

**(IN) ABILITY TO DWELL AMIDST
GENTRIFICATION: AN ANALYSIS OF *IN
THE COMPANY OF STRANGERS* AND *NO
HONOUR* BY AWAIS KHAN**

BY

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ABSTRACT

Title: (In) Ability to Dwell Amidst Gentrification: An Analysis of *In the Company of Strangers* and *No Honour* by Awais Khan

Gentrification has become a universal issue, which significantly affects individuals' ability to dwell within their transformed environments. This thesis investigates the representation of gentrification and its impact on individuals' lives, particularly their ability to find a sense of home and belonging, as depicted in Awais Khan's novels, *In the Company of Strangers* (2019) and *No Honour* (2021). By examining how the characters navigate the tension between progress and authenticity amidst urban transformation, the study establishes a critical link between literature and the socio-cultural dynamics of gentrification. The research is grounded in Sharon Zukin's concept of authenticity and Martin Heidegger's philosophy of dwelling, which together form the theoretical framework. Methodologically, the study employs qualitative textual analysis to explore the experiences of key characters within Lahore's gentrified spaces as portrayed in the novels. The findings reveal contrasting outcomes: while some characters exhibit resilience and succeed in creating a sense of home amidst modernisation, some characters fail to dwell authentically, which leads to tragic consequences for them, such as social displacement and existential crisis. Gentrification not only reshapes urban landscapes but also disrupts the cultural heritage of communities. Moreover, it creates a sense of tension between tradition and modernity which ultimately affect the lives of individuals dwelling in changing urban circumstances. The analysis underscores the pivotal role of successful dwelling, as conceptualised by Heidegger, in mitigating the alienation caused by gentrification. This research contributes to broader discussions on urban transformation, literature, and identity by demonstrating how fictional narratives portray the complex relationship between individuals and their changing environments. The study emphasises the importance of authentic dwelling in addressing the cultural and psychological challenges posed by modernity.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, who gave me life, and to everyone who has taught me about the world. Your influence has been fundamental to this achievement.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Urban landscapes are not just physical spaces but complex socio-cultural and political constructs that shape and are shaped by human experiences. In this context, the rapid transformation of urban landscapes through gentrification is a phenomenon that has garnered significant academic and social attention. Gentrification, as defined broadly, is

“the movement of new middle-class residents into poor and working-class inner-city neighbourhoods, spurring the rehabilitation of a district’s previously abandoned or neglected housing stock and the revitalisation of its commercial life” (Goldfield 302). However, gentrification is not merely a physical transformation of urban spaces; it profoundly affects individuals’ ability to dwell within them that deeply affects their identity, sense of agency, and belonging. This study explores Awais Khan’s novels, *In the Company of Strangers* (2019) and *No Honour* (2021), to investigate how characters navigate and respond to gentrification.

Gentrification, as a socio-economic process, is deeply intertwined with capitalism, which creates sharp divisions along political, economic, and cultural lines. Gentrification is a system “that divides space along political, economic, and cultural lines [...] a force of capitalism that eschews hybridity and community” (Buchanan 52). Furthermore, Sharon Zukin’s critique of gentrification frames it as a force driven by the desire for authenticity, which leads to the commodification of culture as the city is “imploded by new investment, new people, and “the relentless bulldozer of homogenization” (quoted in original)” (7). Thus, this process transforms not only the physical environment but also the lived experiences of those inhabiting these spaces. Moreover, it creates tensions between tradition and modernity, displacement and belonging, hybridity and homogenization.

In tandem, existentialism, as a philosophical framework, emphasizes the individual’s search for meaning in the face of change, alienation, and chaos. Given

that, cities, with their dynamic and fragmented nature, often highlight existential challenges, such as alienation, the loss of identity, and the struggle for belonging. Martin Heidegger's concept of dwelling, rooted in existentialism, offers a dynamic perspective on how individuals relate to their environment as he argues, "The basic character of dwelling is to spare, to preserve... dwelling itself is always a staying with things. Dwelling, as preserving, keeps the fourfold in that with which mortals stay: in things" (Heidegger 150/151). In other words, Heidegger views dwelling as more than physical inhabitation—it is a meaningful engagement with one's surroundings, where individuals find a sense of preservation and belonging even amidst relentless transformation.

This study situates itself at the intersection of urban studies, literature, and philosophy, and analyses how gentrification and existential notions of dwelling intersect to shape identity and agency in literary narratives. By focusing on the urban transformation of Lahore, a city undergoing rapid modernization, it highlights the sociopolitical and cultural dynamics that underlie these changes and their representation in contemporary Pakistani literature. Through an examination of how the characters in Khan's novels navigate their gentrified settings, this thesis explores their struggles and adaptations, while also analysing how gentrification reshapes Lahore's urban landscape and impacts its inhabitants. By integrating Zukin's and Heidegger's theories, this study reveals the complex relationship between authenticity, gentrification, and dwelling.

The structure of this thesis is divided into five main sections. The first section of this thesis provides a literature review and identifies the gaps in existing scholarship and knowledge. In the second section, the theoretical frameworks adopted to analyse the primary texts are discussed, and the detailed methodology used is outlined. The third and fourth sections focus on Awais Khan's *No Honour* (2021) and *In the Company of Strangers* (2019), which offer a thorough analysis of these novels in the context of urban transformation in Lahore. The final section concludes the thesis and summarizes the key findings and discussions.

A city is many things to people; it is home to millions and a series of images and stories. The model of the city has undergone dramatic change in the wake of the

urban development of the cities. In this context, gentrification has manifested itself as a known quantity in the demographics of cities. Gentrification is not a new term and has been derived from the old French word “genterise” which means a person from the social class of gentleman (Lees et al). Notably, Ruth Glass in her book *London: Aspects of Change* (1964) laid the foundation of the term, gentrification. She coined and used the term to refer to the emerging phenomenon in which middle-class people started to shift to refurbished houses due to which displacement of the poor class was observed. In essence, it refers to planned change in the population of land users in such a way that the new users are of a higher socio-economic status than the last users. Consequently, gentrification has become a serious factor in the urban landscape of the city. Where cities are changed and transformed by gentrification, it is becoming the dynamic object of analysis over time as they take diverse forms (Goldfield 317). While gentrification has been the subject of many non-fiction writing, it is worth noting that it has not been treated extensively in fiction directly, although it appears as a sort of looming shadow in many recent works.

In his work “Stage Models of Gentrification: An Examination” Robert Kerstein utilizes stage models to elucidate the dynamics of gentrification and suggests that neighbourhoods experience certain stages as they undergo this process (Kerstein 02). In this framework, gentrifiers are categorized into first and second waves. First wavers are depicted as pioneer gentrifiers who evoke images of settling an untamed frontier. They are typically described as young, academic, and eclectic. These pioneers settle in more challenging neighbourhoods, and make themselves appealing to the second wave of gentrifiers.

The second-wave gentrifiers are seen to have a more profound impact on the community. While first-wavers are portrayed as integrating into the community, secondwavers are seen as displacing it (Blomley 1997; Lees 1996; Ley 1996). Clay highlights the binary characterizations of these two groups. For instance, the first group “newcomers, usually contains a significant number of design professionals or artists who have the skill, time, and ability to undertake extensive rehabilitation,” whereas the second wavers are described as excessive, yuppie, new leftist, secular, and mainstream (qtd in Lees, Slater, and Wyly 31). Moreover, Kerstein further differentiates these groups, portraying first wavers as risk-oblivious, willing to

"chance their investment and perhaps personal safety," and second wavers as risk averse, moving in only after the neighbourhood has been "substantially rehabilitated" by the first wavers (Kerstein 06).

Kerstein's model shows how gentrification changes neighbourhoods in different ways. It explains that the first wave of gentrifiers are adventurous and willing to take risks, while the second wave prefers safer, already improved areas. This perspective helps us understand the complex social changes that happen during gentrification.

While Kerstein's model delineates the stages and types of gentrifiers, Sharon Zukin, on the other hand, offers insight into the underlying motivations and evolving notions of authenticity that propel gentrification. In her book *Naked City: The Death and*

Life of Authentic Urban Places (2009), she defines gentrification as a "movement of rich, well-educated folks, the gentry, into lower-class neighbourhoods, and the higher property values that follow them, transforming a 'declining' district into an expensive neighbourhood with historic or hipster charm" (8). Moreover, Zukin is of the view that gentrification is driven by a desire for "authentic" experience. She relates that once 'authentic' was taken as 'quality of people' its meaning shifted to 'quality of things' and eventually migrated to 'quality of experiences' (3).

Additionally, she argues that over time, the meaning of 'authenticity' has shifted significantly. It now focuses less on origins and more on style. However, Zukin contends that "authenticity" still embodies the 'experience of origins.' For her, the concept of 'origin' is not about being the first to settle in a neighbourhood but represents a 'moral right' to the city, enabling individuals to establish roots as inhabitants rather than mere experiencers. She defines authenticity as a "continuous process of living and working, a gradual build-up of everyday experience, the expectation that neighbours and buildings present today will still be there tomorrow." She further asserts, "A city loses its soul when this continuity is broken" (6), pointing to the profound consequences of disrupting the stability of community relationships. This disruption, often caused by gentrification or rapid urban development, can erode the cultural heritage and sense of belonging that define a neighbourhood's unique character and identity.

This definition underscores the intrinsic link between the stability of community relationships and the essence of urban authenticity. Thus, authenticity, in this context, transcends the preservation of physical structures. In other words, the definition highlights the importance of maintaining the social fabric that gives a neighbourhood its distinctive character and identity. As a result, when gentrification or rapid urban development disrupts this continuity, it often leads to the loss of cultural heritage and a diminished sense of belonging among residents. This loss undermines the lived experience of the city, and transforms it into a less personal and increasingly commoditised space.

People have confused the term dwelling with building in the wake of gentrification, where these two are distinct phenomena. In this research, “dwelling” is taken as not only a physical act of living in space but also as a complex and multidimensional phenomenon, that involves our relationship with the world around us. Martin Heidegger in his article “Building Dwelling Thinking” argues that a structure is essentially designed for man’s dwelling. He asserts that the contemporary world has brought about a negative severance between building and dwelling. By examining the origins of the German word “bauen” – “to build,” Heidegger claims that it has lost its original meaning of “being” in a certain place. Heidegger then proceeds to argue that how we dwell is how we are, we exist, on the face of the earth; it is actually an extension of our identity, of who we are.

For Heidegger, dwelling means to remain in place and to be situated in a certain relationship with existence, a relationship that is characterized by nurturing, which enables the world to be as it is. In Heidegger’s own words: “The basic character of dwelling is to spare, to preserve... dwelling itself is always a staying with things. Dwelling, as preserving, keeps the fourfold in that with which mortals stay: in things” (Heidegger 150-151). In other words, dwelling is not just about living in a physical space, but about experiencing a sense of belonging and connection to that space and the world around it, that is, fourfold in Heidegger’s words. This understanding aligns with Zukin’s critique of gentrification, which highlights how the pursuit of “authentic” experiences often overlooks the deeper, lived connections that define true dwelling. In this sense, this perspective provides a valuable lens through

which to analyse the intricate dynamics of community and identity in the primary texts, *No Honour* and *In the Company of Strangers*.

In tracing the evolution of Pakistani literature, several trends and shifts in literary themes and narratives become apparent. These changes are often reflective of broader socio-political and cultural developments within Pakistani society and beyond. Some notable trends include post-Partition literature, which immediately follows the partition of British India and the creation of Pakistan in 1947, focused on themes of displacement, identity, and trauma. Writers dealt with the human consequences of partition and started exploring the experiences of refugees, survivors, and those affected by communal violence. Works such as *Toba Tek Singh* (1955) by Saadat Hasan Manto and *Ice-Candy Man* (1988) by Bapsi Sidhwa exemplify this trend.

Additionally, Pakistani literature has often been preoccupied with questions of identity, particularly in the context of a nation marked by linguistic, ethnic, and religious diversity. Writers have explored the complexities of Pakistani identity, including the tensions between tradition and modernity, rural and urban life, and religious and secular worldviews. This exploration of identity is evident in novels such as *The Crow Eaters* (1978) by Bapsi Sidhwa and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) by Mohsin Hamid. Furthermore, Pakistani literature has frequently engaged with pressing political and social issues, including authoritarianism, corruption, religious extremism, and gender inequality. Writers have used their works as vehicles for social critique and commentary, which shed light on the challenges facing Pakistani society. Novels such as *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* (2008) by Mohammed Hanif and *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon* (2013) by Fatima Bhutto tackle political intrigue and violence, while authors like Kamila Shamsie address issues of feminism and activism in works such as *Burnt Shadows* (2009).

As Pakistan has become increasingly interconnected with the global community, Pakistani literature has begun to reflect the experiences of diaspora communities and the impact of globalization. Writers living outside Pakistan, such as Mohsin Hamid and Nadeem Aslam, have explored themes of migration, cultural hybridity, and belonging in their works. Novels like *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) and *The Golden Legend* (2017) exemplify this trend. In recent years, there has

been a growing recognition of the diversity of voices within Pakistani literature such as voices of women, minorities, and marginalized communities. Writers from diverse backgrounds have begun to challenge dominant narratives and offer alternative perspectives on Pakistani society and history. Works such as *The Runaways* (2018) by Fatima Bhutto and *Home Fire* (2017) by Kamila Shamsie foreground the experiences of women and minorities. They explore issues of patriarchy, religious intolerance, and cultural identity.

However, little to no consideration has been given to the growing culture of gentrification, although writers have touched on displacement. The issue that Awais Khan seems to have discussed in his work is different from the ‘displacement’ discussed by previous writers. Displacement and gentrification are two related but distinct concepts that often occur in urban areas undergoing redevelopment or revitalization. Displacement is a consequence of gentrification, but not all gentrification leads to displacement. Gentrification can occur without displacement, and displacement can occur without gentrification.

Awais Khan is a Pakistani writer based in Lahore. His debut novel, *In the Company of Strangers* (2019) is set in Lahore and touches on the secretive glamour, whispering elites, and sordid affairs amidst gentrification. Beginning with a suicide bomber changing the lives of less privileged characters in the novel and exploring the relationship of gentrifiers, the novel portrays the instability of people living in gentrified Lahore as well as the hidden world of drugs and a delicate game of deceit. Moreover, the novel highlights the negotiation of the characters to dwell amidst the threat to destroy everything that the characters have ever held dear.

Similarly, *No Honour* (2021) is the story of the unfortunate love relationship of Abida. The novel very dynamically portrays the instability of life between the unstable spaces. The novel takes place in multiple settings and highlights the attempt of characters to dwell in these spaces. Khan paints present-day Lahore with a richness of tone and a depth of understanding that brings it to life with all the fissures and the fault lines, whether it is class, age, gender, or religiosity that threatens the existence of the characters in the face of gentrification. The novel unfolds the experiences of Abida when she escapes to Lahore and then disappears. Moving from the depths of rural Pakistan to the streets of overpopulated Lahore contested with fortress areas, the novel

highlights a story of a family negotiating their ways to dwell through the inextinguishable fire that lights one young woman's battle for change.

1.2 Problem Statement

Gentrification seems to be a multifaceted process that not only transforms the physical landscape but also affects the ability of characters to dwell in these spaces. The desire for authentic urban experience that manifests itself in the form of characters' wishes in the selected texts appears to be the driving force behind gentrification portrayed in the texts and the characters' (in)ability to dwell amidst gentrified spaces reshape their everyday routine. From the sense of identity and belonging to sordid affairs, the characters seem negotiating their ways that reflect the broader cultural and economic changes associated with gentrification.

1.3 Research Questions

- 1 What (in)ability of the characters to dwell in the gentrified space is depicted in the selected texts?
- 2 How does the "desire for authentic" experience lead to cultural erasure and homogenisation in the primary texts?
- 3 How do the characters' relationships with their physical environment reflect the broader cultural and economic changes associated with gentrification?

1.4 Delimitation

This study examines the ability of characters in *No Honour* and *In the Company of Strangers* by Awais Khan to dwell amidst gentrification in Lahore. It is limited to these two novels because they explicitly depict urban transformation and its effects on identity, belonging, and displacement. The research applies Sharon Zukin's critique of gentrification and Martin Heidegger's concept of dwelling, as these frameworks provide a focused lens to analyze the interplay between authenticity, space, and human experience. Other theories on urbanization or socio-economic analyses are not included, as the study prioritizes a literary exploration of gentrification's impact on characters rather than a broader sociological or economic assessment.

1.5 Significance of Study

This study is significant as it expands the literary discourse on gentrification by analyzing its portrayal in Pakistani literature by addressing a critical research gap. It explores the human cost of urban transformation, particularly displacement and alienation, through a theoretical framework that integrates Heidegger's concept of dwelling with Zukin's notion of authenticity. By bridging literary analysis with urban studies, sociology, and cultural studies, the research provides interdisciplinary insights that extend beyond literature to other art forms such as film and visual media. Practically, these findings contribute to urban policy discussions by highlighting the socio-cultural impact of gentrification, and it informs urban planners, policymakers, and social activists about the consequences of displacement and cultural erasure. Ultimately, it encourages a deeper understanding of gentrification's effects on everyday life and the need for more inclusive urban development.

1.6 Rationale for the Study

Gentrification extends beyond being a mere socio-economic phenomenon; it is also a cultural and psychological process that influences human experiences, relationships, and identities. While much research has focused on the physical and economic implications of gentrification, its deeper effects on individuals' sense of belonging, agency, and identity are less often explored. Literature, as a reflection of societal conditions, offers a unique window into how individuals navigate these complex transformations in their environments.

By examining gentrification in literature, this study seeks to understand the very ways in which characters respond to the changing urban landscape. In Awaiz Khan's novels, the characters' interactions with the shifting spaces of their cities are a means of engaging with larger societal issues such as class, identity, and power. Literature allows for an exploration of these internal and external negotiations and provides insights into the emotional and psychological dimensions of gentrification that go beyond what can be captured through economic or architectural analyses alone.

Furthermore, literature offers a space to explore the concept of dwelling in a theoretical context. Heidegger's notion of dwelling emphasizes the relationship between people and their environments, which suggests that our ability to feel at home in a space is essential to our identity and sense of agency. Through the lens of literature, we can explore how gentrification affects this ability to "dwell" in urban spaces, which ultimately reshapes characters' everyday lives, identities, and emotional landscapes.

