

Dislocation of South Asian Families in a Foreign Land: a case of Architectural Anxiety

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Abstract

Pakistan's emergence on the literary vault can be noticed through the considerable critical acclaim Pakistani writers writing in English are receiving worldwide. Among such writers with divergent interests and experiences is Nadeem Aslam, one of the most widely acknowledged Pakistani writer writing in English, who from the slums of Pakistan, to the Pakistani immigrant families, has attempted to assess the living standards of the oppressed in his fictional world.

This paper explores, on the one hand, how political oppression and colonial anxieties become haunting in the form of ghosts, specters and seething presences and on the other, how the horror of oriented other figures prominently in Nadeem Aslam's fiction. Pakistani fiction has not been explored from this perspective previously. Every aesthetic, architectural or structural movement has a smear of past on its face.

Key Words: Politics of architectural anxiety, South Asian immigrant families, Post-colonial gothic, political anxieties, Pakistani writer writing in English.

Introduction

Nadeem Aslam's first novel *Season of the Rainbirds* centers on a small town in Pakistan. Set during the 1980's, the narrative explores the political and religious tensions between traditional Islamic ways and those of the secular world. His next novel *Maps for Lost Lovers* hinges on the large community of Pakistani migrants living in English town of Dasht-e-Tanhaii. In the third novel *The Wasted Vigil* Aslam narrates the terrible afflictions that have for long plagued South Asian region in general and Afghanistan in particular.

Gothic is not only the best, but the only rational architecture, as being that which can fit itself most easily to all services, vulgar or noble. Undefined in its slope of roof, height of shaft, breadth of arch, or disposition of ground plan, it can shrink into a turret, expand into a hall, coil into a staircase, or spring into a spire,

with undegraded grace and unexhausted energy; and whenever it finds occasion for change in its form or purpose, it submits to it without the slightest sense of loss either to its unity or majesty, subtle and flexible like a fiery serpent, but ever attentive to the voice of the charmer (Ruskin, 2004).

Most studies of Gothic recognize architecture as the pillar of the genre. From the origination of gothic architectural style, it was crude, grotesque and exaggerated and expressed the apocalyptic mood of Middle Ages. It intended to have a magical effect on the viewer by evoking a sense of awe, terror and vulnerability which pointed towards the wide variation in gothic impact. Not only in art but even in literature, earlier gothic novels were named after buildings, the chief example being that of *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole which established itself as the prototype for later gothic fiction. In this particular gothic text which is considered to be the first gothic novel, the castle was treated as an additional character of the novel. The architecture of the castle was employed to serve as a mirror to psyches states of characters. Not only this, but the writer also had a fantasy castle named Strawberry Hill which further reinforced writer's interest in gothic architecture and voiced a literary and artistic reaction against the order and false decorum of the Neo Classists. Writers of the gothic narratives allowed architecture to articulate the innermost secrets of the human psyche. The old, unfamiliar, mysterious and menacing gothic building was the perfect setting for a story intended to overwhelm or terrify the reader. Innumerable motifs typical of gothic fiction have been haunted castles, ascents, descents, underground chambers or labyrinth, secret passage, hidden doors, demonic possession, madness, incest and other broken sexual taboos. Although Gothic style is most frequently associated with architecture, it can be applied to diverse arts, such as sculpture, painting, jewelry and textures. Gothic architecture has wide imaginative awareness, keenly perceiving the potential of human psyche and to unlock this potential, it can be credited for its insights into human nature exhibiting human impulses. Like gothic, gothic architecture is also open to the shifts in critical fashion, for its complicated structures, unclear demarcation though familiar and bizarre. It has got remarkable powers of survival through different genres.

Likewise, fictional world of South Asian narratives is characterized by a Gothic sense of apprehension and of impending disaster. It is a hollow fallen world with the vision of human beings living in fear and alienation and haunted by images of mythic expulsion and by an awareness of their wretchedness. In fact, gothic heroes and heroines are left to their own, at time in foreign countries, through complexities of decisions and actions, struggling hard to find their own solutions, ending in estrangement from family ties or in some cases solving the mysteries of their family origins. Prototype gothic settings, the haunted castle, visited houses, dark and dingy places all create the gothic ambiance. A gothic novel can't be considered such without a castle or an abbey, but in later variations of this genre such as postcolonial gothic, though the castles and abbeys have been replaced by urban abodes; there are places where the reader does not forget a

feeling of the menacing, stifling dark presences. Similarly the gothic medium fulfills the need to retain the links to the past, folk tasks, superstitions and oral traditions such as medieval ballads, romance, epic and legend, all contain elements of supernatural.

