REINSCRIBING POST-SPACE: A STUDY OF SPATIAL METAPHORS IN THE POETRY OF TAUFIQ RAFAT AND RIZWAN AKHTAR

BY

Syeda Marium Zara

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN LANGUAGES

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Syeda Marium Zara

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Submitted by: Syeda Marium Zara **Registration #:** 188-MPhil/Elit/F21

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English Literature
Name of Discipline

Dr. Kalsoom Khan
Name of Research Supervisor

_____
Signature of Research Supervisor

Dr. Farheen Ahmed Hashmi
Name of Head of Department (GS)

_____
Signature of Head (GS)

Dr. Arshad Mahmood
Name of Dean (FAH)

_____
Signature of Dean (FAH)

_____
Date

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I Syeda Marium Zara

Daughter of Syed Mehdi Hussain

Registration # 188-MPhil/Elit/F21

Discipline English Literature

Candidate of **Master of Philosophy** at the National University of Modern Languages do hereby declare that the thesis **Reinscribing Post-Space: A Study of Spatial Metaphors in the Poetry of Taufiq Rafat and Rizwan Akhtar** submitted by me in partial fulfilment of MPhil degree, is my original work, and has not been submitted or published earlier. I also solemnly declare that it shall not, in future, be submitted by me for obtaining any other degree from this or any other university or institution.

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ABSTRACT

Title: Reinscribing Post-Space: A Study of Spatial Metaphors in the Poetry of Taufiq Rafat and Rizwan Akhtar

This study examines the poetry of Taufiq Rafat and Rizwan Akhtar, emphasizing their engagement with the representation and reclamation of spaces in postcolonial Pakistan through reading of spatial metaphors present in their poetry. This research argues that these poets, through their poetic works, reinterpret spaces which are marked by colonial histories, connecting them to pre-colonial cultural practices and converting them into spaces of resistance and identity formation. This spatial reclamation not only challenges the colonial legacies embedded in the landscape but also creates a distinct voice for Pakistani English literature within global literary discourse. The research employs textual analysis as a research strategy in order to read the spatial metaphors in the poems and extract the spatial representation embedded in them. By employing the theoretical frameworks of Russell West-Pavlov's concept of "spatial metaphors," W. J. T. Mitchell's concept of "ideological map," and Sara Upstone's concept of "post-space," the study highlights the political and cultural dimensions of spatial representation in Rafat and Akhtar's poetry. While Rafat's poetry explores the historical and cultural shifts in rural and urban landscapes, reflecting the tensions that are present between colonial erasure and indigenous resilience, Akhtar, in turn, portrays the fragmented contemporary spaces, blending personal and collective experiences to reclaim urban and rural spaces of cultural significance. Together, their works emphasize the centrality of space in postcolonial identity and cultural renewal. This research underscores that Rafat and Akhtar's poetry not only critiques colonial spatial practices but also redefines the postcolonial landscape by reclaiming it for cultural memory and continuity. Their contribution positions Pakistani English literature as an evolving field that negotiates history, identity, and spatial politics on a global stage

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DEDICATION

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The present study examines specific Pakistani Anglophone poetry to demonstrate the presence of political spatialization achieved through the utilization of metaphors in the poetry. The goal of politicizing spaces is to reclaim postcolonial spaces and their narratives, which were formerly under colonial rule, while simultaneously reclaiming those places by incorporating the cultural aspects of these spaces back. The poets chosen for this research are Taufiq Rafat and Rizwan Akhtar. Both writers emphasize spatial features in their literary compositions. Given that both poets are of Pakistani origin and wrote during the postcolonial era, it follows that the themes and settings depicted in their poetry are infused with political inclinations. The title "spatial politics" indicates that the main emphasis will be on the politics of spaces in the chosen poetic works and how they create political places and narratives.

1.1 Background of the Study

Poetry is one of the oldest forms of written expression and can be found in some of the early Pakistani literary works in English. In the past few decades, Pakistani poetry written in English has received great attention and admiration. Poets like Taufiq Rafat, Alamgir Hashmi, Daud Kamal, and Maki Kureishi have contributed to the Pakistani poetic genre. Their works tackle various topics, such as personal experiences, identity, politics, cultural appropriation, erasure of culture and heritage, partition, and war. Poetry has the ability to translate a poet's buried thoughts into poems that strive to bring awareness or fundamental changes in society. Pakistani Anglophone poets have frequently utilized their craft to remark on social and political issues and to explore their personal and cultural histories. These poets build a canonical literary environment where their stories are given due consideration and where the voices of marginalized communities are given greater prominence. Shahid Suharwardy, in his essay "The Responsibility of Writers in Pakistan," claims that a writer "needs freedom" and a Pakistani poet "must be aware of the traditions of the society in which he is living." (Arif 15). One first needs to be deeply rooted in society to write about it. As Rafat contended that "poetry should be written by those who are rooted in the earth on which it is written…" (Mansoor 2012). Through their use of language, poetic form, and personal experience, Pakistani Anglophone poets create a space for their intimate

and universal narratives, personal and political, offering a powerful counterpoint to dominant narratives and stereotypes about Pakistan and its people.

When looking at Pakistani Poetry written in English, it can be deduced that it is not merely an amalgamated genre of influences of Western literature; rather, it is in a transitional state and keeps on evolving into an independent genre with varying features. This includes exploring issues of identity, culture, and heritage and grappling with the complex legacies of colonialism and post-colonialism. Space production has become a crucial point of exploration in contemporary research since space, according to Sheppard and Antipode, “is a social construct” rather than just a physical attribute of a place (Sheppard 471). While Western academia is known for producing a significant amount of research on spatialization and exploring the representation of space in literature, Pakistani poetry has a lack of research on spatialization in this regard. This could be attributed to the fact that this is a contemporary discourse in academia, and there is a relative scarcity of literature produced in Pakistan over the years. The present study argues that the poetic works of Taufiq Rafat and Rizwan Akhtar center on the representation of spaces in Postcolonial Pakistan and that this spatial dimension is highly political since it attempts to undo the colonial aspects of these spaces and infuses/links them with the pre-colonial culture, thereby reclaiming these territories. The territorial or spatial reclamation also creates a space imbued with local cultures for Pakistani writing in English in the global English literature. The theoretical concept of "spatial metaphors" by Russell West-Pavlov, "ideological map" by W. J. T Mitchell, and “post-space” by Sara Upstone can help explore and substantiate the argument.

Based on the argument mentioned above, the research carries out a qualitative analysis of selected Pakistani Anglophone poetry by Taufiq Rafat and Rizwan Akhtar in order to argue that there is political spatialization being produced through the use of metaphors in their poetry. The politicization of spaces aims to reclaim the postcolonial spaces and their narratives and infuse the pre-colonial culture and identity of these spaces. The selected poets for this research, Taufiq Rafat and Rizwan Akhtar, focus on elements of space in their body of work. Since both the poets are Pakistani and belong to the postcolonial era; hence, the spaces they produce in their poetry are laced with political tendencies. As the title uses the term “Reinscribing post-space,” the primary focus is going to remain on the postcolonial spaces present in the poetry, and how these spaces are political

and aim to reclaim the spaces as local, rather than a mere palimpsest of the colonial hegemony. The poems act as a site of reclamation in order to create a space imbued with local cultures for Pakistani poetry in English in the global English literature.

The study of the selected texts, dealing with the production of space and how spaces are political, employs the concept of "spatial metaphors" given by Russell West-Pavlov, "ideological map" by W. J. T Mitchell, and Sarah Upstone's concept of "post-space" and postcolonial spaces in her book *Spatial Politics in The Postcolonial Novel*. Spatial metaphors, according to Pavlov, allow the researchers to read both the physical, as well as the abstract spaces that are present in literature. These "spatial metaphors" allow researchers to read spaces in every aspect, which enables an ideological reading of a space, as explained by Mitchell. For Upstone, spaces are laced with political aspects, and postcolonial authors tend to create spaces that act politically. According to Upstone, “postcolonial spatiality is not to reject postcolonial history… Instead, the opening up of history to the spatial offers the opportunity for a powerful critical fusion” (Upstone 3). Upstone's “opening up of history to the spatial” refers to the idea that studying the function of space in postcolonial countries might help researchers better comprehend the effects of colonialism on such regions. Her concept of “post-space” characterizes a situation in which conventional spatial frameworks have been disturbed or challenged, typically as a result of colonialism and globalization. While her focus is on the spaces present in fiction, the present research adapts the arguments that Upstone provides in her book and reads the selected poetry of Taufiq Rafat and Rizwan Akhtar through the concept of post-space and spatial politics that she provides in her work.

1.2 Selected Poets for the Study

There are two poets selected for the current research: Taufiq Rafat and Rizwan Akhtar. Taufiq Rafat is one of Pakistan's most prominent and widely-read English-language poets. He was born in Sialkot in 1927. *The Arrival of the Monsoon* is a collection of 116 poems he wrote during a 31-year period, which spans the entirety of his career as a poet. Taufiq Rafat has written several excellent pieces on English-language Pakistani poetry. Not only has he authored an English play, but he has also translated two collections of poetry from Punjabi into English. In her research titled "Pakistaniness in Taufiq Rafat's Poetry," Hazrat Hayat argues that the "idea [cultural representation] emerged with Taufiq Rafat in

the 1960s but became popular in the 1970s," meaning that many Pakistani poets after partition discuss the unique culture and traditions of Pakistan (Hayat 1638). Several reviewers have remarked on the enticing force of Rafat's poetry. Tariq Rahman argues that Rafat's poetry primarily concerns the tension between tradition and modernity in the globalized present (Rahman 58). Developing an indigenous identity that can freely engage with modernity and postmodernity is of prime concern in Rafat's poetry.

One of the reasons why Taufiq Rafat is selected for the present research is his contribution to Pakistani poetry and the use of the English language for his poetry. Rafat provides a justification for the utilization of the language in his renowned essay, "Towards Pakistani Idiom" which was originally published in the Special Issue on Pakistani Writings in English of 'Venture.' He was writing in a time during which nationalism was at its peak. He emphasized the need to use the English language in order to claim it and provide readers with a Pakistani perspective in writing:

> Now that the British are gone it is no longer a court language as such. Should we therefore discard it? One would rather think the reverse because the language no longer carries with it the taint of imperialism. One should be practical and simply accept it as the most widely used language in the world…Rather of primary importance is the ability to mould it according to one's requirements. (Rafat 2-3)

Rafat began the discourse of reclamation by claiming the English language and utilizing it in order to offer a powerful counterpoint to dominant narratives and stereotypes about Pakistan and its culture. He emphasized the need to use the English language and claim it as one's own. Only then can it be used wholly.

Rafat's poems are narratives that rely heavily on imagery and spatial production to express their purpose. In his 1984 essay, "English Verse Writing and the Political Plight of Pakistan's Impoverished Poets," critic Jamal Rasheed calls Rafat "Pakistan's doyen of English poetry," and he is widely regarded as one of the three poets responsible for establishing the tradition of writing in English verse in Pakistan, alongside Ahmed Ali and Shahid Suhrawardy (33). Although Rafat's poetry sometimes verges on the mundane and at times almost reads like prose, he avoids using vague, inexplicit, overly verbose, or clichéd language. He is very economical with his words, but the imagery and spaces that

he employs are vivid. He is renowned for removing the colonial elements from the language and using it to express the complexity of his emotions and perceptions about the indigenous culture. Rafat is primarily responsible for communicating the sensitivity of the local people and providing context for the rich Pakistani culture. He laments the decline of Pakistani society's culture and morals and paints an accurate portrayal of life in postcolonial Pakistani society. In the introduction to his book *A History of Pakistani Literature in English*, Tahir Rahman calls him "the foremost poet of English in Pakistan," and he is described as having "bent words from a foreign domain to the purpose of his province" for the past half-century, elevating English in Pakistan to "a new creative and imaginative terrain." (Rahman 59). The postcolonial angle of his writing makes the reader feel like he's dealing with cold, hard materialism and presents the readers with a cultural representation that produces spaces for preserving the culture lost to colonialism.

The other poet selected for this research is Rizwan Akhtar. He is also a known name in Pakistani Poetry, albeit a contemporary one. Akhtar works as an assistant professor at Punjab University, Lahore, Pakistan. His poems in his book *Lahore I am Coming*, have appeared in major literary magazines such as Poetry Salzburg Review, Poetry NZ, and Transnational Literature, among others. The book is a tribute to the city of Lahore, Pakistan, and explores the different facets of the city's culture, traditions, history, and politics. It is a mixture of personal and collective experiences, memories, and reflections of the poet on the city and its people.

Akhat's main focus in his poetry is the city Lahore in which he lived most his life. In his article, "Poetry: Versifying Lahore," Irfan Aslam asserts that a lot of authors root themselves in their cities in order to fix their identities. He contends that authors like Akhtar "make their land or city the subject of their work because it moves them psychologically and emotionally, evoking responses in their art" (Aslam 1). Akhtar's collection is notable for its wide range of subject matter and its use of fictive poetic language. His poetry explores the universality of the human experience, from his time as a pupil of Derek Walcott to the anguish of living as a stranger in London, the city of Lahore, and colonial impact. While he deals with multiple themes in his collection, his fascination with urban landscapes and the spaces of Lahore is the main component of his poetry, which also leads to selecting his works for the current research. As Shahid Imtiaz calls it in his review of the book, Akhtar's book presents the city of Lahore as both "a city as well as an imagined

space" where pre-colonial as well as colonial and political structures dominate the space (220). Akhtar, through his poetry, presents the city of Lahore's charm and culture that was lost due to colonization.

The rationale behind selection of Rafat and Akhtar for this study was belonging to two different eras as well as engaging with the issue of colonization and how it disrupted local lives. Both poets present Pakistan space through a local lens and highlight the culture and erasure it faced. The elements of spaces in the poetry of Taufiq Rafat and Rizwan Akhtar also help to understand how the politics of spatialization work in literary space and how the politics create a literary space for Pakistani poetry within the broader English literature. By looking at spaces through their political aspects, not only are cultural phenomena and the impact of postcolonialism brought to the surface, but they also paved the way towards research in postcolonial spaces in Pakistani poetry.

1.3 Thesis Statement

The poetic works of Taufiq Rafat and Rizwan Akhtar center on the representation of spaces in Postcolonial Pakistan and that this spatial dimension is highly political since it attempts to undo the colonial aspects of these spaces and infuses/links them with the pre-colonial culture, thereby, reclaiming these territories. The territorial or spatial reclamation also creates a space imbued with local cultures for Pakistani writing in English in the global English literature. The theoretical concept of "spatial metaphors" by Russell West-Pavlov, "ideological map" W. J. T Mitchell, and "post-space" by Sara Upstone can help explore and substantiate the argument.

1.4 Research Questions

1. In what way do the spatial metaphors used in the selected poetry challenge colonial spatial frameworks?
2. How do the spatial metaphors employed in the selected poetry create a post-space by infusing spaces with the pre-colonial culture?
3. How do these spatial metaphors perform the political roles of ideological mapping and territorial reclamation?

1.5 Research Methodology

Due to the qualitative nature of this study, the research questions are investigated by closely examining the texts. This study follows a qualitative paradigm because it involves an interpretation of a literary work. Qualitative research, as defined by the SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research, is a situated activity that places the observer in context, “This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln 43).

Researchers located around the world are studying things in their natural settings. One of the strengths of qualitative research in literary analysis is its flexibility and adaptability to the context and the needs of the participants. For example, researchers can adjust their research methods based on the analyzed literary work's genre, form, or cultural context.

This study employs textual analysis as a research strategy, which makes sense given that it is part of the larger field of cultural criticism and spaces that take place in the physical and imaginative worlds. Catherine Belsey, in her 2013 essay titled "Textual Analysis as a Research Method," asserts that her "contention will be that textual analysis is indispensable to research in cultural criticism", while expanding textual analysis as a research method (160). Textual analysis, as further defined by Belsey, "as a research method [that] involves a close encounter with the work itself, an examination of the details without bringing to them more presuppositions than we can help” (Belsey 160). Belsey says you need to pay attention to the texts if you want to do good research.

Belsey focuses on the text itself and recognizes the need for information from outside the text, writing that "interpretation always involves extra-textual knowledge" (163). She stresses that there is no such thing as "pure" reading. Extra-textual information, some of which may be common cultural knowledge and some of which may come from secondary sources, is always necessary for any interpretation to make sense (Belsey 160). However, this does not give the reader carte blanche to extrapolate any interpretation he pleases from the text; rather, the process of doing so is not one of free association. For an unbiased interpretation of a text, the reader must be well-versed in its symbols' historical, political, and cultural background. The context of the text's culture and history is taken into

account when doing the textual analysis. This means that, in contrast, to close reading, the textual analysis draws on a broader range of texts to support the analysis at its core. Accordingly, the current study, in order to examine the production of spaces and how they are political in nature, analyses the poetry of Taufiq Rafat and Rizwan Akhtar with the help of textual analysis to understand the wider scopes of study that are embedded in the texts.

Furthermore, the theoretical framework for this thesis is based on the concept of spaces and how they are political. For that, the research takes help from three theorists and their selected theoretical concepts from their seminal works in order to substantiate the research argument. The research takes theoretical help from the concept of "spatial metaphors" by Russell West-Pavlov, "ideological map" by W. J. T Mitchell, and Sarah Upstone's concept of "post-space" and postcolonial spaces in her book *Spatial Politics in The Postcolonial Novel*.

West-Pavlov's notion of "spatial metaphors" provides a way to think through how spaces are built, symbolized and imbued with meaning. The fluid and transformative nature of space that he cuts into provides insights into how the poets all demarcate and refigure spaces as sites of resistance and reclaiming in a postcolonial space. Likewise, Mitchell's idea of "ideological map" provides a space to consider how spaces are not void, but rather, how they are contested, conditioned and dictated by power dynamics and through cultural history. The reclamation of spaces in these works can also be understood within Sara Upstone's notion of "post-space." By offering a theory of the fluid, multiple, and provisional nature of postcolonial spaces, she rejects the fixity of colonial spaces. Post space celebrates the contested hybrid nature of post-colonial space and embraces diversity, multiplicity, and fluidity of space. From this perspective, the poets' representations of spaces show how their spaces actively subverted given colonial ideology and restored agency for culture. This study makes use of these lenses because of the attention they pay to the colonial appropriation of space, which legitimizes colonial power as a political entity, allowing us to explore the different dimensions of spaces and how the political aspects are embedded in them.

1.6 Significance & Rationale of the Study

Looking at Pakistani Poetry and its exploration in Pakistani academia, it can be deduced that it deserves recognition. While academic research has increased on Pakistani

Literature, Pakistani poetry in English remains a subject that needs both recognition and academic research. The concept of the production of space has been significant in literary studies for decades. Various research scholars have opted to work with the concept as their basic theoretical support in their research. By using the concept of the production of space in the analysis of Pakistani poetry in English, researchers can deepen their understanding of the complex ways in which space is constructed and contested in poetry and its broader social, cultural, and political contexts.

However, a significant gap remains in space studies when it comes to poetry, especially the politics of spatialization in the genre of poetry. Spatialization is a field of study that has yet to be explored in terms of literary research significantly, especially in terms of Pakistani poetry. There remains a lack of research, as well as literary contributions produced that has Pakistani poetry and the spaces produced in them as its center.

By engaging with the selected Pakistani Anglophone poetry and the political spatialization, the study aims to lessen the research gap and contribute to the literary academia. The politics of spatialization has yet to be studied in reference to Pakistani poetry; hence, by using Pakistani Anglophone Poetry as a medium, the research will aim to generate discourses on the politics of spatialization in poetry. This study is an important contribution to the expanding body of academic work on English Pakistani literature. This research provides a unique perspective on current Pakistani poetry and contributes to a better understanding of the literary landscape of Pakistan by examining the works of Taufiq Rafat and Rizwan Akhtar. Furthermore, the research will also extend the spatial theory and its tenets to the genre of poetry, which has previously been limited to the study of fiction.

1.7 Delimitation

Because of this thesis's scope and time constraints, the study will be limited to the topics addressed in the research questions, and the sample will be drawn exclusively from the chosen readings. The current study will be delimited to the poetry of Taufiq Rafat and Rizwan Akhtar, which will help keep the study's scope and aim clear as it will only focus on the presentation of spaces in their poetry.

A total of twenty-seven poems have been analyzed in this thesis: fifteen poems by Taufiq Rafat, and thirteen poems by Rizwan Akhtar. As for the poems that are analyzed in

order to study the production of space and the cultural and political inclinations that they possess, the following poems are selected: “Karachi 1955,” “Circumcision,” “A Positive Region,” “A middle-class drawing room,” “The squalor in which some people live,” “The Village,” “Death in the Family,” “Karachi 1968,” and “Sialkot,” from his book *Arrival of the Monsoon* (1947-1969); “Sacrifice,” “Sialkot bombed,” from his collection Going *After Geese* (1970-1973); “Wedding In The Flood,” “the Stone-Chat” and “Grave in the Park” from the collection *Wedding In the Flood* (1974-1976), and “This Year’s April,” from Rafat’s collection A *Rumour of Change* (1977-1978).

The poems “Lahore I Am Coming," “From Empire’s Days in Lahore,” "Inside American embassy Islamabad," "VIP movement on Lahore Mall Road," “Lahore: A Pictorial Triptych,” “Lahore 2009,” "I have a faith too," "A Day In Damn e Koh," "The Mystic Dancers of Punjab," "voyager," “Promenade” “Winter Erasure” and “Evening in Lahore Canal” from the book *Lahore I am Coming* by Rizwan Akhtar.

The research has also been delimited in terms of the theoretical lens and the production of space in terms of cultural and political aspects. In the research, the concept of the production of space and how spaces have political and cultural inclination has been the main factor of exploration through the utilization of spatial metaphors and production of postspace.

For this purpose, the theoretical lens is delimited to theoretical concept of "spatial metaphors" by Russell West-Pavlov, "ideological map" W. J. T Mitchell, and “post-space” by Sara Upstone in her book *Spatial Politics in The Postcolonial Novel* and her arguments on spatial politics in literature. Their lens of looking at poetry through a spatial lens has been adapted to read Rafat and Akhtar's poetic works. The main focus has been on highlighting the literature that mostly presents spaces that are highly political and attempts to undo the colonial aspects of these spaces and links them with the pre-colonial culture of Pakistan.

1.8 Organization of the Study

The first chapter of the study will introduce the topic of Space, how postcolonial spaces can be political and contextualize it with Anglophone Pakistani poetry. It will also introduce the texts and the reasons why they have been selected for the current research.

This chapter also provides a thesis statement, objectives, a conceptual framework, significance, and delimitation of the present research.

The second chapter serves as a road map by detailing prior studies and their significance to the current inquiry. The chapter also highlights the critical input in the field of spaces and how they are culturally and politically influenced. The research also reviews the selected poets and the critical work that has been done on their literary works, which helps highlight the gaps that are present in the academia and how this thesis fills those gaps.

The third chapter deals with the research strategies and theoretical foundation for the research. The chapter explains, in detail, the selected theoretical lens of Russell West-Pavlov, W. J. T Mitchell, and Sara Upstone to trace the political spatialization in the poetry of Taufiq Rafat and Rizwan Akhter.

The fourth chapters of the dissertation primarily focus on the central argument of the study. The chapter deals with the analysis of both Rizwan Akhtar and Taufiq Rafat while focusing on the usage of spatial metaphors and ideological mapping in order to create a post-space where the spaces created in their poetry are reclaimed and reinscribed with local spaces. The analysis will be categorized based on the theoretical concepts present in their poetry and how they lead to the reinscribing of post-space.

The final chapter gives a conclusion and recommendations. Here, the study emphasizes the results of a thorough analysis to determine if the research questions have been sufficiently addressed. Furthermore, based on the findings of the study, recommendations are provided for future researchers in this subject, taking into account the findings of the research.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Given the descriptive nature of the current research, it is necessary to conduct a thematic evaluation of the linked literature in order to examine pertinent ideas, philosophies, and concepts. In order to carry out spatially political research of selected narratives, it is important to first comprehend what spatiality is and the social and political elements that influence the acquisition and formation of information and meanings. In this study, the researcher has examined the significance of poetry, the connection between how poetry encompasses ideologies, and how these ideologies generate political ideals.