The selection of two novels, *In the Company of Strangers* and *No Honour*, rather than focusing on just one, allows for a more comprehensive exploration of the complex themes of gentrification, identity, and agency. Each of these works offers a distinct perspective on urban transformation and how characters navigate and respond to the shifting landscapes around them. Moreover, the selection of the two novels is particularly valuable because they offer contrasting yet complementary settings that allow for a deeper and more varied exploration of gentrification and its effects.

In *In the Company of Strangers*, the narrative is focused on a single city, Lahore, which provides an in-depth examination of how urban transformation and gentrification impact the lives and identities of individuals within one specific environment. This concentrated setting allows for a close-up view of the social and emotional ramifications of gentrification within an urban space.

In contrast, *No Honour* expands the scope by setting its narrative in two cities and one village, which offers a broader perspective on how gentrification's influence varies across different settings. The presence of multiple locations allows for an exploration of how gentrification operates differently in urban versus rural contexts, as well as how the characters' experiences of gentrification are shaped by the geographical and cultural diversity of these spaces. Since this study aims to study how in the selected texts, gentrification reshapes identity, agency, and the ability to "dwell" in these environments, therefore, both novels appear to be the right fit for the study.

With the foundation of this study established, the next chapter explores the existing body of research on gentrification, dwelling and the primary text to provide a comprehensive review of the literature relevant to the themes explored in this thesis.

Through this review, the study aims to position the selected novels within the broader academic discourse and further contextualize the findings of the analysis.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter delves into an exploration of existing scholarship on the subject of analysis. The purpose of this chapter is to establish a foundation for the subsequent analysis of gentrification in Awais Khan's texts, *In the Company of Strangers* (2019) and *No Honour* (2021) by synthesizing and evaluating existing research. The chapter is structured into three distinct sections.

The first section, "Literature and Gentrification," explores existing scholarly discussions on gentrification within the realm of literary studies. This section examines how gentrification has been portrayed and analysed in various literary works. The second section deals with the critical engagement with dwelling and identifies a gap in the existing scholarship. Furthermore, the final section of this chapter turns to the primary texts of this study. By critically assessing this scholarship, the study identifies gaps in how scholars have approached these primary texts and contrasts these approaches with the methodology employed in this research.

2.1 Gentrification and Literature

Due to the limited availability of research on *No Honour* (2021) and *In the Company of Strangers* (2019), and the relatively new lens of combining Sharon Zukin's critique of gentrification with Martin Heidegger's concept of dwelling, this study addresses a gap that is not widely acknowledged in literary scholarship. The current resources available provide an opportunity to explore these novels in a unique and innovative context.

In 1964, Ruth Glass introduced the term "gentrification" in her seminal work *London: Aspects of Change*. Glass observed the influx of middle-class residents into working-class neighbourhoods, particularly in London, leading to significant social and physical transformations. She highlighted how these changes often resulted in the displacement of existing residents and alterations in the neighbourhood's character. Glass's conceptualization of gentrification laid the groundwork for subsequent scholarly inquiries into this phenomenon, especially in the Global North. However, while Glass focused on the visible social and physical changes in urban

neighbourhoods, little attention has been paid to how gentrification is represented in literature, particularly in the context of the Global South. This research aims to explore these literary representations of gentrification in fiction by investigating how authors depict its impact on identity, agency, and belonging.

Neil Smith (1979) expanded the understanding of gentrification in his article "Toward a Theory of Gentrification: A Back to the City Movement by Capital, not People." Smith introduced the concept of the "rent gap," which refers to the disparity between the potential value of urban land and its current use value (Smith 11-18). He argued that gentrification occurs when investors recognize this gap and seek to profit from the redevelopment of urban neighbourhoods. Smith's analysis underscored the role of capitalism and real estate speculation in driving gentrification processes. While Smith's work significantly advanced the understanding of gentrification, its integration with cultural and literary perspectives remains limited. This study aims to address this gap by exploring how gentrification, as conceptualized in Smith's theory, is represented in literature.

Saskia Sassen (1991), in her book *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*, explored the role of globalization in shaping gentrification processes in major metropolitan areas. She examined how global economic forces and the rise of the service economy contributed to the transformation of urban neighbourhoods, which create both opportunities and challenges for local residents (Sassen 65-84). While Sassen's analysis focuses on the economic and spatial transformations in global cities, her work largely overlooks the cultural displacement that often accompanies gentrification. The loss of community identity and cultural heritage can be a profound consequence of urban transformation. In contrast, this research bridges this gap by exploring how gentrification is represented in the literary context of Awaiz Khan's *In the Company of Strangers* and *No Honour*. Through these novels, this research is aimed to examine how characters' identities, relationships, and senses of belonging are shaped by the gentrification process in Lahore, Pakistan.

Colin Reilly in his thesis titled "Cityscapes and City Spaces—Representations of Gentrifying New York in Novel and Film" (2017) explores how the loss of the disappearing city is dealt with within film and literature. Moreover, Reilly evaluates the representation of the city's urban spaces in literature. Using five texts, his research

tracks the changes that have been observed in New York from the 1980s to 2017. His study, however, does not touch on the effects of gentrification on people. One of the other drawbacks of his research is the use of the male voice. All of the works, used in the research, feature male voices which present to us a disproportionate picturisation of gentrification. However, this research aims to fill this gap by analysing the diverse voices.

James H. Peacock, in his work "Those the Dead Left Behind: Gentrification and Haunting in Contemporary Brooklyn Fictions" (2019), explores the intersection of gentrification and the psychological and cultural impacts of urban transformation as depicted in contemporary Brooklyn fiction. Peacock argues that gentrification does not only affect the physical landscape but also haunts the residents, disrupting their sense of belonging and identity. This work is crucial in understanding how gentrification, as a cultural and psychological phenomenon, is represented in literature. However, while Peacock highlights the "haunting" aspect of gentrification in Brooklyn, his analysis primarily focuses on Western urban settings, which leaves a gap in exploring how these themes are represented in non-Western cities, such as Lahore. This research seeks to fill this gap by analysing how Awais Khan's *In the Company of Strangers* and *No Honour* engage with similar themes of displacement, identity, and belonging, particularly in the context of Lahore, Pakistan.

2.2 Dwelling and Literature

Jean-Luc Nancy (1991), in his book *The Inoperative Community*, explores the idea of dwelling as a way of being together in a community. He argues that true community is not based on shared identity or interests, but rather on a sense of shared vulnerability and interdependence. Through dwelling together, we create a sense of belonging and responsibility towards each other. "A community presupposed as having to be one of the human beings presupposes that it effects, or that it must effect, as such and integrally, its own essence, which is itself the accomplishment of the essence of humanness" (sic) (Nancy 3). While Nancy's philosophical approach provides insights into the nature of community and dwelling, there is a gap in applying these concepts specifically to the context of urban gentrification and its portrayal in literature. Nancy's exploration lacks a direct examination of how gentrification disrupts or transforms these communal relationships and the sense of

shared vulnerability in rapidly changing urban environments. This research aims to fill this gap by integrating the concept of dwelling with an analysis of gentrification as depicted in Pakistani literature.

In *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (2006) feminist philosopher Sara Ahmed argues that dwelling can be a way of resisting the dominant norms and structures that exclude certain groups of people from society. Through creating alternative spaces and practices of dwelling, marginalized communities can assert their right to exist and resist oppressive systems (Ahmed 109-119). Ahmed's focus on alternative spaces and resistance does not directly address how gentrification affects the ability of marginalized communities to create and maintain these spaces. This research fills this gap by analysing the dwelling of the characters amidst gentrification.

Gaston Bachelard, in his book *The Poetics of Space* (2014), explores the idea of dwelling as a poetic act. For Bachelard, the home is not just a physical structure, but also a place of imagination and creativity. He argues that we create a sense of security and belonging through our relationship with the spaces we inhabit. "We know ourselves in time when all we know is a sequence of fixations in the spaces of the being's stability" (Bachelard 8). Bachelard's exploration of dwelling as a poetic and imaginative act offers insights into the psychological and emotional dimensions of inhabiting spaces. However, there remains a gap in applying Bachelard's theories to understand how gentrification affects these emotional and imaginative connections in urban settings, particularly in literature. This research addresses this gap by integrating the concept of dwelling with an analysis of gentrification in Pakistani literature.

The Phenomenology of the Dwelling Space in Robert Frost's Poetry (2018) coauthored by Faisal I. Rawashdeh and Malek J. Zuraikat, the authors use Martin Heidegger's and Gaston Bachelard's conceptions of dwelling to analyse Robert Frost's poems. Their study explores Frost's spatial dramatizations and his poetics of dwelling, arguing that, according to Heidegger, one can learn to dwell by staying in the "four-fold" and understanding one's relationship with space. In the case of Frost's poem *In The Death of the Hired Man*, Silas's inability to find a place to dwell is depicted through his tragic death as a homeless eccentric, which reflects his failure to

measure his connection with the idyllic space where Warren and Mary reside (Rawashdeh and Zuraikat 55). While their study primarily focuses on the poetic exploration of dwelling in Frost's work, this research takes a different approach by examining how urban spaces affected by gentrification are represented in literature, particularly in Pakistani contexts. Unlike the poetic examination of dwelling in Frost's poems, this research investigates how characters in literature experience displacement, loss of cultural identity, and changes in their relationship with urban spaces due to gentrification.

2.3 Awais Khan in Focus: *In the Company of Strangers* and *No Honour*

Awais Khan's novels have earned him great acclaim among the critics. However, his novels, being contemporary, have not been explored much by researchers. *In the Company of Strangers* (2019), the debut novel of Awais Khan has the potential and room for researchers to build their studies as it touches upon a variety of themes. Mansour Ahsan in his work, "*In the Company of Strangers* (2019)", discusses the very word 'stranger' and argues that Awais Khan has explored the fact that even those who live with us can be strangers. Ahsan seems away from building the argument as to how the setting which appears to be gentrified Lahore affects the characters' dwelling, and shapes the lives of the characters living in opposite economic spectrum and classes.

Zafar et al. (2013) in their collaborative work "A Marxist Analysis of *In the Company of Strangers* by Awais Khan" examines the hostility and disparities between upper and lower classes in Pakistan using Marxian critique and conflict theory as theoretical support. The research concludes that there is a "class conflict" between the upper and lower class because of the "unequal distribution of power" (717) (sic). The researchers link "sordid affairs" to the elite class. This research highlights classes, conflict, and sordid affairs. However, this research is altogether different as it discusses the broader perspective and sees gentrification as the agent behind all this conflict and disruption among people from both the lower and gentry classes.

Danielle (2023), on the other hand, in his study, "Review: *In the Company of Strangers* (2019)" focuses on the narrative techniques and praises the dual narrative

used in the novel. This dual narrative, no doubt, is exceptionally knitted and serves as a kaleidoscopic reflection of the gentry class and displaced class. However, the author does not reflect on the physical space or setting of the novel. He argues that Mona's husband uses psychological tactics to keep her with him. He relates that Ali becomes submerged in a Lahori high society. This review focuses primarily on narrative techniques and character dynamics without addressing the physical settings or urban spaces within the novel. This approach overlooks how the novel's spatial descriptions and urban contexts contribute to its themes of gentrification, displacement, and social stratification. This research aims to fill this gap by exploring how the physical environments depicted in the novel reflect and influence the experiences of its characters, particularly about urban transformation and societal change.

Sabir et al. (2024), in their study *Exploring Echoes of Empowerment and Androcentrism: A Feminist Study of Awais Khan's "In the Company of Strangers"* (quoted in original), focus on the representation of female characters and their complex engagement with themes such as relationships, self-fulfilment, and women's empowerment. Using gender theories from Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Butler, the researchers shed light on how the novel gives voice to women's experiences, particularly those marginalized in society. Their work emphasizes domestic violence and the impact of patriarchal structures on women's lives within capitalist systems. While their approach centres on the feminist critique of gender dynamics, this research takes a broader approach by exploring the influence of gentrification in reshaping these dynamics. Unlike Sabir et al.'s focus on feminist theory, the researcher examines how the process of gentrification exacerbates class and gender struggles, transforming the lived experiences of women in urban spaces. Thus, this research shifts the focus from individual empowerment to a socio-economic critique that highlights the role of gentrification in both reinforcing and challenging androcentrism.

Farkhanda Shahid Khan (2023), in her research *Inside the Dark World: Women's Trade and Prostitution in Patricia McCormick's Sold and Awais Khan's No Honour*, explores the portrayal of women's trade and prostitution in South Asian societies through Awais Khan's novel *No Honour*. Using a feminist approach, she analyses the novel's narrative to reveal the patriarchal structures, gender inequalities,

and societal norms in contemporary Pakistan. The research emphasizes the struggles of the protagonist, Abida, as she challenges the norms, while also highlighting the pervasive sexism, masculinized privileges, and gendered misogyny that contribute to the grim realities of trafficking and prostitution. While Khan's work focuses on these gendered issues in *No Honour*, it overlooks the influence of urban gentrification on social and spatial dynamics in Pakistan. In contrast, this research shifts the focus to the socio-economic and spatial transformations driven by gentrification, particularly in Lahore, and how these changes impact the lives of women in urban spaces. Unlike Khan's focus on gender inequalities and prostitution, this study examines how gentrification intersects with and intensifies existing societal inequalities, and offers a critical perspective on the broader urban transformations in Awais Khan's works.

Hafsa Lodi (2023) argues that *No Honour* is a novel that uses fiction to draw attention to real-life crimes against women. She adds it takes place across cities and villages, stately mansions, and sketchy apartments. Lodi is of the view that it is the story that begins as a straightforward tale of people and society struggling with honour crimes but it ends with weapons, drugs, and clandestine operations. Lodi touches upon the subject matter of this research. However, her eye does not catch the character's desire for experiencing authenticity, which the researcher assumes is the root cause of all the drama presented in the novel because it disturbs the dwelling of the characters.

Throughout this review, it becomes evident that while gentrification has been extensively studied in various global contexts, there is a notable absence of research focusing on its manifestations in Pakistan. Neither in theoretical analyses nor in literary examinations of novels has gentrification in Pakistan received substantial attention. Moreover, the primary text under consideration, *In the Company of Strangers* and *No Honour* remains relatively unexplored by researchers, and it leaves ample room for analysis and interpretation within the context of gentrification studies. This gap in the literature presents an opportunity for this research to investigate the dynamics of gentrification in Pakistan.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To analyse the primary texts, this study draws on the concept of “gentrification” as articulated by Sharon Zukin in *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places* (2009) and Martin Heidegger’s notion of “dwelling” from “Building Dwelling Thinking” (1971). These theoretical frameworks provide the foundation for examining the representation of gentrification in the selected novels and its impact on characters’ abilities to dwell meaningfully within urban spaces. The adoption of both concepts is crucial: Zukin critiques gentrification and its socio-economic consequences, while Heidegger’s philosophy sheds light on the existential struggles of individuals navigating these transformed environments. Together, these lenses allow for a detailed exploration of how urban transformation is represented in literature and how it intersects with themes of identity, belonging, and authenticity. By integrating Zukin’s insights into the loss of authenticity in urban landscapes (Zukin 9) with Heidegger’s inquiry into the essence of dwelling (Heidegger 145), this study situates the selected texts within a broader literary tradition of examining urban change. This approach highlights the literary portrayal of gentrification as a multifaceted force that reshapes not only the physical landscape but also the lived experiences of the characters and aims to provide deeper insights into their struggles and adaptations.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

The first theoretical underpinning employed is Sharon Zukin’s critique of gentrification and the concept of authenticity from her book *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places* (2009). Zukin, in the very book, defines gentrification as a “movement of rich, well-educated folks, the gentry, into lower-class neighbourhoods, and the higher property values that follow them, transforming a ‘declining’ district into an expensive neighbourhood with historic or hipster charm” (8). Zukin is of the view that gentrification is driven by a desire for “authentic”

experience. She relates that once ‘authentic’ was taken as ‘quality of people’ then its meaning shifted to ‘quality of things’ and now it has migrated to ‘quality of experiences’ (3). She argues that over the period, the meaning of ‘authenticity’ has been shifted to a different meaning that has little to do with origins and a lot to do with style.

However, for Zukin, “authenticity” is something that provides an ‘experience of origins’ and the meaning of ‘origin’, for her, is not settling ‘in a neighbourhood in which one came earliest’, but it is a ‘moral right’ to the city that enables one to put down one’s roots as inhabitants not only as experiencer. She defines authenticity as a “continuous process of living and working, a gradual build-up of everyday experience, the expectation that neighbours and building that are here today will be here tomorrow” and “A city loses its soul when this continuity is broken” (6). This emphasizes the intrinsic link between the stability of community relationships and the essence of urban authenticity. Authenticity, in this context, is not just about the preservation of physical structures but also about maintaining the social fabric that gives a neighbourhood its unique character and identity. The disruption of this continuity, often due to gentrification or rapid urban development, can lead to a loss of cultural heritage and a sense of belonging among residents. This loss undermines the lived experience of the city and transforms it into a less personal and more commodified space.

Authenticity in urban spaces is a complex and multifaceted concept that plays a significant role in shaping the identity and character of neighbourhoods. While authenticity can evoke a sense of connection and belonging among residents and visitors, it can also be a double-edged sword, particularly in the context of gentrification (Zukin 21). On one hand, authenticity preserves the unique history, culture, and social dynamics of a neighbourhood. It allows residents to feel rooted in their community and provides visitors with an opportunity to experience the genuine essence of a place (Zukin 11). Authenticity celebrates diversity, encourages creativity, and promotes inclusivity, making neighbourhoods vibrant and dynamic spaces for all.

Conversely, the pursuit of authenticity can also fuel gentrification, especially when it becomes commodified and exploited for economic gain. As neighbourhoods gain popularity for their perceived authenticity, they often attract investment from developers and affluent newcomers seeking to capitalize on the cultural cachet of the

area. (Zukin, 20) This influx of capital can drive up property values, displacing long-time residents and businesses who can no longer afford to remain in the neighbourhood. Moreover, the quest for authenticity may lead to the homogenization and sanitization of neighbourhoods, as developers prioritize marketability over genuine community character (Zukin 27). This process can erode the diversity and vibrancy that initially made the neighbourhood authentic, replacing local businesses with chain stores and pushing out marginalized communities in favour of more affluent residents.

