying with the multicultural character of New York.
In a subway car, my skin would typically fall in the middle of the colour spectrum. On street corners, tourists would ask me for directions. I was, in four and a half years, never an American; I was immediately a New Yorker” (Hamid, 2007, p. 33).

Changez is able to identify with New York as he sees symbols of his own cultural identity embraced by the city. However, in Manila, he is desperate to be identified as an American. He acts and speaks like one and learns to order executives who are his father’s age, wanting his share of the respect that his American colleagues receive as the “officer class of global business” (Hamid, 2007, p.65). At the same time, Changez is also able to understand the “undisguised hostility” of a Fillipino driver as directed at his Americaness. He identifies with this man as someone with whom he shares a “sort of Third World sensibility” and thinks of his colleague as so “foreign” (Hamid, 2007, p. 67). Even as he is asserting his Americanness, he feels as if he is “play-acting” and confesses that he was often ashamed of it. It is with this confused sense of belonging that he goes home to Pakistan during the Christmas holidays.

Changez’s trip to Pakistan that winter is significant because he is able to reinvent his identity, reawakened by pride aroused by the enduring grandeur of his house with its Mughal miniatures, ancient carpets and an excellent library and, by the rich history of his country. J.D. Fearon describes personal identity as “some distinguishing characteristic (or characteristics) that a person takes a special pride in or views as socially consequential but more-or-less unchangeable.” (Fearon, 1993, p.2). Changez tries to construct his identity by reclaiming pride in his family history as well as in the long and glorious history of Pakistan. “Changez’s personal history is a proud one – his family wealthy and also rich
intellectually – a family history which provides him with . . . a ‘genealogy’ of his own identity” (Waterman, 2015 p.22). After the holidays he returns to New York with a two week old beard:

It was, perhaps, a form of protest on my part, a symbol of my identity, or perhaps I sought to remind myself of the reality I had just left behind; I do not now recall my precise motivation. I know only that I do not wish to blend in with the army of clean-shaven youngsters who were my co-workers, and that inside me, for multiple reasons, I was deeply angry (Hamid, 2007, p.130).

Changez sees his beard as a symbol of difference and individuality that distinguishes him from his co-workers at Underwood Samson. The beard as a marker of identity post 9/11 posed enough problems for Changez: besides problems at immigration, he is subjected to verbal abuse by complete strangers. Even in Underwood Samson, he is conscious of stares and whispers. Changez does not naturally seek a fixed identity based on his ethnicity or culture, in fact, he had earlier commented on the “open-mindedness and ... cosmopolitan nature of New York” (Hamid, 2007, p.48), but the post 9/11 scenario forces him to insist on a valourised cultural difference in order to claim his identity. The inability to identify with America and it’s ‘fundamentals’ distances him further and further away from his colleagues and his job.

Standing on the threshold of great change Changez needed just one catalyst to enable his identity construction complete. And that is provided by Juan Bautista who tells him of the “janissaries”. In a moment of epiphany he sees himself as a “modern-day janissary, a servant of the American empire” (Hamid, 2007, p. 152), and decides to quit
Underwood Samson and return to Pakistan. He says: “It was right for me to refuse to participate any longer in facilitating this project of domination” (Hamid, 2007, p. 156).

If Underwood Samson represents American economic dominion, Erica, represents America itself. Their failed love story can be read as an allegory of America’s relationship to its immigrant community. “The progression of Changez’s relationship with Erica follows the trajectory of his relationship with and representation of American society” (Andrews, 2010, p.41). Their love affair represents the possibility of the East-West meeting in the cosmopolitan atmosphere of New York, but as their relationship disintegrates such a possibility becomes more and more unreal. Their love-making is successful only when Changez takes on the persona of Chris: “It is only in the space of the imagination that he and Erica have been able to come together” (Morey, 2011, p.144). In an indictment to American multiculturalism Hamid shows that Changez becomes acceptable only when he relinquishes his identity. Changez explained their failed relationship with Erica as a result of his identity crisis:

It occurred to me that my attempts to communicate with her might have failed in part because I did not know where I stood on so many issues of consequence; I lacked a stable core. I was not certain where I belonged – in New York, in Lahore, in both, in neither – and for this reason, when she reached out to me for help, I had nothing of substance to give her (Hamid, 2007, p.168).