Postcolonial gothic in Pakistani fiction is defined both according to observable features of themes and setting but also according to the realms of psychological depth from which it originates, or awareness it is believed to provoke. Each narrative develops its own momentum as an exploration of suffering and anxiety. Likewise in Aslam's postcolonial writings, the figures are constantly haunted by terror of the unknown, lending his works the gothic overtones. The ambiance he creates in his novels not only serves as index of a certain psychic inscription but that psychic fear begins to assume the demonic proportions as well. Their fear highlights the inner working of their haunted minds.

Describing a six-roomed building in *The Wasted Vigil*, narrator shows how each of the first five rooms was dedicated to five senses. The first room was dedicated to the sense of sight and on walls "Subha in a dancery gesture presented her eye to a rogue in the forest" (12). The second room was for sense of hearing and "here the walls showed for fastng.ec singers and musical gatherings" (12). Third was given to the faculty of smell where angels were shown to be at the feet of humans, "to ascertain from the odour whether these feet had ever walked towards a mosque" (13) and few others were shown to be leaned towards belly to check for fasting during the month of Ramazan. The fourth room was dedicated to sense of touch and on wall there was a likeness of Muhammad (PBUH) and his hand in a water vessel to make a pact with a woman as he would not shake hands with them and through this vessel he would make a pact. The fifth was on modeled on sense of taste, "the highest place in the house: it contained and combined all that had gone before—and interior dedicated to love, the ultimate human wonder" (13). Now the anxiety can be perceived written large on the interior of each room, awfully damaged by the war. Each room recounts its own story. After describing aesthetically pleasing building, the writer does not forget to evoke the sense of history, immediately brings the reader back to reality by linking it to the fear of religious extremist groups. The act of smearing the images with mud by Marcus for the fear of Taliban is what comments of the anxieties and fear of the inhabitants of South Asian region particularly of Afghanistan. "Even an ant on the pebble had been daubed. It was as though all life had been returned to dust" (13). The six-roomed house—each room was dedicated to one of the five senses—was built by an old master calligrapher. But life turns this house into a haunted abode for both Marcus and Qatrina as "these are the rooms where Qatrina had lost her reasons, Marcus having to tell her there was no need to be afraid just because the bar of red soup as producing white lather" (Nadeem, 2004) and what led to this psychic disorder Qatrina was the incident when she, at sixty-one was declared an adulteress. The thirty nine years of marriage were declared void as the ceremony was conducted by a female and she was punished for being a sinner. "A

microphone had been placed close to her for her screams to be heard clearly by everyone” (40). Unlike sensational gothic novel, as a responsible postcolonial writer, Aslam links the aesthetic to the troubled past and the ravages of war can be read, clearly writ on almost every structure of the house he describes. After aesthetically pleasing passages/ discretionary he immediately jolts the reader by bringing in the harsh reality, jolting the reader, and never sacrificing the concern of a South Asian writer.

Likewise, in the same novel when Lara sits and loses herself in the beauty of Buddha’s sculpture “her gaze on the Buddha’s giant face, Lara sits on the lowest step of the staircase in the perfume factory. She looks at the features of the beautiful young man. He feels vulnerable and intimate, as if facing someone in bed” (42), the narrator again jolts the reader by bringing Taliban’s preparations to dynamite Buddha’s head when in next line the narrator says “dressed in black, the Taliban that day in March 2001 were preparing to dynamite the head when one of them had contemptuously fired a round of bullets into the stone faces smiling to itself” (43). The architectural ambiance and meticulous details of the statue of Buddha do nothing to obviate the sense of awe people felt when in March 2001 Buddha’s colossal statues were demolished and razed to the ground. That fear is re inscribed by the description of the destroyed statues in the middle of Marcus’ perfume factory.