According to Zukin, authenticity encompasses the history, culture, and social dynamics of a neighbourhood in a way that fosters a sense of connection and belonging among residents and visitors (Zukin, 21). When the continuity is broken, the sense of connection and belonging among residents and visitors collapses as the city loses its soul.

This connection is established through several key mechanisms:

Authenticity often stems from a neighbourhood's rich historical heritage, shaped by the experiences of past generations. For example, the transformation of neighbourhoods like Brooklyn and Harlem over time highlights how historical narratives contribute to the authenticity of these spaces (Zukin, 25). Residents and visitors are drawn to these neighbourhoods because of their historical significance, which fosters a sense of continuity and belonging.

Authentic neighbourhoods are filled with a strong sense of cultural identity, shaped by the traditions, customs, and values of the communities that inhabit them (Zukin 29). These areas retain their distinctiveness and character by preserving the unique practices and social norms of their residents.

Authenticity is also rooted in the social dynamics of a neighbourhood, including interactions between residents, community events, and shared experiences (Zukin, 34). Zukin uses the example of Union Square and community gardens in East New York to highlight how these neighbourhoods serve as gathering spaces for diverse groups of people and foster social cohesion and a sense of community (Zukin 32). These social connections create a sense of belonging among individuals, strengthening their ties to the neighbourhood.

By encompassing the history, culture, and social dynamics of a neighbourhood, authenticity creates a multifaceted sense of connection and belonging for residents and visitors alike. It reinforces the idea that urban spaces are not just physical locations but also repositories of collective memories, cultural traditions, and social relationships that shape people's identities and experiences. Gentrification, driven by the desire for authenticity, occurs when areas with perceived authenticity become attractive to wealthier individuals seeking a particular lifestyle or aesthetic. The influx of investment and affluent residents leads to significant changes in the neighbourhood's physical landscape and social fabric. The author suggests that authenticity plays a central role in driving gentrification for several reasons:

Authentic neighbourhoods often possess a unique aesthetic charm, characterized by historic architecture, cultural landmarks, and diverse street life (Zukin, 19). This aesthetic appeal attracts investment from developers and entrepreneurs looking to capitalize on the area's distinctive character.

Authentic neighbourhoods are perceived as culturally rich and vibrant, offering a sense of "realness" and local flavour that appeals to urban dwellers seeking authenticity in their daily lives (Zukin, 16). This cultural capital serves as a magnet for individuals interested in experiencing the "authentic" urban lifestyle.

The growing popularity of authenticity in consumer culture fuels market demand for products, services, and experiences that embody authentic urban living (Zukin, 23). This demand drives up property values in authentic neighbourhoods, making them prime targets for gentrification.

Gentrification is often driven by individuals seeking social status and cultural capital associated with living in authentic urban spaces (Zukin, 31). The presence of trendy cafes, artisanal shops, and cultural venues in gentrifying neighbourhoods signals social distinction and sophistication, further fuelling the desire for authenticity among affluent residents.

In conclusion, Zukin is of the view that gentrification not only changes the demographics of the city by flourishing the city but also makes the city lose its soul. Thus, she critiques gentrification as it leads to the transformation of the urban neighbourhood. She criticizes the process of gentrification for displacing long-term residents and local businesses. She relates that gentrification erases the cultural

diversity and distinctiveness of the neighbourhood as the city is “imploded by new investment, new people, and “the relentless bulldozer of homogenization” (quoted in original)” (7). Since she believes authenticity refers to a continuous process of living and that it is a gradual build-up of everyday routine, she tries to manifest that it is the continuity that guarantees the normal functioning of everything. However, “a city loses its soul when this continuity is broken” (6). In addition, when a city loses its soul, Zukin argues, “the changes are not only visible, they reshape over everyday routines” (7). The key critiques of gentrification, in the view of Zukin, are displacement of long-term residents, cultural erasure, homogenization, and social polarization.

The second theoretical lens taken is the Heideggerian conception of “dwelling” proposed in “Building Dwelling Thinking” (1971). In the wake of gentrification, people have confused the term dwelling with building, where these two are distinct phenomena. As described earlier, dwelling is taken as not only a physical act of living in a space but also as a complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon, that involves our relationship with the world around us. Martin Heidegger in his article “Building Dwelling Thinking” argues that a structure is essentially designed for man’s dwelling. He asserts that the contemporary world has brought about a negative severance between building and dwelling.

Heidegger looks at the origins of the German word “bauen” – “to build” and claims that it has lost its original meaning of “being” in a certain place. Heidegger then proceeds to argue that how we dwell is the manner in which we are, we exist, on the face of the earth, which is an extension of our identity, of who we are. In other words, “dwelling” according to Heidegger, is to remain in place and to be situated in a certain relationship with existence, a relationship which is characterized by nurturing, enabling the world to be as it is. In Heidegger’s own words, “The basic character of dwelling is to spare, to preserve... dwelling itself is always a staying with things. Dwelling, as preserving, keeps the fourfold in that with which mortals stay: in things” (Heidegger – “Building Dwelling Thinking” 150-151). Dwelling is not just about living in a physical space, but about experiencing a sense of belonging and connection to that space and the world around it, that is, fourfold in Heidegger’s words.

Based on Heidegger's conception of dwelling, thinking, and building, if a person does not dwell in a rightful manner, several consequences may unfold, which fundamentally affect their relationship with the world and their sense of being. These consequences are based on the inferences from his very essay.

Heidegger asserts that to dwell is to be (146). If a person fails to dwell properly, they lose touch with the authentic sense of being. This disconnection leads to a superficial existence where life is experienced as fragmented and lacking depth, which results in a sense of alienation.

Proper dwelling involves creating a space that provides orientation and a reference point (153-55). Without this, a person may feel lost and directionless, metaphorically and literally. The lack of a stable, grounding space means the individual is constantly exposed to the randomness and chaos of the world, unable to find a place of refuge or a point of departure for their journey.

Heidegger emphasizes the importance of withdrawing into space to contemplate and engage with the world meaningfully (159). Without such a space, a person remains perpetually exposed to external pressures and distractions, unable to pause, reflect, or gain insights. This continuous exposure leads to a shallow engagement with life, devoid of deeper understanding or wisdom.

Dwelling, according to Heidegger, involves fitting into the fourfold of earth, sky, mortals, and divinities (149). Failure to dwell rightly disrupts this harmony, which causes a disjointed existence where the person cannot fully appreciate their place in the world. This disruption results in a life that lacks a sense of sacredness, connectedness, and respect for the natural and spiritual dimensions of existence.

The consequences of not dwelling in the rightful manner, as described by Heidegger, can be linked to the phenomenon of gentrification. Gentrification often disrupts established communities, which leads to a superficial transformation of neighbourhoods driven by economic interests rather than authentic dwelling. This process frequently displaces long-term residents who have developed a deep, meaningful connection to their environment, and replace their homes with structures that lack cultural and historical significance.

As a result, the new inhabitants experience a disconnection from the authentic sense of being that Heidegger emphasizes, as the new buildings cater more to

aesthetic and commercial values rather than fostering a true sense of dwelling. This leads to a loss of orientation and community, as the original social fabric is torn apart, and new residents are left without a genuine reference point or place of refuge.

The superficial nature of gentrified developments mirrors Heidegger's concern with 'building' that lacks deeper meaning. This lack of meaning results in producing an environment that fails to support reflective and meaningful engagement with the world. Thus, gentrification not only displaces people physically but also spiritually, and exacerbates feelings of alienation and existential anxiety as individuals struggle to find a sense of belonging in an environment that prioritizes economic gain over authentic dwelling.

This research employs Zukin's and Heidegger's lenses as theoretical props to analyse Khan's novels, particularly *No Honour* and *In the Company of Strangers*. The analysis focuses on the characters' navigation and response to the complexities of urban transformation in Lahore, Pakistan. The setting of the novels vividly depicts the gentrified Lahore. Therefore, the setting of the novel is analysed to highlight how economic and cultural changes intersect with personal struggles and societal tensions within gentrified space.

In *No Honour*, characters like Jamil, Abida and Kaleem embody the disorienting effects of urbanization as they navigate Lahore's bustling streets and encounter unfamiliar urban landscapes. Jamil, a rural migrant searching for his daughter Abida in the city, faces displacement and loss amidst the rapid transformations of Lahore. Similarly, Abida and Kaleem experience a similar situation. The concept of authenticity by Zukin has been employed to analyse these characters. As how they fall for the promises of urban transformation. Moreover, Heidegger's concept of dwelling is used to study these characters' journey, as they seek not just physical shelter but a meaningful connection to their environment and a place where they can dwell amidst the chaos of urban life.

Similarly, in *In the Company of Strangers*, The setting is explored using the conception of gentrification laid by Zukin. The characters such as Mona, Ali and Bilal are analysed under the lens of first authenticity and then Heidegger's dwelling. Zukin's critique of gentrification helps in understanding the characters like Mona, Ali, Meera and Bilal amidst rising rents and commercial developments. The lens is used to study how they experience the erosion of their creative community and sense of place.

Heidegger's philosophical lens deepens their understanding of their plight and emphasizes how external forces that prioritize economic profit over cultural preservation disrupt their existential quest for authentic dwelling.

In conclusion, this study utilizes the theoretical lenses of Zukin and Heidegger to analyse Awais Khan's novels *No Honour* and *In the Company of Strangers*. The analysis, detailed in the following chapters, explores the characters' responses to the complexities of urban transformation in Lahore. The novels' settings vividly depict a gentrified Lahore, where economic and cultural changes intersect with personal struggles and societal tensions. In *No Honour*, characters such as Jamil, Abida, and Kaleem navigate the disorienting effects of urbanization, with Zukin's concept of authenticity highlighting their susceptibility to the promises of urban transformation and Heidegger's concept of dwelling examining their search for meaningful connections in a rapidly changing environment. Similarly, in *In the Company of Strangers*, the characters Mona, Ali, and Bilal are analysed using Zukin's critique of gentrification to understand their experiences amidst the changing landscape, and Heidegger's lens to emphasize their existential quest for authentic dwelling. This research, by focusing on these novels, contributes to the broader conversation about urban development and its impact on individual lives living amidst gentrification.

3.2 Research Methodology

This research is situated within the qualitative paradigm and adopts an interpretative approach to analyse Khan's novels, *No Honour* and *In the Company of Strangers*. The study is grounded in the constructivist philosophy, which emphasizes that meaning is not simply discovered but is actively constructed through interpretation. In this context, the texts are seen as offering multiple layers of meaning that are shaped by the reader's subjective engagement with them, rather than being a fixed representation of objective reality. This constructivist approach aligns with the use of textual analysis and allows for a detailed exploration of the novels. The interpretative approach ensures that meanings are derived from the texts themselves, while the exploratory aspect allows the research to address gaps in current scholarship on gentrification, particularly in the context of Pakistani literature.

The concept of "textual analysis," as discussed by Catherine Belsey in her seminal work "Textual Study as a Research Method" (Griffin, 2005), forms the methodological core of this study. Belsey advocates for a close reading of texts, which prioritizes their inherent complexities over preconceived notions or rigid theoretical frameworks. She defines textual analysis as a "close encounter with the work itself, an examination of the details without bringing to them more presuppositions" (Belsey 160). This method enables the exploration of how gentrification and dwelling are represented in Khan's narratives, and it provides insights into the urban transformation and its implications for characters' identities and experiences.

The adoption of this research philosophy ensures that the analysis remains open to the multiple layers of meaning embedded within the texts, reflecting the interplay between literary representation and urban realities. Belsey argues;

“Meaning is not at the disposal of the individual ... We learn to mean from outside, from a language A substantial element of education ... and it is this expanded vocabulary that permits us to think with greater clarity, to make finer distinctions (164).”

This arbitrariness of the meaning supports the key terms of this study, as both gentrification and dwelling are arbitrary phenomena. Therefore, taking Belsey's textual analysis would aid in the study. Belsey's approach is rooted in poststructuralist theory, which rejects the idea of fixed or stable meanings and posits that meaning is always "inscribed in the signifier, in the sound or image" (167). This approach is particularly fitting for this study as it allows for a flexible interpretation that acknowledges the text's multiple meanings and the dynamic interaction of signifiers and signifieds.

By employing Belsey's textual analysis, this research examines *No Honour* and *In the Company of Strangers* to explore their complexity and richness. It supports an open-ended and subjective interpretation that embraces the texts' inherent ambiguities and contradictions. This method is well suited to explore the novels' narratives, which intertwine personal and collective memories, and historical, political, and social themes. Through textual analysis, the research aims to reveal the complexity of Khan's engagement with gentrification and dwelling and to contribute

to a broader understanding of how literature reflects and influences perceptions of urban and social transformations.

Textual analysis has been chosen as the research method because it allows for indepth readings and analyses of texts. This method involves a thorough examination of the language to uncover deeper and hidden meanings within the chosen texts, including symbols and other forms of communication. Since this study is situated within the qualitative research paradigm, textual analysis is an appropriate method. The key principles of Belsey's (2005) textual analysis model that have been adapted for this research are as follows:

1. Language is complex and influenced by external social, cultural, and historical factors, making it non-neutral.
2. Reading is an active process where readers contribute their own perspectives and biases, suggesting that the meaning of a text is not fixed.
3. Texts have the potential for multiple readings, as each reader's interpretation is influenced by their knowledge base.
4. Authors use language and literary strategies to construct texts and convey meaning, rather than merely reflecting reality.
5. The multifaceted nature of literary texts allows for diverse interpretations.

Belsey's method of textual analysis provides a strong methodological foundation for this research. It offers the tools necessary to examine the complex narrative techniques and thematic issues in *No Honour* and *In the Company of Strangers*. By focusing on the texts themselves and allowing for a variety of interpretations, this research aims to uncover the novels' significance within the larger context of gentrification and dwelling. This contributes to the ongoing discussion about how literature can help us understand and navigate the socio-economic and cultural impacts of urban transformation.

In the next chapter, the primary texts using the theoretical frameworks of gentrification and dwelling are analysed. By applying the concepts of Zukin and Martin Heidegger, along with Belsey's qualitative textual analysis approach, the texts' engagement with urban transformation and its impact on individual and communal lives are explored. The elements such as the desire for authenticity, cultural erasure,

identity negotiation, and the broader implications of gentrification on personal and social dwelling have been examined.

CHAPTER 4

NAVIGATING GENTRIFICATION: AUTHENTICITY AND DWELLING IN AWAIS KHAN'S *IN THE COMPANY OF STRANGERS*

Drawing on Sharon Zukin's concept of authentic urban experience and Martin Heidegger's notion of dwelling, a detailed analysis of Awaiz Khan's novel *In the Company of Strangers* (2019) is undertaken in this chapter. The focus is on examining how gentrification, as depicted in the novel, influences the characters' lives and their attempts to find authenticity and a sense of place within a rapidly changing urban environment.

In this chapter, Lahore is described and examined as a gentrified space. By comparing non-gentrified and gentrified areas of the city, the researcher highlights the contrasts and transformative effects of urban development. This discussion establishes the broader social context within which the characters' struggles are explored. The analysis contextualizes the intersections of urban transformation, individual agency, and cultural displacement, which are central to the narrative and reflect broader patterns of urbanization and gentrification in contemporary Pakistani society.

The chapter includes a character-by-character analysis, focusing on Ali, Mona, Bilal, and others. Through this analysis, the researcher contributes to the discourse on urban change and underscores the importance of individuals' lived realities in the study of gentrification.

4.1 Urban Transformation in Lahore

Khan's debut novel, *In the Company of Strangers* (2019), received critical acclaim for its exploration of Lahore's elite society and the intricate web of relationships within it. Through his work, Khan not only entertains but also challenges readers to reflect on the cultural and socio-political contexts that shape the lives of his characters.

This analysis employs textual analysis to explore the novel's depiction of gentrification and dwelling, drawing on Sharon Zukin's concept of authenticity and

Heidegger's notion of dwelling. These frameworks are used to investigate how the characters' personal lives are disrupted and reshaped within Lahore's evolving urban environment.

The novel begins with a suicide bombing depicted in the prologue, where the protagonist Ali's brother loses his leg. This traumatic event foreshadows the chaotic world Ali later becomes entangled in and reflects Kathleen Donnelly's findings that "gentrifiers express ambivalence and feelings of guilt surrounding their presence in the neighbourhood and... displace their responsibility... onto another group of actors, such as the government or real estate developers" (Donnelly 374). In the novel, this displacement emerges as a recurring theme, which illustrates a broader pattern of denial that avoids confronting the ethical consequences of urban transformation.

The bomber's perspective that "they are not humans; they do not feel" (Khan x) encapsulates this denial. This sentiment parallels the alienation experienced by the characters, whose lives are increasingly fragmented by the transformative effects of gentrification. While promising an "authentic" urban experience, gentrification simultaneously disrupts the characters' ability to dwell authentically. The physical and social changes in Lahore reshape their everyday routines and identities that force them to navigate an increasingly fragmented urban landscape.

Set in Lahore, the story revolves around three main characters: Ali, Mona, and Bilal. Ali, initially a model, is forced to return to the industry after his brother's injury (who loses his leg in a suicide bombing attack). Mona and her husband Bilal, an affluent couple, represent the city's elite; Bilal runs a construction company and leads a life of indulgence. Their relationships exemplify the tensions of dwelling within gentrified spaces. Mona's strained marriage, her escape into the modelling world, and her fleeting love affair with Ali highlight the conflict between personal desires and the societal pressures of urban transformation.

The narrative underscores the adverse effects of gentrification through vivid imagery: "In the absence of the thick layer of smoke that usually permeated the city, it looked almost beautiful under the impress of the sunny blue sky" (Khan vii). This contrast between polluted and "revitalized" Lahore emphasizes the dissonance between the promise of urban improvement and its underlying disruptions. For instance, Mona reconnects with her childhood friend, Meera, after a 20-year hiatus caused by a traumatic event. Meera introduces Mona to the modelling world, which

serves as a temporary escape from her unhappiness. This reconnection, however, reveals the fragility of Mona's relationships, which are marked by emotional distance and commodification.