Amartya Sen (2006), in the prologue to his book Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny says that violence is fomented by our inability to recognise the plurality of human identity and our tendency to recognise one particular identity among all our diverse identities - be it religious or ethnic – as an overarching identity that diminishes all
other identities. For Changez his Pakistani identity becomes the singular most important identity, compelling him, however reluctantly, to choose over all his other identities to define himself. From an assimilated immigrant he is compelled to become a “fundamentalist” a word, which in the post 9/11 world seems to be used almost exclusively in relation to Muslim religious fundamentalism, even though Changez’s fundamentalism has nothing to do with religion. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* portrays the conflicting pressures to which young Pakistanis are subjected in America, particularly since September/11, and the clash between various cultures in diasporic conditions. It is this conflict that is represented in the personal dilemma of its protagonist, Changez, who struggles to come to terms with the post-September 11 America and the new identity imposed upon him. In the wake of the attack, his Pakistaniness becomes the most visible aspect of his identity serving as a threat to the host nation. Changez has to reinvent himself through resistance to the dominant culture because the new discourse of terror and war pushes him to the margin.

3.4. Conflict in Nadeem Aslam’s *Maps for Lost Lovers* and *The Wasted Vigil*

Nadeem Aslam was born in Pakistan in 1966; when he was fourteen, his father, a communist, poet, and filmmaker migrated to England, fearing persecution during the Zia ul-Haq regime. He was studying Biochemistry in the University of Manchester when he left his studies to pursue a career in writing. Aslam’s writings confront violence, bigotry, and oppression in the contemporary world, opposed by love and compassion that proves which often is too inadequate to contend with such forces allowing moribund social and religious convention to take over. Nadeem Aslam has written four novels: His first novel,
Season of the Rainbirds (1993), set in a small Pakistani town during the Zia ul-Haq regime captures the decadence and the retrogression of Pakistani society, won the Betty Trask and the Author’s Club First Novel Award. His second novel, Maps for Lost Lovers (2004), which he took 11 years to write, won the 2005 Encore Award and the 2005 Kiriyama Pacific Rim Book Prize. It depicts the lives of an immigrant community in a small British town. Aslam’s third novel The Wasted Vigil (2008) is set in war-torn Afghanistan and chronicles the destruction that war and violence has inflicted upon the country. His latest novel, The Blind Man’s Garden published in 2013 is set in Western Pakistan and Eastern Afghanistan and looks at the War on Terror through the eyes of local, Islamist characters. It contains also a love story loosely based on the traditional Punjabi romance of Heer Ranjha. In each of his novels Nadeem Aslam explores the many fateful encounters between Islam and the West. His characters are often deeply religious and conservative, disenchanted with the modern world and suspicious of the West. The two novels selected for study here are Maps for Lost Lovers and The Wasted Vigil.

3.4.1. Immigrant life in Maps for Lost Lovers

Aslam’s second novel Maps for Lost Lovers is set in an unnamed British town with a large community of Pakistani immigrants. The inhabitants call their town Dasht-e-Tanhaii: The Wilderness of Loneliness or The Desert of Solitude. The lovers Chanda and Jugnu have disappeared mysteriously on a cold winter morning, Chanda’s brothers are arrested on the charge of honour killing their sister and her lover. The novel recounts the twelve months in the aftermath of the event, unravelling the lives of this close-knit immigrant
community, severely putting to test their traditions and their faith in Islam. The novel explores themes of dislocation, exile and alienation. There is “a cross-examination of concepts such as traditional and modern which comes to the surface in the wake of rapid social change and the ensuing feeling of cultural vulnerability, especially within a diaspora.” (Waterman, 2015, p. 111). Maps for Lost Lovers highlights the antagonism between traditional Islamic values and contemporary Western culture through the lives of migrants and their British born children.

In Maps for Lost Lovers Aslam describes Pakistan as “a harsh and disastrously unjust land, its history a book of sad stories” and whose “millions of sons and daughters” “roaming the planet looking for solace, they’ve settled in small towns that make them feel smaller still, and in cities that have tall buildings and even taller loneliness” (Maps, p. 9). It is immigrants like these that have settled in the unnamed British town in the novel; a place that can be easily mistaken for a town in Pakistan. The novel depicts an isolated ghettoised working-class British Muslim neighbourhood, alienated and segregated with hardly any interaction with British culture, which Aslam describes as “pockets of the Third World within the First” (Aslam, 2004, pp. 161-162). Though set in Britain there are hardly any white people present in the story, and the ones that are present are reduced to racists who suffer from moral decay. “Not only are the stereotyped whites excluded, but everything that they represent, i.e. Western society, is alienated and thought of as foreign, not belonging to the desirable traditions and properties of the Pakistani community” (Bengtsson, 2008, p.1). Throughout the novel there are indications that Britain is considered a hostile environment and residence in the UK is neither desired nor seen as anything but temporary, especially for the older generation. “This isn’t our
country” (Aslam, 2004, p. 79) Chanda’s mother tells Shamas. It is a place where “every day you hear about depraved white men doing unspeakable things to young children”, a “nest of devilry from where God has been exiled” (Aslam, 2004, p. 30). Kaukab despairs that the tropical seedlings and cuttings she ordered from Pakistan fail to flourish in England, “she had wondered if the country’s soil itself hadn’t been responsible for the failures” (Aslam, 2004, p.95).