Space studies have been a project of interest in Pakistani academia as well as the world for the past decade. Various researchers and scholars have delved into this sphere of spatialization from a variety of different aspects. The literature review is divided into sections, with the primary section explaining what work has been done on spaces in terms of poetry. The second section deals with the poets and the literature that has been produced in reference to their work. Most of the scholarly work surrounding the poets and their poetry engages with themes of postcolonialism, identity, cultural erasure, etc. This section will give an account of some of the work undertaken thus far.

2.1 Understanding the Concept of Spaces and Spatialization in Literature

Spatialization has become a highly significant element of exploration in contemporary literary research. With the help of various theorists and critics, the field of space studies has emerged as a separate entity and a way of reading a literary text, no matter fiction or poetry. Before diving into the reviews of related literature to the selected texts, it is significant to understand how space studies work as a researchable facet in literature. This review of the literature broadly looks at the concept of space and how it has been borrowed by various researchers in order to analyze literary works as well as talk about spaces in academia, along with connect it to the current research and highlight the gap that is still present in the contemporary academia.

2.1.1 Spaces and Literature

> “Is it conceivable that the exercise of hegemony might leave space untouched?”
>
> (Lefebvre 11)

The definition of space has been increasingly expanded to encompass not only physical location but also abstract conceptual space. As a result of extensive research, influential philosophers became increasingly interested in the growing concept of space, which had a significant and measurable impact on their ways of thinking. Intellectuals such as Michel Foucault, Edward Said, and Henry Lefebvre have redefined the concept of space beyond its traditional understanding, expanding its scope and critical awareness within established spatial and geographical frameworks (Soja 1). In an interview with Paul Rabinow, Foucault states that “space is fundamental in any exercise of power” (Foucault 252). He based this contention on the exercise of political power and the rapid changes that were taking place in Europe in response to revolution and advancement in technology. Michel Foucault's remark that the current era will primarily be characterized by its focus on space has significantly contributed to the recognition of spaces as a crucial framework for analyzing power dynamics and politics. Edward Said extended the influence of power dynamics in spatial discourse from society to the post-colonial context through his works *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*. Edward Said opens his seminal work *Culture and Imperialism* by asserting that no individual can ever exist "outside or beyond geography," and that they are constantly engaged in "the struggle over geography." (7). Said highlights the significance of geographical domination in the notion of empire. He expands the concept of space to encompass narrative spaces, illustrating how the control over these spaces is a crucial element of imperialistic conduct. This notion of spaces encompassing narratives is further expanded by Henri Lefebvre when he argues in his 2012 book *The Production of Space* that space should not be regarded solely as a physical or intellectual creation, but rather as a social consequence. He also critiques the humanities for their careless utilization of spatial metaphors. According to Lefebvre, there are two common misunderstandings about space: the "illusion of opacity," which suggests that space is just physical, and the "illusion of transparency," which suggests that space is purely mental. According to him, space may be described more accurately as a complex social resource that is shaped and utilized by various social processes, with contemporary capitalism being one of the most significant factors.

Lefebvre is of the view that spaces owe as much to imagination as to the physical environment around them. He presented this view by analyzing a national park as a space which is “produced.” He foregrounded his argument by stating, “The raw material from which they are produced is nature. They are products of an activity … which extends well beyond them, for these are also political” (Lefebvre 84). In short, a park is constituted and produced through labor, technology and institutions, and yet its meaning as a space is modified and refashioned as it is inhabited by social groups.

According to Lefebvre, space is not just a by-product of social connections but also a means of production in and of itself. The state and its institutions shape space to suit their purposes, turning it into a political space where ideology and time flow hand in hand. Therefore, space is not a static backdrop but rather an active and fundamental component of political and social life, being both created and contested in real time as a result of power dynamics and social interactions. His work on spaces is the foundation on which the current research aims to read spaces as politically and culturally influential.

Even though Lefebvre did not present his concept of spaces in terms of literary spaces, he did present his readers with a possible way of reading literary spaces and what criteria they should be looking at. He addresses this search by stating that spaces can be found anywhere, “enclosed, described, projected, dreamt of, speculated about” (Lefebvre 14-15). Considering his argument to be correct that spaces are socially and politically determined, then the analysis of spaces in literature, especially in realist texts, should shed light on the social and political forces at work in the society.

Lefebvre also shares some commonality with Foucault, as both consider spaces to be heterotopia. He agrees with Lefebvre that spatial studies have been ignored and seen as nothing but dead and unnecessary throughout history. In his 1968 article, “Of Other Spaces,” which he originally penned as a lecture for architects, he claimed that spaces should be understood as dynamic and in relation. They do not exist as a separate entity, rather, they are connected to social hierarchies and networks. He explained this by providing the concept of heterotopia. Heterotopia is a term Foucault uses to refer to sites that are in reality but which function as a mirror to the society they live in. He points out that "utopias" work similarly, but utopias don't actually exist. He uses examples of libraries, cemeteries, brothels, which are mostly not considered to be spaces of everyday life. The

nature of these heterotopias reveals something about the culture they are located in, not least in that they are other than the space they inhabit, and that they have certain characteristics. However, it does not seem like Foucault intended for his concept of heterotopia to be used for real urban spaces. Lefebvre also criticized his concept of heterotopia for not being specific in what he considered to be spaces (Lefebvre 4).

Besides Lefebvre and Foucault, other theorists working in the social sciences in the 1970s also theorized about the idea of spaces. For instance, in 1976, Edward Relph studied spaces from a phenomenological approach in order to identify how spaces were experienced, as well as created. He wanted to understand the way spaces and identities were interconnected. Similarly, in his 1958 book, *The Poetics of Space*, poet and critic Gaston Bachelard examines the two-way street between the imaginative imbuing of a space with life and significance and the emotional, nostalgic, and fantastical responses it elicits from its visitors. According to Bachelard, this creative output means that we can never have a singular, unmediated perception of a space. We are never just present in a room, confined to its physical boundaries, since we bring with us our own personal histories, memories, conjectures, and fantasies, we permanently alter any given location simply by virtue of our presence there. That which is inhabited goes beyond the bounds of geometry (Bachelard 82). He further states that being in space entails imagining it differently since to imagine something is to conceive something else (Bachelard 10). As long as people occupy it, a room is more than just a collection of walls, floors, and ceilings arranged in a predetermined pattern; it is also a place of contingent relations, a living record of human experience, with many intertwined layers of activity, emotion, and data.

Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* provides crucial insights on the representation of spaces, which is crucial for the current research in postcolonial Pakistani poetry. Bachelard's idea asserts that our perception of space is intricately linked to individual narratives, encounters, and emotions. This concept aligns and helps in contextualizing with the postcolonial effort to regain and reconstruct history. While Bachelard's focus is mostly on the subjective and creative aspects of space, the gap here lies in the way that Bachelard seems to ignore the cultural and political factors and ideals that are embedded in spaces. Most of what he talks about is emotions and perception. It cannot be denied that emotions and perceptions lead to the structuring of spaces; the process of reclaiming and reinterpreting spaces in postcolonial poetry is inherently political, since it confronts the

enduring impact of colonialism and affirms the identities of indigenous populations. Bachelard provides a starting point to read spaces and understand the intricacies that are present in them, which is the main element of the current thesis.

While Bachelard establishes a social and emotional connection to spaces, Doreen Massey, in her book *For Space*, presents the argument that spaces do not possess ideals, personal histories, memories, and fantasies attached to them. Rather, she asserts that spaces are temporary and unstable. The universe is a "sphere of a dynamic simultaneity" that flows into "loose ends and ongoing stories," as Massey points out (107). Through this relational lens, space is expanded to become a meeting ground for the viewer's own memories and psyche rather than a fixed, unchanging entity. Massey digs into multiple layers of space and how these spaces come to exist, and presents the readers with three propositions. (1) Space is the product of interrelations; (2) Space is the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity; (3) Space is always under construction; “it is always in the process of being made. It is never finished; never closed” (Massey 9). Massey suggests we rethink space in order to give our lives and the world more depth and potential. Her book also highlights the political imagination in spaces and how spaces usually lack the depth and diversity of histories. She argues that spaces have the quality of “heterogeneity” and the potential to change. Massey highlights the diverse and changeable nature of space, however, there is a lack of investigation into how these spatial dynamics intersect with themes of identity, memory, and cultural legacy. There is a lack of application of her relational approach. The current research addresses the lack of understanding by examining how spatial relationships, as defined by Massey, function within the particular socio-political and cultural context of postcolonial Pakistan. Massey’s research is significantly important and provides a way to read spaces, and re-establish the centrality of spatial thinking, and how spaces are multiple layers.

The significance that these philosophical critics have given to spaces deconstructs the prevailing power structures and leads to a spatial shift that is directly related to postcolonialism. Postcolonial scholars are greatly indebted to Lefebvre for his groundbreaking insights that shed light on the production and contestation of space. This change is noteworthy because it highlights the active involvement of space in social processes, rather than considering it solely as a mental concept or a mere background to historical events.

2.1.2 Postcolonial Spaces

Space has become a significant concept in various areas within the humanities in recent years. Previously, space has been simplified to basic ideas such as center and periphery, which fail to acknowledge the intricate nature of the spaces described in postcolonial literature (Moore 3). Postcolonial literature seeks to reclaim and reverse the effects of colonialism by exploring pre-colonial histories and identifying methods of resistance, if feasible. Postcolonial literature is highly significant and valuable to the people who were once colonized. It entails the act of challenging and opposing the ways of thinking and writing that were imposed by the colonizers. Essentially, it is a process of negotiation and critical analysis of a particular historical event, namely colonial control. It represents the genre of literature that expresses resistance, fury, protest, and hope. Its purpose is to thoroughly explore the past in order to gain a better understanding and improve the future.

One of the essential studies that led to this research was a 1997 book, *Postcolonial Spaces* by Gulsum Baydar Nalbantoglu and Chang Thai Wong, in which the authors argue that the postcolonial space is defined by diverse identities that challenge the predetermined and formalistic approaches to architectural writing, which previously depicted colonized populations with a narrow perspective. Furthermore, they attempt to engage in discussions with the fundamental ideas put forth by colonists, presenting them as being rooted in inherent epistemological principles. This serves as a medium that contradicts the Eastern ideas of control and raises awareness among the colonized individuals to resist the colonizers and liberate themselves from colonialism, in order to establish their own territory. G. Nalbantoglu and W. Thai write:

> Postcolonial Space is both a reminder of a colonial past and a salutary gesture towards the future. It conveys both a negative moment that displays and displaces binary constructions and fixed categories and a positive one of a promise of becoming for new languages, new subject positions and new modes of spatiality (Nalbantoglu 7)

This postcolonial space possesses favorable implications and serves as a platform to challenge the one-sided speech created by the colonizers and engage in a conversation through their own writing to validate their own existence. Nalbantoglu and Wong

emphasize how it is important to look at the past and learn from it, the history and its implications. Only by learning from the past of colonialization can the colonized learn to change their positionality.

While Nalbantoglu and Wong emphasize the importance of raising awareness among colonized individuals to resist the colonizers, their research leaves a gap which is filled by Andrew Teverson and Sara Upstone. The 2011 book, *Postcolonial Spaces: The Politics of Place in Contemporary Culture*, is a collection of interdisciplinary essays edited by Andrew Teverson and Sara Upstone. It is an important work to be reviewed since it emphasizes the significance of space in studying the politics of the contemporary postcolonial experience. Every chapter in the book explores the interconnected textual and material aspects of postcolonial spatiality. The authors elucidate that within the realm of postcolonial studies, space has consistently held a pivotal role. Scholars engaged in the exploration of colonial and postcolonial discourses have recognized the significance of space in all its manifestations as an essential component of the postcolonial encounter. Furthermore, the authors of this study specifically examine the way in which the postcolonial experience goes beyond the limits of individual nations, and how it becomes interconnected with discussions of globalization in the present era (3). This book is a collection of articles that juxtapose the literary and disciplinary materials. Its purpose is to emphasize the interconnectedness of two seemingly different perspectives. Furthermore, it argues that postcolonial spatiality cannot be solely based on physical or imaginative aspects, but rather must recognize the constant intertwining of different discourses in the experience, representation, and examination of space.

2.2 Spaces and Taufiq Rafat's Poetry

Taufiq Rafat's poetry collection has been the subject of various studies. Many critics and researchers have read Rafat's work and analyzed it from various perspectives. Taufiq Rafat is mainly read with a focus on the Pakistani idioms, imagery, and symbolism, which portray the cultural ethos of Pakistan.

In his poetry collections, Rafat uses language that resonates with people but conveys profound emotions and meanings within his words. His writing has a quality that draws readers in and paints pictures in their minds. Saba Rasheed and Asim Aqeel, in their research paper titled "The Aesthetics of Sensuality: A Reparative Reading of Taufiq Rafat's

Poetry," use a reparative reading approach to analyze the poetry of Rafat. The authors challenge the prevalent paranoid reading approach, which surmises that literary works are written solely for propagandist purposes, and instead, focus on reading for pleasure to understand the function of art for art's sake.

Paranoid readings, which is rooted in what Paul Ricoeur terms the "hermeneutics of suspicion," seek to uncover hidden ideological, political, or social critiques in a literary text (139). This approach is known to often reduce poetry to a vehicle for political or cultural resistance, focusing on colonial legacies, gender hierarchies, or systemic oppression. Rafat's poetry, with its spatial metaphors, sensual imagery, and references to Pakistani socio-cultural realities, has often been read in this manner, aligning it with postcolonial and nationalist narratives.

Nevertheless, the authors suggest that Rafat's poetry should be read through the reparative strategy, in terms of its poetic, sensual, and emotional dimensions rather than ideological readings. In this strategy, Sedgwick argues that reading is meant to contribute to aesthetic and imaginative elements. Sedgwick was against the conventional methods of reading, which centered on ideological and antagonistic reading and highlighted the beauty of written words. He argued that far too often Rafat's poetry has been obscured by politically or culturally overdetermined paranoid readings and makes the case that his poetry deserves to be heard for its unconstrained emphasis on the sensuality and creativity of the human experience in their most instinctive and imaginative modes. Since Rafat's poetry possesses sensuality and passion, as well as political elements, the authors believe that his poetry should be read for its imaginative and sensual imagery, rather than its agendas.

In the article, Rasheed and Aqeel first critique paranoid readings and how the ideological agendas of literary works reduce the thematic elements of nature and beauty in them. Through a reparative reading, practiced by the authors for restoring the sensual and emotional aspects of life, essentially Rafat's poetry is rehabilitated as it is through this reading strategy that Rafat's works present sensuality as a basic means of creativity and personal fulfilment. The researchers celebrated Rafat's way of expressing passion and sensuality in his writing and aimed to focus on the way these elements unveiled the truth of human psyche. They aimed to make the readers see that Rafat's poetry was more than

propagandist, rather it also should be looked at as an art. The article's focus on Rafat's celebration of sensuality is significant because it contributes to academic discourse by offering a fresh perspective on Pakistani poetry in English. It highlights Rafat's innovative departure from the ghazal tradition, presenting him as a pioneer of a more liberated and realistic poetic style. While their research aims to read poetry for pleasure and the beauty present in it, it discards the elements of historical and cultural influence that poetry has on itself. The research has a gap in connecting the author with their art, which is answered in the present thesis.

Similar to the Rasheed and Aqeel's exploration of Rafat as a sensual and imaginative artist, Hina Rafique and Farhana Tabassum also present Rafat as an Asian Romantic through their research paper titled "Taufiq Rafat as an Asian Romantic: A Critical Analysis of Poetry Collection 'Arrival of the Monsoon.'" Romanticism was a literary movement in the late 18th century. Rafique and Tabassum analyze Rafat's poetry collection 'Arrival of the Monsoon' as an English-language poet from Pakistan through the prism of British Romanticism by drawing attention to the distinctive traits shared by both the literary movement and the author's own Pakistani heritage.

The authors argue that Rafat's work exhibits characteristics of Romantic poetry, including love for nature, nostalgia, imagination, and a focus on the common people. However, they are categorical in their analysis of Rafat. They emphasize in their argument that while his poetry is intertwined with romantic elements, Rafat's approach is distinctively localized. He infuses romantic ideals with the cultural, natural, and social particularities of Pakistan. The study situates Rafat as an "Asian Romantic," a poet who blends the aesthetic sensibilities of British Romanticism with a deep engagement with Pakistani landscapes, traditions, and identities. By using straightforward, easy-to-understand language and painting realistic scenes of nature, the researchers demonstrate how Rafat was in harmony with Romantic ideals. Similar to his predecessors, Wordsworth and Keats, Rafat glorifies the positive characteristics of nature by meticulously portraying scenes of landscapes and plants. His poems, such as "A Positive Region" and "The Arrival of the Monsoon" showcase Rafat's talent for evoking the sublime through the use of images related to mountains, monsoons, and the changing seasons. He uses language that resonates with Wordsworth's way of writing and presents the readers with poetic imagery of Pakistan, much like Wordsworth did through his poetry.

Although Rafat's poetry delves into nature, it also depicts ordinary people and everyday events, which is characteristic of Romantic poetry. Poems like “Village Girl” and “Night Watchman” center on ordinary figures, celebrating their simplicity and connection to the land. Rafat’s language, much like Wordsworth’s, bridges the gap between poetic expression and colloquial speech, making his work relatable and grounded in the local cultural context. Rafique and Tabassum claim that while romantic traits are predominant in Rafat’s poetry, he also utilizes nostalgia, like the Romantic poets, in order to celebrate his local culture and country. His poems present the readers with a cultural and historical celebration of the country’s past. Often his reflections on modernity assume a note of lament for the warmth and community of rural life in contrast to the sterility and alienation of the city (e.g., as in “The Kitchen”). However, these nostalgic elements do not just point to the melancholy of Romanticism, as nostalgic elements tend to, but also engage with questions of cultural preservation and identity.

Rafique and Tabassum play an important role in studying Rafat’s poetry. They focus on his poetry’s aesthetic and thematic links with British Romanticism while placing it in a uniquely Pakistani setting. They highlight Rafat’s contribution in using English to reflect the cultural realities of postcolonial Pakistan, showing how he freed English from its colonial meanings to form a local poetic style. However, the article’s focus on romantic elements overlooks how Rafat’s poetry engages with the revival of cultural and spatial identities in a postcolonial context. While it acknowledges Rafat’s use of nature and nostalgia, it does not examine how these elements interact with broader themes of resistance and reclaiming culture that was erased due to colonization. This gap is central to the present thesis, which explores how Rafat reimagines spaces by linking them to pre-colonial cultural traditions and challenging colonial legacies.

While many researchers focus on Rafat’s use of nature and its beauty in his poetry, there are also many researchers who present Rafat’s poetry as deeply grounded in the cultural and social realities of Pakistan, reflecting an authentic representation of its traditions, rituals, and daily life. They present Rafat’s ability to translate the rich local experience through the English language by the use of poetic idiom that resonates with the Pakistani cultural ethos. Rafat’s poetry is deeply grounded in the cultural and societal realities of Pakistan. He reflects the traditions, rituals, and culture of the country through his use of idioms and metaphors in his poetry. His poetry is also marked by the ability to

resonate with the Pakistani cultural ethos. He presents the readers with the beauty of both urban and rural life in Pakistan and presents the intimate connections that are present between people, their practices, and the landscapes they inhabit. His poetry does not simply record these aspects; it advocates for them; it re-creates the world in terms of endurance, ethnicity, and continuity. This element in Rafat's poetry is analyzed and questioned in the article, "South-Asian Niche as the Poetic Helicon of Taufiq Rafat: A Metapoetic Study," which draws on Eva Müller-Zettelmann's theoretical framework on metapoetry. In their paper, Asim Aqeel, Saba Rasheed, and Hafiz Nauman Ahmed explore the metapoetic aspects of Rafat's poetry to unveil how his creative procedure and poetic philosophy closely reflect the South Asian cultural and natural environment. Drawing on Eva Müller-Zettelmann's theoretical framework on metapoetry, the authors analyze Rafat's anthologies, *Arrival of the Monsoon: Collected Poems* (1947–78) and *Half Moon: Poems (1979–83*). The study finds that Rafat's work is a conscious attempt to create a distinct Pakistani poetic idiom that brings out the very character of the South Asian landscapes, culture, and lived experiences.

The authors claim that Rafat draws his inspiration from South Asia's terra firma, in which nature, rituals, and daily life lay the root of his creativity. Rafat's concern with ordinary people, local traditions, and the natural environment is elevated, in poems such as "The Poet as Martyr" and "Reflections", to the realm of myth. The article underscores Rafat's rejection of colonial and Western poetic norms in favor of a localized aesthetic that integrates cultural symbols and indigenous metaphors. For instance, Rafat's use of regional imagery, such as squirrels, vines, and ripe fruit, serves as a metaphorical reflection of the poetic process, where creativity mirrors the growth and fruition of nature.

The article situates Rafat within a metapoetic tradition, emphasizing his self-reflexive approach to poetry. Rafat consciously employs his poems to reflect on his role as a poet, the societal function of poetry, and the intricate relationship between form and content. Poems like "Squirrels" and "My Neighbours" are highlighted as examples of primary and secondary metalyrics, where Rafat not only theorizes his creative process but also demonstrates it through the structure and language of the poem. This metapoetic lens allows the authors to frame Rafat as both a chronicler of South Asian culture and a pioneer in developing a postcolonial idiom that resists the erasure of indigenous identities.

The study contributes significantly to the discourse on Rafat's poetry by illuminating his metapoetic strategies and their role in shaping a South Asian literary identity. The article emphasizes Rafat's ability to convert the language of the colonizer into a means for cultural preservation and reclamation, thereby highlighting his significant contribution to Pakistani English literature. While Aqeel, Rasheed, and Ahmed emphasize Rafat's cultural and artistic contributions, they do not fully address how his engagement with landscapes and cultural practices transforms physical and metaphorical spaces into sites of resistance and identity. Building on the metapoetic techniques, the current research expands on the article's findings, demonstrating how his poetry not only articulates a South Asian identity but also redefines the spatial and cultural narratives of postcolonial Pakistan.

"Representation of Pakistani Indigenous Culture in Taufiq Rafat's 'Arrival of the Monsoon'" also examines Rafat's poetry and the ways in which he successfully depicted Pakistani culture. The researchers, Mahrukh Rana and Farkhanda Shahid Khan, use Franz Fanon's theory, which claims that indigenous intellectuals play a critical role in shaping national consciousness. The piece highlights Rafat's role in advocating for a renaissance of cultural identity. Rana and Khan foreground their analysis in the postcolonial theories of Frantz Fanon, Benedict Anderson, and Anthony D. Smith. They draw on Fanon's concept of national consciousness and emphasize the role of native intellectuals in shaping national consciousness. The authors exemplify this role by connecting their poetic examination of cultural traditions to the broader narrative of postcolonial resistance. Anderson's concept of the nation as an "imagined community" is also utilized by the authors, as Rafat's poetry creates a shared cultural space that fosters collective identity. They also refer to Smith's theory of ethno-symbolism, which demonstrates how myths, rituals, and myths reinforce the continuity of national identity.

Rana and Khan acknowledge that Rafat's poetry is extremely important when it comes to Pakistani English Literature, since he made remarkable contributions to it as an English poet. However, while their article offers a thorough analysis of Rafat's cultural representation, the significance of local traditions, and examines the enduring effects of colonialism, it fails to fails to consider how Rafat's depiction of landscapes and environments converts these physical spaces into symbolic sites of resistance and cultural memory. This gap is filled by the present research by examining how Rafat reclaims and reinterprets spaces shaped by colonial histories. This study extends the findings of Rana

and Khan by connecting the integration of indigenous cultural elements to the spatial and political reclamation of postcolonial landscapes.

Ismail Abbasi, Faiz Sultan, and Khuram Dad also analyze Rafat's poetry and how he talks back to the empire by appropriating nativity and resistance in his poems. By focusing on the experiences of colonized people, the researchers try to reject and criticize the dominant narratives of those who oppressed them. In their research paper, "Countering the Empire: Appropriating Nativity and Resistance in the Selected Pakistani Poetry of Taufiq Rafat," the authors draw on Bill Ashcroft, Helen Tiffin, and Gareth Griffiths' appropriation theory, arguing that Rafat uses the colonizer's language (English) to reclaim and refigure native identities and traditional values. In their 1989 seminal work, *The Empire Writes Back,* Ashcroft, Tiffin, and Griffiths examined how postcolonial writers utilize the colonizers' language to assert their own identities. One central contention of the theory was that language is a site of resistance. Language has often been an instrument of colonial control, yet postcolonial writers use the colonizers language and utilize it to subvert the colonial domination through their idioms, proverbs, and cultural references.