The link between architecture and anxiety becomes more intensity when in his third novel Aslam compares the mind with a haunted house. Gothic becomes explicit and far more intense in his third novel when he starts the book with the words: “Her mind is a haunted house” (5). Mind’s architectural resemblance to the house, that too a haunted one, is what lends the text its gothic texture. Ironically, she has no house of her own as being an outsider in Afghanistan, she lives as a guest in Marcus’ house. Having no husband and family of her own, she further recedes into herself, finally making her mind, her house, filled up with disturbing memories. The entire mind turned inside out and projected outward and unseen interior state is made visible. “Her mind has shimmered with the things she had encountered in this house. They were desert mirages. Phenomena she could not really be sure she had seen” (88). What turns her mind into a haunted house is not only the fact that her brother and husband died in war but also the hostilities that she encounters on reaching Afghanistan. Marcus and his family is one such example. Here Aslam slightly shifts from something external and public to something internal and subjective—from external landscape to mental landscape. The events of the novel unfold the mystery of how in a foreign land Lara, reaching Afghanistan in quest of her missing brother, has been treated coarsely. She first receives the unexpected blows as early as she reaches the foreign land. In her journey through bus, she received three blows to her body with an iron rod as her feet were pointed towards Mecca—a disrespect she wasn’t even aware of, being a foreigner. Aslam dissects fraught psyche of his characters and engages in a gothic

like which significantly establish the connection of the book / text to the gothic world.

In Aslam's novels although there are no traditional gothic structural patterns such as haunted castles, blind alleys, secret passages etc. but he skilfully creates gothic environment through urban structural gothic settings, thereby exhibiting human consciousness ranging from private fears to universal horrors. Horror and terror exuding from the architecture or the landscape is the most potent of the gothic affects he utilizes. Ironically, Gothic architecture which in medieval times and even later created awe in viewer and reader evoked uncanny sensation in urban settings and locales. In fact from gothic architecture to urban dwellings, it's a movement from the sublime to uncanny. Now it is the psychological and not the overtly supernatural happenings that create a sense of uncanny. Gothic architecture such as castles, churches, abbeys etc. used to arouse emotional responses of awe, fear and horror but in modern dwellings rational response is evoked as the source of fear becomes more subtle and psychological. The gothic obsession with the structure and architecture, frequent eruption of violence, unreliability of appearances, the doubt in the minds of characters, oddities in their life, all such elements are one way or the other have been utilized by Aslam in his works. The traditionally haunted colossal gothic architecture mentioned earlier in this chapter has been replaced by haunted spaces. Now the houses, secret panels, confined places become psychologically suggestive of the suppressed living conditions of the immigrants. Instead of order, decorum or rational judgment, the ambiance in his novels represents the darker side of awareness, with evasive regions of guilt, fear and madness which constitute terrifying aspects of human psyche. There is profound unease and fear of frozen life with expressions of frustration caused by the claustrophobic places his characters reside in. Aslam might not have employed gothic tropes consciously and his work might not be strictly characterized as traditionally gothic but all the works bear provocative resemblance to gothic literature. The gothic ambiance or the structure of the houses they reside may be taken as symbol for the mysterious irrational side of the human personality and Aslam's elaborate descriptions of the architecture should not go unnoticed, as it suggests and comments on the psyche of his characters. For example, in *Maps for Lost Lovers* (Nadeem, 2004) Kaukab's house signifies estrangement and entrapment, the rooms remain empty of the inhabitants most of the time. Even the structure of the house conveys this sense of being boxed in, being entrapped. "It being a small house, so little that all the doors slide into walls: Kaukab, mixing up had said once, "there is not enough room in here to swing a door" (268). Not even the inside of the house is deserted; Kaukab having no social life, no interactions with the neighborhood is further alienated. "The house in Dasht-e-Tahaii was silent... icicles dripped outside like washing. The nights brought a chill from the lake that added to the cold and stayed all day in the air that did not move" (127) ". In a conversation with a matchmaker over a piece of fabric, Kaukab mentions that she bought it "from the shop way over there on Ustad Allah Bux street. I don't go there often—white people's houses start soon after that street,