Aslam has created a displaced community unable and unwilling to assimilate, always looking back at their original homeland. Just as they have renamed their town Dasht-e-Tanhaii the inhabitants of this immigrant community have renamed the British landmarks, streets and towns that they encounter with familiar names reminiscent of their lost homeland. “As in Lahore, a road in this town is named after Goethe. There is a Park Street here as in Calcutta, a Malabar Hill as in Bombay, and a Nag Tolla Hill as in Dhaka” (Aslam, 2004, p. 28). James Clifford (1994) claims that: “Resistance to assimilation can take the form of reclaiming another nation that has been lost, elsewhere in space and time . . .” (Aslam, 2004, p. 307). By renaming the British landmarks, these Pakistani immigrants attempt to recreate their homeland in the English space that they inhabit “amassing a claim on the space bit by bit” (Aslam, 2004, p. 156).

Clifford also maintains that, “some of the most violent articulations of purity and racial exclusivism come from diaspora populations” (1994, p.307). In Maps for Lost Lovers members of the South Asian community keep themselves to themselves and avoid interaction with members of other religion, race and ethnicity. So most Muslim men and women of Dasht-e-Tanhaii have a few set of outdoor clothes that they take off on reaching home lest they be contaminated by the dirt outside.
England is a dirty country, an unsacred country full of people filthy with disgusting habits and practices, where, for all one knew, unclean dogs and cats, or unwashed people, or people who have not bathed after sexual congress, or drunks and people with invisible dried drops of alcohol on their shirts and trousers, or menstruating women, could very possibly have come into contact with the bus seat a good Muslim has just chosen to sit on, or touched an item in a shop that he or she has just picked up...(Aslam, 2004, p. 267).

Fear of hybridization and the notion of purity force them to religious extremism and violence. Any kind of transgression is met with strong condemnation and even violence, therefore the book is replete with forced marriage, domestic violence, exorcism and even honour killing.

“As is often the case in such patriarchal, rigid cultures, the standard for female purity is higher than the standard for men” (Waterman, 2015, p.121). When a suitable match is not found for a woman in England, she is often sent off to Pakistan for marriage, as is the case with Mah-Jabin. She is married to a cousin in Pakistan at the age of sixteen to disastrous results. A rebellious girl, who happens to fall in love with a Hindu boy, is battered to death as a result of an exorcism following a diagnosis that she is possessed by djinns. Suraya is divorced by her husband in a drunken rage when he uttered the dreaded word ‘talaq’ three times. She returns to England looking for a suitable man who would marry and divorce her, because that is the only way that she can be reconciled to her husband and her son. A thought that occasionally crosses Suraya’s mind is: “Allah is not being equally compassionate towards the poor woman who is having to go through another marriage through no fault of her own . . . as though Allah forgot there were
women when he made some of his laws, thinking only of men” (Italics in original) (Aslam, 2004, p.150). Female fetuses are aborted routinely: Burra, Chanda’s brother has his wife undergo an abortion believing that she is pregnant with a daughter, but after the abortion finds out that the foetus was that of a boy. Chanda’s relationship with Jugnu is seen as sinful, but Chotta’s sexual affair with Kiran in not entirely a secret.

Far from the country of their origin, the inhabitants of Dasht-e-Tanhaii assert their religious and cultural identity more vigorously than they would in their original homeland. This is more evident in the character of Kaukab than in anyone else. To some extent Kaukab forms the core of the novel. She is the orthodox wife of Shamas, whose fundamentalist attitude towards her religion alienates her from her husband and children. Kaukab is a devout Muslim; an unbending and blinkered follower of Islam. Her aversion to Britain and everything British is evident from her attitude towards the English language, a language that she never learnt beyond a few broken sentences. Kaukab idealizes Pakistan as a place of purity and agonises over her diasporic condition. She considers England to be a country where sin is commonplace, and that migrating to England has been the biggest mistake of her life (Aslam, 2004, p.324).