Abbasi, Sultan, and Dad argue that Rafat subverts colonial hegemony and creates counter-narratives that celebrate Pakistani culture through his poetic idioms. The paper presents how colonial authors like Rudyard Kipling exhibited epistemic violence in their writings by providing the narrative of white colonials and giving them the upper hand. They highlight that Kipling' writing perpetuates epistemic violence by misrepresenting Eastern societies as primitive and uncivilized. In contrast, they present Rafat's poetry, which revitalizes native peoples' identities and voices by making them the center. Rafat's use of appropriation, as seen in poems like "The Kite Fliers" and "The Arrival of the Monsoon," demonstrates the ways in which he utilizes English as a medium of indigenous expression with foreign words that are not translated, like 'kurta'. This strategy not only resists erasing native identity but also brings local culture onto the field of global literary competition. In doing so, the study highlights the ways in which Rafat's writings act as a literary and cultural protest, re-establishing the relevance and existence of indigenous Pakistani traditions by using the colonizers' language; English.

This research paper aligns with the current thesis since it reads the spaces present in poetry to reclaim them by infusing them with local culture. However, while the article

offers a rich analysis of Rafat's use of language and culture, reclamation is viewed through linguistic strategies and ignores how Rafat's poetry conceives physical and metaphoric spaces as sites for defiance and reformation. Similarly, Iram Mohsin, Anila Jamil, and Saira Hassan's research article, "Representation of Changing Indigenous Values in Pakistani Society: An Analysis of Rafat's Poetry," also deals with the same argument. Mohsin, Jamil, and Hassan critically examine Rafat's poetry, focusing on its engagement with the cultural, social, and moral transformations in postcolonial Pakistani society. They also draw on postcolonial theories like Abbasi, Sultan, and Dad. However, their focus is on hybridity, mimicry, and cultural dislocation in order to claim that Rafat's poetry functions as a critique on the diminishing cultural values pervasive impact of colonial ideologies on Pakistani identity.

The article takes Rafat's use of eastern imagery to explore the tension between tradition and modernity. The authors refer to poems like "Kitchens," "Reflection," and "Wedding in the Flood" to illustrate Rafat's attitudes towards the "Westernized" life of modern Pakistan and his interrogation of the alienation and materialism. They utilize Homi K. Bhabha and Edward Said's arguments on mimicry and hybridization to argue that Rafat exhibits as well as rejects the Western amalgamation in Pakistani culture. The cultural dissonance as evidenced in his poems has this duality of the field of colonial and postcolonial pressures, which would draw on the tradition yet unbalance it by breaking away from it. However, while the article's focus remains largely on the symbolic and cultural dimensions of Rafat's poetry, it does not sufficiently address how Rafat's use of landscapes and physical spaces intersects with his critique of colonialism and cultural disintegration. This gap is the core of my thesis, which explores the political and cultural recovery of space in Rafat's poetry.

These studies analyze the works of Taufiq Rafat, his poetic language, sensuality, and importantly, how his poetry acts as a medium to present the Pakistani culture through using the colonizer's language. However, while the researches do focus on the importance of language, and how Rafat utilizes it in order to present his country in the global world, the researches lack any focus on spatialization and how there are spaces present everywhere, and how these spaces contain elements like politics and culture which are given focus in the current research.

2.3 Spaces and Rizwan Akhter's Poetry

Rizwan Akhtar's poetry collection, *Lahore I Am Coming* (2017), has been the focus of numerous studies. This book consists of a wide range of themes concerning the human experience of existence. Nonetheless, it predominantly centers on the city of Lahore and Rafat's memories of it. It not only conveys the writer's sentiments and grandeur about many urban subjects but also evokes the unwavering beauty and seasons that characterize the whole scene. Many scholars have tried to explore Rizwan's poetry and present the readers with different aspects present in his work.

There has been detailed research done on Akhtar by Amna Saeed, Aadil Ahmed, and Rabia Saeed. Their paper, titled "Poetry in Style: A Stylistic Analysis of Rizwan Akhtar's Poems" by Amna Saeed, Aadil Ahmed, and Rabia Saeed provides a comprehensive examination of Akhtar's employment of stylistic elements in his poetry, concentrating on two poems from his collection Lahore, I Am Coming: "Love Signs In" and "Love in Times of Load Shedding." The research demonstrates how Akhtar's diction and rhetorical devices, which include the way metaphor, simile, personification, alliteration, assonance, and consonance, successfully convey themes of love, disappointment, nostalgia, and societal critique. These aspects are carefully interwoven to represent both personal emotional complexity and wider societal challenges, especially those encountered in modern Pakistan.

The article provides useful insights on Akhtar's poetry style, mostly concentrating on technical aspects and prioritizing formalist study above thematic or contextual exploration. While it briefly explores issues of socio-political critique and urban alienation, it fails to consider the wider spatial and cultural ramifications of Akhtar's work, particularly with postcolonial identity and the reclaiming of spaces influenced by colonial history. The study emphasizes the deficiency of research linking Akhtar's stylistic decisions to broader issues of place, memory, and cultural resistance, namely how his poetry traverses and reinterprets the terrains of postcolonial Pakistan. This gap corresponds with the emphasis of the current thesis, which aims to investigate the portrayal and reclaiming of spaces in the works of Taufiq Rafat and Rizwan Akhtar. This gap underscores the necessity of contextualizing Akhtar's poetry within the wider discourse of spatial politics and

postcolonial cultural identity, thereby enhancing the dialogue over his contribution to Pakistani English literature.

Amna Saeed and Aadil Ahmed also investigate the effects of neo-colonialism caused by the economic and military oppression of the local population of Pakistan in their research essay titled "The Neo-colonial Paraphernalia and the Socio-Cultural Crisis of the Local in Rizwan Akhtar's *Lahore, I am Coming*." Saeed and Ahmed explain the dominant role of neo-colonialism, which on the one hand, promotes cultural sameness, linguistic expansion, and military oppression in the name of the Global War on Terror in Akhtar's poetry, while, on the other hand, unravels the unsound position of the postcolonial local who suffers the most under the current phase of modern neo-colonialism. The research underscores the weak position of the postcolonial spaces in the face of contemporary neo-colonialism, which is relevant to the present research. It highlights Akhtar's contribution to the chronicling of the psychological and material repercussions of neo-colonial hegemony, positioning his poetry as a means of struggle against external imperialist forces and internal comprador elites.

Saeed and Ahmed provide a very important stepping stone for the current research, since they theorize and contextualize how poets like Rizwan Akhtar engage with grand narratives of colonization and neo-colonialism. The paper contextualizes Akhtar's work within the paradigm of postcolonial critique, specifically about geography and cultural identity. However, it predominantly emphasizes the neo-colonial critique while also neglecting to consider how Akhtar's poetry reclaims places by re-establishing connections between postcolonial and pre-colonial cultural practices. This gap is essential to the present study, which investigates how Akhtar's poetry challenges colonial legacies by reconfiguring spaces and cultural narratives in Pakistani English literature. The article's examination of neo-colonial trauma offers essential context for understanding the socio-political aspects of Akhtar's work. It also allows for additional investigation into how his poetry aids in the reclamation and reimagining of cultural and territorial domains within the postcolonial framework.

Besides neo-colonial reading of Rizwan Akhtar's poetry, there is also research on the impact of colonization and multiculturalism on Akhtar's poetry, which is important for the current thesis. In their research study titled, "Burden of Exile and Identity Crisis in

Rizwan Akhtar's Pakistani Story (from real to comic): A Postcolonial Critique," researchers Taimur Kayani, Aqlimia Farrha, and Ejaz Ahmed examine the effects of cultural hybridity in Akhtar's Poem: “Pakistani story (from real to comic),” specifically with regard to sexuality and identity crisis brought on by a clash of civilizations. Postcolonial literature is the main emphasis of Kayani et al., who argue that it displays cultural hybridity that results in a confused identity of orients. Using Homi Bhabha’s theories of hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence as a framework, the study unpacks how Akhtar’s work reflects the fragmented selfhood of postcolonial subjects living in exile. Kayani et al. investigate the questions of identity and draw conclusions about the difficulty in accepting one identity out of multiple.

Kayani et al. foreground the poem’s repeating imagery, which shows the unavoidable influence of Akhtar’s native culture, which follows Akhtar like a shadow, symbolizing the weight of unresolved cultural identity. His longing for his mother country, such as traditional clothing and local food, juxtaposes with his adjustment to Western life, reflecting the inner conflict of diasporic existence. The research emphasizes Akhtar’s depiction of this ambivalent condition as a “third space” for cultural negotiation, a concept integral to Bhabha’s postcolonial analysis. The realm of hybridity and cultural liminality facilitates both mimicry and resistance, as Akhtar concurrently engages with as well as critiques colonial legacies. The authors focus on Akhtar’s portrayal of “third space” as a space of cultural negotiation.

To conclude their article, Kayani et al., claim that Akhtar's confusion in the poem between Akhtar's own culture and the colonizer's culture points to his hybrid identity and his burden of indecisive citizenship as Bhabha, a postcolonial thinker, has described it through her theory. The article is useful in understanding Akhtar’s exploration of diasporic identity and hybridity, but primarily his psychological exploration. However, there is a gap in how Akhtar’s poetry redefines and redraws spaces defined by colonial histories. The omission of this element is significant to the present thesis, which stresses the political and cultural renewal of postcolonial spaces.

While many researchers focus on the postcolonial aspect of Akhtar’s poetry, there are also researchers who focus on the language and the metaphors that Akhtar uses in order to present the postcolonial elements in his poetry. Sadaf Iftikhar, Tehseen Zahra, and Ajmal Gulzar have deeply explored silence as a metaphor in Akhtar's poetry. They explore

multiple key themes such as human relationships, loss, colonialism, language, imperialism, and representation of females in their research essay, “A Corpus-Based Study of the Metaphor Silence in Lahore, I Am Coming.” Using a literary and linguistic approach, Iftikhar, Zahra and Gulzar investigate the metaphorical and thematic use of the positive abstract key word 'silence' in the poetry collection by Akhtar. The authors used the theory of Conceptual Metaphor (CTF) by George Lakoff and Mark Johnsons, which claims that metaphors are not only linguistic expressions but the ways of understanding the world. Silence grows in importance as a key metaphor about love and loss, language, colonialism, immigration, and about the representation of women.

This study argues that Akhtar’s poetry gives meaning to silence as more than an absence, but as a space of meaning and resistance. In metaphors, for instance, “lexical silence hibernating”, which signifies peace and love, and ‘silence rocks’, which signifies familial love as a safe place, we can see silence representing unspoken love, sorrow, and desire in human relationships. Sometimes, the critiques of colonial and neo-colonial effects take the form of silent metaphors like the "mental munch of silence" to signal the marginalization of the Urdu language or how local languages become erased.

Silence is also employed by Akhtar as a tool to portray women’s resistance in patriarchal societies, as a weapon of resistance against oppression. For instance, his poems like “Trilogy,” “The Only Woman,” “The Poet Meets an Adulteress,” “She Loves His Words” and “She was a Language” present silence as a metaphor that portrays women’s resistance to patriarchy and the colonial hegemony imposed on them. The authors claim that silence is a weapon “that can be used against the colonizers and patriarchal men who demean women by using language as an arrow (weapon) that causes wounds” to highlight the deep oppression that is present in the society.

This article serves as the quintessential resource in the appreciation of how Akhtar’s use of silence through poetry relates to major postcolonial issues such as identity, resistance, and cultural survival. However, its primary focus on metaphorical analysis through cognitive linguistics leaves gaps in exploring the spatial dimensions of Akhtar’s work, particularly how silence interacts with his representations of postcolonial spaces. While the study acknowledges Akhtar’s critique of colonialism and its cultural consequences, it does not explicitly address how his poetry reclaims or reimagines spaces

shaped by colonial histories. The researchers highlight the need for further research on metaphors present in the poetry of Akhtar. This gap aligns with the current research focus, as it seeks to examine how Akhtar's poetry reclaims colonial spaces by infusing them with pre-colonial cultural narratives and creating a distinct space for Pakistani English literature in a global context.

Another article, "Postcolonial Flâneur: A Critical Analysis of Spatial-Cultural Narratives in Rizwan Akhtar's (2017) *Lahore, I Am Coming*" by Iqra Farooq and Ayesha Ahmed, conducts a critical analysis of spatial-cultural narratives in order to discuss how a wandering observer interacts with cultural and spatial narratives of the city. This research explores how Akhtar functions as a poet flâneur in recording the cultural and psychological issues of postcolonial Lahore, with reference to the city's colonial heritage, cultural change, and socio-political dynamics. Through a discussion of the architecture, streets, and historical landmarks in Lahore, and by focusing on Lahore city as a whole, the study unpacks how the spaces present in Akhtar's poetry are infused with the traces of colonial oppression and the resilience of indigenous culture.

The article employs a qualitative approach, grounding its analysis in Adebayo Williams's theoretical framework of the postcolonial flâneur, which emphasizes the role of space in negotiating colonial and postcolonial identities. It highlights Akhtar's portrayal of Lahore as a city where history and modernity collide, creating narrative rich with themes of nostalgia, loss, and cultural survival. Poems like "The Dancing Courtesans of Old Lahore" evoke the grandeur and subsequent decline of courtesan culture under colonial influence, while works such as "Kitchen Cabinet" and "Winter-Weddings of Lahore" critique the commodification of culture and the lingering impact of colonialism on contemporary urban life.

The article is pertinent to the current research as it offers a deeper comprehension of Akhtar's spatial narratives, especially the interconnections of memory, identity, and resistance within colonial and postcolonial frameworks. However, although the study adeptly contextualizes Akhtar's poetry within the expansive framework of postcolonial flânerie, it fails to investigate how his poetic spaces actively recuperate pre-colonial cultural elements or their contribution to the overarching discourse of spatial reclamation in Pakistani English literature. This gap highlights the necessity for more study on how

Akhtar's work reinterprets and politicizes spaces to counteract colonial erasure and promote cultural renaissance.

Looking at the multiple research studies on Akhtar, it can be seen that his poetry has been the subject of research multiple times. While some researchers broach the subject of colonialism, stylistic features, and analysis of metaphors, the rest focus on the aspect of neo-colonialism and how it has impacted the way identities are projected in literature. The argument that spaces are present in Akhtar's poetry and that those spaces created are political and possess ideological and political implications remains a topic that has not been researched in Pakistani academia.

2.4 Conclusion

The above-reviewed literature throws light on the works produced about space poetry, and also variously explores aspects of the selected poets. The scholarly works take into account the process of spatialization and what elements are present in it, but the significant issue of spaces in postcolonial poetry is not given due attention, which is a major concern of the current research in the selected poetry. Moreover, the reviewed literature does not analyze the poets and their works in terms of spatiality and the politics of spaces. Rather, there is a significant lack of research in the field of spaces in Pakistani academia.

The scholarly works mentioned earlier in this chapter show that, contrary to the already explored aspect of spaces and postcolonialism, spatial politics is relatively an under-discussed concept in Pakistani academia. Spatial politics in postcolonial poetry is a very important field in literature since it attempts to counter the colonial aspects that are present in spaces and reclaim them. Therefore, this study is of significance as it not only focuses on spaces in poetry, but also on how they are used politically in order to reclaim the past history and culture that was erased.

Moreover, a review of relevant literature also helps in understanding and locating the topic of this study in the already existing knowledge relevant to the development of spatial studies in the Pakistani academia. It also signifies the importance of the selected poets Taufiq Rafat and Rizwan Akhter in trying to reclaim the postcolonial spaces and give them new meaning as local spaces for Pakistani writing in English in the global English literature.

While the review of literature on spatialization and space studies provides us with an overview of the contribution that researchers have made in the field of space studies, a significant lack remains in spatial studies from the perspective of politics and poetry. While some authors talk about the politics of spaces, their research focuses on fiction. The present research's aim is to lessen the research gap and place politics of spatialization amidst these larger contests in order to extend the produced discourses. Ultimately, this research aims to shed light on the complex and multifaceted ways in which space is constructed, contested, and shaped by political forces. By doing so, this research will contribute to our understanding of the political dimensions of space and how these dimensions intersect with broader social, cultural, and economic processes

CHAPTER 3
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Theoretical Framework

Space has become a vital component of contemporary cultural and social research, due to which many scholars treat space as socially and politically constructed. It seems necessary, before advocating a theoretical framework for this study to refer to the concept of space as shaped by theorists such as Henry Lefebvre, Jacques Derrida, and Gérard Genette, as a preliminary point to ponder. Owing to Jacques Derrida and Gérard Genette, who associated the process of writing with the very organization of a set of spaces, interest in space has arisen. Spatiality has been the topic of many publications in literary and cultural studies over the past few decades, following the widespread ‘spatial turn’ in the humanities and the social sciences.

An understanding of Henry Lefebvre’s concept of space is important for understanding spatial politics. In his book *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre breaks space and its production down into twenty-one sections that further clarify the complex meaning and function that surrounds physical space. He argues that spatial phenomena are of central importance to personal experience and that they are conditioned by people and groups acting in socially constructed situations. Lefebvre’s theory of space illuminates the dialectical relationship between domination and resistance in different social contexts because spaces are both part of an effective social process. Pakistani cities show a strong tradition of creative resilience as metropolitan environments in general tend to be splintered and exhibit a vigorous resistance to pressures of isolation.

These covert urban places function as spaces where "representational space" is cultivated, attracting artists, authors, and philosophers (Lefebvre 39). These spaces are influenced by the dominance of global capitalism and conflicting ideologies, but they also have the potential for resistance and collective social liberation. The act of spatial re-appropriation is a kind of rebellion against neoliberal hegemony. It presents real-life situations that are suitable for imaginative transformation and societal reformulation. While

the production of space is significant to this study, postcolonial elements regarding Pakistani space are also important. Edward Said's Culture and Orientalism has inspired postcolonial studies to explore the analysis of colonial and postcolonial places.

The theoretical framework for this thesis is based on the concept of space and how it is political. For that, the research takes help from three theorists and their selected theoretical concepts from their seminal works in order to substantiate the research argument. The research takes theoretical help from the concept of "spatial metaphors" by Russell West-Pavlov, "ideological map" by W. J. T Mitchell, and Sarah Upstone's concept of "post-space" and postcolonial spaces in her book *Spatial Politics in The Postcolonial Novel*. This study makes use of these lenses because of the attention they pay to the colonial appropriation of space, which legitimizes colonial power as a political entity, allowing us to explore the different dimensions of spaces and how the political aspects are embedded in them.

3.1.1 Spatial Metaphors

Since the research focuses on the aspect of politics of spatialization in regard to Pakistani poetry, the research borrows and takes bits of help from the research essay, “Postcolonialism and the Politics of Space: Towards A postcolonial Analysis of Material Spatial Practices” by Russell West-Pavlov who explains how politics of spatialization works in terms of post-colonialism. The author argues that postcolonial studies have overlooked important insights into the physical and practical aspects of colonial power dynamics by not considering the material realities of spatial domination and colonial exploitation, which are often examined by geographers. The author contends that this disregard has reduced the discipline's capacity to fully address the lived experiences and tangible effects of colonialism. He highlights how most of the postcolonial works use a consistent set of spatial metaphors (such as "in-betweenness," "third space," etc.) while ignoring the real spatial practices that those metaphors may point to (Pavlov 263). The metaphors can be both specific and abstract. Writers use spatial metaphors in order to shift the focus on the spaces that are embedded in poetry. By shifting the focus to material postcolonial spatiality, the author suggests that we can better understand how power and oppression continue to shape these spaces and the people who inhabit them. In that way, it

highlights the brutal reality of colonial and neo-colonial spatial practices, which are still ongoing today. Hence, it is a vital need to read spaces in every aspect.

Pavlov also examines the concept of "spatial amnesia" in his analysis of postcolonial studies, which he relates to Rob Nixon's critique in American ecological criticism. Pavlov argues that this forgetfulness stands in stark contrast to the postcolonial literature, which he characterizes as primarily concerned with transnational border-crossing and relocation as isolated incidents rather than systemic problems.

Pavlov contends that a significant portion of postcolonial theory, which is influenced by poststructuralist traditions like Bhabha's, utilizes spatial metaphors (such as in-betweenness and thirdspace) but neglects the tangible spatial practices that these metaphors represent. However, the writer contends that this mistake unintentionally fails to acknowledge the terrible realities of colonial and neo-colonial spatial exploitation that continue to exist in the present day. He highlights the importance of redefining postcolonial studies to include these physical spatial aspects. This involves urging the discipline to critically examine its colonial and neo-colonial roots and to incorporate spatial and geographical considerations more openly.

In addition, Pavlov criticizes the excessive use of metaphorical spatial language in postcolonial speech, suggesting that its prominence might be attributed to the impact of French poststructuralist ideas, which sought to depart from conventional historical and philological methods. Nevertheless, he recognizes that the increasing use of spatial vocabulary by postcolonial critics suggests an unconscious acknowledgment of the importance of space in colonial and postcolonial contexts, even though their main focus is on literature.

According to Pavlov, space is a "social practice" upon which previous practices have always previously left their mark (270). This social practice, according to Pavlov, “does not always already seize upon and recast the material conditions of its production.” Rather, Material conditions can only be understood through the mediation of language, which is always part and parcel, in turn, of the self-same spatial practices. Space, then, as the raw material of social life, is never present in pre-social, pre-discursive form; it can only ever be reflected as part of social production, as something which is always already re-made by its inhabitants (Pavlov 270).

Pavlov's claim that "space is both the raw material of social practice and also one that is always already produced by that practice" conveys a complex understanding of the role of space in various social and cultural settings, especially when considering the impact of colonialism and postcolonial dynamics (270). Looking at spaces as the fundamental component of human activity, the physical aspect of spaces can serve as the tangible foundation and setting where civilization takes place with all its intricate elements. It serves as the setting in which human history and social interactions unfold.

However, Pavlov also insists that space is not static or inert. Human activities, emotions, and ideas actually mold and create it. Urban planning, colonialism, migration, and ordinary intercourse continuously change and regenerate the physical space, which entails that space isn't a passive background, but a dynamic object, changing because of what people do and how society develops. Pavlov insists that all social actions or practices inevitably leave their imprint on space. Physical space is impacted through historical events, cultural practices, economic systems, and political beliefs. These may be built physical structures, for example, buildings and roads, but can also be abstract spatial arrangements, like borders, zones of control, and imagined landscapes.

Within the framework of colonialism and postcolonial studies, this viewpoint sheds light on how Western powers, through colonization, reorganized and altered physical landscapes to align with their economic and geopolitical objectives. Simultaneously, it recognizes that these changes in space were not unilateral; they were challenged, bargained, and occasionally undermined by native communities and postcolonial organizations striving to regain and rebuild their spatial domains. Hence, to look at a poetic space politically, one needs to look at spatial production through the lens of spatial elements cemented in the poetic language through symbols and metaphors. The researcher aims to utilize the concept of spatial metaphors in order to read the selected texts.

3.1.2 Ideological Mapping of Spaces

W. J. T Mitchell, in his research essay, "Space, ideology, and literary representation" highlights the importance of literary space and how ideologies and politics function in spaces. His seminal work "Spatial form in literature: towards a general theory" is the foundation on which his concept of ideological mapping is based in his later work.

Mitchell began his critical analysis of spaces by looking at its spatial form. He believed that spatial form was crucial for the interpretation of spaces. Building on the ideas given by Aristotle who claimed that writers become “inartistic” and only create characters and plots in their works that appeal to the audience visually, Mitchell claimed that spaced should be prioritized along with time in literature, and that spaces are an essential feature of literary interpretation, and that literary space tells us more about society and history than we would otherwise have known (Mitchell 567).