and even the Pakistanis there are not from our part of Pakistan” (42). The last portion of the sentence clearly shows the distance from the white. This sense of isolation is further hinted at when Kaukab thinks of her neighbourhood: “all quiet: it hoards its secret, unwilling to let on the pain in its breast...no one makes a sound in case it draws attention. No one speaks. No one breathes. The place is bumpy with buried secrets and problems swept under the carpet” (45). The sense of loneliness she is made to feel is what leads her to passive acceptance of life. Aslam dexterously places parallel of her domestic life with life outside of her home. Signs of domestic life i.e. cooking, aroma of food etc. highlight the fact that though familiar and homely, the inhabitants have no bonding. Near the end of the novel, Kaukab invites her children to dinner with their respective families. The preparations of the dinner have been graphically sketched, with meticulous detail of the dishes, pots, cooking etc. In the entire novel, just once the entire family sits together for a dinner, the activity is seen, the voices heard. “Over the next hour—while December’s darkness falls outside—the kitchen is animated as voices rise and hang in the air for short periods—a mouthful of food taken directly from the pot resulting in a bout of praise for Kaukab; the grandson spitting out a mouthful of half-chewed M&Ms like coloured gravel; Charag smiling and telling Mah-Jabin to finish the apple” (315). Kaukab, longing to have the comforts of a perfect family and warmth of her loved ones, goes to bathroom immediately after her son Charag leaves. She delights in the warmth of the linoleum, touches it and thinks joyously that “Her cold cold house is full of her children again. There is warmth in unexpected places” (315). But the feeling of coziness and activity happens to be ephemeral, the air becomes tensed, house plunges into silence once again and things fall apart. “The house, as if floated through time, has arrived at an iceberg, and no one is sure whether it will ever move away from it, leaving it behind. Now and then, to relieve the silences” (315). The stark contrast is presented when, after portraying the details of homely feeling, her children leave the house and in an instance the house is all empty. Kaukab in panic asks “where have they gone? When are they coming back?” (326). The house becomes a silent place where she is not living but merely existing where she is “trapped here with each other—locked up together in solitary confinement—and there is no release” (288).

The settings of his novels have been described with keen visual quality, and the architectural descriptions invite the visions of a country marred by the postcolonial/ colonial history and political upheavals and foreign invasions. Aslam consciously alludes to the visual scenic descriptions by describing the landscape, structure and the remains of the architectural details of Buddha’s sculpture in *The Wasted Vigil* (Nadeem, 2004). He skillfully develops the concept that history cannot be effaced; its tangible presence in the present can be symbolized by the standing statue of the Buddha in the perfume factory as if past has its disturbing presence in the present. The use of architecture as a frightful, menacing backdrop adds to the gothic texture and depth of his works. In *The Wasted Vigil*, the narrator commenting on the living conditions of the Afghans that they feel lonely, in the

very next line links it with the landscape of the house in which they live. He skillfully sets up a parallel between the architecture of a house and the lives of the peoples of South Asia and Afghanistan both damaged terrible by war. “They are intensely solitary here. The house stands on the edge of a small lake; and through damaged in the wars, it still conveys impression of being finely carved, the impression of being weightless. At the back is the half circle formed by the overgrown garden and orchard. Shifting zones of birdsong, of scent” (10). This is sight of isolated houses, obscure depths, disturbance of the domestic sphere, references to past mutilated and damaged by war. The word ‘still’ underscores the struggle to resist the damages of war as the house still conveys the impression of being alive, existing. The house has been described as a living entity bearing all the impressions of a human face just as in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* - a gothic novel (Stevenson & Robert, 1964) with its surrealist settings. The author describes the architectural design of the house in human terms: “a certain sinister block of building thrust forward its gable on the street. It was two stories high; showed no window, nothing but a door on the lower story and a blind forehead of discolored wall in the upper; and bore in every feature the marks of prolonged and sordid negligence” (11) which has been sharply contrasted with the comfortable interior of Jekyll’s study room. On a similar gothic pattern Marcus’ house in *The Wasted Vigil* gives a sense of being damaged by war. Every nook and corner of the house is damaged, bulletted, and torn apart by war. The house becomes another living character, commenting on the conditions of those damaged by war with the books nailed overhead. The thought that the Taliban may burn the books and all depiction of living beings covered with mud is inscribed on a pebble and “shattered skin of the walls” (14), and the painted couples had been harshly treated and what was left of them was “A shredded limb, a lost eye” (14). The house has been given a human shape and is described as a living character having skin. Similar description of the structure of the house can be traced in another seminal gothic reading, *The Fall of the House of Usher* by Edgar Allan Poe where the narrator of the story is mysteriously trapped in the house (Poe, 1990). The house is symbolic of the decay of the Usher family and the very structure of the house assumes a living monstrous character of its own:

But with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit. I say insufferable; for the feeling was unrelieved by any of that half-pleasurable...I looked upon the scene before me – upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain – upon the bleak walls- upon the vacant eye-like windows – upon the few rank sedges...what was it – I paused to think – what was it that so unnerved me in the contemplation of the House of usher? (365)

And gradually it unfolds to the narrator that all attempts to describe the structure of the house are futile as everything in an instance turns unfamiliar. “I had been accustomed from my infancy – while I hesitated not to acknowledge how familiar was all this – I still wondered to find how unfamiliar were the fancies which ordinary images were stirring up” (368).

Aslam tends to concentrate both on the environment and its effects on the inner workings of psyches of his characters, mostly leaving the readers to deduce for themselves the complex inner psychological movements whose splendid display of varied reactions compel the readers to focus not on the reactions but draw their attention to the mystery of the cause which could have provoked them. The mystery of the cause lends his narratives an uncanny as texture which is secretly familiar to almost all the characters but has undergone repression and then returned from it. Freud defines uncanny in terms of everything is that is “unheimlich that ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light” (934 Leitch). (Nadeem, *Season of the Rainbirds*, 2008) mystery of the letters long lost in a train crash evokes this feeling of unease not only in the characters but also in the readers who are ensnared in the mysterious maze and feel trapped and paralysed. (Nadeem, 2004) the town is structurally uncanny, displacing the familiarity and the domesticity of the town. The place becomes strange and alien for the inhabitants as the environment creates sense of the unfamiliar within the familiar. Readers cannot allay the uncanny sensation within the town. “The town lies at the base of a valley like a few spoonfuls of sugar in a bowl” (Nadeem, 2004). These immigrants are few and far between not more than a spoonful in England. The locations and contact determine how the subject is oriented or disorientated not only in the present but in relation to the past, to personal and to cultural memory and here the environment surrounding them serves to illustrate the mental state of the characters. Gothic ambiance given to the town makes it all the more manifest, menacing, and ghostly transformative. In all the novels, the gothic atmosphere is heightened until defamiliarized, and with that, the familiar becomes morbidly unfamiliar as all the characters feel displaced hence making the entire environment uncanny both for the inhabitants and the readers.

The relationship of the house with inmates is paradoxical; instead of providing the warmth and coziness it threatens the very existence of its inhabitants. The house is no longer a sign of safety. It has become a place where the characters are hesitant to walk in their own houses. A house which is expected to be a psychological barrier against unwanted intrusion and threat fails to provide any security to the inhabitants and what results is a strong feeling of homelessness. The same houses turn out to be prisons for the disturbed psyches. Fearing to walk in the garden of her house, the narrator exposes Lara’s fear that, “Always like distant ache within her is the thought of landmines, so she cannot bring herself to go too far into the garden” (36). When Lara enters Marcus’ house, an apparently homely house turns into a site of horror when she roams around the house and finds every wall bulleted, every painting smeared with mud, eve book nailed for the fear of Taliban.”If that was not sufficient , a ghost said to be that of his daughter Zameen had appeared in one of the rooms the day the Taliban came here” (15). Another such character is afraid of landmines “he experienced this dread whenever he is in an area not yet swept for landmines- wanting always to pull his shadows close to him, thinking the weight of it is enough to set off whatever