It was as though, when the door of Pakistan was closed on her, her hands had forgotten the art of knocking: she had made friends with some women in the area but she barely knew what lay beyond the neighbourhood and didn’t know how to deal with strangers: full of apprehension concerning the white race and uncomfortable with people of another Subcontinental religion or grouping (Aslam, 2004, p.32).
However, within her household, Kaukab is a dominant and assertive woman who does not tolerate any questioning of her authority. Driven by her belief in the supremacy of her religion she governs her household according to orthodox Islamic traditions, and any act of resistance from her children is interpreted as contamination by British way of life. She cries: “This accursed land has taken my children away from me. My Charag, my Mah-Jabin, my Ujala. Each time they went out they returned with a new layer of stranger-ness on them until finally I didn’t recognise them any more” (Aslam, 2004, p.146).

According to James Clifford (1994), “women in diaspora remain attached to, and empowered by, a “home” culture and tradition – selectively. Fundamental values of propriety and religion, speech and social patterns, and food, body, and dress protocols are preserved and adapted in a network of ongoing connections outside the host country” (p.314).

The primary incident in the novel is that of the honour killing of Jugnu and Chanda by her brothers Burra and Chotta. After three unsuccessful marriages Chanda is an object of shame for her brothers; and when she begins a live-in relationship with Jugnu they feel she has gone too far. “We are men but she reduced us to eunuch bystanders by not paying attention to our wishes” (Aslam, 2004, p. 342). In Pakistan the brothers boast that they “preferred being murderers to being brothers to a sister who was living in sin” (Aslam, 2004, p. 342). In an interview with Marianne Brace (2004), Aslam says: "In a way, the book is about September 11", he adds: “Jugnu and Chanda are the September 11 of this book" (n.pag.). The acts of terror Aslam describes in Maps for Lost Lovers are those inflicted daily by Islamic fundamentalists not on ‘infidels’ in foreign lands, but on Muslims themselves in their own homes. “Primarily associated with the immigrant Muslim
population, the phenomenon of honour crimes in modern Britain is immediately taken to affirm the perceived polarization between a secular West and its ethnic and religious minorities” (Yaqin, 2012, p. 101-102).

The purpose of the novel as Aslam himself points out, is to draw attention to the dangers of extremism lurking in isolated groups, who, due to lack of will and capacity to confront the root problems, the leadership is taken by the most vigorous advocates of radical ideas who, being given the greatest amount of attention by the mainstream media, in time get the status of official representatives. In Maps for Lost Lovers Aslam portrays how multicultural policies fail to grasp the reality of the diasporic communities. The book shows that “state multiculturalism is a meaningless notion for an immigrant working class and a rootless underclass who cling to an unforgiving mode of belonging in an alien environment” (Yaqin, 2012, p.113). Despite the immigrant experience the British Asian diaspora in England is pulled apart by religion and cultural differences and thus deprives itself of a sense of community and belonging.

3.4.2. The Wasted Vigil: Critiquing the modern civil war

The second novel of Nadeem Aslam selected for this study is The Wasted Vigil, a novel set in Afghanistan. It traces the history of Afghanistan from Soviet occupation to the Taliban regime including in its delineation instances of American intervention. It is a novel that explores the brutal realities of the Afghan conflict. Aslam presents gruesome images of death and destruction, of rape and mutilation, of abductions and murders. He writes about how political and social conflict extending over several generations in a particular
place impacts human life. The vulnerability of women in the face of conflict, how they always are at the receiving end of extremism and fundamentalism is represented through the life of Quatrina. “The ‘global civil war’ enacted in the pages of *The Wasted Vigil* thus offers a critique not only of definitions of civil war, but also, and perhaps more significantly, a far more damning critique of the American-centric perspective on globality and media’s normalization of the unimaginable image” (Frawley, 2013, p. 439).

*The Wasted Vigil* is set in contemporary war-torn Afghanistan; Aslam traces the course of the civil war from the present back to the time before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, to the eruption of violence when Pakistan’s General Zia facilitated the US to provide money and arms to Afghanistan to support the mujahidins opposing the Soviet occupation. As the novel unfolds, Aslam meticulously includes all the documented savagery of Afghanistan inflicted by all sides involved in the long and intractable war: Land mines that look like toys, designed to lure children, rape of women and also young boys, brutal Taliban justice like stoning and amputation, torture, violent and feuding warlords, and self-righteous Americans.