In his essay, “Spatial form in literature: towards a general theory,” Mitchell begins by aiming to unify the concepts of space and time by highlighting their complementary nature. Mitchell argues that we can only perceive a spatial form within the context of time, and we cannot discuss our experiences of time without referring to spatial dimensions (544). He gives importance to time and space relationship and argues that if we do not connect time and space together, there are gaps in understanding how spaces exist in time. To explain the relationship, he says: “Instead of viewing space and time as antithetical modalities, we ought to treat their relationship as one of complex interaction, interdependence, and interpenetration” (544). In literature, Michelle argues that space and time are connected very delicately, and our understanding of them lies in our ability to read spaces. For instance, we can only make sense of the narrative in a book if there is spatial and temporal organization in the text. Michelle gives the example of this mapping of spatial images through the example of geometry:

> Geometry has no difficulty in "mapping" both continuous and discontinuous functions in spatial coordinates, nor does it restrict one kind of function to space, the other to time. Readers do a similar kind of mapping, if less methodically, when they begin to construct images of temporal or other organizational patterns in any work of literature. (Mitchell 542)

Similar to how geometry uses coordinates to show inconsistent functions, our mental mapping of a story contains these gaps to symbolize instances where the narrative momentarily halts or changes direction. Mitchell was primarily intrigued by the connection between literary space and ideology. His objective was to give a comprehensive understanding of the concept of space. He argues that the area described in literature, which

they refer to as the "space of artistic representation," should be seen as a predetermined location of ideological conflict.

By showing how literary representations of space, or "the space of artistic representation," may be read as a "pre-inscribed site of ideological conflict," he offers critics an ideological map of the concept of space as it is used in the language of analysis (Mitchell 595). By looking at spaces as the site of “ideological conflict” where the impacts of political and cultural changes reside, the social powers and their influence on spaces can be explored. Mitchell’s analysis leads him to conclude that literary spaces serve as a conduit via which ideas of aesthetic order, social power, interest, and value can be communicated to and from readers (Mitchell 595). For Mitchell, spaces are laced with ideological elements and function as representatives. By utilizing his idea of spaces as “pre-inscribed site” which encompasses political and social ideologies, the researcher aims to explore the multiple dimensions generated by spatial metaphors in the selected poetry and how it infuses the poetry with the pre-colonial culture, thereby reclaiming these territories.

Mitchell’s exploration of literary space emphasizes its intrinsic relationship with ideology, positioning space as more than a passive backdrop. Instead, he sees it as an "ideological map," a conceptual framework that reflects and engages with the power structures, values, and social dynamics of its time. Mitchell shows that artistic representation of space is essentially political because it encodes struggles over meaning and authority by looking at space as a pre-inscribed site of ideological conflict. His opinion is similar to Soja and Lefebvre's criticism that spatial layout does not represent neutrality but illustrates that within spatial layout, there are people's particular worldviews. Moving beyond a discussion of aesthetic effects, Mitchell embeds spatial manipulation within a broader ideological framework to question how the novel mediates between a reader's aesthetic experience and his or her ideological perspective on social hierarchies. The connection of literary spaces to their social context rests upon and underscores precisely how literary spaces are active participants, and participants also shaped by, the ideologies of the day.

Through the lens of space as a pre-inscribed ideological conflict, Mitchell demonstrates that artistic portrayals of the representation of space are inherently political: they become a coded struggle over meaning and authority. His opinion is similar to that of

the critics like Soja and Lefebvre, who contended that spatial arrangements were not neutral but reflexive of ideologies. Mitchell embeds spatial manipulation within broader ideological frameworks that critique how literature acts as a mediating element between the aesthetic experience of a reader and their schematic perception of the social hierarchy. The connection demonstrates how literary spaces help mold, and are molded by ideologies.

Mitchell also perceives that the language used in literature is heavily infused with spatial metaphors. Our temporal language frequently incorporates spatial imagery, such as referring to time as "long" or "short" spells, and "intervals" of time (542). Mitchell's proposition that spatial conceptions surpass physical boundaries to symbolize temporal encounters emphasizes the significance of spatial metaphors in comprehending postcolonial poetry. The utilization of metaphors allows readers to understand the intricacies of historical and cultural displacement, as well as the restoration of spaces and identities. In the context of postcolonial literature, space plays a dynamic role, actively influencing and being influenced by the story, rather than serving as a passive setting.

3.1.3 Colonial Spaces as Post-Space

While Pavlov and Mitchell deal with the inscribing of colonial agendas in spatial language and metaphors and how the spaces in postcolonialism are “pre-inscribed site” that encompass political and social ideologies, Sara Upstone takes the argument a level higher by talking about “post-space.” According to Upstone, the central premise of post-space is its explicitly metamorphic function, where it is precisely through re-visioning chaos, fluidity, and disorder, rather than in spite of it, that statements of resistance or survival are made. A fusion of real and imaginary is utilized to rewrite space, to re-privilege its role as a positive multiplicity celebratory of postcolonial cross-culturalism. (Upstone 15)

Upstone argues in her book that “through seizing the denied fluidity of abstract space and imbuing locations with a political function, postcolonial authors create space as a site of possibility and resistance” (11). Through spaces that are present in literature, authors create spaces that act politically. She focuses on "postcolonial space" as a concept to reflect "the diverse spaces that construct the postcolonial experience" (1), arguing that it is crucial for postcolonial authors to create alternative identities and challenge colonial representations of territory (Upstone 13-15). By creating postcolonial spaces, authors can aim to negotiate for a cultural space lost in response to colonization since “without space,

any negotiation of place is incomplete" (Upstone 3). Based on this premise, the present research aims to read spaces present in the selected poets' collections and reclaim the territories lost to the colonial hegemony.

Upstone, in the first part of her book, asserts her understanding of postcolonial spatiality in relation to literary discourse and how it does not reject postcolonial history; instead, it offers "the opportunity for a powerful critical fusion" of time, history, geography and space (3). The author argues that the colonization process includes more than just the physical act of occupying a region; it also involves the construction of a new identity for the colonized. This sense of self is frequently imposed by colonizers, who may also seek to eradicate the colonized people's unique language, customs, and culture. When we read the political spaces in postcolonial writings, we are reading the texts and the space that the text creates. Upstone highlights how spaces are multifaceted and not fixed in postcolonial states. They act as a site where political engagement can occur.

In the book, Upstone employs the term "post-space" to characterize a situation in which conventional spatial frameworks have been disturbed or challenged, typically as a result of colonialism and globalization. She claims that hybridity, plurality, and fragmentation of postcolonial spaces threaten the prevailing spatial narratives that value homogeneity, coherence, and hierarchy. According to Upstone, postcolonial literature and art can formulate new spatial configurations that mirror these hybrid, fractured situations and provide alternative spatial narratives that contest prevailing paradigms and act as a medium for territorial reclamation.

They also examine how affective and emotional forces like trauma, memory, and belonging challenge or reinforce dominant spatial narratives in postcolonial environments. Upstone argues that "postcolonial literary texts offer an interrogatory alternative to the colonial myth of spatial order… through seizing the denied fluidity of abstract space and imbuing locations with a political function, postcolonial authors create space as a site of possibility and resistance" (Upstone 11). Writers present postcolonial spaces in alternative and more nuanced ways that allow for an understanding of complexity and diversity in these spaces. Thus, this offers a space of possibility and resistance against dominant power structures where marginalized communities are allowed to exercise their agency.

According to Sara Upstone, postcolonial literary texts challenge the preexisting idea of colonial spatial order. This misconception, described as such by Upstone, is that space is a static and hierarchical thing, in which some places are inherently better than others. Yet colonial powers adopted this idea as an excuse to still maintain power over lands and peoples they had colonized. Yet while postcolonial writers routinely talk about the 'permeability' and 'ambiguity' of space, they also committed to disturbing these rigid 'spatial hierarchies' mapped out by colonialism. To do this, they design new means to narrate about space, which in turn undermines conventional modes of thinking about spaces of the world and provides a fresh way of looking at spaces and the avenue of its constitution. They also find political purpose in speaking on and for the resistance and tribulations of colonized peoples in such a way as to reinscribe counter-narratives using images that counter the dominant discourses and monologies of a nation.

According to Upstone, postcolonial writers offer an alternative to myths, as they construct experimental spatial narratives that challenge customary ideas. She contends that postcolonial writers borrow from the elusive "fluidity of abstract space" to make tangible places politically significant (Upstone 11). She further contends that by concentrating on space, researchers may determine how colonialism established spatial hierarchies, exclusions, and power relationships that continue to define postcolonial cultures today in contrast to the colonial era, postcolonial space does not ignore the fact that all territory is fictitious and fluid. Instead, space needs to be reclaimed for the diversity it contains and the opportunities it affords for the transcending colonial experience. This makes space a place of resistance and possibilities.

Sara Upstone discusses the concepts of nation, place, body, and space to highlight the presence of political activities that occur not only within the boundaries of a state but also in other locations. Upstone's idea of post-spaces pertains to the method of interpreting literature, suggesting that literary works may be analyzed from a colonial standpoint (Upstone 33). She further elucidates that the term "place" denotes the exercise of colonial authority, whereas "space" encompasses a wider and more adaptable range of forms that the colonial power seeks to conceal. Space, in an abstract sense, serves as a container where hegemonic concepts can be included due to their adaptable characteristics. Space is utilized as a colonial domain to uphold the stability of colonialism, resulting in the establishment of a natural political order that shapes civilization. By reclaiming previously colonized

land, the spaces between colonizers and the colonized become more apparent, and the power dynamics of colonialism are questionable (Upstone 4).

3.2 Research Methodology

Research methodology refers to a structured approach for examining and understanding a selected topic of study. C. R. Kothari, in his book *Research Methodology: Methods & Techniques* asserts that research methodology encompasses not only the selection of research methodologies, but also the elucidation of the underlying logic behind the chosen method or approach, as well as the rationale for rejecting alternative ways (8). Jacques Barzun and Henry Graff defines research methodology as “experimentation, observation, logical arguments from accepted postulates and a combination of these three in varying proportions" (29). This study has examined Pakistani poetry in English by Taufiq Rafat and Rizwan Akhtar from a view of spaces and how their poetry attempts to recreate spaces that reject colonial narratives and recreates a space imbued with local cultures. Research of this kind is characterized by its qualitative nature, as it involves the analysis of the poems to identify the spatial and political elements that contribute to the creation of post-space.

3.2.1 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is characterized by its exploratory approach, focusing on understanding phenomena rather than dealing with variables. According to Creswell, it investigates a problem in order to comprehend the central phenomenon. He also states that qualitative research is more appropriate for investigating research problems where the variables are unknown and exploration is necessary.

Qualitative research mainly focuses on fundamental concepts, ideas, processes, or central phenomena. In this study, multiple themes and ideas were examined to identify political, cultural, and colonial elements present in selected poetry, which contribute to the construction of spatial reclamation. The study seeks to examine the postcolonial Pakistani spaces created by the poets, how these spaces attempt to reclaim the spaces and present the influence of politics on local spaces of Pakistan in literature.

3.2.2 Textual Analysis

This study uses textual analysis as the main method to examine the “representation of spaces” present in the poems. This approach serves as a data collection technique, specifically designed for researchers interested in examining how literature within a certain culture or subculture construct new identity and presents itself in a new medium. Textual analysis allows the researcher to examine questions pertaining to the texts, how they are interrelated, how they connect with the existing body of literature.

In the disciplines of literature, media studies, mass communication, sociology, and cultural studies, scholars use this instrument to gather information about how individuals or stories portrayed or recorded in the analyzed 'text' see and understand the world they inhabit. Gabriele Griffin's book, *Research Methods for English Studies*, consists of a collection of essays that discuss several research methods used in the field of English studies. In Chapter 9 of this book, the author presents Catherine Belsey's essay on “Textual Analysis as a Research Method.” In this essay, Belsey argues that textual analysis is essential for conducting research in cultural criticism. Cultural criticism encompasses disciplines such as English, cultural history, cultural studies, and any other field that examines texts or aims to comprehend the representation of culture in its artefacts (Griffin 160).

Given the nature of the current research, which is exploratory and interpretive, method of textual analysis outlined by Catherine Belsey in her essay titled "Textual Analysis as a Research Method" is employed. According to Belsey, when analyzing a text, it is important to consider the constraints that the text itself provides, rather than relying solely on free association or interpretation by the reader. Belsey argues that introducing something entirely novel to the text could potentially result in distorting its meaning. Therefore, Belsey's approach to textual analysis emphasizes the reader's role in maintaining a genuine connection with the text. She cautions against distorting the text by imposing personal meaning onto it, as this can lead to subjective interpretations.

According to Belsey, textual analysis does not support a single interpretation, suggesting that she believes in multiple interpretations of a text. However, she also emphasizes that a reader does not have complete authority in interpreting a text. She emphasizes this point by referencing Barth's essay "The Death of an Author." She asserts

that Barth is "certainly not proposing that we simply shift authority from the head of the author to the head of the reader" (Belsey 162) in this article. For Belsey, a text limits the number of possible interpretations it can have when it talks to the reader. However, this doesn't mean that "the text alone determines its own reading" (162). Thus, she argues that in order to analyze texts, one must see interpretation as "the effect of a relation between a reader and a text" (162). This quotation aligns with the current research, which explores the postcolonial interpretation of the text as a form of cultural and political critique as it seeks to analyze a significant aspect of modern society, were spaces encompass the reality. Considering Belsey's assertion that "textual analysis is essential for cultural criticism research" (160), is pertinent since it highlights how textual analysis keeps the readers and the text separate and the text can be analyzed more deeply. The purpose of doing textual analysis on the poetry of Rafat and Akhtar is to investigate the concept of ‘spaces’ and how they attempt to undo the colonization and reclaim the spaces as local entities.

The major advantage of textual analysis is its capacity to explore the link between form and content. Poetry, as a literary form, significantly depends on figurative language, symbolism, and structural components to communicate its subjects. This research employs textual analysis to examine how poetic techniques such as imagery, metaphor, and narrative structure enable the conceptualisation and reclaiming of places. Through this approach, close reading of the text entails interpreting and spotting patterns, recurring motifs, disruptions that identified the acts of the resistance and reclamation. An in-depth exploration is necessary in order to fully understand how postcolonial poets like Taufiq Rafat and Rizwan Akhtar articulate their vision of space and identity.

In particular, textual analysis is especially well adapted to the analysis of postcolonial poetry because it draws so much attention to the text's relation to its socio-historical context. Through postcolonial literature, writers look at the legacies of colonialism and seek to give alternative narratives that deconstruct the prevailing discourses of colonial power. The textual analysis of this thesis focuses on how the chosen poems reclaim spaces as places of cultural memory and sites of resistance. With this methodological framework, the text is carefully read for patterns, recurring motifs, and disruptions that signal acts of resistance, or reclamation, in the poetry of Rafat and Akhtar.

3.3 Relevance of the Theories to This Research Study

The theoretical frameworks by Russell West-Pavlov, W.J.T. Mitchell, and Sara Upstone are highly relevant when analyzing the poetry of Taufiq Rafat and Rizwan Akhtar. These frameworks shed light on the intricate manner in which literary texts depict and reclaim postcolonial spaces. These theories offer a sophisticated perspective on how these poets navigate the spatial politics of postcolonial Pakistan, reclaiming territories and infusing them with pre-colonial cultural significances. As a result, they make valuable contributions to Pakistani writing in English within the broader context of global English literature.

The concept of “spatial metaphors” by Pavlov is of greatest importance in understanding how postcolonial poets’ use of language can reshape and redefine spaces. Pavlov shows how the prevalent use of spatial metaphors in postcolonial literature discloses and disdains the material realities of colonial and neo-colonial practices. W.J.T. Mitchell, too, offers a good point to discuss spaces as being sites loaded with ideological conflicts. Mitchell argues that literary representations of spaces have major ideological implications and become battlegrounds for the ideological and political dynamics of a society. The overall analysis is enlarged with the help of Sara Upstone’s concept of 'post-space', in relation to the diverse and vibrant postcolonial spaces. For Upstone, space is “hybrid, shifting, and reflective of the elaborate relationships that construct our sense of place in the contemporary world“ (15). She argues that postcolonial literature often rejects a traditional spatial narrative to achieve hybridity and fragmentation and to undermine colonial spatial hierarchies.

By applying the theoretical framework, the study intends to explore the representation and retrieval of postcolonial Pakistani spaces into the poetry of Taufiq Rafat and Rizwan Akhtar. In their poetry, their spatial metaphors not only record the lingering effects of colonialism, but also the vitality of pre-colonial cultural landscapes and what they wrought. But this reclaiming of space extends well beyond the physical act and represents a bold statement, setting out into territory which challenges those colonial narratives and rightfully privileges local cultures and local identities. To that end, this analysis is an addition to understanding how postcolonial literature can be a resource for claiming space

and culture, and contribute a fresher version of the Pakistani perspectives to the international discourse of English literature.

CHAPTER 4
DECIPHERING THE POSTCOLONIAL SPACES FOR SPATIAL RECLAMATION IN TAUFIQ RAFAT'S POETRY

In this chapter, the poetry of Taufiq Rafat and Rizwan Akhtar is analyzed from the perspective of spatial politics. The theoretical concept of "spatial metaphors" by Russell West-Pavlov, "ideological map" W. J. T Mitchell, and "post-space" by Sara Upstone has been employed to explore the attempt to undo the colonial hegemony and how these poets attempt to infuse the local culture back into the spaces that have been influenced by colonialism. The chapter deals with the discussion of the ways that Taufiq Rafat and Rizwan Akhtar's poetry is laced with the representation of spaces in post-colonial Pakistan. Through the discussion, it is argued that the poetic spaces in the poetry of both poets are laced with political and cultural history in order to link them back to the pre-colonial culture hence reclaim the territories to their original state.

It is also argued that by reclaiming the territories embedded in the postcolonial spaces, these Pakistani poets aim to create a space imbued with Pakistani local culture, while also creating Pakistani writings in the global English literature. Since rarely work is presented that aims to decolonize and reclaim the native culture, the current research highlights that spatial reclamation requires reading the spaces as more than physical and temporal. While Rafat was writing when the partition took place and emphasized its repercussion through his poetry and metaphorical language, Akhtar presents the readers with a contemporary view of postcolonial space that are present in present day cities like Lahore, Islamabad, and Karachi. Through their poetic works, they attempt to undo the colonial spaces and re-establish them with the pre-colonial culture, thereby, reclaiming these territories. The research also claims that this spatial reclamation also creates a space for Pakistani writing in the global English literature since very few people work on postcolonial poetry from the lens of spatial politics. Rafat and Akhtar imbue their poetry with political metaphors. This chapter deals with the analysis of the poems by Taufiq Rafat and Rizwan Akhtar through the theoretical lens of "spatial metaphors" by Russell West-Pavlov, "ideological mapping" by W. J. T Mitchell, and "post-space" by Sara Upstone.

4.1 Impact of Memory, History, and Identity in Production of Spatial Metaphors

In this section, the impact of memory, history, and identity on the production of space is analyzed. When we talk about history of Pakistan, partition is the most important event that takes precedence. The Partition is not simply a setting, but rather a pivotal history that shapes the postcolonial state. It signifies the shift from colonial rule to an autonomous nation state, while also highlighting the lasting impacts of imperialism and communal conflicts. Postcolonial poetry provides a critical examination of these themes, presenting subtle and thoughtful contemplations on the intricate connections between history, memory, and identity.

Through the exploration of history, poets are able to reclaim and reimagine the areas that were impacted by the historical trauma of Partition. In doing so, they challenge the prevailing narratives and promote a more profound comprehension of the socio-political environment of the region. The analysis of Partition in postcolonial poetry emphasizes the act of reclaiming and rebuilding territories that have been damaged by colonialism and its consequences. Taufiq Rafat was writing when the partition took place and emphasized its repercussion through his poetry and metaphorical language. His poetry collections span over multiple decades and highlight how spaces changed with time. Starting from his book *Arrival of the Monsoon*, which spans overs the years 1947-1969, Rafat shows his readers the drastic change that is felt by the nation, how the cultural spaces are influences, changed, and erased. Before talking about reclamation of spaces, it is pertinent to highlight the impact of colonialism on cultural identity and how it can impact the society and the spaces that they create. In order to see the intricate balance between the spaces and the individuals residing in them that is disturbed by the colonial influence, looking in to the history and cultural ideologies of a society is important since it provides a history of a space. Rafat's poetry is laced with themes of reclamation as well as preservation. However, when they are read in depth, it can be deduced that they also focus on erosion of spaces and the shifting meanings of place and identity in postcolonial Pakistan.

Rafat focuses on the theme of memory, erasure of cultural spaces and identity, erasure of history through colonization in most of his poetry. Taufiq Rafat's poem "Death in the Family" presents the readers with a physical and emotional journey of burying a relative,

while it also subtly comments on how the cultural and communal spaces are being lost due to colonization.

I bear my cousin to his grave
at the head of a slow procession
to be laid beside our common grandfather,
dead these fifty years,
and a host of half-remembered
or long-forgotten relatives. (Line 1-6)

The poem begins by Rafat presenting the readers with a scene of a funeral taking place. The speaker is a part of the procession that is carrying his cousin to his grave. Even in this collective grief of losing a loved one, the cousin eludes the bereaved, vanishing into the depths of memory. This disconnection between the corporeal form and the recollection of the departed reflects the extensive dislocation experienced in postcolonial contexts, when the absence of physical land is linked with cultural and psychological disarray.

Pavlov's claim that space is inherently social and discursive which Rafat depicts by demonstrating how the graveyard, as a locus of complex history, is perpetually redefined by the rituals and recollections of its inhabitants. The slow procession symbolizes the progressive dissolution of familial ties, illustrating the fragility of this societal custom. The cousin’s body is in front of Rafat, yet, it has lost its connection to the world. Both the "common grandfather, dead these fifty years" and the "half-remembered or long-forgotten relatives" connect the past of forgotten history which is presented by relatives to the dead body that is about to be buried. The history is present but it has lost its connection to the space it is present in. This agrees with Pavlov's concept of space as a "social practice," influenced by historical and contemporary interactions where space is remade by its inhabitants. This fleeting nature of memory indicates that these associations are unstable and ultimately disjointed. The gradual procession reflects this weakening connection, converting the burial place into an archive of disjointed tradition where history is losing its foothold.

Rafat continues and turns to the auditory texture of the graveyard, where the "shuffle of feet" and the "hissing of gas lanterns" become the cousin's mourning. The transition from conventional mourning rituals to subdued, utilitarian noises signify the decline of social

life in these areas. This transition corresponds with Mitchell's "ideological map," which asserts that locations are infused with conflicting ideologies. The lack of a more expressive collective mourning indicates a decline in old customs, instead by a subdued, pragmatic approach to burial. The cousin is referred to as "the one who planted the silver oaks," symbolizes a tangible link to the land and its pre-colonial importance. His dual identity as a "white-haired army contractor" connects him to colonial past. This duality aligns with Upstone's concept of postcolonial hybridity, when space and identity are redefined via both resistance and complicity. The expression "dead certain now, and properly contracted" employs irony to highlight the definitive nature of death, juxtaposed with the fluidity of his recollected existence. The cousin's identity as both planter and contractor illustrates how postcolonial settings are imbued with histories that defy solitary narratives.

The speaker notes, "He is not the weight we carry" emphasizing how the deceased cousin's life is more significant in memory than in the physical body being buried. This notion of memory as a formative force reflects West-Pavlov's concept of "spatial metaphors," where space, in the poem's case, the courtyard and the silver oaks, is shaped by cultural and personal histories. In postcolonial environments, where the loss of physical territory is entwined with cultural and psychological disorientation, this gap between the body and the memory of the deceased reflects the larger displacement experienced. The mention of the cousin planting silver oaks evokes a feeling of deep connection to the land, yet it reflects an action from the distant past, highlighting how places linked to individual and cultural narratives can become disjointed as time progresses.

"He is not the weight we carry,
but the one who planted the silver oaks
in the courtyard; (Line 9-11)

Rafat asks a question later in the poem, "Is this the conclusion of the ancestral residence?" which questions the decline of the history. His question explicitly leads the readers to examine the ideological transformations that jeopardize the unity of communal and familial places. The deterioration of the ancestral home aligns with Mitchell's perspective that locations are inherently imbued with cultural and political significance.