Ali and Mona's relationship, though passionate, is emblematic of the inability to form authentic connections within a commoditised urban environment. Mona conceives Ali's child, but Ali, entangled in Mir Rabiullah's terrorist organization, sacrifices himself to prevent further harm to those he loves. His ultimate act of selflessness highlights the fractured nature of human connections within a gentrified city. After Ali's death, Mona's repeated visits to his grave serve as a metaphor for her loss of stability and belonging, further illustrating the alienating effects of urban transformation.

Zukin argues that gentrification seeks to create an "authentic" urban experience by revitalizing neglected areas (Zukin 31-32). Lahore, as depicted in the novel, oscillates between its gritty, unkempt reality and the superficial allure of modernization. The early morning scent of "damp earth and moon grass" (Khan Vii) contrasts sharply with the image of a smoke-free city under blue skies. These juxtapositions highlight how gentrification transforms not only physical spaces but also social and emotional realities.

The novel also portrays the socioeconomic disruptions brought about by gentrification. The absence of traffic wardens and dysfunctional traffic signals, described as "watching over everything like a silent ghost" (Khan Viii), symbolize the persistence of chaos beneath the veneer of progress. Similarly, the tangy smell from public parks and antiquated lawnmowers operated by gardeners reflects a city caught between tradition and change. These descriptions emphasize the disruptive nature of gentrification, which often displaces existing residents and erodes established community norms.

4.2 Ali's Journey through Gentrification: Dwelling in a Changed Landscape

Initially introduced as a former model struggling with family hardships, Ali's journey unfolds amid the complexities of societal expectations, economic pressures, and personal aspirations. Ali's decision to return to the modelling world exemplifies the broader impact of gentrification, as his pursuit of financial stability clashes with the need for authenticity in a rapidly transforming Lahore. Sharon Zukin defines

authenticity as a “continuous process of living and working, a gradual build-up of everyday experience” (6). Ali’s re-entry into modelling reflects his yearning for authenticity. When Ali initially leaves modelling, he plunges into a life marked by financial hardship and familial distress. His brother’s tragic injury, “they cut off his leg!” (14) due to a bomb blast, compounds the family’s economic woes: “Money. We don’t have any” (15). Ali’s mother, once a vibrant figure full of life and optimism, now bears the physical toll of years of struggle (15). Her features, “now etched with weariness and sorrow,” vividly symbolize the family’s descent into destitution (15).

Amidst these challenges, Ali’s decision to re-enter the modelling world emerges as a desperate bid to alleviate his family’s financial burdens. However, his return is not just a financial necessity; it is also an effort to reclaim authenticity. Zukin argues that authenticity in a gentrified city is a continuous process of navigating lived experience amidst an evolving urban landscape.

Ali’s actions can also be interpreted as a form of adaptive dwelling. In Martin Heidegger’s words, dwelling means “to spare, to preserve... dwelling itself is always a staying with things. Dwelling, as preserving, keeps the fourfold in that with which mortals stay: in things” (Heidegger 150). Dwelling is not just about living in a physical space but also about experiencing a sense of belonging and connection to one’s surroundings. For Ali, Lahore serves as both a backdrop and a stage where he navigates his roles and responsibilities. By re-entering the modelling industry, Ali engages with Lahore’s urban landscape not merely as a physical space but as a social and economic environment where he can utilize his skills and connections to earn a living (15, 25). His decision demonstrates his ability to adapt to the circumstances imposed upon him by the city’s socio-economic dynamics. Ali uses his knowledge of the industry and personal network to secure opportunities, actively participating in Lahore’s urban life to sustain his family’s livelihood.

Ali’s engagement with modelling, despite its challenges and compromises, showcases his resilience and determination to dwell authentically within Lahore’s urban fabric. His dwelling is characterized by his negotiation of personal values and societal expectations. While modelling may not align with traditional notions of honour or dignity in his cultural context, Ali’s prioritization of his family’s welfare reflects a deeper commitment to his role as a provider and caretaker. This negotiation

highlights his agency in shaping his narrative within Lahore's evolving urban landscape.

Zukin observes that during gentrification, the city is "imploded by new investment, new people, and 'the relentless bulldozer of homogenization'" (7). This process leads to spatial inequalities and segregation, with significant implications for social justice and the quality of life for urban residents, resulting in a "state of greater inequality and greater injustice" (Harvey 94). In Ali's narrative, such segregation and inequality are evident. He blames himself for his brother's condition, lamenting that "if he had only made enough money to buy them a car, Hussain wouldn't have had to rely on public transport" where the accident occurred (61).

Ali's financial struggles lead him to seek help from Gul, who introduces him to Mir Rabiullah, a covert terrorist operative. Initially, Ali's decision to accept Mir's help appears pragmatic, driven by the economic necessity to support his family, particularly his brother's medical expenses. However, this relationship soon entangles Ali in a moral and ethical dilemma, illustrating the darker consequences of gentrification's socioeconomic pressures. Mir's control over Ali's financial well-being exemplifies the uneven power dynamics of gentrified spaces, where economic disparities heighten exploitation and marginalization.

Ali's romantic relationship with Mona, a wealthy "forty-one years old," (21) woman, further complicates his journey. Zukin notes that gentrification reshapes everyday routines (7), and Ali's re-entry into modelling introduces him to Mona's privileged world. For Ali, Mona represents an escape from his struggles, embodying a sense of belonging and authenticity he desperately seeks. Conversely, Mona's attraction to Ali reflects her own yearning for connection, challenging societal norms and highlighting the emotional void in her life. Loretta Lees emphasizes that gentrification often leads to social polarization and the erosion of community cohesion (Lees 397-398).

Later, when Ali falls in love with Mona, who is from the upper class, his actions seem driven by a desire for social authenticity (Zukin 31). In an attempt to win her affection, Ali buys Mona an expensive gift, and to afford this, he becomes involved in Mir's terrorist activities. "They're (Gifts) not expensive," was all he said to Mona with a giant smile plastered on his lips. Inside, the knowledge of how far he

had fallen for this money grated him” (211). This marks the point where Ali begins to dwell inappropriately, disrupting the fourfold of Heidegger's dwelling concept. He becomes increasingly dependent on Mir's financial support and connections, trapped in a cycle where his actions are dictated by Mir's expectations and demands. “You are needed on Sunday at 3 pm. Urgent. Do not forget or get delayed” (213) (*Italics in original*). This dependency compromises Ali's autonomy and moral compass, and forces him into situations that challenge his principles and values. Ali's struggle highlights the darker side of dwelling in a gentrified urban environment, where economic survival often demands personal sacrifices, such as compromising integrity and ethical boundaries. His compromised position reflects the broader dynamics of power and exploitation in gentrified spaces, where individuals from marginalized backgrounds are coerced into compromising situations by more powerful figures like Mir.

Ali's pursuit of authenticity through Mona drives him deeper into Mir's web, further eroding his moral compass. Ali is coerced by Mir into a suicide-bombing mission to “blow up Bilal,” (248) who is Mona's husband. Trapped between loyalty to Mir and his love for Mona, Ali's journey culminates in his tragic decision to sacrifice himself during a suicide-bombing mission. Heidegger warns that improper dwelling leads to a loss of orientation, and inhibits meaningful reflection. His act, “he smiled as his thumb came down on the button,” (262) to ultimately sacrifice himself by blasting a bomb near the sea where the party is taking place symbolizes the profound disorientation and moral compromise caused by his inability to dwell authentically within Lahore's gentrified landscape.

In conclusion, Ali's journey highlights the critical role of dwelling authentically within an urban landscape shaped by gentrification. As long as Ali navigates his environment with a sense of authenticity—prioritizing his family's well-being and maintaining personal integrity—he copes with the challenges presented by the rapidly changing socio-economic conditions in Lahore. However, as soon as Ali begins to dwell inappropriately—compromising his values in pursuit of financial gain and social status, influenced by gentrification's pressures—he spirals into moral conflict and struggles. His engagement with Mir's terrorist activities and his pursuit of Mona's affection, driven by the desire for authenticity, ultimately lead to his tragic end. This inappropriate dwelling, rooted in the disorienting effects of gentrification,

illustrates how the socio-economic forces shaping the urban environment can force individuals to make choices that erode their autonomy and integrity. Ali's tragic fate serves as a poignant reminder that when individuals are unable to dwell authentically due to the pressures of gentrification, they risk losing their moral compass, which leads to internal strife and, ultimately, destruction.

4.3 Mona's Struggle for Authenticity: A Portrait of Personal Transformation

Sharon Zukin's concept of the "authentic urban experience" is crucial in understanding Mona's internal struggle. Zukin argues that authenticity involves a continuous process of living and working, grounded in everyday experiences and social continuity: "A city loses its soul when this continuity is broken" (Zukin 6). For Mona, this idea is reflected in her life, where her lavish surroundings fail to provide her with a sense of authenticity and belonging. As her life becomes increasingly detached from her true desires and past experiences, her identity feels fragmented. This detachment is further highlighted by her strained relationship with her husband, Bilal, who is more engrossed in his business dealings than in his wife's emotional well-being. Mona's attempt to call him illustrates their emotional disconnect. When she calls him, he does not pick up, and later, when he does answer, he expresses irritation at her repeated attempts to reach him (4). This interaction portrays the distance in their relationship, which accentuates how gentrification and its effects on personal identities and relationships leave them both isolated.

Zukin's theory further explains how authenticity can evoke a sense of connection and belonging among residents and visitors, but also serve as a double-edged sword, particularly in the context of gentrification (Zukin 21). In Mona's case, this double-edged experience is embodied in her transformation from a middle-class background to living in a luxurious mansion. The material success of her new life starkly contrasts with her increasing sense of alienation. Reflecting on the past, Mona's disillusionment becomes evident: "Mona had been crying a lot these past few years; each bomb blast shook her in a physical way, deepening her fear that the world was falling apart, just like her marriage" (1). Her lavish lifestyle, marked by material excesses such as "Chanel bags" and "Belgian chocolates," is shown to mask the

emotional void she feels. This emotional void symbolizes how gentrification impacts both personal identities and relationships.

The novel highlights Mona's ongoing emotional conflicts with Bilal, further illustrating her emotional instability. The use of alcohol as a coping mechanism and the subsequent inability to recall the specifics of their fights signify her growing emotional detachment. "She didn't even remember what it was they'd fought about this time, the whiskey had made sure of that. Perhaps something about how she had been avoiding him for weeks" (68). This line depicts Mona's struggle to maintain an authentic experience within her marriage. As Zukin suggests, an authentic urban experience involves genuine engagement with one's environment and relationships. In Mona's case, her reliance on alcohol and her avoidance of Bilal highlights her disconnection from her true self and emotions. Her inability to remember the details of their arguments signals deeper issues of emotional avoidance and detachment, which further erode the authenticity of her relationship. "Had she? She couldn't recall the last time she had been at ease with him – his mood swings didn't allow for that luxury" (68). Zukin argues that authenticity requires a continuous process of living and working that is grounded in social continuity (Zukin 6). Mona's lack of ease with Bilal demonstrates her inability to dwell authentically within her own home, as their relationship has become a constant source of tension, which disrupts her sense of continuity and peace.

The cyclical nature of destruction in Mona and Bilal's relationship emphasizes its superficiality. "She didn't need to remember the particulars of their argument. It always came down to breaking things in the room" (68). This repetition of destructive behaviour reflects the erosion of their connection, mirroring Zukin's assertion that gentrification leads to the displacement of authentic communities and the erosion of genuine social ties. The physical destruction of objects symbolizes the emotional wreckage of their marriage. "At first, she'd mourn over the loss of her things for days, but now she had become as flippant about them as he was" (68). This detachment from her material possessions mirrors Mona's emotional numbness and growing disconnection from her authentic self, a direct result of the turmoil in her marriage. "She might have hurled an object or two at him last night although she couldn't be sure" (68). Her uncertainty about her own actions underscores her loss of self-

awareness and the breakdown of her authentic identity within this destructive relationship.

Mona's life within the gentrified, affluent society of Lahore exemplifies Zukin's argument that gentrification leads to the displacement of authentic communities. Her relationships, particularly with Bilal, have become transactional and superficial, marked more by social status and material gain than by genuine emotional connection. Mona's attempt to rekindle her romance with Bilal is short-lived: "He didn't even deserve her indifference, especially after he had continued his affairs despite their so-called romantic reconciliation" (102). This highlights the fragility of their relationship and the hollow nature of their attempts at reconciliation. Bilal's infidelities and Mona's disillusionment further highlight the emotional and social disconnection that characterizes their marriage and reflect the broader impact of gentrification on personal relationships. The pursuit of material success, rather than nurturing emotional bonds, leaves both characters isolated.

Martin Heidegger's notion of "dwelling" adds another layer of complexity to Mona's experience. Heidegger views dwelling as a fundamental aspect of human existence that emphasizes the importance of finding one's place in the world and creating spaces that foster a sense of belonging and continuity (Heidegger 150-151). However, Mona's experience of dwelling in her luxurious mansion is marked by alienation rather than fulfilment. "People would laugh at her if she told them that despite everything, her home felt like a prison to her" (5). This sense of entrapment underscores the hollow nature of her existence, where material wealth fails to compensate for the lack of meaningful human connections and a sense of purpose. Heidegger's philosophy asserts that true dwelling involves living meaningfully and harmoniously within one's environment and forging deep, authentic relationships (Heidegger 152). Mona's inability to connect meaningfully with her surroundings or the people in her life, particularly Bilal, portrays her alienation from both herself and the world around her.

Mona's memories of a more humble past contrast sharply with her current state. "When she (Mona) had been a young girl, they were poor. With her father's meagre salary, they would struggle to make ends meet. Food was scarce, meat even more so, and vanities like watching movies in theatres or buying make-up were inconceivable" (140/141). Her disconnection from both her past and her authentic self

highlights the emotional cost of gentrification and its impact on her sense of dwelling. Mona's luxurious lifestyle, marked by material wealth and social status, only serves to amplify her feelings of imprisonment. "People would laugh at her if she told them that despite everything, her home felt like a prison to her" (5). The mansion, which should symbolize success and comfort, instead becomes a symbol of isolation and alienation. This paradox reveals the dissonance between material wealth and emotional fulfilment, reinforcing the idea that true dwelling requires more than just physical comfort; it requires emotional and social continuity.

In conclusion, Mona's struggle in *In the Company of Strangers* exemplifies both Zukin's concept of the "authentic urban experience" and Heidegger's notion of "dwelling." Zukin's theory illuminates how gentrification disrupts the continuity of social relationships, leading to Mona's emotional detachment and disillusionment. Despite her material wealth, Mona's inability to connect meaningfully with her environment and relationships highlights Heidegger's assertion that true dwelling requires a sense of belonging and continuity. Her strained relationship with Bilal and her feelings of emptiness reflect the profound emotional and social disconnection that results from gentrification, where the pursuit of material success often leads to a loss of authentic human connections.

4.4 Bilal's Business and Personal Negotiations in Gentrified Lahore

Belsey argues that language is not neutral but shaped by the social, cultural, and historical contexts in which it operates. It both reflects and reinforces the power structures that govern relationships within a community. In Bilal's case, the non-neutral aspect of language is evident. Bilal's life from his mansion and business dealings in affluent neighbourhoods to interactions with elite circles embodies a microcosm of Lahore's urban transformation. His character is central to understanding the gentrification process in the city. Zukin (2006) asserts that authenticity in urban spaces is rooted in the social dynamics of a neighbourhood, including the interactions between residents, community events, and shared experiences (Zukin 34). As a construction businessperson, Bilal is actively involved in reshaping the city's physical space, and his ambitions and ventures play a significant role in the gentrification of Lahore. However, beneath these ambitions, Bilal is in search of an authentic urban experience—a yearning that remains unfulfilled in his personal life, as language and

interaction within his personal and business spheres are shaped by class and economic status.

Heidegger (1951) argues that authentic dwelling involves building meaningful relationships and living harmoniously within one's environment (Heidegger 150). However, Bilal's personal life, particularly his neglect and mistreatment of Mona, stands in stark contrast to this ideal. Bilal's failure to engage meaningfully with Mona is evident when he admits he does not know basic details about her preferences or life philosophy (266). This neglect reveals a failure to engage in authentic dwelling with his spouse. Their relationship, marked by emotional distance and disconnection, is symptomatic of the wider moral compromises inherent in rapid urban development. The language Bilal uses, such as his cold admissions of ignorance about Mona's inner life, speaks volumes about the fractured nature of their connection. Language here, rather than being a neutral vehicle for communication, becomes a tool of emotional distancing and detachment.

A conversation between Bilal and Mona reveals further cracks in their relationship. Mona's laughter in response to Bilal's awkward romantic gestures, along with her discontentment with their marriage, suggests that their bond is rooted more in obligation than in genuine affection. The lack of emotional connection is compounded by Bilal's transactional approach to life, both personally and professionally. In a world shaped by gentrification, Bilal's marriage to Mona seems to exist on the periphery of true intimacy and mutual understanding. Heidegger's philosophy stresses that dwelling is more than occupying space; it requires forming deep, meaningful connections to people and places. Bilal's failure to 'dwell' authentically with Mona reflects this deficiency, and their communication reflects a language of detachment, shaped by the socio-economic forces at play.

Zukin's assertion that "a city loses its soul when this continuity (authenticity) is broken" (6) emphasizes the crucial link between the stability of community relationships and the essence of urban authenticity. Bilal's longing for intimate, simple gestures, such as "rubbing a smear of sauce" or "sharing a joke" (266), demonstrates his recognition of a deeper need for connection, yet these gestures are conspicuously absent in his own life. This absence of intimacy in his marriage speaks volumes about the fractured nature of his emotional and social existence. His yearning for the "old Mona" (266) represents a desire to return to a time when their connection

felt genuine, yet his actions, like infidelity and emotional neglect, have already undermined any chance of reclaiming that authenticity. The language he uses in reference to Mona, along with the lack of meaningful dialogue in their interactions, highlights a broader erosion of genuine connection amidst the rapid changes in their urban environment.