The novel delineates the story of divergent characters who have congregated in the house of Marcus, a British, permanently settled in Afghanistan. In his house, near the mountains of Tora Bora, Marcus, who has become more Afghan than British, provides refuge to Lara, a Russian woman who has come to Afghanistan in search of her brother Benedikt, a soldier in the Soviet Army, who went missing in the 1980s. He also houses, David Town, a former CIA operative masquerading as a dealer in gems, who has also come on a quest of his own. Later two others come to stay in the house: Casa an allegedly Afghan labourer, who is actually an orphan adopted by the Taliban and brought up to be
a jihadist and lastly Dunia, a teacher in the American funded school in Usha, who is fleeing the Taliban and fundamentalist threats. Unknown to them the stories of all these varied individuals are linked to each other in the past, and this is uncovered in painful revelations as the story progresses. These individuals from four different nationalities now living under the same roof represent the main actors in the civil war raging in Afghanistan. Lara represents the Soviet Union, Casa Afghanistan; the host Marcus represents Britain while David represents the United States of America. In the never ending war the Soviets, the Americans, Pakistanis, and the Afghan Mujahidins are all equal villains with the ordinary Afghan caught in the crossfire. Early in the novel, the narrator tells us that: “This country was one of the greatest tragedies of the age. Torn to pieces by the many hands of war, by the various hatreds and failings of the world. Two million deaths over the past quarter century” (Aslam, 2008, p. 12). Aslam explores the human dimension in this tragic and often brutal civil war. All the characters maintain devoted, sometimes futile vigil for long missing family members and loved ones. But the vigil or the hope of finding every missing character results in despair because ultimately every relationship is destroyed by death.

Marcus is a British doctor who marries an Afghan woman who is also a doctor. When the story opens Marcus is a widower, who has lost his wife as well as his daughter to Taliban atrocities. He is trapped inside his home, a house he bought forty years ago, just before his marriage to Qatrina. The house was built by an old master calligrapher and painter in the last years of the nineteenth century, the walls of which were painted with beautiful images. The imagery on the wall is still there but has been caked over with mud out of fear of the Taliban, to whom any depiction of living things is blasphemous. One
night a band of Soviet soldiers broke into his house and picked up Zameen, their daughter. While in captivity she is repeatedly assaulted sexually by Benedikt, Lara’s brother, and by the time they escape, she is pregnant with Bihzad. Marcus’s quest is to find this grandson from his dead daughter. Marcus’s own life is not free from trauma – the Taliban find him in possession of Islamic calligraphy decorated with animals, accused of theft they order that his hand be cut off because he could not prove ownership to the paintings. In their brutality the Taliban order Qatrina to perform the amputation threatening to kill her husband if she refuses. Qatrina lost her sanity after this event and in a fit of lunacy nailed all their books to the ceiling with long spikes. The Taliban also declared their marriage of twenty years as illegal because their wedding which was presided over by a woman does not count. Accused of “living in sin” Qatrina is stoned to death by the Taliban.

*The Wasted Vigil* is the story of a land and people ruled by terror in the hands of the Taliban. Aslam creates harrowing images of the brutality of the Taliban.

... only hours after gaining control of Usha – they began whipping women in the streets for showing their faces. They banned smoking, music, television, kite flying, ludo, chess, foot-ball. There were bonfires of books and videos and audio tapes. They stood on the sides of the roads arresting men who didn’t have beards, taking them to jail until the beard has grown (Aslam, 2008, p. 239).

Aslam is much concerned about the silencing of women under fundamentalism. He sees the “reasons for fundamentalist misogyny as pragmatic rather than doctrinal, the simplest way of giving vulnerable, uneducated recruits a sense of power” (James-Mars, 2008, n.pag.). The young Taliban foot soldiers are from poor and impoverished
backgrounds, and teaching them to dominate “over women was a simple way to organise and embolden them” (Aslam, 2008, p. 240). Earning a living was considered inappropriate for women resulting in arrest, a woman may bleed to death but she may not be treated by a man. A woman may be beaten for exposing her feet. Lara is beaten with a tyre iron when she was lying down with her feet pointing towards Mecca, a disrespect she was unaware of. “Everyone . . . had the right to make an example of an unwise Afghan woman, even a boy young enough to be her son” (Aslam, 2008, p. 8). The madrassa teachers taught that “when a woman steps out of the house Satan is delighted” (Aslam, 2008, p. 220). “Set against the background of post-9/11 rhetoric of war on terrorism, the novel highlights the struggle of a young afghan mujahid Casa against the US army that, in turn, is countering the terrorist activities of Mujahidin in Afghanistan” (Kansool, 2012, p.62). The terrorist (Casa) and the anti-terrorist (James) seem to be driven by the same kinds of sentiments. Casa is traumatized by the US invasion of Afghanistan, and their effort to expel him and other mujahidins from their own country. He feels justified to fight and kill the Americans because they have derided his religion, “But how can we let someone obliterate Islam?” Casa tells Dunia (Aslam, 2008, p. 319). On the other hand James, an American soldier also has a duty to his nation and the people who lost lives in the 9/11 attacks. Therefore, thinking about this duty James feels justified to torture the mujahidins and feels proud to protect his homeland and people from suicide bombers and terrorists. Likewise Casa and Bihzad are proud to be jihadists because Allah has ordered them to fight against infidels who are abusing their language.
3.5. Contours of conflict in Kamila Samshie’s *Kartography* and *Broken Verses*