Rafat exemplifies Pavlov's concept that places endure solely via continuous actions. The residence, characterized as a venue for neighbors to resolve conflicts and friends to

converse about agriculture and it suddenly coming to its demise highlight how local history is lost with time and change. The passing of the cousin leads to the unravelling of the familial and social networks that previously upheld the household, illustrating how colonialism also unraveled and indigenous territories and their history. The cousin, much like the ancestral home, symbolizes a fading connection to a previously stable cultural landscape, which is now disintegrating under the pressures of modernity and colonial disruption.

The concluding lines of the poem turn contemplative, as the speaker reflects on his own mortality following the death of his cousin. The shift from witnessing the cousin's burial to contemplating one's own mortality highlights the shared experience of death, while Rafat connects this reflection to the particular sense of dislocation experienced in postcolonial contexts. The gesture of "turning our back on the graveyard" represents a broader cultural shift away from traditional spaces, whether by choice or necessity (Line 47). It is highlighting the persistent disconnection from ancestral identities and the locations that once provided a sense of foundation. This supports Upstone's assertion that postcolonial literature employs spatial narratives to contest colonial notions of fixed and hierarchical space. The graveyard, interpreted through grief, transcends its role as a mere site of loss, rather, it evolves into a realm of potential, where the tensions between tradition and modernity coexist.

In another poem, "The Squalor in Which Some People Live," Rafat explores the intricate and at times painful connections between individual and collective history, physical environment, and sense of self in postcolonial Pakistan. Rafat's poetry delves into the political and cultural relevance of spaces through vivid pictures and thoughtful perspectives.

The opening expressions convey profound repulsion for the "squalor" and public immorality prevalent in modern culture, establishing a stark contrast between the speaker's current circumstances and their origins. This encounter with the "squalor" serves as a mean of recollection which urges the speaker in the poem to recognize and reclaim their origin. When the speaker claims "Dear God, have I forgotten so soon / my own beginnings?" he is insinuating the erasure of history through spaces. The correlation of social creation and spatial memory experience in this case mirrors Pavlov's theory that contends that spatiality,

memory, and experience are inherently tied to each other for social creation. Personal history amongst large scale socio-political upheavals such as the “act that severed a continent” which alludes to the Partition are contextualized in the recollection of ancestral residence with its “oblique house in Shahalam.” This statement adheres to Mitchell’s theory of spaces as "pre-inscribed sites of ideological conflict,” and how intimate spaces are weighed down by the larger histories of colonialism and division.

Rafat's recollections of the "oblique house in Shahalam" gives us an unforgettable image of the complex, broken off aspects of postcolonial identity. Rafat presents the readers with a home, which now has been changed to a “dry fountain,” where colonialism and total elimination of history from the continent are presented by the statement that it was “the act that severed a continent.” This dry fountain acts as a site of recollection, highlighting the plight and everlasting impacts of colonial hegemony. This place evokes recollection, underscoring the lasting, yet occasionally challenging, influence of historical and cultural legacies. According to West-Pavlov, space both influences social behaviors and can mold them. A vivid image of the house is kept retained by the poet's mind though it is actually absent. In its place, a dry fountain stands. Past experiences and ongoing cultural narratives have formed this cognitive framework for the speaker. Colonial structure takes root and the history is erased.

But it inflames the eye of memory
like a mote: room piled upon room,
and not a ventilator anywhere
to let the stale air out. Down one side
a gutter ran like a sore; the other
shared with a Hindu dealer in brass. (Line 11-16)

The speaker presents the readers with a detailed depiction of the house's surroundings which encompasses several rooms, a deteriorating gutter, and the presence of a Hindu brass trader. Through this imagery, the speaker establishes an intellectual framework linking personal history to broader socio-political contexts. The existence of the Hindu trader expresses the intricacy of interrelationships of many cultures, together with the decadent effect of colonial dominance. The house displays a close connection to neighboring communities as the subcontinent was a place where difference thrived before Partition, and

the event of the house’s disappearance represents its removal during the postcolonial transformation.

Rafat’s grandfather was a bone setter with a certificate from Lord Kitchener which Rafat remembers fondly for its contrast between traditional expertise versus colonial recognition. This example refers to Upstone's postspace which shows both indigenous practice and colonial legacy, demonstrating the ongoing negotiation one would find in the mixture of vernacular, indigenous, and colonial architectures. This duality further reflects Mitchell’s "ideological map," with the grandfather serving as a figure of both resistance and collaborator within the colonial framework. His "boisterous, semi-naked" presence in the residence serves as a metaphorical anchor, linking the family's identity to its surroundings. He is a prime example of Pavlov's claim that social practices determine a space, as the grandfather’s function is both highly esteemed in the community and closely connected to the physical location of his profession. The grandfather's capacity to flourish within the colonial structure while upholding his customary position exemplifies the fluid and disputed characteristics of postcolonial environments.

The poet reminisces about the scent of oil, lint, dung, and unaired quilts, which evokes memories of pleasant days throughout the winter. These memories emphasize a time when the local culture flourished despite the lack of financial wealth. The act of remembering and honoring these sites represents an effort to reclaim and imbue them with pre-colonial cultural aspects, establishing a connection between the past and the present. As Rafat says,

> The hands of the clock in moving forward
> are moving back. The family business
> slides downwards imperceptibly
> while l bandy words in a foreign tongue. (Line 45-48)

The imagery of the clock, with its hand "moving forward" and "moving back,” describes the repetitive essence of memory and history, demonstrating how progress is intertwined with loss. The decline of the "family business" contrasts sharply with the speaker's employment of a "foreign tongue," highlighting a profound disconnection from ancestral roots and traditions. This moment echoes West-Pavlov’s notion that space, language, and identity are deeply connected. The transition to a foreign language signifies

a departure from the native spatial and cultural context. At the same time, it resonates with Upstone's concept of "post-space" where, the act of "bandying words" in a foreign language denotes both empowerment (with access to global discourse) and detachment (from one's cultural roots). This linguistic transformation symbolizes the extension of colonial spatial hierarchy into language, serves as a declaration of moving past colonialism and reclaiming history and creating a narrative that gives voice to Pakistan in the wider realm of world literature.

"Circumcision" becomes an exploration of cultural tradition, and bodily autonomy, through the dissonant relation between ritual and personal identity, by invoking a childhood recollection. Sensory nuances within the poem highlight this poetry's authenticity, and it is made real and relevant while dealing with postcolonial point of views on power and spaces by turning a ritual into realistic event.

The initial lines present the readers with the speaker about to be circumcised. The poem's hidden meaning can also be taken as critique on the hegemonic structures of the society. The poem indicates how hegemonic structures require a community to be complicit and ensure their durability by interpellating the community. This is illustrated in the poem where "two cousins held a leg apiece" and the speaker is stripped of his autonomy. This corresponds to Mitchell's idea of space, where spaces such as the stool are pre-inscribed sites of power which perpetuate collective traditions while repressing the possibility of individual autonomy. Though ordinary, the stool becomes a symbol of submission to cultural authority and aligns with how colonial systems made use of spaces as courts, schools and churches to naturalize their control.

Pavlov's idea of spatial metaphors further elucidates how ritual space is made. The stool as well as the tools that the barber uses are laced with cultural signifiers, affirming the authority of tradition. However, just like how colonial powers labeled their territorial superiority beneficial for the colonized spaces, this spatial production through the stool and the tools also masks the violence implicated in the act. The act of circumcision, stripped bare of symbolism, is shown in the poem to be a physical violation of the boy, a violation that he learns to process through "indignation and pain." Rafat creates a theme of compulsion and vulnerability in the poem when he shows the speaker's "removed my pyjamas / they pulled me, all limbs and teeth." The speaker becomes an object, incapable

of resisting the communal will, trapped instead by the act of being ‘dragged’. It is in accordance with the notion of Pavlov that personal action is subordinated to the cultural practices of shaping social space. This space of transformation and vulnerability, on the body, becomes the symbolic stool where cultural tradition happens.

The notion of postspace given by Upstone claims that areas that are both fragmented and disputed open the option of negotiation. The speaker in the poem is unaware of the traditional ritual taking place. He is deceived by his cousin where the cousin cries “observe that golden bird.” The speaker’s response, characterized by a strong sense of anger and suffering, serves as a compelling demonstration of their ability to take action and establish their own power. By using "the graphic vocabulary of the lanes" to express himself, the protagonist finds his voice again and expresses himself in a way that is deeply ingrained in his every day, local culture. This act of verbal resistance against the barber, who represents the enforcement of conventional norms, signifies the reclaiming of individual and cultural autonomy from repressive influences, whether they are colonial or cultural in nature. The speaker’s anger is similar to the postcolonial task to unmask and expose the institutions of colonial domination, exposing the fissures within hegemonic systems, which want to silence the resistance.

Taufiq Rafat’s “Grave in the Park” similarly puts together a complex visual of history, culture and memory in postcolonial Pakistan and highlights how they are trapped in each other. Rafat employs the grave as a spatial metaphor to indicate that confining dimensions, layers of culture and the traces of history all contained in a single "brown rectangle / marking it off / from the expanse of the ground about it" (Line l3–l5). The grave, though small and confined in its dimensions is isolated from the space surrounding it. Its isolation, “the nearest tree / was a sixer away” emphasizes its distinctiveness within the larger park, symbolizing the alienation of indigenous spaces within modern, colonized landscapes (lines 7–8).

As the poem progresses, Rafat juxtaposes the sacredness of the grave with its mundane, even irreverent, treatment by the boys. The description of someone lighting "a clay-lamp every night / in the lamp-niche / black with use" (lines 13–15) suggesting a persistent but decreased spiritual activity. Pavlov's claim that space is constantly mediated by the cultural and social practices of its occupants and is never pre-discursive is consistent

with this. The grave turns into a palimpsest, with contemporary leisure activities erasing its hallowed beginnings. The boys' usage of the sides of the cemetery, where they "freshened every day / with charcoal or chalk / the sets of stumps / at which we bowled" (lines 27–30), emphasizes how indigenous holiness was disrupted by colonialism. As an indication of how colonial spatial practices absorb and reuse native sites for their own ideological and cultural purposes, cricket, a classic colonial sport, overlays and changes the grave.

Rafat uses a tone in the poem that alternates between terror, contempt, and reverence, showing the grave's disputed ideological character. The grave serves as both a practical play area where the boys play 'four matches at once' (line 46) and a location of legendary power, since it is thought to belong to 'a giant / who swallowed children' (lines 33–34). The grave, however, turns into a site of terror at night, a source of such intense horror that the narrator would only return with "a friend, / or preferably two" (lines 55–56). Mitchell's theory of space as an ideological map is best shown by this oscillation between play and terror. In literature, places frequently function as locations of ideological struggle, bearing the tensions of conflicting cultural narratives. At one time, the grave is a space of play, and at another moment, it turns into a sight of terror.

When the narrator returns as an adult after the Partition, Rafat's depiction of the grave changes. The broken but persistent postcolonial identity is paralleled by the depiction of the park as changed but yet identifiable, "grass on the fields, / and a lot more trees" (lines 97–98). The grave has endured time and change, and it is now described as "navel-high, / of embraceable width, / and three strides long" (lines 102–104). With 'lichen-covered / stump markings' (lines 108–109) and a 'cold' lamp-niche (line 111), its lessened importance symbolizes the loss of its cultural and spiritual value. Its continued existence in spite of these shifts, however, places it within Sara Upstone's concept of "post-space"—a flexible, hybrid construct that defies strict colonial spatial hierarchies. The grave preserves the memory of pre-colonial spirituality and regional cultural traditions, while being overshadowed.

The poem's last stanzas further develop the spatial metaphor by relating the cemetery to the larger landscape of memory and grief. A layer of historical and collective erasure is added by the narrator's memory of the Hindu graveyard or "burning ghat, / or whatever it was, / abandoned by its look" (lines 69–71), which emphasizes how Partition

turned sacred places into forgotten or desecrated locations. The boys' violent reclaiming of territory motivated by nationalist ideas is highlighted by the act of urinating on the mounds, "for the sake of honour" (line 76). The grave becomes a symbol of nostalgia and the irreversible loss of youthful purity in the narrator's mature reflection, which stands in stark contrast to this destruction. According to the poem's concluding lines, "at which childhood site / that final illusion, / our particular mammoth, / will be laid to rest" (lines 124–127), spaces are brittle stores of identity that are continually disputed and rebuilt, much like memories. Rafat, through his use of a grave, aimed to reclaim the history and create the illusion that, despite the spaces changing with time, as argued by Upstone, they still remain tethered to their historical and cultural roots while adapting to new narratives of identity and belonging.

In “Sialkot Bombed,” a similar notion of erasure of space is argued as "Grave in the Park." The opening lines, which describe the bombing of the bus stand, immediately present a space that is violently transformed by the bombing that took place during the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965. The bus station, a site typically associated with movement, travel, and exchange, is reduced to rubble, with “three bus-loads of civilians, mostly women and children and old men” being the tragic casualties. This space, once a lively site of commerce and social interaction, is marked by loss and destruction, reflecting how postcolonial spaces are scarred by the trauma of conflict.

Rafat’s description of the aftermath further develops the theme of ideological mapping, particularly through the imagery of exhumation and recovery. The “Civil Defence” (line 17) is still exhuming bodies a week after the attack, emphasizing the ongoing presence of death and destruction in the space. The mention of bodies being “exhumed” not only conveys the persistence of the past within the physical landscape but also represents the ideological and psychological wounds that remain, unhealed, in the minds of the survivors. These bodies are unclaimed, with “no one has come forward to claim them,” reflecting the alienation and dislocation caused by violence, where identities are lost, and even the dead are forgotten or ignored. This reflects the disorienting and fragmented nature of postcolonial spaces, as described by W.J.T. Mitchell, where the physical space itself becomes estranged and detached from the social and cultural identities that once inhabited it.

Rafat's "This Year's April" explores a city as a political and emotional space that bears the weight of history, violence, and erasure. Rafat turns the city into a multi-layered landscape that shows the postcolonial Pakistanis' ideological tensions and fears. In this poem, the speaker seeks to traverse a zone that hovers between familiarity and estrangement, reflecting both individual and communal experiences of violence and disturbance.

Part I of the poem establishes the poem's foundation in time, with "this year's April" taking on a tone of near-indifference, being both commonplace and metaphorical (Line 1). "How weather-beaten they are," and the ordinary "lamp-posts," represent the weathered and neglected urban places that go unseen (Line 6-7). The urban environment is given life by the personification of the lamp-posts, which show a rhythm of silent existence as they draw shadows "inwards at noon" and cast them "out" (Line 10-11). In this case, West-Pavlov's claim that space is inseparable from its social and temporal "marks" is borne out; the lamp-posts symbolize the city's constant presence, even in its neglected and decayed form. A tension is created between the natural and artificial areas of the city by the vivid and "profuse" gul-mohur and jacaranda trees, which stand in sharp contrast to this wear. And yet, as the poem develops, the speaker's longing for April to remain "unhistoric" (l. 10) reveals an underlying need to evade the crushing burden of social and political turmoil.

The violence in Part II destroys the illusion of peace. Rafat's depiction of the "teenagers" overturning a car reveals the ideological rift present in urban spaces. The broken "wind-screen" and the gas-tank exploding convert the urban road into a battleground where violence is both theatrical and disturbingly commonplace, "All this in the name of God." In this context, Rafat examines how places transform into arenas of ideological issues, reflecting Mitchell's concept of the "pre-inscribed site," where social authority is expressed via both physical and symbolic violence. The pot-bellied officer's chase and nonchalant execution of the "shovel-wielder" elicit a cinematic feeling of detachment: "This is just like the movies: cops, pursuit, and bloodshed. " This demonstrates the desensitization to violence in postcolonial urban spaces, where ideological authority imprints itself into space, transforming it into a domain of control and repression.

In parts III and IV of the poem, Rafat portrays the city under curfew, a starkly emptied and alienating space, while intertwining this with an almost metaphysical

rumination on fate and uncertainty. The city in part III is presented as an uncanny space, both familiar and transformed by the curfew, embodying what Sara Upstone refers to as "post-space," where normative functions are disrupted, and the environment becomes alien. The city's stillness, "To think a city can be so still at eleven in the morning," underscores this uncanny atmosphere, rendering it an almost spectral version of itself. Within this silence, the people who remain indoors become ghostly presences, hidden but acutely felt: "The walls bulge with their heart-beats". Rafat's depiction of their "eyes glistening, with the patience of animals" strips away individuality, reducing them to survival instincts. This aligns with Pavlov's idea of spaces as active participants in shaping human experiences, where the environment intensifies the characters' vulnerability. The hidden lives behind closed windows mirror the broader societal suppression, as fear dictates their existence, rendering the city both inhabited and empty—a duality that reflects the psychological toll of curfews and martial law.

Part IV moves away from the immediate physicality of curfew city to the bigger area of prediction and inevitability of the metaphysical realm. The astrologer warns, "This year's April … will be decisive" as he introduces an air of historical determinism; but his discomfort undercuts the phenomenon's certainty. A vision of a "lake" that puzzles him with "colour and smell" denotes an ambiguous symbol of stagnation or decay or a form of unresolved tension between natural and constructed space. The lake could be considered an ideological map; a space where the poet projects the contradictions of political turmoil and human agency. Rafat constructs a speculative layering of space as an object and as an ideological construct, between personal and collective crisis that operates through this disjointed imagery.

In this section, the poems demonstrate how memory and cultural history bend and displace the spaces of postcolonial Pakistan. The analysis above reveals that most of the writing in Rafat's poetry revolves around how one's poetry transcends the fine line between erasing, reclaiming and transforming of spaces. In this, spaces are identified as dynamic, layered entities that are constantly being remolded by collective memory, cultural identity and colonial histories. From this perspective, Rafat's poems reveal the inextricable, if tentative links between individual memory, collective identity and the material and conceptual forging of spaces. These poems map out how collected and pieced together

memories shape cultural heritage and identity formation bringing forth an understanding of socio-political realities in colonial and postcolonial spaces.

4.2 Urban and Rural Spaces: Transformation, Resistance and Reclamation of Postcolonial Spaces

The colonial past is inscribed in the physical and cultural fabric of urban and rural spaces and history plays a central role in shaping both these spaces. Cities reorganized by colonial forces serve colonial, economic and administrative ends, and new spatial patterns place colonial interests first rather than indigenous ways of life. The result of this spatial reorganization was an alienation of local populations and the substitution of colonial patterns of space for the traditional ones. At the same time, rural spaces have been exploited for resources and become spaces of resistance to colonial rule. As the postcolonial era ushered in its own difficulties, a compelling drive for national development and modernization frequently reproduces these inequalities, and rural communities and indigenous histories were further marginalized and simply erased.

Colonization, history, and modernity conjoin in the production of urban and rural areas, through which culture and identity are forged in postcolonial Pakistan. These are more than mere spaces on a map, more than locations; they are social and cultural support structures filling stories of resistance, reclamation, and change. The urban landscape has clearly been shaped by colonial architecture, and the forces of modernization, all too often representing cultural erasure and alienation. Colonialism imposed new spatial hierarchies and ideologies upon the lands, destroying indigenous customs and thereby changing the ways that indigenous people engage with their environments. In the case of cities which are repositories of colonial legacies; which bear the cosmopolitan charm of the postmodern city shoulders, the effects of domination are everlasting, and development stares us ruthlessly in the face, obliterating cultural memory. However, these metropolitan spaces also function as places of resistance, where the narratives imposed by colonization and modernity are contested by the interaction of memory and history.

While the urban and rural spaces serve as crucial point where colonization, history, and modernity converge, they also present the postcolonial condition of a space. This condition represents the everlasting consequences of colonialism, such as fragmented cultures, economic dependency, and identity conflicts. Madina Tlostanova asserts that the

postcolonial predicament transcends simple historical or cultural examination, urging for researchers to pursue active decolonization. This necessitates not only building upon pre-existing structures, but rather "developing an active and conscious ethical, political, and epistemic position" to eliminate colonial legacies (Tlostanova 166). She attacks postcolonial studies for frequently operating within Western paradigms, contending that they risk perpetuating the very colonial systems they aim to analyze.

Cultural erasure, a by-product of colonial and postcolonial transformations, is a recurring theme in the interplay between urban and rural spaces. In urban centers, the imposition of colonial architecture and urban planning often effaced indigenous spatial practices, while rural areas experienced the erosion of traditional lifestyles through economic and social changes. However, these spaces are also sites of reclamation, where individuals and communities seek to revive and reimagine their cultural heritage. In this case, reclamation usually results in reassertions of precolonial identities, resistance to the homogenizing features of modernity and recreations of links to the land.

Modernization complicates the dynamics of spaces by introducing new ideologies and technology which changes original connections with space. Urbanization is the reason why cities grow and uproot people from the rural area and create hybrid environments in which the modern and the ancient come together. These forces also transform the rural environment, often seen romantically as a refuge from modernity and transform rural cultural traditions, community structures, and agricultural methods. This dichotomy of change and resistance reveals the fluidity of postcolonial settings, which are characterized by the struggle between a natural heritage and a modern desire, and scores of conflicting and fruitful innovations. Such imagery can be seen in the poem "Karachi, 1955" by Taufiq Rafat. The poem blends nature and urban Karachi, the largest Pakistani city, to demonstrate the fight to reclaim and redefine space in a city which is deeply characterized by the old colonial history. Rafat's images show vivid images of the everyday conflicts, nature, urbanization and the long-lasting impact of colonialism. Rafat begins the poem with an intense description of natural forces:

> The screaming wind transplants the soil
> particle by particle. The roar of the sun
> is silenced by distance, but its muscular rays

crack the most stubborn rock like a nut.
And yes, the sea: biting into the beachhead
with an ancient rasping sound. (Line 1-6)

The term "screaming winds" is used to describe the migration of 1947 in sub-continent. The metaphors of forces used not only illustrate the severe physical conditions of Karachi's environment but also symbolize the persistent effects of colonial exploitation, indicating a landscape that is still undergoing significant changes. The water, which is described as "biting into the beachhead with an ancient rasping sound," highlights the colonial influence's persistent and intrusive nature even as it continues to mold and degrade the city's identity. The harshness of the wind symbolically conveys the traumatic and violent upheavals of partition, suggesting that the natural world, much like the human world, has been scarred by this event. The metaphor of the "sea biting into the beachhead with an ancient rasping sound" further underscores the theme of colonization; the sea represents the persistent, almost invasive, influence of imperialism on the land. This aligns with Upstone's idea of "post-space," in which the geography is not neutral but carries the weight of colonial history. Here, the forces of nature, much like colonial history, intrude upon and reshape the city, erasing or transforming the old and creating space for new identities and struggles.

… All the forces
of nature crowding man off his perch
so that the land can return to its ways. (Line 6-9)

In line 6-9, Rafat highlights the attempt of the city space to turn back to the way it used to be. This imagery speaks of the complexities of postcolonial space, where the aftermath of colonial rule leaves an indelible mark on both the land and its inhabitants. While nature pushes for a return to its original state, the remnants of colonial violence, displacement, and partition resist this reclamation, manifesting in the struggles for survival and control. This can be linked to Mitchell's idea of the ideological map, which suggests that the land is an ideological construct shaped by power dynamics. In Karachi, these power dynamics are historical, where colonialism has permanently altered the city's landscape and its people's relationship to it.

In this city of scarce sweet water and little rain

each man protects his rood of greenery
with panicked care. The municipality plows
the heart of the road for a strip of grass
and jealously counts its trees on week-days.
The bald sparrow scrounges in the dust-bin;
only the spendthrift gul-muhor spills its gold
in the pitiful spring that time allows (Line 9-16)

In the second stanza of the poem, Rafat portrays the residents' strenuous endeavors to sustain their livelihoods amidst this inhospitable setting. A lack of "sweet water and little rain" makes it necessary for each individual to guard their "rood of greenery with panicked care" (Line 9-11). These visual highlights the challenge of staying alive and the intense safeguarding of resources in a post-partition environment where the poor management by colonial powers has resulted in a lasting scarcity and rivalry. In an attempt to infuse life and order into a city still scarred by colonialism, the municipality is "plowing the heart of the road for a strip of grass" to create green spaces. Here, the public's attempts to reclaim small green spaces can be interpreted as symbolic of a larger, more difficult process of reclaiming national identity and cultural space in the wake of colonial rule. The "bald sparrow scrounging in the dust-bin" and the "spendthrift gul-mohur spilling its gold" highlight the transitory nature of beauty and life in a space still recovering from the destruction caused by colonial rule. This visual emphasizes the precariousness of life in postcolonial space, where even small moments of beauty and hope are fleeting. The images of the sparrow and the gul-mohur flower symbolically reflect the resilience of postcolonial identities amid enduring hardship.