death-dealing device is hidden there” (69). As Toni Morrison says in *Beloved* about the safety of the house that it was a troubled house, being visited by the baby, brutally murdered. Now that the ghost of the baby returns to haunt, the house fails to provide shelter from haunting. “It occurred to her that what she wanted for her children was exactly what was missing in 124: safety. Which was the very first message he got the day he walked through the door. He thought he had made it safe, had gotten rid of the danger, beat the shit out of it run it off the place and showed it and everybody else the difference between a mule and a plow” (193). Another such sense of being haunted can be traced the way the house, which is meant to be a secure habitat, has been described otherwise (Arundhati, 2008). “It was a grand old house, the Ayemenem House, but aloof-looking. As though it had little to do with the people that lived in it. Like an old man with rheumy eyes watching children play...the steep, tiled roof had grown dark and mossy with age and rain. The triangular wooden frames fitted into the gables were intricately carved, the light that slanted through them and fell in patterns on the floor was full of secrets. Wolves. Flowers. Iguanas” (165). The Ayemenem House is aloof towards the inhabitants and the images lights carve on the floor make it all the more mysterious. The house has been described in details which make it no less than a visited house. (Nadeem, 2004) “The house is on a street that runs along the base of a hill. This street is linked by a side-street to a shelf like road higher up the hill and, in late summer, when the abundant dropped fruit of the wild cherry trees gets trodden on, the footpath up there are stained with red dark blue smears” (3). In this description it seems as if Aslam packs the entire course of the play, the way the lovers are being trodden on in the name of honour killing and how the smears of their blood keep haunting people linked with the lovers in any way. Ironically, in their own house, their own homeland they are afraid of their own shadows. The similar concept has been presented by Julian Wolfreys words. “There is no house without haunting. The house does not come to be haunted. Instead, haunting is the condition out of which the sense of the house manifests itself” (Snodgrass, 2004). Paradoxically the houses described in Aslam’s novels are haunted and insecure for the living but are secure for the dead who are unaffected by their haunting. The dead are shown to be comfortable roaming around the house, while the living are in unhomely state. This perpetual exchange between homely and unhomely condition is what makes the works rich in gothic overtones. (Nadeem, 2004)

It is through various descriptions of nature, houses, neighborhood etc the narrator voices this sense of being ensnared and suffocated in the environment detrimental to intellectual growth. (Nadeem, 2008) the deputed team comes to solve a murder case of Judge Anwar – powerful local figure and ironically the house offers them more mysteries. They roam in the “labyrinthine house” in an effort to find a clue, to murder/ assassination (15). The very structure of the house seems to pose a political threat to their inquiries/ investigations. It seems to perplex their senses as they discover certain mysterious windows in the mazes of the house that the family members had never opened. It a symbolic level, the

closed windows reveal the dark ride of the unconscious that is threading to thought and reason. The house and later the empty arches of the courthouse bear remarkable resemblance to middle ages gothic building. The silence and emptiness of the court rooms contribute to the aura of a symbolic tomb where values of justice are deep buried. With their “myopia”, the characters fail to see ahead (Nadeem, 2008). Consequently, their minds are too paralyzed to perceive beyond the strict list of injunctions made available to them by fundamentalists and fake religious mentors whose own lives have murky secrets behind. Apparently, the narrator reveals Maulana Hafeez’s near-sightedness in tongue in cheek manner when he visits an optician and is found, myopic, “the blurred edges contracted all of a sudden and objects came sharply into focus—even those that he had thought of as simply too far away to be seen. Maulana Hafeez was taken a back—that others observed things with such clarity, that all the time he too had been meant to see the world as clearly as this” (21). Similar references can be traced in *Maps for Lost Lovers*, a novel about an immigrant Pakistani family living in England, where they have to struggle to have even a comfortable communication with the people around and to cope with the clash of cultures. It is through the interplay of past and present, that the author suggests how being an immigrant is not to be at home with the surrounding and how all refugees have been relegated to peripheries. The location and structure and the surroundings signal the suppressed living conditions. They find themselves locked up in their houses but still the house fails to provide any comfort as the characters constantly fear the unknown forces following them. “On the road with the chestnut trees he hears footsteps behind him on the snow, but there is no one there” (Nadeem, 2008) and “there it is again, the knock, the sound of finger-bone on glass, louder this time” (Nadeem, 2008). At another point “there is someone at the door. There informal taps are given on the glass panel instead of doorbell being pressed” (Nadeem, 2004). For Shamas his own image becomes a source of terror for him when: “He stands at the window, and the sight of his face—reflected ghostlike on the glass pane—fills him with disgust...in her eyes he was a beast letting loose his lusts on her flesh” (Nadeem, 2004). The use of mirror leads to an important gothic tradition of doppelganger