Bilal's commodification of relationships is particularly evident in the way he treats his daughter Aimen's future marriage. Zukin argues that cultural capital attracts those seeking to experience "authentic" urban lifestyles (Zukin 16). For Bilal, the prospects of Aimen's marriage become a business transaction rather than an emotional commitment. The parade of wealthy suitors that visit Bilal's home illustrates how urban transformation has shifted the nature of personal relationships. In this new social order, traditional values of familial ties are overshadowed by economic concerns, highlighting how gentrification has commodified even the most intimate human interactions. The language of business transactions permeates what should be a deeply personal event, further exemplifying how external factors shape personal relationships.

When Elahi, a member of the gentry class, is killed, Bilal's reaction encapsulates his transactional approach to relationships. His cold, utilitarian response to Elahi's death—"Good riddance, I say. I'm certain that procuring steel from his dumb son will be infinitely easier now" (174)—reveals a lack of empathy and a focus on practical benefits rather than ethical or emotional considerations. This attitude contrasts with the ethical and communal aspects of dwelling that Heidegger advocates, where human life and death are engaged with meaning and respect. The language Bilal uses here reflects not only his personal detachment but also his reduction of human life to mere transactional value, emblematic of the social and cultural dynamics driven by gentrification.

Bilal's attitude towards Elahi's death, and his commodification of marriage, vividly demonstrate how gentrification affects not only the physical city but also the relationships that sustain its communities. Zukin's analysis of urban authenticity and Heidegger's philosophy of dwelling both illuminate Bilal's failure to connect meaningfully with his environment and the people around him. His relationships, including his marriage to Mona and his transactional dealings with his daughter's future, reflect the broader impacts of gentrification—where the social fabric is torn,

and human connections become increasingly commodified and superficial. The language of detachment and transaction, deeply embedded in Bilal's interactions, underscores the erosion of authentic human connection in the face of urban transformation.

In conclusion, Bilal's character embodies the detrimental effects of gentrification, as explored through Zukin's concept of "authentic urban experience" and Heidegger's notion of "dwelling." Bilal's relationships are transactional and superficial, rooted more in economic considerations than in genuine human connection. His neglect of Mona, his commodification of marriage, and his callous reaction to Elahi's death reveal the profound social and moral costs of gentrification. The analysis, grounded in both Zukin's and Heidegger's frameworks, demonstrates how gentrification's impact is not merely physical but deeply social, cultural, and linguistic, and reshapes not just the city's skyline but also the nature of human relationships within it.

4.5 Other Characters: Perspectives on Urban Change and Authenticity

Heidegger's notion of dwelling involves being present and engaged in a meaningful way with the world and others. However, this authentic form of engagement seems almost entirely missing in the characters from the gentry class. Throughout the novel, the affluent characters appear primarily concerned with their own interests, disregarding the communal and emotional ties that foster meaningful human connection. For instance, when Kalsoom and Mona's other friends learn of Elahi's death and his funeral, their reactions reveal a profound detachment from the ethical and emotional responsibilities that Heidegger associates with dwelling. Kulsoom's remark, "Please, I don't think I can take all the pressure of weeping ladies. I don't want to go" (178), highlights her preference for avoiding discomfort and social obligations, suggesting a disconnection from the authentic dwelling that requires being present with others in times of grief. Her refusal to participate in the communal mourning process critiques a society where personal comfort is prioritized over shared human experiences.

On the other hand, Alia's response to Elahi's death is disturbingly cruel and desensitized. She expresses excitement at the thought of witnessing someone else's

suffering, saying, “I’ve been dying to see that bat in agony,” and her graphic recounting of Elahi’s demise—“There wasn’t anything left of Elahi to bury. Apparently, he got crushed into pieces under the rubble” (178)—emphasizes her emotional distance from the tragedy. This reaction exemplifies a complete rejection of Heidegger’s authentic dwelling, where one’s ethical engagement with others is paramount. Alia’s indifference highlights a broader theme of social fragmentation, as described by Sharon Zukin in her study of gentrification. In this social context, genuine human empathy and community bonds are eroded, giving way to a more detached and morally bankrupt way of being.

These characters’ responses to Elahi’s death serve as a critique of the superficiality and moral decay that accompany social and economic stratification. The gentrification process, with its focus on individualism and material gain, fosters a loss of authentic community engagement. Zukin’s theory of gentrification, which argues that urban transformation often leads to the erosion of genuine social ties, is vividly illustrated in this scene. Alia’s cruelty and Kalsoom’s apathy reflect a society where personal desires take precedence over collective emotional well-being, making it increasingly difficult for individuals to engage in authentic dwelling.

Heidegger asserts, “The basic character of dwelling is to spare, to preserve... dwelling itself is always a staying with things. Dwelling, as preserving, keeps the fourfold in that with which mortals stay: in things” (150). This preservation of the fourfold—earth, sky, divinities, and mortals—ensures the normal functioning of life. However, when this balance is disrupted, as in the case of Mir Rabiullah, the individual becomes alienated from both the world and themselves. Mir’s memories of his mother initially reflect a sense of warmth and authenticity: tender recollections of her nurturing care, such as her encouragement to eat hot kheer and kiss his forehead before school, embody a time when his life held genuine meaning. These memories align with Heidegger’s idea of dwelling authentically, where connections to people and things are full of emotional resonance. However, this nostalgia is shattered by his chilling admission of having killed her. “He remembered killing her with his bare hands, watching in wonder how the life bled out from her eyes, leaving them still and vacant. He had relished the act” (220). This violent act symbolizes a rupture in Mir’s ability to dwell authentically, marking a departure from any meaningful connection to

others. His act of matricide—motivated by a distorted sense of honour—alienates him from his past, his community, and ultimately from himself.

Mir's internal conflict and remorse, particularly his repeated haunting by the memory of his mother, underscore the profound psychological toll of inauthentic dwelling. Despite his efforts to suppress these memories, they continue to resurface: "Leave me alone, Mother... It has been sixty years. Leave me in peace" (220). This illustrates how the act of violence has permanently disrupted his ability to find peace and dwell authentically. The moral corruption evident in his actions highlights a deep sense of unresolved conflict, reflecting the broader fragmentation of social bonds in the world around him. His inability to reconcile with his past reveals the lasting consequences of not living authentically, where violence and betrayal replace meaningful, authentic relationships.

Moreover, this internal turmoil mirrors the broader theme of gentrification. Zukin argues that the transformation of urban spaces often leads to the loss of authentic community connections and an increase in social fragmentation. Mir's story is a microcosm of this larger social phenomenon. His moral decay, fuelled by personal violence and betrayal, reflects the broader social and ethical erosion brought about by gentrification. His exploitation of others, particularly vulnerable figures like Ali, further contributes to the social fragmentation that Zukin describes. In this way, Mir's actions can be seen as a reflection of the social fragmentation caused by gentrification, where the values of community and authentic connection are increasingly replaced by self-interest and violence.

In conclusion, both Mir Rabiullah's internal conflict and the characters' reactions to Elahi's death reflect the consequences of inauthentic dwelling. The characters' detachment from community, their moral decay, and the social fragmentation they embody all point to a broader critique of gentrification and its impact on human connection. By juxtaposing Heidegger's philosophy of dwelling with Zukin's critique of gentrification, it becomes clear that the loss of authentic dwelling and community ties is a key feature of the socio-political landscape presented in the novel. Ultimately, the novel exposes the destructive effects of a society where economic success and individualism take precedence over genuine

human relationships, leaving its characters trapped in a state of moral and emotional disconnection

Meera (Mona's childhood friend and owner of the modelling agency where Ali worked) exemplifies the hollow nature of relationships formed in a gentrified context. Zukin argues that the pursuit of aesthetic and economic enhancement often leads to the erosion of authentic urban experiences (Zukin 2009). Despite her outward success, which includes a glamorous social life and material wealth, Meera's personal life reveals a profound emptiness and lack of authentic connections. Her history of "thrice divorced at the age of 41" (06) underscores the transitory and commodified nature of relationships in her life. The numerous failed marriages reflect the superficiality of connections within a gentrified society, where personal fulfilment is overshadowed by external appearances and material success.

In their youth, Meera once explained to Mona the cultural symbolism of showing a guy the finger, likening it to being called a "taxi," a derogatory term implying a woman of questionable morals (07). This comparison highlights the commercialization of relationships in a society shaped by gentrification, where intimacy is reduced to a transactional exchange. The gesture, reminiscent of the commodified relationships in Heera Mandi, Lahore's red-light district, exposes the way society equates human interactions with monetary value. The conversation between Meera and Mona draws a stark contrast between their carefree laughter in the past and Meera's current life, where personal fulfilment remains elusive despite her material success. The shift in their dynamic symbolizes the broader societal transformation, where genuine human connections are sacrificed for economic and aesthetic pursuits.

Meera's life trajectory demonstrates how societal changes, specifically gentrification, reshape personal values and relationships. The commodification of intimacy and the superficiality of her relationships serve as a critique of how urban transformation, driven by economic growth, can erode meaningful social bonds. Zukin's analysis of gentrification's impact on cities mirrors Meera's experiences; as cities become increasingly transformed by economic prosperity, traditional values and authentic connections fade. The changing social norms in Lahore are reflected in Meera's approach to relationships, where personal desires take precedence over moral or communal considerations.

Heidegger's notion of dwelling offers a contrast to Meera's lifestyle. Dwelling, for Heidegger, involves a profound engagement with one's environment and relationships, fostering a sense of coherence and rootedness in life. Meera's casual attitude toward relationships and her nonchalant response to scandal reveals a detachment from the ethical responsibilities Heidegger associates with authentic dwelling. When Meera confides in Mona about Shahida's husband, Ilahi, and his affair with an "18-yearold" (36), she inadvertently exposes the moral ambiguities that arise in a privileged, wealthy class. This revelation exemplifies the erosion of ethical norms within a society where wealth and status blur the lines between right and wrong.

Moreover, Meera's casual attitude toward motherhood and relationships further underscores her detachment from traditional family values. "With all the husbands I've been juggling," she remarks, "I never got the chance. Besides, I didn't want one man's child to be raised by another" (36). This statement highlights her disregard for traditional notions of family and monogamy, emphasizing her transient and commodified approach to personal relationships. In contrast, Heidegger's idea of authentic dwelling requires a deep connection to one's existence, relationships, and responsibilities. Meera's lack of engagement with ethical considerations in her relationships reveals a profound disconnect from the rootedness Heidegger envisions.

In conclusion, *In the Company of Strangers* (2019) offers a multifaceted nature of gentrification and its impact on personal and social identity. Through the experiences of Mona, Ali, Bilal, and others, the novel explores the connection between the quest for authenticity and the ability to dwell amidst urban transformation. In this study, the tension between development and the erosion of cultural identity and community cohesion in Lahore is apparent, which offers insights into the lived realities of individuals navigating the complexities of gentrified space.

In line with Belsey's method, this analysis connects the characters' personal struggles to the broader social changes that shape their lives. The gentrification of Lahore, with its rapid transformation and the commodification of relationships and identities, serves as the backdrop for these existential journeys. The exploration of Mona's character, caught between external affluence and internal emptiness, demonstrates how the shifting socio-political landscape influences her psychological state. As Belsey suggests, literary analysis should not only consider social context but

also examine literary strategies (p. 34), through techniques like characterization and dialogue, the novel analyzes the superficiality of material prosperity and its emotional toll. Mona's emotional detachment despite outward success illustrates the existential void that often accompanies a gentrified existence.

Ali's narrative highlights the human cost of gentrification's socio-economic disparities. His moral compromises and the sacrifices he makes for survival reflect the erosion of dignity in a gentrified space. Similarly, Bilal's character exemplifies the moral decay that often accompanies wealth and power. His relationships, marked by infidelity and emotional detachment, align with Belsey's assertion that a text's ideological and ethical context should be examined. Bilal's inability to empathize with Mona's struggles mirrors the dehumanizing effects of a gentrified society that prioritizes personal gain over authentic human connections. His response to Elahi's death, seeing it as a business opportunity, further illustrates the moral bankruptcy that accompanies a system built on superficial success.

Meera's character adds further complexity to the narrative and illustrates how gentrification influences interpersonal relationships. While Zukin's framework highlights the commodification of urban space, the novel uses Meera's experiences to demonstrate how this transformation infiltrates personal lives, rendering relationships hollow. Meera's string of divorces and casual approach to relationships speak to the transient nature of connections in a gentrified environment. The comparison of her youth with her present life portrays how social changes lead to disillusionment.

The text's portrayal of characters like Alia and Mir Rabiullah enriches the analysis of gentrification. Alia's morbid curiosity and hedonism reveal the erosion of empathy and ethical responsibility within the gentry. Mir Rabiullah's story, marked by trauma and extremism, provides a contrast to the superficial world of the elite, which also emphasises the psychological toll of disconnection from one's roots. Through these characters, Awais Khan critiques the fragmentation of society and the loss of authentic connections in a rapidly transforming urban environment.

This study, while grounded in Belsey's methodology, also considers how literary devices and the author's ideological stance inform the narrative. The critique of gentrification is not merely sociological but deeply personal, with each character's journey reflecting the broader societal shifts. In doing so, the novel urges a re-

evaluation of what it means to live authentically in a world driven by consumption and superficial success. The need for genuine human connections and inner fulfilment, over and above social status, remains central to the novel's critique.

In sum, *In the Company of Strangers* offers a profound exploration of gentrification's impact on both the urban landscape and personal identities. By focusing on the ideological underpinnings of the text and the literary strategies employed, this study sheds light on the complex, often painful consequences of living in gentrified space. The novel's depiction of emotional disconnection, moral decay, and the struggle for authenticity offers a compelling commentary on the human condition in the face of gentrification, providing valuable insights into the challenges of maintaining personal identity in a commodified, rapidly changing society.

CHAPTER 5

FROM UNSTABLE BUILDINGS TO UNSTABLE LIVES: AUTHENTICITY AND DWELLING IN KHAN'S *NO HONOUR*

In this chapter, the analysis of the second novel, *No Honour* (2021), is undertaken. Through the lens of Heidegger's philosophy, the characters' experiences in gentrified Lahore are examined with a particular focus on their relationships with space, authenticity, and their sense of belonging. Like the previous chapter, this analysis begins with an exploration of the urban spaces in which the novel is set, followed by an examination of the descriptions of these spaces.

The chapter is structured into four main sections: "From Khan Wala to Lahore," "Abida: Surviving to Thriving," "Jamil: Adapting and Belonging," and "Other

Characters: Contrasting Perspectives." The first section delves into the shift from Khan Wala to Lahore, briefly exploring the characteristics of these distinct urban environments. In the second section, Abida's journey from surviving to thriving is analysed as a means of exploring authentic experiences amidst the pressures of gentrification.

The third section examines Jamil's narrative, which offers a different dimension to the analysis by reflecting on his adaptation to the changing urban landscape while grappling with his own sense of belonging and authenticity. In the fourth section, the perspectives of secondary characters, including Kaleem, Rukhsana, Pir Sadiq, and Shahid, are considered. Each of these sections contributes to a comprehensive analysis of the characters' experiences and their interactions with the evolving world around them.

In the preface of the novel, Shabnam's story is shared. She is seduced by the promises of a better life in the city, only to be betrayed and left to suffer. Shabnam is coerced into a relationship with a much older man who promises her the world but ultimately leads her down a path of destruction as the whole village gathers to kill her. Her tragic tale sets the tone for the novel, which illustrates how the allure of city life

can lead to dire consequences for young girls from rural areas. This underscores the novel's theme of urban transformation and its impact on individuals.

The novel revolves around Abida, a young girl living in a remote area at the beginning of the story. In her village, there is a tradition of honour killing if any girl is found having a relationship out of wedlock. Abida has always been fascinated by city life, and she falls for a boy named Kaleem, who visits her village to meet his parents. Abida's desire to move to the city drives her to fall for Kaleem, and she eventually conceives a baby out of wedlock. The whole village gathers to kill her, but Kaleem arrives with the police and rescues her. The couple then moves to Lahore to start a new life in the congested area of Anarkali, which is in direct contrast to the gentrified parts of the city.

In Lahore, they have a daughter, but soon Kaleem starts taking drugs and sells Abida to a brothel to support his addiction. From here, her adverse journey begins. Kaleem takes their daughter away, falsely telling Abida that she has died. Apa G, the brothel owner, who lives in a gentrified space, exploits Abida. Apa G uses Abida to satisfy her clients' desires. Abida faces numerous hardships and eventually falls in love with one of her attendants, Shahid. Abida's father, Jamil, comes to Lahore to rescue her, but he is horrified to learn about her situation. Determined, he continues searching and eventually finds her in Apa G's brothel, trying to save his daughter. Abida is then sold to Rana Hameed, a powerful steel mill owner with a mansion and luxury cars. Ultimately, the boy Abida fell in love with helps her father rescue her, and they start a new life. Abida goes on to establish an NGO to save girls from honour killings.

5.1 From Khan Wala to Lahore

In *No Honour* (2021), gentrification is depicted not just as an urban phenomenon reshaping physical spaces, but as a transformative process that disrupts characters' sense of identity, belonging, and their ability to dwell authentically within the city. Gentrification, in this context, emerges as a multifaceted force that not only alters the built environment but also impinges upon the characters' lived experiences, deeply influencing their relationships, daily routines, and emotional connections to their surroundings.

Sharon Zukin defines authenticity as a “continuous process of living and working, a gradual build-up of everyday experience, the expectation that neighbours

and buildings that are here today will be here tomorrow” (06). She emphasizes the essential connection between community stability and the essence of urban authenticity. In this sense, authenticity is not merely about the preservation of physical structures but also about maintaining the social fabric that imbues a neighbourhood with character and identity. In *No Honour*, Lahore emerges as a dynamic backdrop, vividly illustrating the impacts of gentrification. The novel contrasts different parts of the city to reveal the profound social, cultural, and economic shifts brought on by urban development. The characters, particularly Abida and Jamil, experience these changes as they encounter urban spaces that unsettle their perceptions of authenticity, identity, and belonging.