Rafat's portrayal of urban life in Karachi further exemplifies the ideological contradictions inherent in the city's areas.

We wear our features to suit the landscape,
and malice moves like a rainless cloud
over the brown cliffs of the teeth.
From opposite the terminus I stare
at the commuters storming the gates, and see
where the roof bulges the effeminate rise

of a dune, and where the lamp-post stands
the arms of the cactus lifted in prayer. (Line 17-24)

In a postcolonial setting, people are always negotiating their place in the world, and the city's harsh atmosphere, hectic urban life. The line “We wear our features to suit the landscape” implies a kind of adaptation, where individuals alter themselves to fit into the urban, postcolonial environment (Line 17). This idea of “wearing features” aligns with Pavlov’s concept of spatial metaphors, where the landscape shapes the identities of its people. The urban setting of Karachi forces individuals to blend into the space they inhabit, becoming part of the city itself. The poet's depiction of commuters aggressively entering the terminus portrays a disorderly and energetic urban environment, where human behavior reflects the turbulent natural forces mentioned before.

Rafat’s description of the physical environment in the following lines, “where the roof bulges the effeminate rise / of a dune, and where the lamp-post stands / the arms of the cactus lifted in prayer,” offers a remarkable juxtaposition between the built environment and the natural world. The word “effeminate” suggests softness and fluidity, which contrasts with the harshness of the desert landscape. The dune represents the land’s shape, its shifting nature, and the instability of postcolonial spaces, where cultural identities and social structures are in flux. This notion of transformation and fluidity is also seen in Upstone’s idea of “post-space,” where the land is no longer static but is constantly reimagined and reshaped by historical forces, including colonialism.

The image of the “lamp-post” with the "arms of the cactus lifted in prayer" is a juxtaposition of urban and natural symbols, suggesting the convergence of the city’s man-made environment with the desert’s organic elements. The cactus, often a symbol of endurance and survival in harsh conditions, here “lifts its arms in prayer,” symbolizing a yearning for transcendence, spirituality, or a form of resistance against the hardships faced by the people. The lamp-post, a product of urban life, stands beside this figure of nature, reflecting the hybrid nature of Karachi as a city where traditional, spiritual elements intersect with the modern, urbanized world. This hybrid space mirrors the contradictions inherent in postcolonial Karachi, where different cultural, historical, and geographical elements coexist and interact.

Just a few years later, Rafat penned another poem titled “Karachi, 1968” in which he presents a vivid critique of the city’s character, portrayed as both alien and unyielding. The poem’s depiction of Karachi as a city "sandwiched between the desert and the sea" situates it in a liminal space, both geographically and metaphorically. Mitchell’s concept of the "ideological map" is crucial for analyzing the depiction of Karachi as a liminal space. Mitchell argues that spaces are shaped by ideological forces that construct them as legible and meaningful to particular power structures.

> Karachi is the only city I know
> where barbers solicit like whores, and papayas
> are considered fruits. Sandwiched between
> the desert and the sea, it swell by reclamation,
> and points to its belly shamelessly (Line 1-5)

The city in Karachi 1968 is depicted as "a windy instant burg," a place where superficial elements, such as the "big mouth" of artists or the "sexless" clouds, suggest an environment that has been commodified and stripped of its deeper cultural and historical meanings.

The city has lost its identity and is seemingly split, with contradictions, ideological markers that betray the original cultural essence of city. Karachi’s folks and culture are objectified and an overall commercialization comes to the mind when the speaker says that the barbers “solicit like whores” (Line 2). This is legacy of colonial commodification, in which indigenous practices and identity became mere transactions. However, Karachi becomes a site in which historical, ideological divides of colonization and modernization meet, resulting in tension between a desire to find cultural authenticity and the pressures of global processes of modernization. For example, Karachi in 1968 does more than serve as a physical location, instead it becomes a metaphor for the postcolonial condition, where the last colonial remnants cohabit with attempts to reclaim culture. The line “swell by reclamation” refers to both physical and ideological procedures (Line 4). It alludes to Karachi's attempts to establish a postcolonial identity among the lingering remnants of colonial modernity, while also referencing the city's actual growth through land reclamation operations. However, this reclamation appears oppressed, as the city "points to its belly shamelessly," hinting at a sense of self-awareness. This aligns with Mitchell’s notion of the

ideological map, as Karachi embodies a contested space shaped by colonial legacies and rapid modernization, where identity is constructed through chaos rather than tradition.

> No, I do not think I shall come to terms
> with this grey place. It shortens my breath
> and pinches my eyes. On bad roads automobiles
> smelling each others' jostle their way
> to the beach. A manure truck leaves its trail. (Line 15-19)

The portrayal of Karachi as a "grey place" that offers "no hope of change" might initially appear to reject the potential for reclamation, but the "whirling airport searchlight" at 2 a.m. complicates this narrative. The "grey place" that Rafat describes is precisely a post-space, an environment that refuses to conform to a singular, fixed identity. The city's "mini-monsoon" and its shifting weather patterns reflect this constant state of flux, where the city remains in a state of tension between past and present, tradition and modernity. This sense of disorientation, where the city's cultural and natural landscapes are experienced as fragmented and alienating, aligns with Upstone's concept of postcolonial spaces as always evolving, never fully resolved. The searchlight that "brandishes its sword" over the city at night can be interpreted as a symbol of ongoing resistance, an effort to reclaim visibility and identity within a space that remains both familiar and foreign. The city, though fragmented and alienating, still asserts its vitality, refusing to be reduced to a colonial or modernist stereotype. This duality, where resistance and reclamation coexist with transformation, reflects the complexities of postcolonial spaces, where the ideological maps of the past are redrawn in response to contemporary realities.

There are various poems that show how urban and rural spaces are transformed but in Rafat's "A Middle-Class Drawing-Room," he concentrates in analyzing a typical Pakistani middle-class household which is full of desolation in every corner and makes the history of the space speak for it. The drawing room becomes a spatial metaphor for the way the space changed over time. Through the drawing room, Rafat adeptly looks beyond social and cultural issues. The drawing room becomes a spatial metaphor for the way the space changed over time. Rafat scrutinizes the representation of this seemingly ordinary drawing room and discusses themes like dignity, economic struggle, and cultural heritage, matters

that help to contemplate the post-colonial contexts in contemporary Pakistani poetry. He begins his poem by describing the drawing room:

> As soon as you enter, the room's poverty
> strikes you like a blow. The mohri carpet
> may have been priceless once; now its worst
> patches are hidden by strategic placement
> of occasional pieces. (Line 1-5)

The poem opens with a striking image of financial troubles, highlighting the "room's poverty," setting a particular tone and basis to the poem while stressing conflict between the thoughts of the outer world and its reality. According to Pavlov, the physical condition of a space reveals socio economic conditions and histories underlying it. As soon as the speaker enters the drawing room, they are met with a "mohri carpet," which might seem like a part of the room only. However, it presents the readers with the socio-economic conditions of the space. The deteriorating carpet that gradually falls apart, and the small imperfections, in fact, symbolize the fragile socio-economic status of the host family and their struggle to maintain their dignity. By grounding these objects in concrete imagery, the poem makes clear that spatial metaphors are indeed the basic elements of social existence situated into poetic language.

Rafat presents the reader with a drawing room that is not just a space of social meetings, rather, it has become the stage of the complicated entanglement of social judgement and cultural display. In this context, the drawing room is evidently a space of ideological conflict as W.J.T. Mitchell puts it, for the clash of social status and cultural beliefs on being turned into a site for social interaction and opinion formation. The speaker's visit to the house for evaluative purposes in regards to prospective marriage highlights how the drawing becomes a site of socio-economic standing. Just like Mitchell argues, that spaces in literature communicates social power, value, and aesthetics, the physical and symbolic nature of the household also mirrors the broader societal hierarchies that preferred appearances at the expense of authenticity.

While the beginning of the poem presents the financial instability of the household, various ornaments, symbol of ethnic pride and endurance are later seen in the poem.

…On the mantelpiece
an aluminium tiger is ready to spring,
and on the wall a set of three geese
carved in a dark wood, their wings fully
extended, diminish towards the ceiling. (Line 8-12)

The objects that are present in the drawing room illustrate Upstone's notion of space as a naturally resistant and potentially productive site. Desire and cultural continuity are represented by the carved geese that ascend toward the ceiling and the metal tiger “ready to spring.” These objects present the great cultural values of the family, and present the family's resolve to rise above their economic situation.

The ending lines of the poem bring the mutual anxiety of host and guest to the front. They both show the emotions of anxiousness, fueled by their need to gain respect and acceptance from each other. This coincides with postcolonial condition that tell explains how hegemonic structures that have been internalized from colonial times compel people to behave in the way that functions as imposed standards often at the expense of true self-expression. Through the speaker and the host, Rafat criticizes how spaces like the drawing room, instead of being a comfortable and authentic place, turn into spaces of performance and judgement, wherein colonial hegemony leaves its indelible impression on personal identity and social identity.

While Rafat’s drawing room presented the readers with the socio-economic conditions and how they affect spaces in poetry, his poem “The Village” makes the readers see how impact of devastation on a local village can transform its entire space and turn it into a repository of erasure. Rafat initially leads us through the "re-occupied village," immediately creating a feeling of displacement.

The depiction of the village's metamorphosis from a thriving marketplace to a deserted wreckage underscores the harsh consequences of battle on both the tangible and communal domains. This corresponds to Russell West-Pavlov's notion of spatial metaphors, in which the village's space serves as more than just a physical place, but also as a symbolic embodiment of shattered lives and histories.

We wander curiously through the lanes

of the re-occupied village,
if you can still call
it a village, for roofs, doors, windows,
of each house are gone, giving us
the appearance of
tourists in an excavated site. (Line 1-8)

In the first part, the poem juxtaposes the vibrant past of the village with its current state of devastation, exposing the fragility of cultural spaces under the weight of violence. The imagery of blackened beams and ravaged houses connects to Pavlov's idea of space as a "social practice" that bears the marks of prior actions and ideologies. The obliteration of roofs, doors, and windows reflects the systematic dismantling of a lived, organic space into a cold, inhuman archaeological site, devoid of its social and cultural essence. The transformation of this communal space into a site of atrocities, where "brides weeping" and "grandfathers lamented" are replaced by "ravished daughters" and "drunken soldiers," underscores the colonial and neo-colonial spatial practices that re-inscribe violence and domination into the geography of the postcolonial world.

Rafat's descriptions of the intimate spaces within the village further reveal the human cost of this spatial unmaking. The poem recalls how these spaces once served as vessels of generational continuity:

The beams of the low roof blackened
by winter fires
before which squatted
four generations of story-tellers,
have ended in a camp-fire, round
which drunken soldiers
have told each other
tales of real and imagined prowess.. (Line 13-20)

The blackened beams, once witnesses to familial storytelling, are now appropriated by invaders for campfires, reducing a site of cultural exchange into one of domination. This stark transformation resonates with Mitchell's idea of space as a site of ideological conflict. The repurposing of domestic structures, such as doors chopped for firewood, demonstrates

how colonial and neo-colonial forces overwrite local spatial identities with symbols of conquest and utility. The shift from familial warmth to the soldiers' "tales of real and imagined prowess" underscores how even intangible cultural practices, like storytelling, are violently disrupted and replaced by the narratives of the oppressor.

In Rafat's characterization of the devastation wrought by the "green and greedy centipede," which can be considered a metaphor to the invading armed forces, he highlights the damage that is brought upon by these centipedes and how it goes beyond physical limitation and also includes a mental enforcement of subjugation. Upstone's concept of space is correspondingly analogous to this metaphor, in which postcolonial places are continually redefined as a result of violent and resistive events. This violence is depicted by the contaminated wells, mosques that are completely destroyed with no standing structures, trees uprooted, railway tracks torn to pieces, and wells that were poisoned (Line 49-63). Rafat connects the destruction to the history of colonial violence and historical desecration, arguing that such violence is not an anomaly, but rather, it is a feature of hegemonic domination, by drawing parallels to the "topless stupas and mangled buddhas" of the Northern valleys. These acts of violence and devastation prove that spaces of history are pre inscribed sites of conflict, and made available to colonial and neo-colonial forces to imprint a tangible legacy of exploitation and control over them.

While the village presents the devastating remains of the village, there is also a subtle critique on the cultural and historical consequences of the village through the imagery. Rafat's visceral language takes the reader through the embodied trauma of war whilst also desecrating the originality of spaces which is made vulnerable to the aggression by the hegemonic powers. This can be seen by the help of Sara Upstone's idea of 'post space', which denotes that liminal space arise from the destruction of physical and emotional spaces. Rafat presents this critique by the portrayal of the railway tracks which are described as "twin snakes" with their "shining backs broken" by tanks (Line 51-52). This destruction of the tanks at the hand of militant tanks stands for the deep cultural and spiritual upheaval the community has to go through. When the railway tracks are described as "twin snakes," their "shining backs broken" by tanks but also the idea of tanks completely disrupting the physical terrain and eroding the cultural significance of these areas portrays the destructive impact that warfare has on technology and the environment. Similarly, the collapsed minarets of the mosque which are compared to an "armless beggar"

highlight how even the sacred spaces of religion were erased and went to destruction. Rafat points to the “shisham trees” as “ravaged stumps” that once were known to provide shade and now they are seen to disconnect from the land and its customs (Line 60, 64). The “topless stupas and mangled buddhas” of the northern valleys repeat the pattern of cultural devastation and a strength it takes to observe and remember such events.

The second part of the poem continues the grim exploration of spaces that are impacted by destruction. Rafat not only present the effects of spatial destruction through objects and places, but also through the psychological impact. He suggests that the villagers, despite their physical return to the space, are trapped in a fractured reality where the “war is not yet over” (Line 2).

For those who return to the village
the war is not yet over.
They will always remember (Line 1-3)

When Rafat’s says that the inhabitants of the village will always remember the catastrophe, these lines embody Upstone’s notion of post-space as a site of fragmented identities and unresolved conflicts. Times may change, but history remembers everything. The “unexpected sound” that triggers terror reflects the fragility of their reclaimed space. The extent of the obliteration of both material and cultural life in the village is revealed by the burnt houses, slaughtered cattle and women who are brutally violated and murdered. This destruction relates to Mitchell’s theory of spaces as ideological map in which war and violence reshape the cultural story of a place.

but who can re-build a broken heart?
Whenever eyes look eastward, their minds
will fill with hate,
as a foot-print
by the river-side fills with water. (Line 16-20)

Lastly, Rafat refers to the eastward glance, likely referring to Pakistan’s neighbor, India. This direction is a poignant symbol of the Partition times hatreds and un-finalized enmities that the wars gave birth to. The phrase “their minds / will fill with hate” highlights the vicious cycle of postcolonial trauma, where historical grievances are replayed over and

over again as a form of traumatization of the population. This hatred is not innate, but rather, stems from violence, displacement, and the socio-ideological conflicts that arose due to colonialism. This cyclic nature also highlights why reclaiming of spaces is significant since it overwrites the trauma of the past, and transforms the spaces in postcolonial Pakistan with rich culture.

The transformation of urban and rural spaces in postcolonial Pakistan is evidently not a physical process alone, but encompasses a matrix of memory, history and identity. In the poems in this section, the spaces reflect the complexity of the cultural loss and in defiance, displaying the colonized control but also providing the means for reclaiming spaces. Urban and rural spaces are not fixed; they are sites through which the effects of colonialism are felt, and through which the reclamation, decolonization, and fight for change still persists. As both a locus of historical trauma and contemporary agency, the flexibility of space highlights the ongoing difficulties of reclamation while showing a need for the redesign of physical and cultural spaces in a postcolonial context.

4.3 Nature and Cultural Continuity as Reclamation

The term "culture" refers to the process of aiding the growth and development of human beings by providing a suitable environment. The life of a human being consists of two fundamental aspects: the Ideological and Material components. These components can be further subdivided into values and social activities. Culture does not exist as a separate entity, rather, it is a phenomenon that is experienced and developed by people. Humans cannot live in a society separated, they exist within the dimension of time and space, hence, they are connected by beliefs, ideals, traditions, etc. Each culture is interconnected with a particular human society. Hence, it's safe to assume that every human culture has its own unique history and set of territories. As reported by Faiz Ahmed Faiz in his report on the search for Pakistani identity, culture comprises of material and ideological elements. However, it also goes beyond our physical world and exists in a spatial/temporal dimension. He argues that "its ideological component may include extra-territorial and supra-temporal elements" (15). The reason behind this claim was to provide a description of Pakistani culture that would take into account both the country's cultural geographies and its national historical past which is engrained with the scars of colonization. Hence, it can be said that culture is a product of society that encompasses spaces, whether they are physical, or

tangible. Spaces are always fluid. To read spaces as political, one first needs to understand their hybridity, and ability to shift with time and how they have elements of culture, politics, traditions infused in them.

Cultural continuity, in this perspective, constitutes not only a passive transmission of tradition but an active endeavor of rediscovery and reintegration. For some postcolonial authors, nature serves as a locus of reclamation where cultural traditions are both conserved and revitalized. By engaging with the environment, they aim to repair the severed relationships to the soil, emphasizing the significance of local traditions and sustainable practices that existed before to colonial involvement. This reclaiming is often viewed as a rebellion because nature's perseverance mirrors the fortitude of several communities that have 'survived' the effects of colonialism. Subsequently, socio-cultural significance of the environment entails portraying the natural world as both a setting and a stage upon which narratives of resilience, sustainability, renewal and redemption are explored.

However, in postcolonial writing, nature often overcomes its roles of mere backdrop for human activity and becomes the figure of cultural memory and regeneration. In postcolonial nation like Pakistan, the natural environment is a site of reclaiming indigenous cultures, history and customs after decades of colonial annihilation. The appropriation of the natural environment is inseparable from the overarching efforts of otherness and identification because nature is the real and spiritual reference to pre-colonial heritage. On this basis, nature works as the symbolic space where behaviors, conventions and ancestral knowledge are inscribed. As such, Russell West-Pavlov's concept of spatialization is especially relevant here because it stresses that space subsumes meanings and cultural practices that shape personal relations to environment. In this regard, nature represents stability and the universal connection between people and the land which colonization threatened to sever. In reclaiming and reinscribing the natural spaces, Rafat's poetry challenges erasure of cultural subjects. For him, natural world is not only used as a site of nostalgia, but it is also a stage where one can create new historical, traditional, and indigenous experiences.

In writing "A Positive Region", Rafat creates a region that is full of natural resources and landscapes of beauty. However, the region appears to be isolated from the effects of colonization. By doing this, Rafat posits himself into a space that is lush and

serene, giving the colonized territories a reprieve from the historical narrative of suffering and destruction. By focusing on the beauty of the nature, Rafat tries to reclaim and praise the indigenous territories which are very often claimed to be unproductive and discarded by colonial accounts.

The portrayal of the space in "A Positive Region" commences with a vivid, somewhat hyperbolic depiction of natural abundance which “almost smothered / by confident pines, and bursting-over / with green springs at every nook” (Line 1-3). The natural world as depicted here, is shown as being tenacious, self-sufficient and working against pressure of external forces. These references to nature suggest that nature functions as the space of cultural survival, a self-sufficient and preserved domain despite having an active enemy in shape of neo-colonialism. This concurs with Upstone’s idea of post space in which space is more than merely disrupted by the historical or colonial condition, but reconstituted as something dynamic, whereby, there is not only room for remnants of the past, but possibilities of reclamation. In these references to nature, we find that the nature plays a key role as a site of cultural continuity. It remains untouchable and self-sustaining despite persistent challenges from the outside. Reading of nature resonates with Sara Upstone’s idea of post-space, which reimagines space as no longer conditioned by historical or colonial disruption, but restructured as something living and dynamic, containing its inherited past as well as its potential for regeneration.

The poem also presents positive region as a spatial metaphor in order to depict nature 's fertility and vitality. This spatial metaphor implies that presence or absence of cultural existence is dependent on soil of the land. Rafat places the land as a sustainer of life and culture by linking the land with fertility and sustenance, “not a living thing shall be hungry here.” The soil represents cultural resistance, providing food in a practical sense to people, while intimately linking to local knowledge and culture. Thus, the idea of nature as a vital force is connected to the fundamental plot of the postcolonial attempt to recover indigenous links to land whereby normal practice of loving and caring for nature clashes with the colonial and postcolonial authorities’ plundering of nature. The vision aligns with Mitchell’s ideological map which claims that land is mobilized as a utopian counter narrative to colonial and capitalist exploitation. The pines take a utilitarian image, where each pine is “belted low at the waist and buckled with a cup” signifying functionality and

resourcefulness, not a waste like the industrialized exploitation that is seen in Rafat's other poetry (Lines 20-21).

> With one last long backward look
> we resign it to the uncomplicated
> men, the cicadas, and the lordly eagle. (Line 51-53)

Despite the spaces' apparent lack of authoritarian imprint, the natural space in the poem is not without the footprint of colonialism. Rafat shows the "tall pines" fade to "shrubs" in the course of the poem which shifts away from the previously ideal and idealistic background and towards a more practical and real-world reality. Such a transition forces a reminder that postcolonial places are fluid and forever changing. They are a product of remnants of the pasts. This is shown at the end of the poem, where the natural space is left to "the uncomplicated men, the cicadas, and the lordly eagle" which points to the reality that nature continues its journey. These "uncomplicated men" here are a lifestyle and ethos which basically rejects the postcolonial modernity and its complexities. It represents a continuity, and a resilience, that are very much intact despite external forces of colonization. The "lordly eagle" becomes a representative of cultural and territorial sovereignty with a rejection of colonial subjugation. In this respect, the poem fits Mitchell's idea of landscapes as ideological spaces. The poem is not simply a departure from physical landscape but a turning point. This act of leaving the space to its natural and local inhabitants is also a recognition of the tension Upstone describes in postspace where space is always caught between a longing for the bygone past and the unrelenting incursion of the globalized modern world in spaces. The act of "resign" from the space is symbolic as well as physical; it signifies the understanding that one cannot completely own or reproduce this harmonious natural state. The postcolonial struggle between the desire for precolonial places and the impossibility of completely reclaiming or returning to them in a contemporary, fragmented reality is mirrored in the speaker's role as an observer instead of a resident.

Similarly, in "The Stone-Chat," Rafat provides a rich exploration of space as a medium for understanding identity, resilience, and the reclamation of cultural and environmental landscapes. At first glance, the poem appears to present a barren space, the eroded hills of Jhelum—rendered seemingly lifeless by its parched and "no-color

background” (Line 16). Yet, Rafat compels the reader to look beyond superficial absence and re-envision the landscape, much like the stone-chat does, to uncover life, meaning, and survival within the neglected terrain.

The poem begins with a challenge to artefacts, declaring, "So why embellish it with words" (line 1). This rejection of artifice underscores the rawness and authenticity of the described space, a barren landscape in Jhelum’s eroded hills. These hills are likened to "a village crone, too seamed and bedridden / To be of value, yet somehow lingering on," a poignant metaphor that recalls Russell West-Pavlov’s concept of spatial memory (Line 9–10). The hills, marked by erosion, bear the scars of history, symbolizing a landscape shaped and discarded by colonial and modern forces yet persisting with resilience. The speaker points out that we tend to focus too much on idealized, well-known spaces, places that are often linked with fertility and abundance, instead of appreciating the nuanced complexity of less "fruitful" locations (Line 3). Here, the desolation of the Jhelum hills reflects a cultural bias that has persisted since colonialism and postcolonial times, which views native, unadorned landscapes as little more than "waste" and so unworthy of respect (Line 13). This geographical denial harkens back to Mitchell's idea of space as an ideological construction, in which cultural and political power establish value hierarchies for areas. The hills are viewed by the colonially inscribed gaze as "too seamed and bedridden / To be of value", like a "village crone" that lives but is ignored (Line 10-11).