Mary Ellen defines doppelganger as “the twin, shadow double, demon double, and split self. The term doppelganger derives from the German “double goer” or “double walker”...in which characters gaze inward at wearing dichotomies through shadowscapes, look-alikes, sexual doubles, mirror images, portraits and, and dreams and nightmares” (Snodgrass, 2005). The other created double is both a duplicate and antithesis of the original self and the effect of doubling is created through the moment of self recognition. It is a duplicate in the way that it’s his own reflection, and antithetical because this self is not what he portrays himself to be. For Shamas, seeing him as ghostlike is his deteriorated image in his eyes where he is removed from his previous image of a human being with a self control on sexual fantasies. It is not a simple identification and mirroring of the reflected self image. He has deceived his wife by copulating with Suraya, and he

has also jilted Suraya by hiding her husband's call from her for fear of losing her. He has abandoned his conception of him as a human being, and his new consciousness has filled him with disgust and his own previous image of self becomes unattainable. Ironically, the reflected image has intimate bonding with his inner self, but it makes him his own other. And eventually to dilute this empowering potential of the other image, "clouding the glass with his breath, he makes himself disappear" (230). Reality was too bestial for him, and the image, too real. The trope of the doppelganger facilitates to lay bare the inner workings of troubled psyches. Similar effect of gothic doubling is created when Lara, avoiding her image in mirror "turns after a while and crosses over to the circular mirror leaning against the far wall...in the mirror she ignores her own image, examining the reflection of the ceiling instead, lit by the pale early light" (5). By making her encounter a mirror as early as she reaches a foreign land, Aslam creates the alienation effect where she is severing herself from her own image, as a result of loss of identity in a foreign land. It is as if she were acutely aware of this new sense of disorientation which entails her desire to avoid her own image. On similar lines is riddled with such references of fear from lives of people living under the constant threat of external forces, the Taliban groups in this particular novel. A strong sense of terror emanates from the feeling when the narrator describes how his characters fear the unknown. The characters constantly perceive the sense of being followed or watched by unknown figures as: "In the garden Marcus opens his eyes, feeling as though someone has drawn near and blocked his sunlight, but there is no one". A man who left his country to set up his home in another had to pay heavily, as his wife and daughter were brutally killed by Taliban groups. A man snatched of his life's earnings will have nothing but traumatic memories which haunt him to the extent that he feels insecure even in his own house. And this sense of unknown fear connects it to traditional gothic style of writing as the following passage reveals. Not only Marcus, Lara, a widower coming to Afghanistan in search of her brother, also feels sense of insecurity in her house when "a sound originating in one of the other rooms startled her where she stood, he heart speeding up at the possibilities". This pervasive threat is no sensational device the writer chooses at a whim, his aim is to keep the reader on his toes and to relate to the plight of the colonized others.

An uncanny and a secret book, is a text with a deeper narrative of ghosts, ghosts which cannot participate in the text through their verbal participations, but still the narrator does not let their presence fade away as if the responsibility of speaking for and on behalf of ghosts lies on his shoulders. It is by not forgetting the trauma, by not losing sight of the melancholy, that the violence done to both the lovers and many more is kept alive and given voice. To silence the ghosts is to deny their existence and to bring them to focus is to heighten their reality and the narrator claims to achieve the latter. The fear of guilt is strong to an extent that not for a single moment the ones responsible for murder are able to shake of the names and faces of two lovers from their minds. The story is set in a gothic manner that all-encompassing presence of ghost of the lovers can be felt on almost every page.

The gothic Gaze is fixed on the characters of the novel so that the feeling of guilt remains fresh for the ones responsible.

In all the above quoted examples taken both from the classical gothic writings and from Aslam's fiction, architecture has been employed to reinforce the thematic and artistic concerns of the author. Through various textual references it is evident that in Aslam's novels Gothic is energized by thematic intensity of its explorations into the darkest regions of human consciousness. Aslam's pre-occupations with dread, fear, violence, and terror would make him a gothic writer by any definition but the historical range of his psychological speculations, and emotional analyses of his characters in terms of their surroundings certainly give him superiority over traditional gothic writers who used the techniques of sensationalism with no other purpose than to shock and frighten their readers. It is this weaving of dislocation of immigrants, and their sense isolation and being marginalized into a Gothic narrative of strange landscapes and architectural settings that make Nadeem Aslam a leading postcolonial gothic writer. In his novels the settings are reflective of traditional gothic form and are written from the perspective of the troubled South Asian region.

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