Kamila Shamsie was born in 1973 in Pakistan. Her first novel, *In the City by the Sea*, was shortlisted for the Mail on Sunday/John Llewellyn Rhys Prize, and her second, *Salt and Saffron*, won her a place on Orange's list of '21 Writers for the 21st Century'. In 1999 Shamsie received the Prime Minister’s Award for Literature in Pakistan. Her third novel, *Kartography* (2002), explores the strained relationship between soul mates Karim and Raheen, set against a backdrop of ethnic violence. Both *Kartography* and her next novel, *Broken Verse*, (2005) have won the Patras Bokhari Award from the Academy of Letters in Pakistan. Her next novel *Burnt Shadows*, published in 2009 was shortlisted for the Orange Prize for Fiction and won the 2009 UK Muslim Writers Award for Fiction. Her latest work *A God in Every Stone* was shortlisted for the 2015 Walter Scott Prize. In 2013 she was included in the *Granta* list of 20 best young British writers. Kamila Shamsie is one of a new wave of Pakistani writers who are based in Britain and successful in both Pakistan and the West. Kamila Shamsie comes from a long line of literary family that includes several female writers. Her mother Muneeza Shamsie, is a writer and a critic who has made invaluable contribution to Pakistani writings in English. Her great-aunt is Atia Hossain, one of the earliest woman writers in Pakistan. Kamila Shamsie divides her time between, Britain, the United States and Pakistan. The novels of Kamila Samshie that are selected for this study are *Kartography* (2002) and *Broken Verses* (2005). Both the novels are set in Karachi, while the first novel explores the personal stories of the protagonists Karim and Raheen set against the turbulence of political violence, *Broken Verses* explores idealist fundamentalism and the conflict between personal life and political activity.
3.5.1. Ethnic conflict in Kartography

*Kartography* begins when the protagonists Karim and Raheen are in their early 20s, but depicts their 1970s childhood through a series of flashbacks which also tell the stories of each of their parents. “Taking in events from 1970-1971, 1986 and the mid 1990s, *Kartography* considers the intersecting impacts of the war and the recent ethnic violence on the post-1971 generation, through Raheen’s friendship with Karim, and on the post-Partition generation through Karim and Raheen’s parents.” (Herbert, 2011, p.160). *Kartography* is a love story set amidst ethnic tension; Raheen and Karim are soulmates, inseparable since infancy when they slept “spine to spine”. They speak in anagrams and complete each other’s sentences. They belong to the upper class cosmopolitan society of Karachi “insulated in the Defence bubble” (Waterman, 2015, p.37). “Where class bound everyone together into an enveloping, suffocating embrace, with ethnicity only a secondary or tertiary concern” (Shamsie, 2002, p.175). In contrast to this, on the other side of the Clifton Bridge, a mojahir like her is reduced to become a car thief in order to support a family even though he scored decent marks in the Civil Service exams he is denied government employment due to the quota system.

Karachi the port city of Pakistan is one of the oldest and biggest cities where a large number of Muslims from India, known as Mujahirs came to settle transforming its demography and economy. In the 1980s and 1990s, there was an influx of Afghan refugees adding to the multi-ethnic population of the city. The city has seen disturbing ethnic and political violence in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Communal and class differences are causes for frequent violence between the Mujahirs and Pathans. The Mujahirs, are English-speaking urbanites, a majority in Karachi who are resented for
taking employment and living-space from others, opposed by feudal landlords who resist
democracy, land reform, and the progressive policies that would destroy their local
authority. Raheen understands the dynamics of ethnic divide quite early in life; that she
will always be considered an outsider due to her parent’s migrant past. Her frustration is
obvious when she says:

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. . . If I told them Karachi was my home just as
much as it was anyone else’s, would they look at me and think: another Muhajir
(Shamsie, 2002, p.41).

It was when she was quite young that she overhears her parent’s friends Uncle Asif and
his wife Laila, express their fear about the establishment of the MQM. Aunty Laila says:

‘Karachi’s my home, you know. Why did those bloody Muhajirs have to go and
form a political group? Once they’re united they’ll do God knows what.
Demanding this, demanding that. Thinking that just because they are a majority
in Karachi they can trample over everyone else. Like they did in ’47. Coming
across the border thinking that we should be grateful for their presence’ . . . ‘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, 2002, p. 38).