Abida's transition from Khan Wala to Lahore encapsulates the disorienting effects of gentrification. In Khan Wala, she is familiar with “lush green fields” and a rural landscape where she can “see miles in the distance” (78). This rural landscape, defined by “open drains and cooking fires,” offers her a sense of community and connection to the land (78). However, when she arrives in Lahore, the city appears as a chaotic and congested space: “thatched houses,” “proper metalled roads,” and a constant cacophony of “car horns, street hawkers, and screaming ambulances” (78-79). The absence of greenery and the overwhelming presence of “plastic bags flying in the air” alongside

“mountains of garbage” symbolize the urban decay resulting from gentrification (79).

Abida's initial perceptions of Lahore reflect the rupture of continuity she associates with authenticity, contrasting sharply with the harmonious, community-driven landscape of Khan Wala.

Zukin argues that gentrification often attempts to recreate an "authentic" urban experience by revitalizing neglected areas. However, as Abida experiences in Lahore, this "authenticity" is hollow, grounded in superficial modernity rather than meaningful connections to place. This shift from the familiar, earthy landscapes of Khan Wala to the polluted, concrete jungle of Lahore challenges her understanding of authenticity. The lack of “women actively participating in street life” and the presence of “plastic everywhere” further disrupt Abida's sense of belonging (79). Heidegger's notion of dwelling, which emphasizes a deep connection to one's environment, resonates with Abida's alienation. The city's transformation renders her unable to properly “dwell” in Lahore, resulting in emotional and existential dislocation.

Similarly, when Jamil arrives in Lahore, he too experiences the urban transformation in direct contrast to his rural roots. As the bus groans through “a fashionable part of the city,” Jamil marvels at the “steel-and-glass towers,” “neat, grassy parks,” and “towering trees” that seem to symbolize order and prosperity (111). This imagery evokes the pristine, wealthier aspects of gentrified Lahore, yet it is contrasted with the “hazy grey” sky, suggesting the underlying tensions in the city’s modernization (111). The transition from this area to older parts of the city, where “sparkle dimmed,” highlights the inequality wrought by gentrification. The affluent areas, maintained by “armies of gardeners,” symbolize the financial divide, while the “older part of the city” reveals the marginalized communities displaced by these economic shifts (111). Jamil’s experience thus mirrors the social fragmentation caused by gentrification, where the displacement of poorer communities undermines the authenticity of the urban environment.

Neil Smith’s concept of the “rent gap” further clarifies this dynamic, as gentrification is driven by the recognition of the disparity between the potential value of land and its current use. This disparity is embodied in Jamil’s experience: unable to afford rent, he ends up sleeping on the footpath. His observation of a bustling city filled with “cars, rickshaws, and motorcycles” that “whizzed past him as if demons pursued them” highlights the frantic pace of urban life, which distances individuals from meaningful relationships with their surroundings (127). The image of people passing him “as if he were invisible” reflects the disconnection between the rapidly transforming city and the people it marginalizes (127). Zukin’s idea that gentrification can erode the vibrancy and diversity of neighbourhoods is evident here, as Jamil’s invisibility in the urban chaos underscores the alienation experienced by those who are excluded from the benefits of gentrification.

In contrast to the chaotic, gentrified spaces of Lahore, Apa Ji’s house represents a different kind of urban transformation. While it is not defined by sleek modernity, Apa Ji’s establishment caters to an exclusive clientele with “refined tastes and deep pockets,” creating a space that is fundamentally divisive (105). Though it draws on traditional elements, this space commodifies culture and exclusivity, preventing the broader population from accessing it. This divide undermines the social cohesion required for proper dwelling as conceptualized by Heidegger. The illicit nature of Apa Ji’s business further destabilizes the community, creating a sense

of insecurity and displacement. The commodification of tradition for profit prevents genuine human connection and undermines the authenticity of the space. Those who seek refuge in this environment, despite its appearance of exclusivity, remain disconnected from the community at large.

Ultimately, *No Honour* presents a compelling narrative of a city undergoing rapid gentrification, where the physical transformation of space intersects with profound social and emotional consequences. Through characters like Abida and Jamil, Awais Khan demonstrates how gentrification not only reshapes the city's skyline but also displaces individuals from their cultural roots and sense of belonging. Heidegger's concept of dwelling offers an invaluable lens to explore the existential challenges faced by these characters, as they are forced to dwell in a city that no longer feels like home. The loss of authentic, rooted spaces, coupled with the disorientation caused by urban change, reflects the deeper tensions between economic development and cultural preservation. The struggle of characters like Abida and Jamil to maintain their identities in the face of gentrification ultimately highlights the fragile nature of authenticity in an increasingly commodified world.

5.2 Abida: Surviving to Thriving

Abida's journey in Awais Khan's *No Honour* embodies the yearning for a better life and the complexities of dwelling authentically in evolving urban spaces, as framed by Sharon Zukin's concept of gentrification and Martin Heidegger's notion of dwelling. Before encountering Kaleem, Abida's life in her rural village was circumscribed by traditional customs and limited opportunities. In her village, Abida, like many young women, "wanted to be far away from the villagers who breathed down her neck (16)." Her desire for a different life was driven by the yearning for autonomy and authenticity, reflecting Zukin's theory that individuals often seek to gain cultural capital and social status by associating themselves with "authentic" urban spaces (Zukin, 31). This longing becomes particularly significant in her encounter with Kaleem, whose urban lifestyle symbolizes the promise of breaking free from her restrictive rural past.

Zukin's conception of gentrification is reflected in Kaleem as the catalyst drawing Abida into the urban sphere, where economic and social aspirations

intertwine with personal desires for autonomy. Gentrification, as Zukin argues, is not just about physical space but also about the symbolic value of the "authentic" urban experience. In Abida's case, Kaleem represents a gateway to that authenticity—education, employment, and the opportunity to break away from the rural norms that she wishes to escape. However, this shift from rural to urban is not without complications. Gentrification, while promising, often leads to clashes between traditional values and modern aspirations.

This is evident when Abida informs Kaleem that she is “with child. More than three months along (39),” and asks him to marry her. Kaleem's response, “Marriage? Abida, I am twenty years old. I can't be married (39),” underscores the pressures faced by individuals in evolving urban spaces, where traditional societal structures are replaced by more fluid and often conflicting modern expectations. His refusal to marry her reflects a growing rift between Abida's rural, traditional values and the demands of urban life, where marriage and responsibility are often postponed in pursuit of career or personal freedom. This tension encapsulates the larger impact of gentrification: as urban environments promise economic and social mobility, they also disrupt established norms and obligations.

Martin Heidegger's concept of dwelling, which emphasizes an authentic relationship between individuals and their environment, provides further insight into Abida's struggle. Initially, her relationship with Kaleem signifies a departure from her rural upbringing, where societal norms tightly regulated relationships and marriage. However, when the villagers learn about Abida's pregnancy, the Jirga convenes and decides that she should die. As she attempts to flee with Kaleem, the crowd chants, “Die, Abida, Die (62).” This scene highlights the deep-seated resistance to change that persists in rural communities, even as urbanization encroaches upon traditional practices. The Jirga's decision to punish Abida for her perceived transgression reflects a stark contrast between entrenched cultural practices and the modernizing forces of gentrification.

The villagers' readiness to enforce punishment, even as urban spaces evolve around them, demonstrates their commitment to preserving traditional norms. The crowd's reaction—“so much fun”—further underscores the cruelty of these outdated customs, which remain unchallenged in their community. However, Abida's life is

spared when Kaleem calls the police, whose sirens “grew louder (66),” signalling the intervention of modern legal structures that challenge the authority of traditional norms. This external force reflects the growing impact of urbanization and gentrification, where institutions like the police become pivotal in replacing customary forms of social regulation.

However, Abida’s life in Lahore does not become easier as they face new challenges posed by the fast-changing landscape. Abida notices that “Kaleem was losing weight,” and she asks him, “Is the job proving too stressful? We can survive with less money, Kaleem.” Abida also observes his hands shaking, but she dismisses it, urging him to be strong: “You’re going to be a father soon. You have to be at your full strength (86).” This shift from their familiar rural environment to the demanding urban life exposes them to economic instability and social pressures. This transition embodies the harsh realities of gentrification, where traditional ways of life are disrupted by new economic demands and an unfamiliar, often alienating urban space. Kaleem’s deteriorating health and subsequent addiction are emblematic of the disconnection and alienation that can result from rapid urban transformation, where the promise of a better life often fades into harsh realities.

For Heidegger, dwelling is not merely about physical residence but about feeling rooted in one’s environment, creating a sense of belonging. Abida and Kaleem’s failure to establish a stable home in Lahore reveals their struggle to dwell authentically in an alienating urban context. This is most evident when Kaleem, succumbing to the pressures of city life, spirals into addiction. One particularly telling moment occurs when Kaleem’s friends, including Fareed, who promised him business opportunities, visit their home.

They invite Abida to “come and sit with us,” but she refuses (93). When the guests leave, Kaleem slaps her: “This is the first time you’ve ever raised your hand at me... Husbands hit their wives all the time. It’s normal. And if you had obeyed me, it wouldn’t have happened (95).” This moment of domestic violence marks the culmination of their inability to “dwell rightfully,” as Heidegger might put it. It underscores how gentrification can exacerbate existing social issues and create new ones, as the pressure to succeed in the modern urban environment leads to violence and emotional distress.

Kaleem's addiction and the increasing dysfunction of their relationship expose the challenges that come with rural-urban migration, particularly for women like Abida. The sense of instability that accompanies the rapid transformation of their lives is compounded by the harsh realities of urban living. Abida's tragic fate, culminating in her sale to a brothel, is a poignant reminder of the precariousness of such transitions.

Heidegger's notion of dwelling is crucial here, as it is clear that neither Abida nor Kaleem can establish a stable and nurturing home in Lahore. Abida's plea for Kaleem to be at "full strength" for their future child, juxtaposed with Kaleem's descent into addiction and violence, highlights their disrupted sense of home and the profound impact on their well-being (86). Their struggle reflects the larger issue of gentrification and urbanization, where individuals who migrate in search of a better life often find themselves at the mercy of economic instability, social alienation, and personal destruction.

For Abida and Kaleem, their move to Lahore initially represents a quest for a better life, seeking opportunities and a new beginning away from their rural origins. However, their experience in Lahore becomes fraught with challenges as they confront the harsh realities of urban life, including economic struggles and social pressures (95).

Kaleem's descent into addiction underscores the loss of grounding and authenticity in their dwelling experience. Heidegger's notion of true dwelling—where one feels a harmonious connection with their environment—appears absent here. As Lahore undergoes gentrification, with its stark contrasts between affluent areas and impoverished neighbourhoods (111), Abida and Kaleem find themselves on the margins of this transformation. Their inability to secure a stable, authentic existence in the city mirrors Heidegger's concerns about the alienating impact of modernity and urbanization. The dissonance between their aspirations and the realities of urban life highlights the challenge of maintaining a meaningful existence in a city shaped by economic disparities and social upheaval.

Abida's experience at Apa Ji's place in Lahore marks a significant shift in her life trajectory. After enduring immense hardship, including being sold by Kaleem and ending up in a brothel, Abida finds herself under the care of Apa Ji. Here, Apa Ji

offers a semblance of maternal care and stability within what would otherwise be a harsh and exploitative environment (128). In terms of dwelling, Apa Ji's establishment represents a distorted form of dwelling for Abida. While Apa Ji provides a roof over her head and some form of protection, it is within the confines of a brothel—an environment that inherently disrupts any sense of authentic dwelling. Abida's presence in such a place starkly contrasts her earlier desires for a better life and authentic experiences in the city, desires shattered by the harsh realities she faced. Despite the semblance of care Apa Ji offers—"Consider me as your mother. I will always be here for you" (105)—Abida's dwelling at the brothel is marked by exploitation and a loss of agency. She is trapped in a cycle where her worth is reduced to her ability to generate income through entertainment for men with "refined tastes" (128). This situation further underscores the theme of improper dwelling, where Abida is forced into circumstances not of her choosing, and her desires for authentic living are completely undermined.

Similarly, Abida's time spent at Rana Hameed's house exemplifies a departure from Heidegger's notion of authentic dwelling. Heidegger views dwelling not merely as occupying a physical space but as a profound relationship between a person and their environment, where one's existence is rooted in a sense of belonging and authenticity. At Rana Hameed's house, Abida's dwelling is characterized by coercion, objectification, and a profound lack of agency. She is sold into servitude, initially regarded as "Sahab's new pet, and that's all there is to it (165)," and later becomes a pawn in the power struggles between Rana Hameed and his wife. This environment strips Abida of any semblance of autonomy or dignity, reducing her to a commodity to be used and discarded at the whims of her captors. Rana even controls her with drugs, reinforcing her submission to him. During her time at Rana's, Abida disconnects from her authentic self and surroundings. Heidegger's concept of dwelling emphasizes harmony with one's environment and self, but Abida's immersion into a drug-induced state disrupts this harmony. She feels "alive and dead" (196), existing in a state of disconnection from both her true identity and the world around her. This disconnection mirrors the effects of gentrification, which often displaces individuals and severs their connection to their environment.

Abida's sensation of drug-induced euphoria, which she feels is "better than anything in the world, even her baby" (196), reflects an artificial satisfaction. This parallels the superficial allure of gentrified spaces, which promise enhanced lifestyles and experiences but ultimately fail to provide genuine fulfilment and connection. For Heidegger, dwelling requires authentic engagement with one's environment. Gentrification, however, replaces authentic experiences with commodified ones, leading individuals to seek satisfaction through artificial means. Furthermore, Abida's loss of autonomy is evident as she becomes passive and controlled by her addiction, unable to "escape this delightful prison" (196). Gentrification often results in a similar loss of autonomy for marginalized residents, who are displaced by the economic and social forces driving urban transformation. This lack of control over one's environment and circumstances is antithetical to Heidegger's notion of dwelling, which presupposes that individuals can shape and meaningfully engage with their surroundings.

Moreover, Heidegger suggests that dwelling encompasses a deep engagement with one's environment, nurturing a sense of belonging and rootedness. In contrast, Abida's experience at Rana Hameed's house is marked by alienation and displacement—key elements of improper dwelling. She is forcibly removed from her familiar contexts, such as the village life she sought to escape, and even the exploitative yet somewhat familiar environment of Apa Ji's brothel. This plunges her into a new realm of suffering and disconnection, where her ability to shape her world and find meaning is undermined.

Abida's return home after killing Rana Hameed represents a reclaiming of agency and a rejection of the improper dwelling she endured in Lahore's urban landscapes (260).

Her marriage to the boy who attended her at Apa Ji's, symbolically reconnecting with a simpler, more authentic life outside the city's gentrified spaces, reflects a return to a more genuine form of dwelling (262). This contrast highlights the detrimental impact of gentrification on community and personal integrity, where urban development often displaces authentic social structures and values. Abida's act of opening a shelter home for girls fleeing the jirga system further underscores her transformation and her commitment to combating the injustices perpetuated by traditional and modern forms of exploitation. This act not only critiques the gentrification that commodifies and

exploits urban spaces but also stands as a testament to the resilience of individuals like Abida, who seek to restore authentic dwelling amidst societal upheaval. Her return to a simpler life, marriage, and the establishment of the shelter home all reflect a yearning for genuine community and ethical living, challenging the superficial comforts and exploitative environments found within gentrified urban spaces.

Heidegger emphasizes that dwelling involves caring (*Sorge*) for the world and for others. This caring is an essential aspect of being, as it reflects our interconnectedness with our environment and with other beings. The supportive relationships Abida forms with her father and Shahid are expressions of caring. These relationships are built on mutual respect, love, and understanding—central to Heidegger's idea of dwelling. By nurturing these relationships, Abida creates a space where she can truly dwell, surrounded by those who care for her and whom she cares for in return. Dwelling, according to Heidegger, involves nurturing and preserving—both the physical environment and the social fabric. This nurturing is a form of care that sustains life and promotes well-being. By establishing an NGO to save girls from honour killings, Abida engages in nurturing on a broader scale. Her work with the NGO reflects a commitment to preserving the dignity and safety of vulnerable women. This nurturing aspect of her dwelling extends beyond her personal life, contributing to the well-being of her community and aligning with Heidegger's vision of dwelling as a form of care and preservation.

Heidegger's concept of dwelling also includes a sense of being-at-home in the world. This sense of belonging is crucial for authentic existence, as it provides the grounding necessary for individuals to thrive. Abida's sense of being "finally at home" (289) signifies her deep sense of belonging and acceptance. After experiencing displacement and alienation, finding a place where she feels valued and understood is essential for her rightful dwelling. This mirrors Heidegger's idea that true dwelling involves feeling at home in one's environment, both physically and existentially. For Heidegger, dwelling also involves being in the world, which means understanding and integrating one's past, present, and future in a coherent and meaningful way. This integration allows individuals to live authentically and fully. Abida's journey is marked by her ability to reconcile her traumatic past with her present and future aspirations. This integration is crucial for her sense of rightful dwelling, as it enables

her to move forward with a sense of purpose and resilience. By embracing her past and using it to inform her actions, Abida exemplifies Heidegger's notion of being in the world.

In conclusion, Abida's struggles highlight how gentrified spaces prevent her from dwelling authentically. In these environments, shaped by gentrification, individuals are displaced and commodified, losing their connection to meaningful communities and their true sense of self. Abida's experiences in the brothel and at Rana Hameed's house illustrate this loss of authenticity—she is treated as an object rather than a person with agency. Gentrification creates spaces where economic pressures undermine genuine connection and belonging. It is only when Abida escapes these exploitative environments and reconnects with her roots that she begins to dwell authentically, aligning with Heidegger's idea of dwelling as a meaningful, rooted existence.

5.3 Jamil: Adapting and Belonging

Jamil's journey from the rural peripheries to Lahore in Awais Khan's *No Honour* (2021) constitutes a compelling examination of the socio-economic and spatial consequences of urban gentrification on marginalized communities. His transformation, from a father deeply rooted in rural traditions to an individual dealing with the complexities of Lahore's rapidly changing urban environment, reflects the broader socioeconomic shifts characteristic of contemporary urbanization in cities like Lahore. Gentrification, as conceptualized by Sharon Zukin, denotes a process in which affluent individuals and developers strategically invest in dilapidated urban neighbourhoods, leading to economic revitalization. However, this phenomenon frequently entails the displacement of long-standing, lower-income residents and the erosion of the cultural and social fabric that once defined these communities.