> …To understand
> This waste, I must try and know myself
> As I must once have been, and become,
> And become, why even be…even
> If I have to become …that, that stone-chat there (Line 12-16)

The speaker's attempt to "understand / This waste" indicates a transition to reflection. Rafat defies colonial verbiage that makes barren lands into a desert nomadic space of non-culture. To highlight the real importance of these places, he says we have to be introspective and reconnect with the land as a pre-colonial culture does. He illustrates this with the lines “I must try and know myself / As I must once have been” (Line 13-14). It supports Pavlov’s statement that there is no pre-social or pre-discursive space; that space is continuously influenced by human interaction and experience. Rafat argues that the

historical and cultural “marks” located in the sites need to be rediscovered, or at least reinterpreted. This reclaiming is represented by the metaphor of the stone-chat, nearly obscured against the colorless stone-chat.

Rafat additionally emphasizes how resilient the space of stone-chat itself is. The stonechat becomes a symbol of survival, and thus of resistance, representing a different spatial narrative. This accords with Sara Upstone’s concept of post-space, in which spatial arrangements consider hybridity, multiplicity, and chaos, rather than their diminishment and absence. It subverts through the stone chat reimaging of space into a “riot of colour” reclaiming control over the area from colonial idealization of landscapes (Line 27). This bold celebration of existence amid obstacles faces colonial spatial structures that make spaces deemed as “waste,” unseen or unworthy of focus (Line 13). Through the intertwining of survival and transformation, Rafat not only reclaims the space, but also revitalizes its voice, previously silenced by dominant narratives.

While “The Stone-Chat” presented the readers with the space to understand how identity, resilience, and the reclamation of cultural takes place, Rafat’s "Sacrifice," explores the intersection of physical, psychological, and ideological space, using the ritual of animal sacrifice as a metaphor for both personal and national trauma. While normally, sacrifice is connected to religious meanings, in this poem, Rafat presents this as more than just a religious act, rather it encompasses layers of historical violence and suffering.

The poem begins with a visceral description of the act of sacrifice, as the narrator’s own body seems to merge with the dying goat, feeling its blood spill onto the earth, “As he moves the knife across the neck of the goat / I can feel its point on my throat”. This intense connection between the narrator and the sacrifice underscores the intimate, yet violent, relationship between human beings and their actions in a world marked by suffering and destruction. The physical space of the ritual, a “tight circle” formed around the animal becomes a microcosm of the larger, fragmented society. The constricting of this tight space also signals a feeling of being bound and complicit as the manner in which historical and colonial legacies can seal postcolonial societies in a passivity that expresses itself in repeated cycles of violence and suffering. In this case, the metaphorical space of the house that is being constructed which should symbolize new beginning, is inverted into the space of horror and death. Instead of blessing the house, the ritual of sacrifice hints toward the

destruction of a place, not only physically, but morally and psychologically through the lines, “We are not building the foundations of a house, but another Dachau.” The poem’s reference to “another Dachau” links the ritual to historical acts of violence and atrocity and substitutes a moment of creation for a moment of destruction. This parallel to Dachau, an oppressor/concentration camp in Germany, serves to characterize this sacrifice as a ritualistic violence of war and oppression. This stark comparison forces a revaluation of the site as more than a cultural or spiritual space; it becomes a locus of ideological violence, echoing Upstone’s concept of disrupted spatial coherence in postcolonial contexts. The “house” being constructed is thus no longer a mere physical structure but a metaphor for historical trauma and the perpetuation of systemic hierarchies. In this sense, Rafat critiques the ways in which postcolonial nations, like Pakistan, continue to build their identity and history on foundations soaked in blood and suffering, unable to escape the painful legacies of the past.

The children’s fascination with the blood, the unsteady hands of the friend performing the sacrifice, and the mechanical nature of the ritual, where cameras click and the "white-bearded man chants,” suggests a numbness to violence, and an acceptance of brutality as part of everyday life. This echoes Mitchell’s idea of the ideological map, where spaces are filled not only with physical structures but with the ideological baggage of past actions and collective memory. The “virgin ground” that is “thrust” into by the pickaxe represents both a literal and symbolic “foundation” that is tainted by violence and death.

Sacrifice is not only a personal aspect in the poem, it is also an observation on the national spaces of Pakistan. Like the individual, the nation is enmeshed in the pattern of violence, and loss. The nation's space is not an altogether space of hope or renewal; it is an oppressed space, a space of blood, and unhealed wounds. This is a nation whose people still experience their lived reality through rituals of violence whether in the form of war, colonial oppression or internal strife. The sacrificial act related to the founding of the house is just one demonstration of how spaces, buildings, and houses in particular, are built physically but also symbolically act as a product of many layers of culture, history, and ideology. The invocation of Dachau situates the local and religious ritual in a broader narrative of global violence, as the reclamation, never neutral, but always contested, is heavy with historical weight.

Similar to “Sacrifice,” in another poem “Sialkot,” Rafat explores personal identity, stitching personal memory into wider cultural and historical meaning of the city. The poem takes roots in a space which is historically rich and explores the speaker’s intimate involvement with Sialkot as well as the homely ways it negotiates between past and present.

The fort, which appears many times throughout the poem, is a physical representation of the city's past. Once a site of defense and conflict, “From it stone, arrow, bullet were launched,” it now houses administrative offices and a police station, a shift that highlights the passage of time and the transformation of purpose (Line 11). This change mirrors the broader erosion of traditional spaces, where symbols of resilience and struggle are repurposed into utilitarian modernity. Yet, even in its diminished state, the fort retains its symbolic weight, “umbilically overlooking the town,” maintaining a connection to its heritage (Line 8). This dynamic between historical function and present-day utilization resonates with Pavlov’s idea of space as imbued with cultural memory, where the fort embodies both the physical residue of history and its re-contextualization within modern socio-political frameworks.

The speaker’s meditative tone shifts to introspection in the concluding lines, where the contemplation of death, “Maybe I shall die here and be carried to the family plot” reinforces the deep connection between self and space. This notion of returning to the land as a final act of belonging ties the individual’s fate to the continuity of the place itself. The image of things “grope[ing] forward from the same root to which they wither” encapsulates the cyclical nature of cultural and personal identity, where renewal and decline are intricately linked. This reflection resonates with Pavlov’s spatial metaphors, suggesting that space is not merely a static container but an active participant in the ongoing negotiation of identity, history, and belonging. Through the poem, Rafat crafts a portrait of the city that is both a site of memory and a living entity, shaped by history and personal experience.

Another representation of nature and its unpredictability is seen in the poem “Wedding in the Flood” by Rafat. The poem’s spatial dimensions, articulated through cultural practice and natural landscapes, presents the readers with a representation of space and how nature serves as a domain for the reassertion of indigenous cultures, histories, and customs in response to colonial erasure.

The poem opens with the bride's mother lamenting the separation from her daughter as the wedding procession begins. This moment foregrounds a personal space of emotional tension, where the familial and the cultural intersect. The bride's departure symbolizes not just a familial loss but a spatial transition into an unfamiliar domain, the "cold house, among these strangers" (line 5). This aligns with Mitchell's concept of space as a site of ideological conflict, as the act of marriage embodies patriarchal control over women's spatial mobility, transferring the bride from one household to another under societal norms. The palanquin, a traditional mode of transport for brides, becomes a mobile yet confining space, a microcosm of her broader displacement.

The recurring mention of the dowry objects, the cot, the looking glass, and the tin trunk, serves as material markers of social and economic identity (lines 12–14). These objects anchor the narrative in the physical and symbolic realities of the bride's move. They are not mere belongings but extensions of her identity, bound by expectations of value and tradition. This resonates with Pavlov's concept of spatial metaphors, where material items reflect deeper social structures. The dowry, a culturally sanctioned practice, materializes the bride's worth and reinforces her role within a patriarchal economy. Yet, the rain threatens to destroy these symbols, introducing nature as a disruptive force that challenges the rigidity of these cultural practices.

The climactic crossing of the swollen river transforms the natural landscape into a chaotic and violent space, symbolizing the fraught process of change and the collapse of established norms. The river, described as "brown and angry", challenges the procession's journey, subverting their sense of control (line 39). This aligns with Upstone's assertion that postcolonial spaces destabilize colonial and patriarchal spatial hierarchies. The ferry ride, fraught with danger, becomes a space of reckoning. The final lines depict the catastrophic unmooring of the wedding party, where the "father tossed on the horns of the waves" and "the bridegroom heaved on the heaving tide" suggest a complete dissolution of societal order (lines 44–47). The bride's final union with the river—her "true wedding" shatters the constructed rituals of marriage, reclaiming the natural space as one of ultimate agency and finality (line 49). The fluidity of the river, in contrast to the rigid societal expectations represented by the dowry and the ceremony, reflects the challenges of reimagining spaces in postcolonial contexts, spaces that are constantly being reshaped by both personal and collective forces. Rafat's exploration of the intersection between

personal and collective spaces speaks to a broader concern about how postcolonial societies negotiate their place within the global order, just like the bride's negotiation with her changing circumstances.

The poems in this section highlights how cultural continuity and reclamation are deeply intertwined with the concept of space, revealing the dynamic interplay between history, identity, and the environment. Spaces, whether tangible or metaphorical, are never inert; they are continuously shaped by human actions, memories, and ideologies. To reclaim such spaces in postcolonial societies means to reclaim indigenous histories and traditions and to refuse erasures and distortions by the legacies of colonization. Recurring motifs of nature not only hold the meaning for resilience, but also function as a repository of cultural memory for connection to precolonial histories and practices. But this reclamation is not just about recovering elements of the past that have been lost; it is about using them to integrate with the present, and to withstand the homogenizing tendencies of modernity and globalization.

As a result, reclamation and redefinition of spaces is a form of resistance, a way of reclaiming autonomy in the face of historical and contemporary disruption. This way, postcolonial societies can imagine futures where spaces hold the prospect for resilience and continuity, where spaces serve as a testimony to history and evolving landscape for cultural expression. Through an examination of space and place this exploration unravels the intricate connections between the personal, the cultural and the spatial, highlighting the importance of engaging space as an essential dimension to understanding and conveying postcolonial identities.

CHAPTER 5
UNDEFINED AMORPHOUS LAHORE IN RIZWAN AKHTAR'S *LAHORE I AM COMING*

In this chapter, the poetry of Rizwan Akhtar is analyzed from the perspective of spatial politics. The theoretical concept of "spatial metaphors" by Russell West-Pavlov, "ideological map" W. J. T Mitchell, and "post-space" by Sara Upstone are employed in order to highlight the colonial elements present in Akhtar's poetry and how they attempt to infuse the local culture back into the spaces that have been influenced by colonialism. The chapter is divided in to sub categories according to the themes present in begins with the theme of pre-partition and how the culture was before the 1947 partition and British raj.

Rizwan Akhtar's poetry book, *Lahore I Am Coming* focuses on the city of Lahore as it changed throughout history. Lahore is one of the most important cities of Pakistan when it comes to cultural dimensions. As one of the most important cities to many rulers, the city was formerly a major Mughal provincial capital. Later, it became an important center for Sikh influence in northwest India and later served as the capital of the British Punjab.

If we look at the city of Lahore, it saw rapid changes under the British rule. It was rebuilt to accommodate the western life. The city's politics, education, and culture saw a drastic change because of the new ideas and concepts that emerged with western rule. Akhtar constantly tries to preserve the integrity and traditional element of Lahore; However, the colonial elements of the city are far suppressing than its history. According to Aysha Rafiq, Lahore tried to maintain its traditional framework for a long time, but it could not withstand the cultural invasion of modernity brought about by the British Raj (2017). The city became more accessible to global modern cultures as a result of the colonists' modernization efforts. While the British did build a new Lahore in many ways, they did not entirely erase the ideas, traditions, cultural practices, and architectural heritage of the city they had seized. The British Lahore was a mixture of different and similar things.

From the time of its independence to the present day, the British considered it a land rich in natural resources. The horrific massacre that occurred in 1947 was only one aspect of the 1947 Partition that devastated its fortunes. Looking at Lahore now, it can be seen that the city that was once home to multiple faiths, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, and others,

became a focal point of the horrifying practice of "ethnic cleansing," which not only reduced the city's population, but also exterminated the cultural diversity it used to have. Overall, Akhtar highlights these plights of historical, cultural, and geographical eradication through his poetic works.

Inspiration for the title of this chapter is taken from a Pakistani historian, Dr. Shahid Imtiaz's book on Lahore titled *Amorphous Lahore: Colonial and Postcolonial* published in 2017. In his book, Imtiaz highlights that the city of Lahore is amorphous. Through his book's title, Imtiaz describes the city of Lahore as something that does not have any apparent or detectable shape, structure, boundaries, or crystalline form. While for the current chapter, the book title has been adopted in order to highlight the fluid nature of the city Lahore and how its spaces are is perceived, interpreted and imagined throughout history.

5.1 Colonial Impact and Mapping of Urban Space

The research undertaken in this section foregrounds the complex relationship between colonial legacies and shaping of urban environments throughout postcolonial contexts. Urban spaces, particularly in formerly colonized lands, are deeply politicized spaces where the history of conquest, control and cultural imposition is written on, and into, the landscape. Interventions by the British colonial administration in cities like Lahore serve as an example of how urban spaces are reconfigured and affect the development not just of these spaces themselves, but also of cities like Islamabad, a modern city created in the postcolonial period. Cities are much more than physical sites, crammed with memory, ideology, and identity. The colonial and post-colonial history of urban spaces in Pakistan takes us into an ongoing debate between imposed spatial structures and indigenous cultural frameworks.

Traditional colonial urban planning segregates, watches, and projects power over the local spaces. The imperial powers, rather than refurbishing the local spaces created new spaces for themselves that were well maintained, planned, and taken care of. Local and colonial motifs often merge in the city's space to express the mixture of control and appropriation. Educational and, particularly, administrative buildings in which such ideologies materialize embodies a vision of progress that overlooked indigenous cultural

frameworks. This refiguring of space was a vehicle of governance and domination, an act of carving the colonizer's values into an urban fabric.

The most visible effect of colonial rule in Pakistan is in the cities like Lahore where British rule was very abrupt and brought drastic changes in the infrastructure and culture of the city. Government College, Mall Road and Lahore High Court were developed as landmarks of an administrative hub of a colonial city. Besides constructing them to make Lahore functional, these spaces were also semiotically designed to be symbols of British superiority, and modernity. Additionally, the act of constructing the subordination of indigenous spaces to the state of being a relic of the past was reaffirmed in the act of marginalizing and neglecting the walled city of Lahore which is considered to be one of the greatest repositories of Mughal and pre-colonial heritage.

In his explorations of the urban and local spaces of Pakistan, Rizwan Akhtar's poems reflect the influences and impact of colonialism. In his poetry collection, *Lahore I Am Coming*, his critique of Lahore sketches a multilayer of histories of colonial and post-colonial urban transformations. Through vivid imagery and spatial metaphors, Akhtar demonstrates that colonialism undermined indigenous spatial practices, and colonialization also leaves its marks that form part of the urban experience. His poetry mourns the loss of cultural continuity and tries to claim these spaces with the spirit of resilience and memory of the precolonial traditions. To Akhtar, cities are not spatial entities at all; rather, they are symbolic landscapes where histories of domination and resistance meet cultural endurance. He considers Lahore a palimpsest: a city of Mughal grandeur, colonial imprint and a contemporary chaos, each vying for place in an urban narrative.

Rizwan's *Lahore I Am Coming* takes the readers on a tour of the city, its history, its turbulences and how its past still impacts the contemporary Lahore and its representation in literature. Akhtar highlight not only the plight of colonization and partition in both the past as well as the contemporary times, but also signifies that colonialism has a significant impact on history and how it still affects the current spaces. The poem "From Empire's Days in Lahore" captures the multi-faceted impact of colonial rule on Lahore's society and culture. The poem begins with a picture of Mall Road, a major road in Lahore that was built during the time of the British raj. By referencing back to the colonial time, Akhtar takes the readers on the historical journey. He also refers to a European writer Rudyard

Kipling later in the poem, to highlight the significance of Mall Road in the spatial history of Lahore.

> In colonial days the Mall Road was laid
> for clerks and officials.
> haggling through crooked binoculars, shying
> people copied English words in small corners (Line 1-4)

The Mall Road acts as a spatial metaphor, presenting the underlying imperial agendas that construed the space of the city. The reference to British officials watching local vendors "through crooked binoculars" suggests the distorted view the colonizers held of the local population, where their perception was clouded by an imperial mind-set. The "superior ghosts of the empire" who corrected locals with obtuse stares" further emphasize the colonial arrogance that sought to reshape Lahore into an image of imperial dominance, aligning with the concept of an "ideological map" (Line 9-10). This map, as theorized by Mitchell, represents how space is manipulated and redefined by the colonial power to maintain control over both the land and the people. In this context, the British gaze, and their imposition of foreign structures, serves to distance the colonized from their own space, transforming Lahore into a space of surveillance, regulation, and cultural alienation. The indigenous people of Lahore were stripped of their autonomy and made to live by the colonial rules.

> an insinuation or swearing spilled in regular intervals
> from pink pouting mouths of men wearing tricornes
> they squeezed noses with muslin handkerchiefs
> over vegetables and fruits, while a god-sent retinue
> parted crowd for superior ghosts of the empire
> correcting locals with obtuse stares
> over city's geography of music and courtesans
> and near canon Zamzama and Oriental College (Line 5-12)

The "Pink pouting mouths of men wearing tricornes" evokes an image of arrogant, entitled British officials or military personnel, easily recognized by their distinctive "tricornes". Akhtar highlights that these soldiers frequently insulted and made nasty remarks about the locals by "swearing spilt in regular intervals" (Line 5). The colonizers

show their cultural superiority and the disconnect between themselves and the natives by covering their noses with handkerchiefs to prevent the odor of local goods. This shows how the colonizers felt about the local market and traditions, which were important to the natives' daily life. The depiction of the colonial officials as "superior ghosts of the empire" who "correct locals with obtuse stares" reinforces the ideological control over space in Lahore. The British not only controlled the physical environment but also imposed their cultural and moral standards, seeking to reshape the city into an image of their own cultural superiority. This "correction" of the locals mirrors the power dynamics discussed by Upstone in her theory of "post-space," where colonial spatiality is marked by the forced removal of indigenous cultural and social structures, replacing them with the colonizer's imposed order.

In the poem, the spaces in Lahore, such as markets, streets, and even social interactions, are sites of tension, where colonial forces attempt to overwrite indigenous cultures. Yet, the persistence of local customs such as "betel-leaf and Urdu ghazal" suggests a resistance within these spaces. The local culture, while suppressed, survives through subtle acts of defiance, presenting a complex negotiation between colonial imposition and indigenous resilience. All across the city, from its courtesans and music to its historical sites like the canon Zamzama and the Oriental College, there is a sense of continuing reclamation, as suggested by this imagery:

> where pigeons wafted all day taking flights
> to shrines of Lahore's saints
> who cultivated a mystic resistance
> but Kipling, the son of her majesty covered Lahore
> with all the might of a scholar rooted
> in Victorian grandeur of ornate flourish
> in markets he braved European merchandise
> noted the lust of seller and the piety of invader (Line 13-20)

Additionally, the poem creates a map of history for the readers when it refers to the colonial intellectual Kipling, who is said to have covered Lahore with the "might of a scholar rooted in Victorian grandeur." The lines demonstrate how colonial authors like Kipling impose their own ideological perspectives upon the city of Lahore and concealed

its indigenous cultural spaces. It is implied by the phrase that Kipling's vivid descriptions and literary talent brought Lahore to life in a manner that emphasized the Victorian values of the era.

According to Mitchell, spatial form in literature serves as a means of colonial representation. The way Akhtar describes Lahore “with all the might of a scholar rooted in Victorian grandeur of ornate flourish,” he highlights Kipling’s part in building an imperial narrative that preserves British’s cultural supremacy. Kipling explores the city of Lahore through his famous character Kim, in his novel names *Kim.* The lines “noted the lust of seller and the piety of invader” seem to refer to his depiction of Lahore in his seminal work, *Kim*, in which he described the city Lahore as crowded, filled with beggars, and merchants yearning to earn money one way or another. Akhtar uses Kipling to rebut the colonial narrative that aimed to fix Lahore’s identity with imperial authority, by overwriting its own intrinsic vitality and agency with the local culture. The metaphor of the "pigeons wafting all day taking flights to shrines of Lahore's saints" contrasts the colonial figures like Kipling with local figures of resistance, suggesting that while imperialism seeks to control and reshape spaces, However, these spaces continue to hold cultural significance and spiritual resistance for the local population. The presence of religious and mystical spaces in the city becomes an act of reclaiming the city’s original identity, even under colonial oppression. The indigenous shrines thus represent a postcolonial counterpoint to the colonial imposition on Lahore’s geography.

While ending the poem, Akhtar bring the focus back to the local, everyday lives that persist amid colonial violence and cultural suppression.

> whose tiny lives are wedged between
> the love of betel-leaf and Urdu ghazal,
> and passion for soldiers who vented guns
> cocked into a language
> as distance grew after slangs kegged
> into a script of sedition until the Mutiny
> routed our trusted clientele. (Line 26-32)

The phrase "Whose tiny lives are wedged between" illustrates how the regular lives of the indigenous population are restricted and disturbed by the overpowering influence of

colonial powers. The "tiny lives" is a metaphor for the ordinary encounters of the colonized individuals, which are limited and marginalized due to the imposition of foreign standards and customs. The idea that "venting guns" are "cocked into a language" alludes to the militarization of discourse, in which colonial power take over even the language of the locals. By using language as a tool to impose authority and quell opposition, the colonial narrative seeks to supplant indigenous cultural forms. The poem acts as a site of resistance and reassertion of native identity against the imposed colonial space. This aligns with Upstone's concept of postcolonial reclamation, where the geographical and ideological landscape begins to transform after the collapse of colonial authority. Through the use of language, the imperial and colonial legacy is slowly and gradually rewritten. The "Mutiny" symbolizes the breakdown of colonial dominance and the eventual reclamation of the space from imperial rule, signaling the beginning of a postcolonial re-imagining of Lahore's identity.

The poem, "The VIP Movement on Mall Road in Lahore" by Akhtar also demonstrates how oppression, spectacle and power converge in a postcolonial urban space through the Mall Road. Utilizing striking and brutal imagery, the poem criticizes the socio-political forces that hold the elite and colonizers in control of public spaces and make everyday lives a spectacle. Lahore's Mall Road is an example of a colonial urban symbol and an example of a site of both control and disempowerment that demonstrates how postcolonial authority has maintained spatial hierarchies.

The poem turns a commonly shared urban space into a site where ordinary lives get subjugated under a relatively oppressive nature of authority. The imagery of the "infinite python" describing the procession of cars transforms the VIP movement into a monstrous and predatory force, devouring the accessibility of the Mall Road. This aligns with Upstone's concept of "post-space," as the poem explores how spaces in a postcolonial city are manipulated and dominated by internal power structures, reproducing hierarchies that echo colonial strategies of control.

Akhtar sharply criticizes the socio-political processes in Lahore through the use of animalistic analogies. The depiction of the crowd waiting "on edges... like baited worms" reinforces the imbalance in power. By describing people as worms, Akhtar dehumanizes them within the narrative, reflecting their diminished agency in the face of political

displays. They are not active participants in the space but passive spectators, consigned to the margins, awaiting the spectacle to pass. This marginalization is a spatial metaphor, as theorized by Pavlov, who argues that power imprints itself onto the arrangement and use of spaces. In this poem, the public's relegation to the periphery mirrors their political and social disempowerment. The "edges" symbolize the literal and figurative boundaries imposed by the spectacle of power, separating the elite from the masses. The description of the state, "torpor and blink back," highlights the passivity and conditioned acceptance of dominance. Uniformed police officers play a crucial role in maintaining this hierarchy by "carrying the dust of the city" and ensuring that the "clutch cabinet of many ministers" runs smoothly. In this view, the police are seen as extensions of the colonial control mechanisms that maintained social and geographical space.