“Through Laila’s diatribe, Shamsie uncovers how our notions of being —at home‖ and in
place can encourage xenophobia and hostility toward those we designate as strangers
and newcomers, especially when they rest upon ideas of ownership, possessiveness, and sovereignty” (Kumar, 2011, p.169).

Kartography draws a parallel between the ethnic tensions in Karachi and the civil war between East and West Pakistan in 1971. The Partition of 1947 had turned many Indians into Pakistanis, similarly, 1971 turned many Pakistanis into Bangladeshis. The event of 1971 is “an open wound cutting across the parent’s generation, as well as the children’s” (Waterman, 2015, p.70).

Between our birth in 1947 and 1995, dead bang between our beginning and our present, is 1971, of which I know next to nothing except that there was a war and East Pakistan became Bangladesh, and what terrible things we must have done then to remain so silent about it. Is it shame at losing the war, or guilt about what we did to try to win that mutes us? (Shamsie, 2002, p. 270).

Karim and Raheena knew the significance of the year 1971 to their parents, because this is the year when their parents swapped fiancés: Karim’s mother Maheen was originally engaged to Zafar, Raheen’s father and Raheen’s mother Yasmin to Karim’s father, Ali. As the anti-Bengali sentiment swept the country with the approaching civil war, Zafar engaged to the Bengali Maheen has to face charges of being called “a turncoat”, “a traitor”, “bingo-lover” and even assault. When he is confronted by an armed neighbour whose brother is killed in East Pakistan, who asks him how he can marry a Bengali, to which Zafar replies: “Think of it as a civic duty. I’ll be diluting her Bengali blood line” (Shamsie, 2002, p.232). Although the children were not yet born then, this event haunts their relationship decades later. According to Caroline Herbert (2011), this moment of Zafar’s weakness, gestures towards the (often gendered) violence of the civil war, and the
genocidal repression of Bengalis in East Pakistan, as well as the atrocities which are excised from official histories (p.161). *Kartography*, alludes to the absence of memorialisation of 1971; there is an official silence on the atrocities of the war. “The task of uncovering Pakistan’s silenced histories is the subject of Shamsie’s 2002 novel *Kartography*” (Herbert, 2011, p.160).

3.5.2. Broken Verses: Feminist voices in troubled times.

The second novel selected is *Broken Verses*, published in 2005. In this novel Kamila Shamsie incorporates various strands of national, socio-political and cultural aspects of Pakistan. It is also a work that discusses the dilemmas of educated women in Pakistan. Kamila Shamsie tells a tale of the quest of a daughter for her mother who left her when she had barely entered her adolescence. Samina Akram is a feminist activist who disappears two years after her lover a famous Pakistani poet, who is simply called The Poet, is brutally murdered by government minions. “The history of her mother and the Poet is told in relation to such events as the overthrow of democracy by the military, the various ins and outs of who replaced whom as head of state, how this affected human, especially women’s rights, and how the fundamentalists gained strength because the military needed their support” (King, 2011, 156). Fourteen years later Aasmaani, is still submerged in grief and anger over the loss of her mother, who she feels has abandoned her. Through Aasmaani’s quest for the truth about the disappearance of her mother and the murder of her step father, Shamsie’s *Broken Verses* traces “Pakistan’s vexed relationship with democracy” and takes on “issues of censorship and democracy in the
increasingly rigid political and ideological atmosphere of 1980s and 1990s Pakistan” (Cilano, 2009, pp. 190-191).

Kamila Shamsie has created a “fiercely independent woman” (Broken Verses, p. 87) in the character of Shamina Akram. She becomes the muse of the radical, anti-government poet Nazim, openly and defiantly becoming involved with him. The Poet “made her a figure of rebellion, of salvation, she played into it” (Broken Verses, p. 88). All over the country people read the Poet’s verses dedicated to her and soon she finds herself being invited to speak at girl’s colleges and join panel discussions on Women’s Upliftment. But Shamina is not a woman contented to live in the shadows of the poet; by 1970, she had walked out on him in search of her own identity. She becomes a firebrand speaker often risking physical harm and imprisonment as she seeks to protest against the government’s misogynistic policies. She is at the forefront of the feminist movement in Pakistan during the 1970s and 1980s, which paradoxically coincides with the Pakistani military’s encouragement of Islamic fundamentalism. The 1980s, as Aasmaani recalls, “was all prison, protest and exile and upheaval”. “The battle lines were so clearly drawn then with the military and the religious groups firmly allied, neatly bundling together all the progressive democratic forces fought against” (Shamsie, 2005, p.73).