Jamil's experiences in Lahore illustrate this dual nature of gentrification. His journey begins with a desperate search for his daughter Abida, who has ventured to Lahore in search of a better life but faces exploitation. Jamil's arrival in Lahore starkly contrasts with his rural upbringing, where communal bonds and traditional livelihoods shaped his identity. For instance, his first experience of the city, where he wakes up exhausted on the pavement, encapsulates the grim reality for many rural

migrants: “Jamil woke up with the afternoon sun beating down on him. He was drenched in sweat, his entire body aching from sleeping on the pavement” (128). This vivid imagery reflects the marginalization faced by migrants, who are relegated to the periphery of urban prosperity. Jamil becomes a symbol of rural-urban migration’s discontent, which echoes Zukin’s critique that gentrification often forces marginalized migrants to live under precarious conditions while affluent districts thrive on economic growth.

Jamil’s employment under a building contractor for minimum wage further underscores the economic precarity of migrant labourers in gentrified urban spaces: “gladly taken on Jamil for the minimum wage” (147). His gruelling labour for meagre wages not only highlights the exploitation of migrant workers but also mirrors Zukin’s argument that gentrification exacerbates socio-economic disparities. The process of revitalizing urban spaces benefits affluent newcomers while marginalizing low-income residents. As Jamil navigates the stark spatial divides of the city, he observes the contrast between affluent neighbourhoods with modern amenities and the dilapidated areas where marginalized communities reside: “Where he came from, fabrics were sold in shops to be sewn at home, not modelled by dummies in shop windows” (147). This disparity is central to Zukin’s critique, which argues that gentrification reshapes urban landscapes to cater to the wealthy elite, leaving marginalized communities like Jamil’s struggling for basic services.

Beyond economic challenges, Jamil also grapples with the erosion of cultural authenticity and community ties in Lahore’s gentrified milieu. As he moves through the city, he experiences a sense of invisibility: “Nobody had the time to spare him a single thought. People just walked past him as if he was invisible” (128). This alienation reflects Heidegger’s concept of dwelling, which emphasizes the importance of a deep-rooted connection to one’s environment and community. Jamil’s sense of displacement is heightened as he encounters foreign customs and materialistic pursuits that contrast with his traditional values. For Heidegger, authentic dwelling requires a meaningful engagement with one’s surroundings, grounded in shared traditions and values. In Lahore, Jamil’s struggle to maintain cultural continuity amid gentrification highlights the existential dilemma faced by many migrants: balancing the pursuit of economic opportunity with the preservation of their cultural identity.

Jamil’s journey also reveals his resilience and determination to preserve his identity amidst the challenges posed by gentrification. His quest to save Abida from

exploitation reflects his commitment to a rightful form of dwelling. According to Heidegger, dwelling is more than just physical habitation—it is about forging a meaningful connection to one's environment and community. Jamil's pursuit to rescue Abida is symbolic of his attempt to restore a sense of belonging and identity in a city that seems hostile to both him and his daughter. This process of dwelling rightly in an alien environment reflects Heidegger's vision of authenticity, as Jamil refuses to let the pressures of gentrification define his sense of self or his community.

Similarly, Jamil's interactions with Pir Sahab concerning Khalil's education and Abida's marriage further illustrate his aspirations for upward mobility and social integration in Lahore. In his dealings with Pir Sahab, Jamil strategically feigns ignorance about education to secure a better future for his family, highlighting his manoeuvring within Lahore's social hierarchies: "Forgive me, Pir Sahab, but having spent just a few months in school myself, I don't know much about education" (20). This reveals his awareness of the importance of education and social status in the evolving urban landscape. As Jamil navigates Lahore's gentrified districts, he is constantly confronted by social and economic exclusion, as when the guard prevents him from entering Apa Ji's establishment: "he knew that he (guard) wouldn't let him in" (149). These experiences reveal how gentrification commodifies space, redefines social boundaries, and marginalizes vulnerable communities in the pursuit of economic progress.

Despite the adversity he faces, Jamil's resilience and commitment to his family demonstrate the strength of community solidarity and cultural resilience. His interactions with fellow migrants and marginalized residents underscore the importance of shared experiences in resisting displacement and preserving cultural heritage. In the face of gentrification, Jamil's steadfastness in defending his identity and community exemplifies his ability to dwell authentically. As Heidegger asserts, the ability to dwell rightly is rooted in the defense of one's identity and community against external pressures, and Jamil's journey illustrates this struggle.

In conclusion, Jamil's experience illustrates how gentrification disrupts his ability to dwell authentically in Lahore. As the city transforms, Jamil faces alienation and displacement, unable to reconnect with his rural roots in the face of urban development. Heidegger's concept of dwelling, which emphasizes a deep connection to one's environment, highlights how gentrification erodes the sense of home for marginalized individuals like Jamil. His struggle to maintain his identity and navigate

the city's shifting social and economic landscapes shows how gentrification forces people to sacrifice cultural continuity and community ties. Jamil's journey reveals the negative impact of gentrification on authentic dwellings and calls for a reconsideration of how urban development can prioritize both progress and human dignity.

5.4 Other Characters: Contrasting Perspectives

Shabnam's story vividly illustrates the intersection of dwelling and the pursuit of authentic experience, which ultimately leads to tragic consequences. The concept of dwelling, as understood through Heidegger's philosophy, encompasses more than mere habitation; it involves a deep existential connection to one's environment, where an individual finds belonging and authenticity. Shabnam's initial dwelling in her rural village, while simplistic and traditional, provides a sense of rootedness and familiarity, albeit constrained by conservative norms and limited opportunities. Her desire for authentic experiences, however, drives her to seek a life beyond the village, lured by promises of love, modernity, and material wealth presented by The Man. This aspiration reflects a longing for a more fulfilling existence, free from the constraints and predictability of rural life. The Man symbolizes the allure of urbanization and modernity, promising Shabnam a life of excitement and opportunity in the city, far removed from her traditional upbringing.

However, Shabnam's relationship with the man reflects her inability to dwell rightfully, which ultimately leads to her downfall. Instead of finding the authentic experiences she craves, she falls victim to societal prejudices and the rigid moral judgments of the jirga. The jirga's condemnation and subsequent punishment of Shabnam for bearing a child out of wedlock exemplify how societal norms and patriarchal structures clash with individual aspirations for autonomy and self-fulfilment.

Shabnam's tragic fate highlights the consequences of societal norms and personal desires conflicting within a traditional village setting. Her story brings to light the intersection of gender roles, expectations of chastity, and the allure of urban life.

Belsey emphasizes the importance of understanding the "proper social and historical context" of a text, and in Shabnam's case, her journey must be viewed

against the backdrop of rural-urban migration and the rise of urban gentrification in Pakistan.

This socio-political context is integral to understanding Shabnam's quest for a different life in the city, as she is drawn to the promises of urban modernity that contrast sharply with her rural upbringing. Gentrification, with its promise of prosperity and opportunity, represents a transformation that many characters in the novel, including Shabnam, aspire to, but which also brings with it exploitation and displacement.

Moreover, Belsey also underscores the need for literary strategies in the analysis of a text. In *No Honour*, the author uses Shabnam's relationship with The Man as a metaphor for the allure and false promises of urban spaces, which are presented as spaces of freedom and success but ultimately, reveal their exploitative nature. The contrast between the traditional village life and the modernized city is presented as a deliberate literary technique to foreground the tensions between rural authenticity and urban commodification. Through this contrast, the author comments on the socio-economic forces at play in both rural and urban settings, showing how these spaces, while offering new opportunities, also come with the costs of dislocation and alienation.

The character of Apa Ji, whose real name is Amna, exemplifies the complex relationship between care, manipulation, and the harsh realities of gentrified spaces. Apa Ji introduces herself with warmth and respect, using a term of endearment commonly associated with maternal figures—Apa Ji—suggesting that she is offering Abida a sense of belonging and security. However, her actions and words reveal a deeper, manipulative agenda that underscores the commodification of women within gentrified spaces. Sharon

Zukin's theory of gentrification suggests that market demand for products, services, and experiences increasingly embody the idea of "authentic" urban living. In Apa Ji's case, her business, which initially appears to cater to the emotional and nurturing needs of the women she oversees, is, in fact, designed to serve the materialistic desires of wealthy men, offering them a space of "refined tastes and deep pockets" (105).

Apa Ji's offer to Abida to treat her as a mother figure is simultaneously a nurturing gesture and an ironic manipulation. The suggestion that Abida might

become the “second or third wife” of a rich man is laden with irony, as Apa Ji presents this as an opportunity for Abida to secure status and security (105). However, the underlying implication is that Abida’s worth and future are intrinsically tied to her ability to meet the desires and expectations of powerful men. This transactional view of relationships underscores the commodification of women within Apa Ji’s establishment. By framing the brothel as a sophisticated space catering to wealthy men, Apa Ji uses her establishment as a vehicle to commodify not only women but also the concept of authentic relationships and experiences. This environment, which presents itself as a space of luxury and opportunity, is in fact a place where women’s autonomy is stripped away, and their value is reduced to their ability to serve market demands.

When analysed through Belsey’s research method, Apa Ji’s character reveals a critique of the socio-political and economic forces of gentrification. Belsey’s focus on the importance of a text’s social and historical context underscores the exploitation of women in spaces that are marketed as hubs of prosperity and progress. Apa Ji’s manipulation of Abida is reflective of broader social structures where women, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds, are often commodified and sold as objects of desire in the pursuit of status and wealth. Apa Ji’s establishment, in this context, is not a nurturing home for women but a microcosm of the wider urban gentrification process that commodifies people in the name of progress.

Heidegger’s concept of dwelling provides an important lens through which to understand Apa Ji’s failure to create an authentic, meaningful space for Abida. According to Heidegger, dwelling involves creating a space where individuals can truly be themselves, in harmony with their environment. Apa Ji’s failure to provide a rightfully authentic dwelling for the women in her care speaks to her detachment from this ideal. Instead of offering a safe and nurturing environment, she manipulates and commodifies the women under her control to meet the demands of the gentrified space. Her actions transform the concept of dwelling into a tool for exploitation, undermining the authenticity and meaningful existence that Heidegger advocates for. Through her actions, Apa Ji reflects the broader disconnection from authentic being that is often associated with gentrification, where the pursuit of profit and marketability takes precedence over genuine human connection and care.

Zukin argues that gentrified urban spaces often promise new opportunities and experiences but ultimately perpetuate inequality and exploitation. Apa Ji's business exemplifies this contradiction, which offers an alluring vision of modernity and luxury, but at the cost of women's dignity and agency. The establishment she runs is not just a place for transactions but a space that commodifies the very idea of intimacy, authenticity, and human connection, highlighting how gentrified spaces turn human lives into products to be consumed by the powerful.

In conclusion, Apa Ji's character is a powerful illustration of the intersection between gentrification and the failure to dwell authentically. Through her manipulation of Abida and her commodification of relationships, Apa Ji reflects the deeper socioeconomic forces at play in gentrified urban spaces. Her actions, when examined through the lenses of Belsey's research method, Zukin's theory of gentrification, and Heidegger's concept of dwelling, reveal the profound disconnect between the promise of authentic experiences and the exploitative realities of the urban environment. Apa Ji's failure to create a nurturing, authentic space for Abida highlights the broader theme of disconnection in the gentrified world of *No Honour*.

Kaleem's character plays a pivotal role in driving the narrative forward, especially as his personal journey reflects the impact of gentrification on individual aspirations and moral choices. Initially, Kaleem moves to Lahore with hopes of achieving economic success and personal growth. However, as he becomes more enmeshed in the urban environment, his pursuit of success gradually becomes increasingly materialistic, which aligns with Sharon Zukin's critique of gentrification's role in shaping superficial lifestyles and fostering a disconnect from authentic living. Zukin argues that gentrification often distorts people's perception of success, shifting its focus from personal development and social progress to the pursuit of wealth and status. Kaleem's early experiences in Lahore reflect this shift, as his initial ambition for career advancement gradually transforms into an obsessive pursuit of financial gain and social standing.

One of the key moments that illustrates Kaleem's changing mind set is his declining health, which signals the toll that his obsession with success is taking on his well-being. The novel describes him as losing weight, his face taking on a yellowish pallor, and his hands trembling, suggesting the physical and emotional stress of his

growing obsession with career advancement (86). Despite his deteriorating health, Kaleem remains fixated on achieving wealth and success, which indicates his increasing prioritization of material goals over personal well-being. Zukin's critique of gentrification points to how urban environments can pressure individuals to adopt superficial values, often leading to moral and ethical compromises and Kaleem's actions provide a clear example of this trend.

Kaleem's decision to quit his job at the airline due to dissatisfaction with pay and workload further exemplifies his shifting values. His declaration, "I quit. The pay was shit. I was not born to be a secretary's assistant and work long hours in offices. I was born to be a leader, and Fareed will make it a reality. Soon, we will be rich" (95), underscores his growing obsession with wealth and status. This decision marks a critical turning point in his character's development, as it highlights his increasing disconnection from ethical and meaningful work in favour of a relentless pursuit of material success. His focus on financial gain, propelled by the allure of urban opportunities, mirrors the disconnection from authentic dwelling that Zukin warns about in gentrified spaces.

As Kaleem's journey unfolds, his pursuit of wealth leads him further into moral decline, particularly as he turns to substance abuse to cope with the pressures of his new lifestyle. His addiction marks a clear departure from ethical considerations and genuine fulfilment, echoing Heidegger's concept of "proper dwelling." In Heidegger's philosophy, dwelling refers to living in harmony with one's environment, being grounded in a meaningful existence that is aligned with personal values and a sense of belonging.

Kaleem's descent into hedonism, characterized by his substance abuse, highlights his failure to dwell rightfully. Instead of fostering a life rooted in authenticity and ethical integrity, Kaleem chooses immediate gratification and an escape from the challenges of his reality, prioritizing temporary pleasures over long-term well-being.

The tension between Kaleem and Abida further accentuates the ethical dilemmas stemming from Kaleem's turn toward hedonism. When he reveals his involvement in substance abuse, Abida's concern for his well-being contrasts sharply with his justification of drug use as a means to manage stress and sustain his lifestyle. His rationale highlights the shift in his values: he is no longer motivated by a desire

for genuine fulfilment or meaningful relationships but by the pursuit of personal pleasure and status. This shift mirrors the broader implications of gentrification, where individual desires for instant gratification often outweigh long-term responsibilities, ethical values, and genuine human connection.

Kaleem's actions, when viewed through Heidegger's lens of dwelling, reveal his failure to live in harmony with his environment and his values. Instead of fostering an authentic, meaningful existence, Kaleem succumbs to the pressures of an urban environment that promotes materialism, success at any cost, and a disconnect from deeper, more fulfilling ways of being. His transformation into a character-driven by hedonistic desires marks a profound departure from the possibility of authentic dwelling, as he prioritizes short-term pleasure and status over long-term well-being, moral integrity, and meaningful relationships.

In conclusion, Kaleem's character serves as a critical example of the detrimental effects of gentrification on individual aspirations and values. His materialistic pursuit of success, his descent into substance abuse, and the resulting ethical dilemmas all point to the failure to dwell authentically in an urban environment that prioritizes wealth and status. Kaleem's journey highlights the moral and existential consequences of living in a gentrified space where success is defined by superficial values, rather than genuine personal growth and well-being.

Shahid's character plays a central role in embodying themes of love, redemption, and social justice, while also providing a lens through which the impact of gentrification on personal lives and relationships is explored. Initially introduced as a young man sent by his father to Apa Ji's brothel to "act like a man" (125), Shahid begins his journey as part of a transactional system that commodifies both women and men in the context of gentrified spaces. However, as his relationship with Abida deepens, his character evolves beyond this superficial and exploitative role, ultimately transforming into a figure of resistance and compassion. Shahid's love for Abida signifies a genuine capacity for empathy and emotional depth, which distinguishes him from other men who visit Apa Ji's establishment with transactional motives. His love transcends the commercialized nature of the environment and creates an authentic connection that sets the stage for his personal growth and moral evolution.

The turning point in Shahid's character arc comes when Apa Ji sells Abida to Rana Hamid in response to their deepening relationship. This act of separation, which pushes Abida into a more precarious situation, awakens Shahid to the larger injustices that entrap her and others like her. His quest to rescue Abida not only demonstrates his love for her but also marks his commitment to challenging the oppressive systems that exploit vulnerable individuals. In this way, Shahid's character becomes a symbol of resistance to both personal exploitation and the broader socio-economic shifts brought about by gentrification. Shahid's journey towards rightful dwelling, as described by Heidegger, is marked by his desire to create a space where Abida—and by extension, others—can live authentically and with dignity, free from the forces of commodification and exploitation.

Gentrification, as discussed by Sharon Zukin, reshapes urban spaces by commodifying people, places, and relationships, often displacing the vulnerable in the process. Shahid's involvement in Apa Ji's brothel is reflective of how individuals' personal lives are shaped by the forces of urban transformation. Apa Ji's establishment, like other gentrified spaces, adapts to the changing socio-economic environment, exploiting vulnerable individuals for profit. This commodification is most apparent in the selling of Abida to Rana Hamid, a move that underscores the way gentrification transforms people into marketable assets. Shahid's involvement in this context, and his eventual decision to fight against it, speaks to the broader social dynamics at play, particularly the way gentrification distorts human relationships and exacerbates social inequities.

Heidegger's concept of dwelling, which emphasizes being at home in the world and living in harmony with one's environment, offers a philosophical framework through which Shahid's actions can be understood. Shahid's relationship with Abida represents a quest for authentic dwelling within a space that is hostile to genuine connection and personal fulfilment. His love for Abida offers a semblance of stability and safety, a space where they can be themselves amidst the chaos and displacement caused by gentrification. When Apa Ji disrupts this sense of dwelling by selling Abida, Shahid's subsequent actions—searching for and eventually marrying Abida—become efforts to restore the lost sense of home and belonging. By rescuing Abida from the forces of exploitation, Shahid seeks to create a new life for them, one

that is grounded in authentic dwelling, free from the commodification that characterizes the gentrified urban environment.