“While Islamic jurisprudence has primarily remained a patriarchal discourse, Samina Akram uses it to demand a new articulation of the rights of women” (Mansoor, 2014, p. 53). In spite of her secular outlook, she has deep knowledge of religious texts and can take on intractable clerics to point out their biased interpretation of the Koran. Broken Verses also records Samina’s protests against the Hudood Ordinance, a legislative initiative introduced by Zia-ul-Haq in 1979 that, in part, decreed “an accusation of rape
could only be proved in a court of law if there were four pious, male Muslim adults willing to give eye-witness testimony” (Shamsie, 2005, p. 92).

In the actual history of Pakistan, the Hudood Ordinance stands as one of the high water marks of Pakistan’s English-language press’s involvement in the public sphere, particularly by its female journalists. According to M. Shamsie, the English-language press’s coverage and critique of the Hudood Ordinance “galvanised educated professional women in Pakistan, particularly lawyers, welfare workers and journalists [such that] they formed the Women’s Action Forum which came out into the streets to protest against Zia’s laws” (Changed xiii) (Cilano, 2009, p.193).

Apart from discussing issues of democracy and Islamization, Broken Verses also touches on Pakistan’s contentious relations with India, and its role in Afghanistan and with the US. Shamina warns the cleric she is debating with of the dangers of his interpretation of Islam and how it is turning young, idealistic and confused boys into jihadis trained and armed by the US to fight the Soviet infidels. She questions the Maulana:

‘What happens after Afghanistan, have you considered that? Where do they go next, those global guerrillas with their allegiance to a common cause and their belief in violence as the most effective way to take on an enemy? Do you and your American friends ever sit down to talk about that?’ (Shamsie, 2005, p. 286)
Through the recollection of a daughter deprived of her mother’s love and company, Kamila Shamsie weaves the story of the struggle put up by Samina and the Poet to raise their voice for their country against despotism and oppression.

3.6. Conclusion

Pakistani writers like their Indian counterparts, have similar thematic concerns, often writing about the self and the nation. Some are preoccupied with the memories of Partition, the war of 1971 or the Islamization of the state. Others write about the immigrant experience, chronicling the history of Pakistanis that continues with migration and exile. Almost all of them explore issues of identity, hybridity, home and exile. Above all, they collectively counter the singular representation of Pakistan, revealing the nation’s multiplicity. (Cazmi, 2009, p.37)

The works of all the writers included in this study reveal in their own ways the heterogeneity of Pakistan as opposed to the stereotypical representation of it in the media. Kamala Shamsie’s *Kartography* and Nadeem Aslam’s *The Wasted Vigil* attempt at memorializing events that official accounts have silenced. Pakistan’s official silence regarding the 1971 war and the atrocities connected to it is uncovered and interrogated. Atrocities related to war and conflict is also the main focus of Aslam’s novel *The Wasted Vigil*. These works function as parallel histories where true history is absent. The novels examined in this study reveal that the issue of identity is a major concern. Changez’s U turn from an America loving, Princeton educated, New York executive to a “reluctant fundamentalist” can be interpreted as an attempt at re-presenting the Muslim identity as
opposed to how he is framed, especially in the post 9/11 environment. Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin (2012), say that: “The bearded Muslim fanatic, the oppressed veiled woman, the duplicitous terrorist who lives among ‘us’ the better to bring about our destruction: all these stereotypes have emerged with renewed force since 9/11” (p.2). These are the stereotypes that contemporary writers seem to oppose and provide an alternate reality to.

Religion is a fundamental aspect of Pakistan as a nation, and religion has always gained centre stage in politics as well as in the society at large. Therefore it is not surprising that it preoccupies the writers from this country. Aslam’s Maps for Lost Lovers tackles the theme of Islamic extremism and the diasporic condition. In the closed Muslim community of an unnamed British town, the immigrants live a life almost similar to any town in Pakistan. Hamid’s The Reluctant Fundamentalist and Nadeem Aslam’s Maps for Lost Lovers can be read as a failure of American and British ideas of multiculturalism. And as Hamid’s narrator Changez talks to a silent American about events around 9/11 it’s hard not to draw a link back to Ahmed Ali’s project of using the novel in English from the subcontinent to illustrate ‘another side of the story.’ With regards to The Wasted Vigil, The choice of Afghanistan as the setting is also, of course, a declaration that the novel is inherently political; in the post-9/11 world it could not be seen otherwise. All the novels examined here participate in the construction of Muslim identities in the aftermath of 9/11. Pakistani writers are interestingly poised; implicated in both the unfolding and the unraveling of our age.
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