Shahid's acceptance of Shakeela, Abida's daughter, further underscores his commitment to creating a space of genuine dwelling. After retrieving Shakeela from the orphanage, Abida asks Shahid to join them and pretend they are getting married. Upon realizing Shakeela's traumatic past, Abida expresses concern that Shahid might not want to marry her due to her past. Shahid's response—embracing her and declaring, “After all this time, do you still question my love?” (267)—demonstrates his profound empathy and commitment to creating a loving, secure home for both Abida and Shakeela. Shahid's willingness to accept Shakeela, despite the societal stigma surrounding her past, reflects his rejection of the oppressive norms and values that underpin gentrified spaces. His embrace of Shakeela is a symbolic act of healing, as he works to create a safe and nurturing environment for her to thrive.

Shahid's support for Shakeela's NGO, which aims to protect girls from honour killings, further illustrates his dedication to social justice and rightful dwelling. By helping Shakeela establish the organization, Shahid extends his commitment to the wellbeing of others, contributing to a broader social effort to create a more just and compassionate society. This initiative aligns with Heidegger's idea of dwelling as being in harmony with the world, as Shahid's actions help foster a safer environment for others to live authentically. His willingness to contribute to the well-being of others reflects the broader implications of Heidegger's philosophy, which emphasizes the importance of living in a way that nurtures both personal growth and the greater good.

In the novel's final moments, when Abida declares, “she was sure of one thing; she was finally home” (289), Shahid's role in her journey to a safe and loving space is made clear. His actions have not only helped Abida overcome her past trauma but have also empowered her to make a positive impact on society through Shakeela's NGO.

Shahid's commitment to authentic dwelling—both for himself and for those around him—culminates in the creation of a space where love, empathy, and social justice can thrive. His journey is a testament to the power of resistance against oppressive systems and the transformative potential of creating spaces where individuals can

truly dwell in harmony with their values and the world around them. Through his actions, Shahid demonstrates that rightful dwelling is not only about personal fulfilment but also about contributing to the well-being of others and addressing broader social injustices.

In *No Honour*, the characters' journeys highlight the impacts of authentic and inauthentic dwelling within the context of gentrified spaces. Abida initially struggles to dwell authentically; her inauthentic desires lead her into a cycle of victimization and significant personal issues. Jamil, despite facing numerous challenges amidst gentrification, strives to dwell authentically; ultimately, he rescues Abida and brings her back home. Conversely, Kaleem falls victim to the detrimental effects of gentrification and inauthentic dwelling, and his character highlights the consequences of failing to navigate these societal shifts. Shahid exemplifies proper dwelling; he supports Abida in establishing an NGO, forges a meaningful connection with her, and marries her, which embodies a stable and authentic way of being. Shabnam's tragic fate underscores the dangers of improper dwelling, as her inability to navigate these complexities leads to her demise.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In concluding this research, it is crucial to reflect on how the study has addressed the research questions and thesis statement. The study has examined Awaiz Khan's novels *In the Company of Strangers* and *No Honour*. In this study, it is revealed that the multifaceted process of gentrification not only transforms the physical landscape but also impacts the ability of characters to dwell in these spaces. The desire for an authentic urban experience that manifests itself in the characters' wishes appears to be the driving force behind gentrification portrayed in the texts. The characters' inability to dwell amidst gentrified spaces reshapes their everyday routine, and their negotiations to live reflect broader cultural and economic changes associated with gentrification. The researcher aimed to explore how Khan's novels reflect and promote an understanding of gentrification's impact on characters' ability to dwell in gentrified spaces. Through a detailed qualitative textual analysis, this research has confirmed that the novels successfully portray the intricate relationship between gentrification and the characters' sense of identity and belonging.

6.1 Synthesis and Findings

Before delving into the study, three questions guided the analysis. The first question, "In what ways do the selected texts present characters' (in)ability to dwell in the gentrified space?", has been addressed through a detailed qualitative textual analysis of key characters such as Mona, Bilal, and Ali in *In the Company of Strangers*, and Abida and Jamil in *No Honour*. These characters' experiences in Lahore highlight their struggle to adapt to the gentrified urban environment.

The analysis of Mona, Bilal, and Ali in *In the Company of Strangers* demonstrates how these characters grapple with their transformed environment. Mona, who initially experiences a sense of adventure in the gentrified spaces of Lahore, eventually feels an overwhelming sense of alienation. Her struggles are compounded by her inability to reconcile her past with her present, as seen in her

interactions with other characters who have either embraced or resisted the changes in their surroundings.

Bilal, a character who once thrived in his community, finds himself disoriented and disconnected as gentrification erodes the familiar landmarks of his life. His sense of identity, which was closely tied to his environment, becomes fragmented, and leads to a profound personal crisis (see 4.4 p.38).

Ali's story is particularly touching, as his inability to dwell culminates in his tragic death. His struggle to find a place within the gentrified city reflects a broader theme of displacement and loss. Despite his efforts to adapt, the relentless pace of change and the erasure of his cultural and social touchstones leave him vulnerable and isolated. His death serves as a stark reminder of the human cost of gentrification, highlighting the profound impact of environmental changes on individual well-being (see 4.2 p. 38).

In *No Honour*, Abida's journey from a remote village to Lahore underscores the challenges of finding a sense of home and stability in a rapidly changing urban landscape. Abida and Jamil's experiences further illustrate the complex relationship between the ability and inability to dwell in gentrified spaces. Abida's initial experience in Lahore is marked by a sense of dislocation. Coming from a remote village, she struggles to navigate the urban landscape, which feels both physically and culturally alien to her. Her journey highlights the theme of displacement, as she struggles with the loss of her familiar environment and the challenge of finding a new sense of belonging (see 5.2 pp. 51-52).

Jamil, on the other hand, represents a more dynamic interaction with the gentrified environment. His character embodies both the challenges and possibilities of adaptation. Initially, Jamil faces significant obstacles as he attempts to establish himself in the rapidly changing city. However, unlike Ali, Jamil gradually finds ways to adapt and integrate into his new surroundings. His ability to dwell, as suggested by Heidegger, involves not just physical habitation but also a deeper sense of belonging and purpose. This is seen in his evolving relationship with the city, where he starts to find meaning and connection in the new spaces he inhabits (see 5.3 p.59).

The analysis reveals that when characters like Abida and Jamil are not dwelling in the right way, as laid out by Heidegger, they face numerous challenges. Heidegger's concept of dwelling goes beyond mere physical residence; it encompasses a way of being that is attuned to one's environment, involving a sense of belonging and engagement with the world. For Abida, her initial inability to dwell manifests in her feelings of isolation and disorientation. She struggles to find her place in the city, both literally and metaphorically, as she navigates the unfamiliar urban landscape (see 5.2 p. 62).

However, as Abida starts to engage more deeply with her surroundings and finds a sense of purpose through her work, her ability to dwell improves. The establishment of her NGO marks a turning point in her journey, symbolizing her growing connection to the city and its people. This newfound sense of purpose helps her overcome the challenges of displacement, allowing her to create a new sense of home. The concluding lines of *No Honour* highlight this transformation, as Abida, after establishing her NGO, feels at home; her sense of connection and belonging is restored (see 5.2 p. 56).

The detailed analysis of these characters' experiences demonstrates that successful dwelling, according to Heideggerian principles, is crucial for their well-being amidst gentrification. Heidegger's notion of dwelling emphasizes the importance of a deep, meaningful connection to one's environment, which is disrupted by the rapid changes brought about by gentrification. The struggles and eventual adaptations of characters like Abida and Jamil underscore the complex relationship between individuals and their environments, highlighting both the challenges and possibilities of finding a sense of home in a changing world.

The second research question, "How does the 'desire for authentic' experience lead to cultural erasure and homogenization in the primary texts?" has been explored through the characters' experiences and their interactions with the gentrified urban spaces. This desire often manifests in ways that contribute to the cultural erasure and homogenization of the spaces they inhabit. The analysis is framed within Belsey's (2005) model of textual analysis, which considers how external social, cultural, and historical factors influence the meaning of a text.

The portrayal of Lahore as a gentrified space in *In the Company of Strangers* highlights the tension between preserving cultural heritage and embracing modernity. Mona's previous middle-class life and her wish to have luxury exemplify the desire for authenticity. Her longing for a more luxurious lifestyle is rooted in a desire for what she perceives as an authentic urban experience. However, this pursuit leads her to feel increasingly alienated from her surroundings and disconnected from her cultural roots.

Mona's desire for a higher social status and her attempt to integrate into the more affluent sectors of society highlight the broader cultural erasure occurring in gentrified spaces. The neighbourhoods she aspires to belong to are undergoing rapid transformation and losing their unique cultural identities in favour of a homogenized urban landscape (see 4.3 p. 36).

Ali's wish that having a car would elevate his social status and his engagement with Mir Rabiullah further illustrate this theme. Ali believes that material possessions and connections with influential figures will provide him with an authentic experience of urban life. However, this pursuit ultimately contributes to his sense of displacement and the erasure of his cultural identity. His interactions with Mir Rabiullah, a symbol of the new economic benefactor, represent a shift away from traditional community values toward a more individualistic and materialistic society. This shift results in the homogenization of cultural spaces, where economic power overrides cultural heritage (see 4.2 pp. 32-33).

Similarly, in *No Honour*, Abida and Kaleem's desire to be in Lahore and experience the best city life represents their pursuit of an authentic urban experience. Abida's move from a remote village to the city is driven by a desire for modernity and the perceived opportunities that come with urban living. However, her journey is marked by the loss of her cultural identity and the challenges of adapting to a homogenized urban environment. The traditional values and communal ties that defined her village life are eroded as she strives to integrate into the city's more modern, yet culturally diluted, landscape. This transition highlights the cultural erasure that accompanies gentrification, where the pursuit of modernity often leads to the loss of unique cultural identities (see 5.2 p. 52).

The third research question, "How do the characters' relationships with their physical environment reflect the broader cultural and economic changes associated with gentrification?" has been addressed by a detailed analysis of the characters' everyday interactions with their surroundings. These interactions serve as a microcosm of the broader cultural and economic shifts brought about by gentrification. Ali's engagement with Mir Rabiullah in *In the Company of Strangers* illustrates the changes associated with gentrification. Initially driven by the need for money, Ali shares sensitive information with Mir Rabiullah, who then uses it to kill people.

Later, Ali's motivations shift as he seeks to match the status of Mona, which can be seen as the broader materialistic values imposed by a gentrified society (see 4.2 p. 32). This desire for social mobility and material success emphasizes the impact of gentrification on personal relationships and moral choices. The need to conform to the new socio-economic norms often leads characters to compromise their values and engage in ethically dubious actions.

Similarly, the behaviour of minor characters like Alia and Meera in *In the Company of Strangers* also reflects the materialistic ethos engendered by gentrification. Their reaction to Elahi's death, laughing and mocking his wife, reveals a loss of communal empathy and the rise of individualistic and materialistic attitudes (see 4.5 p.

40). Bilal's cold-hearted response to Elahi's death further exemplifies this shift, as personal gain and material pursuits overshadow traditional community values and human compassion (see 4.4 p. 40).

In *No Honour*, Jamil's transition from his village to Lahore and his subsequent experiences working as a labourer highlight the economic pressures and cultural dislocation faced by those affected by gentrification. The portrayal of Jamil waking up on the pavement, drenched in sweat and disoriented amidst the bustling city life, contrasts sharply with the traditional village life he is accustomed to (see 5.3 p. 57). His struggle to navigate the chaotic urban environment and his efforts to earn money to search for his daughter reflect the broader economic hardships and cultural disorientation caused by gentrification. The physical discomfort and sense of alienation that Jamil experiences underscore the broader disjunction between rural and

urban life, which highlights how gentrification disrupts traditional ways of living and forces individuals into unfamiliar and often harsh urban realities.

Similarly, the narrative of Abida, who faces numerous hardships and ultimately starts an NGO to save girls from honour killings, highlights the socio-economic challenges and the quest for identity in a gentrified space. Abida's journey from a remote village to Lahore is marked by significant cultural and economic adjustments. Her initial struggle to find a place in the city and the eventual establishment of her NGO reflect a broader pattern of resilience and adaptation among those displaced by gentrification (see 5.2 p. 56). Her story highlights the complex relationship between personal agency and structural forces that show how individuals navigate and sometimes transform the very environments that challenge their sense of identity and belonging.

Furthermore, Kaleem's downfall in *No Honour*—falling prey to his friends, succumbing to drug addiction, and ultimately selling his wife Abida to fulfil his needs—tragically illustrates the destructive consequences of gentrification (see 5.4 pp. 63-64). Kaleem's story reveals how the socio-economic pressures of a gentrified society can lead to moral degradation and the breakdown of family and community ties.

This analysis has revealed certain findings, which are crucial for understanding the impact of gentrification on the characters' lives. In *In the Company of Strangers*, Mona, Bilal, and Ali each struggle with their transformed environment. Their struggle highlights themes of cultural erosion, loss of orientation, and a lack of reflection. Mona's initial excitement about the gentrified spaces of Lahore turns into alienation as she fails to dwell properly. Bilal becomes disoriented and disconnected as gentrification disrupts the landmarks of his life, which leads to a personal crisis. Ali's inability to dwell culminates in his tragic death, which hints at the human cost of gentrification and the relentless pace of change that erases cultural and social touchstones.

Similarly, in *No Honour*, Abida and Jamil's experiences further illustrate the complexities of dwelling in a gentrified space. Abida's journey from a remote village to Lahore is marked by a sense of dislocation. Initially struggling to navigate the

urban landscape, she eventually finds purpose through her NGO, which symbolizes her growing connection to the city and its people. Jamil's story reflects both challenges and possibilities; he faces significant obstacles but gradually adapts and finds a sense of belonging and purpose in the gentrified city. Their experiences contrast with other characters and highlight that if a person dwells rightfully, s/he can alter and resist even this inevitable change that gentrification brings.

The desire for an "authentic" urban experience often leads to cultural erasure and homogenization. In *In the Company of Strangers*, Mona's longing for luxury and social status alienates her from her cultural roots and contributes to the homogenization of Lahore's neighbourhoods. Ali's pursuit of material possessions and status further illustrates this theme, showing how economic power can override cultural heritage. Similarly, in *No Honour*, Abida and Kaleem's pursuit of a better life in Lahore results in a loss of their cultural identity and highlights the broader cultural erosion in gentrified spaces. Moreover, Ali's engagement with Mir Rabiullah in *In the Company of Strangers* reveals that gentrification can drive moral compromises and loss of communal empathy. Bilal's cold-hearted response to Elahi's death and the materialistic ethos of minor characters further demonstrate this shift.

In conclusion, it has been examined how the selected novels, *In the Company of Strangers* and *No Honour*, highlight the impacts of gentrification on the characters' lives, particularly on their ability to dwell in transformed spaces. Through the experiences of characters such as Mona, Bilal, and Ali in *In the Company of Strangers*, and Abida and Jamil in *No Honour*, the study has revealed the complex relationship between urban transformation and individual identity. These characters struggle with themes of cultural erosion, loss of orientation, and the challenge of adaptation. Mona's initial excitement for gentrified spaces turns into alienation, while Bilal's disorientation and Ali's tragic fate illustrate the personal crises that arise from the disruption of familiar environments.

Similarly, Abida and Jamil's journeys in *No Honour* shed light on the cultural and economic pressures faced by those navigating a rapidly changing city. Abida's shift from dislocation to purpose, as she establishes her NGO and Jamil's evolving sense of belonging emphasizes the possibility of resistance to gentrification's impact through proper dwelling. The research also underscores how the pursuit of an

"authentic" urban experience can lead to cultural homogenization, as seen in the characters' alienation from their roots and the broader societal shifts they face. In sum, this study has illustrated how the novels reflect the human cost of gentrification, which reveals the complexities of identity, and belonging, and challenges one's ability to dwell amidst urban transformation.

6.2 Recommendations for Further Research

While this thesis provides a comprehensive analysis of Awais Khan's novels *In the Company of Strangers* and *No Honour* through the lens of gentrification, authenticity, and dwelling, several areas for further research remain open for investigation. These recommendations aim to extend the insights gained from this study and explore additional dimensions of urban transformation and its impact on individual lives and communities. Following are some recommendations:

1. Future researchers may employ the combined frameworks of gentrification and dwelling in a wider range of literary texts. Analysing how various authors and genres engage with the intricate relationships between urban transformation and personal identity will expand the understanding of these theories beyond Khan's novels. Works such as Zadie Smith's *NW* and Aravind Adiga's *Last Man in Tower* could provide fertile ground for such studies.
2. Exploring the intersection of technological advancements and urban transformation with literature could offer new perspectives on the evolving urban condition in an era of rapid technological development. This approach might include examining works that address themes of smart cities, digital surveillance, and urban planning, such as William Gibson's *Pattern Recognition* or Dave Eggers' *The Circle*.
3. Conducting comparative analyses between *In the Company of Strangers* (2019) and other contemporary novels that explore urban transformation can illuminate different narrative strategies and thematic explorations. For example, comparing Khan's work with Teju Cole's *Open City* (2011), which also examines urban life and personal identity, could yield valuable insights into how various authors approach similar subjects.
4. Integrating other related theoretical frameworks can further enrich the analysis. For example, the use of Edward Soja's concept of "Thirdspace" may explore the spatial dimensions of urban transformation that offer a perspective on how spaces

are socially constructed and contested. Michel de Certeau's "The Practice of Everyday Life" may be deployed to investigate how individuals navigate and resist gentrified spaces in their daily routines.

5. Future researchers could also explore the theme of gentrification in different cultural and geographical contexts. Examining how gentrification unfolds in cities across the Global South versus the Global North can offer comparative insights into the universal and particular aspects of urban transformation. This approach might include studying works from diverse literary traditions to understand how gentrification impacts various communities worldwide.

By investigating these texts and integrating the aforementioned theoretical frameworks, future researchers may further explore the area of gentrification and dwelling in literature. This will offer new insights into the evolving human-environment dynamics and the broader implications for urban sustainability and social justice. Such investigations might shed light on the ethical and socio-political dimensions of urban transformation and advance the discourse on equitable urban development within literary studies. Thus, this research project may prove to be a useful study for further research because its essence lies not solely in scholarly pursuit but also in its capacity to stir thought and evoke response. We may benefit from the findings of this study to create more inclusive, sustainable, and just urban environments for future generations.

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