Akhtar's use of visual and sensory imagery deepens the critique of spatial domination. Vendors are described as holding "ridiculous postures," and "trees as if diseased bow in old reticence." These images create a sense of lifelessness and submission, where even the natural environment is affected by the oppressive atmosphere. The "diseased" trees bowing highlight how space itself seems complicit in perpetuating subjugation, reflecting the long-standing effects of historical and contemporary power dynamics. This ties back to the colonial legacy, where spaces were meticulously shaped to display authority and control.

The VIP culture is further critiqued with the mention of the ambulance "drenched in sweating" and unable to move. The ambulance is a universal symbol of urgency and care, yet its plight in the traffic underscores the dehumanizing priorities of power. The contrast between life and death through the ambulance and the iconic spectacle of VIP security functions as a clear mark on the distorted values of the city's spatial and social dynamics. The line "Bullet proof cars snaking, and hissing" is a reference which depicts how surreal and menacing this system is and how governance itself has become a performance detached from the public needs. By presenting the "spectral crows" who "yell from electricity wires, "Akhtar presents the unresolved tension present in the space of Mall Road. However, crows, are commonly associated with death and decay, which foreshadows the impact of systems that are unequal and oppressive. The silencing of the human dissent in this controlled space of Mall Road due to the VIP movement is also underscored by the crows' cries, which, the driver explains, is the, "only protest government does not mind"

(Line 22). Yet the crows' spectral presence also signifies persistence and inevitability, hinting at the enduring spirit of resistance in even the most stifled spaces.

Similarly, in his poem, "Voyagers" Akhtar present the readers with a traumatic effect of a city space and how the history and trauma reflect their impact in the urban spaces. In the first few lines of "Voyagers," Akhtar uses a metaphor involving a "postman" to link the mind with the physical world. The comparison highlights the significance of connection in a constantly alienating world by illustrating the speaker's function as a medium of information transmission and recollection. This metaphor aligns with Pavlov's spatial metaphors, where the mind, as an internalized space, becomes a site of estrangement, reflecting the fractured nature of external spaces and relationships. The presence of a "cranky vendor" emphasizes the lack of real contacts, which highlights the separation that is common in modern metropolitan environments. Here, the seller stands for the everyday struggles that postcolonial societies have in navigating their emotional requirements.

In a culture characterized by history and ongoing trauma, the lack of "postcodes" emphasizes the difficulty of navigating personal relationships, reflecting the complexity of identity. The line "stars are remote beloveds without postcodes" encapsulates a longing for connection that is thwarted by distance. Due to the lack of postcodes, there seems to be lack of delivery, which in turn leads to lack of responses, and distance in the local spaces seems to grow exponentially. The stars, symbolic of aspirations or loved ones, remain out of reach, their absence underscored by the lack of "postcodes," a marker of specific, reachable locations. This evokes Mitchell's concept of ideological mapping, where spaces, physical or emotional, are defined and controlled by markers of accessibility and belonging. Here, the absence of such markers reflects the loss of anchorage in the postcolonial world, where individuals navigate fragmented and de-territorialized identities.

With its reference to a "bomb blast," the poem is placed within a particular socio-political context, where urban dwellers are confronted with persistent violence and instability of the space. The sentence "the city is without moon" conjures up a striking mental image of blackness, representing the despair that follows a tragic event and the beauty that was once there. Upstone's idea that spaces are not static but continually redefined by historical and contemporary forces can be seen through this destruction that echoes the violent disruptions of colonial and postcolonial histories, where spaces and

identities are repeatedly reshaped by violence. In the same way, it also elaborates how cultural narratives shape people's perception of spaces in relation to Mitchell's idea of ideologically mapping of spaces. The poem criticizes the violently altered social environment and shows how tragedy changes the mental and physical geography of a society. The blast shatters the city's identity and coherence so that it becomes a site of trauma.

Throughout the poem, the speaker is wondering "Who knows, I might carry you with me when I go to English gardens to dalliance" (Line 13). Metaphorically, the "English gardens" stand for an idealized picture of something aesthetically pleasing and intimate that is in contrast to the grimness of urban life in Pakistan. "English gardens" also brings up a place of colonial history, order, control. But the dualism of this idealized space with the barbarity of "staring you out of my passport" reveals the bureaucratic, personal and the impersonal nature of global movement. The passport, a bridging symbol of national identity and mobility, becomes a barrier for international movement. This fits with Upstone's argument that post-space is a site contested and reclaimed by individuals who struggle and debate over how they fit into imposed structures of identity and belonging. When the speaker refers to the English gardens, he not only highlights the old hegemonic structures still in working, he also makes the readers see that despite their presence, the speaker still tries to move past the trauma and destruction present in front of him.

> But, I suspect, we'd miss our plane, and
> behave like our cat that makes winter
> its favorite time huddling around everything.
> and sorts out continents in beds. (Line 17-20)

The last words of the poem contain a bit of practicality and flexibility. People find ways to adapt to their lives just as the cat, symbolically, is able to find ways to help simplify our lives in trying times and to help us feel better about our lives. The cat is a metaphor for how these people in postcolonial nations reconnect to spaces that are laced with trauma, demonstrating their resilience. The line "sorting out continents in beds" refers to redefining spaces that are interpersonal with locality and individuality. Pavlov's assertion of spatial production states that people remake spaces in order to represent how they see their fragmented worlds.

Rizwan Akhter's poem "I Have a Faith Too" also presents the changes wrought in the rural spaces by ideological rigidity. The rural spaces presented in the poem reflect the tensions present in lived spaces by spirituality and imposed doctrines. The poem's thematic locations of nature, faith, and relations with the people, act as a powerful tool to help us to understand how postcolonial space comes into being and are contested. With particular reference to a village mosque, Akhtar presents the politics of cultural production, social hierarchy, and ideological conflict.

The poem begins by creating a peaceful rendition of the mosque built by a man who exhibits a life lived, with unarticulated piety. The construction of the mosque and the digging of a water pump together evoke Pavlov's idea of space as social practice involving physical labor, and communal value. These actions represent spaces in their organic relations with their inhabitants, a pre-colonial form of spatial production without the rigidities of colonial modernity. Through the man, the natural space is also presented as animated. The crows, pigeons, sparrows, and vultures form a natural relationship with the mosque, participating in the rituals of its existence. These images evoke Upstone's notion of post-space, where hybridity and the interconnectedness of human and non-human elements disrupt colonial narratives of order and hierarchy. The sparrows, for example, "muttered" during the man's chanting, suggesting an organic spirituality in which even nature participates (Line 9). This stands in stark contrast to the rigidity introduced later in the poem, where such fluidity is obliterated by ideological imposition.

The poem shifts sharply with the arrival of the "man with a big moustache" and his family, whose actions disrupt the balance of the space (line 15). The family's aggressive behavior, harassing birds, kicking bowls, and haggling for space, represents the intrusion of rigid, colonial-inflected power structures into a previously harmonious environment. The mosque, initially a site of inclusivity and spiritual multiplicity, becomes a battleground for ideological dominance. Mitchell's concept of spaces as "pre-inscribed sites of ideological conflict" is evident here, as the mosque is transformed from a communal space into one laden with sectarian and hierarchical ideologies.

> there came a new faith levied with words of fixity
> garlands like creeds hanged over the simple arch
> of mosque, plants around graves shriveled like opinions (Line 20-22)

The "new faith" that arrives is characterized by “words of fixity” and “garlands like creeds”, metaphors that signify the imposition of rigid, codified beliefs (Line 22). The plants around the graves, which "shriveled like opinions" (line 24), symbolize the suppression of diversity and the erasure of pre-existing cultural and spiritual practices. This reflects This intrusion can be read as a metaphor for colonial and postcolonial systems which overwrite indigenous culture and practice. Mitchell’s notion of ideological mapping, where spaces are overlaid with narratives of power that rewrite their histories and identities. The transition from an open, lived spirituality to a rigidly defined faith parallels the colonial rewriting of postcolonial spaces, where indigenous practices are replaced or marginalized.

The poem’s critique lies in its depiction of the human cost of these transformations. The man who had built the mosque, dressed in a “tattered turban” and drinking from his palms gets relegated to a marginalized position and his efforts become effaced with the coming of the new faith (Line 13). The tattered turban highlights the man’s humility and devotion. However, the new occupants’ imposition of hierarchical and exclusionary practices on an otherwise humble and inclusive spirituality overshadows the rootedness of his spirituality in the land and in the community. As Upstone argues, postcolonial spaces must reclaim their multiplicity and fluidity in order to resist colonial and neo-colonial spatial hierarchies. The man’s loyalty, however, is rendered irrelevant by the newly established system. The poem's complaint against the "supplier" echoes the postcolonial criticism of how the dominant narratives of colonial modernity erase the experiences, work, and spiritual contributions of colonized people (Line 11). Like the colonial powers that preceded them, the new occupants of the mosque impose spatial hierarchies, a fixed narrative, to cast aside the original space's multiplicity.

While “I Have a Faith Too” presents the colonial imposition on the local spaces and how they lose the cultural, ideological significance, Akhtar’s poem "Inside American Embassy Islamabad," highlights how colonialism penetrates the urban spaces. He scrutinizes the neo-colonial power structures put forth by foreign embassies and laments at the continued deference of what remain of western geopolitical forces. Though the poem's central subject is an embassy in Islamabad, the poem also reflects on the grand narrative of repression through colonial impositions.

Rizwan begins his poem with “behind a glassy window” which acts as a metaphor for a barrier between the applicant who is a resident of Pakistan and the gatekeeper of their potential journey. This barrier, both literal and figurative, reflects the postcolonial condition of separation from global power structures. In Pavlov’s theory of spatial metaphors, such boundaries are not just physical but symbolic, marking a division between the colonized and the colonizer, the powerless and the powerful. The official's "still eyebrows" and fingers "working on keyboard" imply that the applicant's life has been coldly processed as nothing but digital data. When the speaker says that "as if I had surrendered my copyrights instantly," it highlights how ideologically locals are categorized and their individuality and history is erased and turned into nothing but computerized data for the foreign force where identity becomes a commodity subsumed within institutional systems. This resonates with Mitchell's concept of the ideological map, where spaces of control, like the embassy, are sites of power where identity is codified and subjected to the authority of the state. The act of storing one's life in rows of "details" connects to how colonial power structures have historically categorized and fragmented identities, reducing them to manageable entities. In a postcolonial context, this can be seen as a metaphor for how colonized subjects were mapped and monitored by colonial powers.

When the applicant's experience is compared to a child being "spanked into silence," it conveys a feeling of submission and powerlessness. The "bulging envelope" he is holding symbolizes his identity and aspirations, which are now under the embassy's examination and evaluation.

> they placed me in boxes,
> tabbing selecting details of rows and rows
> of applicants murmuring and nudging
> like unwanted poems whittle for interpretations
> and find their way to uninterested listeners. (Line 15-19)

As the poem continues on, Akhtar describes the embassy’s cramped and gloomy environment using spatial metaphors. Upstone claims that in postcolonial spaces, marginalized individuals need to navigate situations marked by exclusion and power imbalances. Candidates are “placed in boxes” and therefore are deprived of freedom and individuality. They feel like “unwanted poems” that are heard by “uninterested listeners”.

This aligns with what Upstone says about postcolonial spaces. In postcolonial context, embassies are not only places, but figures of (global) power and of influence, where identities and individuals are labelled, processed and often discarded. These spaces are not neutral but are laced with the politics and history of the past. The “unwanted poems” are metaphoric for invisible and silenced voices and marginalized identities that are forgotten by global systems of power.

Through the description of the embassy, Akhtar highlights the western powers that are still present in the contemporary Pakistani spaces. The description says the embassy has “wall picture of a white hawk,” and “barbed walls” and “vast gravel spaces,” a sort of prison atmosphere that is as far from the freedom and opportunity for which hundreds of other crowds are fighting (Line 20-24). The speaker's “home grown pretensions” is challenged by the white hawk, an emblem of the power of the Western and a subtle comment on the outright resistance between the speaker's own identity and that of the foreign (Line 21). This aligns with Mitchell's ideological map where the physical and metaphorical walls whether they are real; represented by the embassy, or metaphorical, created by objects present in the building; create power, exclusion, and controlled spaces. The "barbed walls" symbolize not only the physical separation but the ideological and cultural barriers that continue to persist in the postcolonial space.

> The man behind window remains busy
> his complacent jaws expands
> like an empire manages
> through a single click of word
> to each answer Refused. (Line 36-40)

At the end of the poem, Akhtar presents the readers with a ‘man’ behind a window. Through this man, Akhtar presents the colonial structures still precedent in Pakistani spaces. His ability to strip power from the locals by his single “click” highlight the prevailing powers present with the colonial structures. Refusal of the man in the embassy is more than just a response to the particular requests presented by the individual; it's also a stunning act that shows no end to the exclusion of the Global South from opportunities, especially mobility, in a world defined by Western powers. The metaphors employed in the

poem capture the power play, bureaucracy's dehumanizing of the locals, and the effect of colonization and its remanence on an urban space.

In this section of the chapter, the poems that were analyzed revealed the persistence of the colonial imprint in urban spaces is both spatial and substantive. The poems highlighted the physical changes in the local spaces as well as the continued hegemonic legacy prevalent in the postcolonial Pakistan. Be it the structured, controlled spaces of the British era Lahore or the modernist mold of Islamabad, the physical spaces continue to be sites where the colonial inheritance is being contested throughout the poetries. The urban spaces presented in the poems don't only function as static backdrops, they participate in the story of resistance and reclamation.

While "From Empire's Days in Lahore," "Inside American Embassy, Islamabad," "VIP movement on Lahore's Mall Road," "Voyagers" all present various different themes and imagery, all of those poems construct a detailed map of how colonialism, trauma and socio-political structures of Pakistan have shaped urban landscapes. Through spatial metaphors, vivid imagery and a contrast between indigenous culture's resistance and forced colonial narratives, Akhtar captures a contrast between indigenous culture and forced colonial narratives.

All of the poems in this section have lingering spatial hierarchies, whether they are spatial based upon the material artefacts of colonial control or more contemporary decrees of neo-colonial rule. Akhtar criticizes the continuing disempowerment of citizens through spaces like the Mall Road in Lahore and American Embassy in Islamabad. The poems are also central to acts of resistance that occur in both maintaining of cultural practices, forging new relationships, and recreation of spaces ravaged by displacement and violence.

It is clear, as we examine Akhtar's presentation of spaces, he looks at spaces through the specter of the colonial impact, that the postcolonial urban landscape is not simply a product of colonial intervention, but a site of contestation where past and present coincide. Whether in the design of the roads, segregation of urban spaces, or foreign intervention in cultural and official spaces, the colonial imprint is still present in cities of Pakistan. However, in representing local spaces, Akhtar offer a platform to reclaim these spaces, from symbols of oppression to spaces of identity, memory and resistance. The "colonial impact" on urban spaces, therefore, is not an event of the past but an ongoing

process, where these spaces are continually reinterpreted and redefined in the postcolonial era.

5.2 Ideology Mapping of the City Lahore Through History, Memory, and Metaphors

Lahore is a city saturated with cultural and historical heritage providing a dynamic setting for examining the relationship between postcolonial ideology and remembrance. Having been a city that comprises rich and deep cultural and historical features, Lahore provides a rich context to discuss postcolonial ideology and memory. Thus, using Lahore as the case study founded on indigenous resistance and British colonial traces, Akhtar argues for this city's cultural and historical importance. Formerly a thriving Mughal city and later a center of colonial modernity, Lahore's path from the nineteenth century to independence illustrates how historical asymmetric imprint and colonial modern's continual construction relate to one another. Although colonial imprint was clearly noticeable in the urban fabric and social thinking of Lahore, it was never defined entirely by it. The city had a pre-colonial history of an intellectual cultural and social interaction which also continued to impact the growth of the city even as it got pulled into colonial relationships. So, the city's spaces are saturated with colonialism, partition, and resistance which positions the spaces as ideological terrain where historical/cultural oppositions and contradictions are negotiated, something that Akhtar explores through reflective commentary and evocative storytelling.

The fascination with urban settings is one of the most important themes in the collections of Akhtar's poems Through his poetry, Akhtar maps the city of Lahore with focus on colonial legacy and the process of cultural decolonization. His poetry shows the tension between colonialism and the longing to restore meaning to the spaces of the city and turn them into monuments of local history and pride. The recovery of the cultural sites is politically relevant because it exposes the colonial takeover of these spaces and bestows new relevancy to the cultural sites in a postcolonial setting.

In the postcolonial context, the architecture and geographical layout of Lahore acts as a palimpsest, with layers of histories, both original to the region and those imposed and/or adopted from the colonial masters. Through memory, Akhtar presents his readers with this spatial production of postcolonial space of Lahore. Through history and local

inhabitants' stories, Akhtar negotiates between the remnants of imperial structures and the reclaiming of spaces which are infused with pre-colonial cultural practices. However, this journey through memory and ideology is not merely the anti-ethnographic narrative of abstract resistance or nostalgic reminiscence of local history, but rather, it is the recuperative reimagination of the city as a space where histories, colonial interruptions and postcolonial desires meet. The social changes that are seen in Lahore's buildings, streets, squares, and everyday lives contribute to the long and interesting process of thinking about how postcolonial cities and their inhabitants handle their pasts. The longing for the past, as rooted in the recovery of the self and the nation is a key theme of Akhtar's poems. For instance, in poems like "Lahore, I Am Coming" and "Lahore 2009," Akhtar presents the city as a space that is reinscribed with ideologies, cultures, and traditions. He shows Lahore as a primary locus of memory and ideologies, asserting reclamation through discourse.

For instance, the poem, "Lahore I am Coming" is written with the help of Akhtar's past memories that he still carries in mind. The city imparted to him the knowledge of writing, the expertise in crafting poetic expressions based on his personal encounters and observations of the tangible world surrounding him. In the poem, the return to Lahore after years of absence is not merely a physical journey but a passage through the layers of cultural, historical, and emotional landscapes that define the city. Here, Lahore functions not only as a geographical location but as a repository of memories and identities. Throughout the poem, Akhtar creates a very disjointed narrative of the space of Lahore, and explores many facets of the city. The poem portrays Lahore as a place intricately connected to the Akhtar's past as well as his memories of the city. In the opening stanza of the poem, Akhtar begins his poem by describing the city Lahore,

> My voice in a dusty evening of Lahore
> echoes from the chipped roof
> of grandfather's grave.
> The map of my life is all wrinkled. (Line 1-4)

Akhtar first presents Lahore as a spatial object itself and as a symbol space for historical preservation. The first line, "My voice in a dusty evening of Lahore echoes from the chipped roof of grandfather's grave," portrays Lahore as a place in which the one continues to hear the echoes of the past (Line 1-21). This image of the grandfather's grave

gives us an idea of the ways in which individual lives are interlinked with the broader historical frame of the city. It presents the lived space as not static but as the site where memory and history come together to create a map for a speaker's life onto the city. Physical structures in the city do not just give it its spatiality, they socially, emotionally and historically mark out spaces present in the city. This aligns with the views of Pavlov that space in postcolonial contexts is not neutral but is saturated with ideologies, memories and cultural practices that refuse to be eliminated by colonialism.

Through the grave of the grandfather, Akhter present the historical significance of artefacts and objects to the spatiality of a city. “The chipped ceiling” of the grandfather's grave highlights how sites that conserve history and memory get ‘chipped’ or reinscribed. They get tears, and get broken by outer influences. The chippness of the grave also life symbolizes the relentless passage of time and the enduring marks of colonial and postcolonial disruptions. As the poem progresses, Akhtar starts to draw an important contrast between the individual and the collective histories of the city, granting Lahore its thick layer of past. The imagery of “emaciated horses” pulling a tonga, distanced from “decked rickshaws” full of “the rides of passion and jolt” seems to indicate the city’s change under colonialism and in its “tangle” of indigenous culture and modernity.

Spaces for West-Pavlov are ideological formed through the contestations and intersections of cultural identities. The ongoing negotiation between Lahore’s colonial past and its postcolonial present is mediated by two symbols of the past, the tonga and the present, the rickshaw. This contestation of the space of the city is representative of a wider ideological struggle of remnants of the colonial power structures and local resistances. Like all postcolonial spaces, the space of Lahore resists simple classification and reinvents itself over and over again in order to cope with the forces of globalization, memory and identity. Akhtar’s representation of Lahore as city under flux offers a corollary to space as such a metaphor of ideological and cultural negotiation where several histories and multiple identities may coexist and determine the future. These are such transformations because postcolonial spaces are haunted by the imprints of colonial histories, yet redefined through the resistance of their inhabitants.

Upstone highlights that memory infuses itself into personal and familial spaces, asserting cultural continuity in the face of external disruptions. The representation of

Lahore as a city of change gives us an example of space being a metaphor of ideological and cultural negotiation where one can coexist and construct the present as various pasts do. These transformations indicate just how colonially haunted postcolonial spaces are, and how they are being reinscribed to resist the colonial structures still precedent. For instance, Akhtar's use of peeling mangoes, and having ‘carrot drink’ with the family anchors the poem in the domestic and personal spaces of home, furthering the importance of space in postcolonial writing. These actions of peeling mangoes and drinking carrot juice create tightly knit spaces, personal and sensory, which resist the homogenizing forces of modernity that threaten to globalize cultural practice. Through these memories, the intimacy of food, home and familial ties, symbolize the resistance of indigenous cultures to colonizing force. Remembering and reclaiming these everyday rituals is a claim of identity by Akhtar, through which he puts the personal experience of degradation at the center of the struggle to emphasize cultural survival.

Lahore’s postcolonial landscape is also associated with memory and modernity, which is also why Akhter uses traditional metaphors. Metaphors of fleetingness and tradition are drawn in the “fluttering kites,” and the “pigeons,” moving with far more unexpected movement through the air. These images seem to imply that despite the interruptions of a colonial history and its legacy, Lahore’s identity, like its kites and pigeons, can still rise above the weight of the dust, conquer the incursion of decay and reclaim its city spaces again through the projection of personal memory and aesthetic symbol. Akhtar’s engagement with Lahore, through both a personal lens and a broader cultural lens, shows how the city becomes a living entity, shaped by the people who inhabit it, even as they navigate the complexities of postcolonial existence.

Akhtar’s reflection on Lahore deepens as he positions himself in the spaces of literary and cultural history. The line "I croon Ghalib’s ghazals sitting in the Dervan e Khas" (8) blends Lahore’s physical spaces with its literary past, connecting the tangible city to the intangible cultural artefacts of its history. The Devan e Khas, a space imbued with historical and spiritual significance, becomes a site of reflection, where the speaker is able to recall not only the city's sensory experiences; "clouds of saffron and betel leaf aroma," but also the enduring influence of Lahore’s literary traditions. The references to famous poets like Ghalib and Faiz, as well as the invocation of historical figures and traditions, underscore the centrality of memory and ideology in the speaker’s experience of Lahore.

The city's identity is dictated by the presence of the "Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam" and the image of "anklets-wearing saints" dancing at the "Fair of Lamps." The Gardens of Shalimar vibrate with a sense of stored history that is also a symbol of a lost grandeur; while the Gardens are now in the speaker's memories, their presence in Lahore's cultural spaces provides a lasting testimony to how these spaces, like other spaces in Lahore, have resisted erasure and reclaimed place in a contemporary world. The Dervan e Khas, the Fair of Lamps and Mall Road are thus spaces of layers of memory, identity and ideology, some of which have played out over time. Lahore encompasses 'trunk of neglect' and 'silent dissent,' yet the speaker seizes that space, not as a physical claim, rather a cultural and ideological move to reclaim the spaces.

> the exaggerated hoardings
> encroach upon the footnotes of history…
> Lahore I am in love with you
> How have you subdued my images? (Line 101-104)

The reference to "exaggerated hoardings" invading the "footnotes of history" stands in for the tension between commercialization and cultural heritage. In this, Akhtar mourns how the rapid expansion, urbanization of Lahore has overshadowed its historical depth and cultural significance. He highlights the struggle by the postcolonial spaces to achieve a sense of identity against the outside world of modernity. Connecting this with Mitchell's idea of ideological maps, the space of Lahore is both a physical and ideological site, one caught between forces of modernization and globalization, on one hand, and the forces of memory, on the other. This acts as a rhetorical turn... in which the city becomes a contested terrain where various histories, ideologies and cultural practices collapse and resonate.

Akhtar's sensory immersion in Lahore, the city that runs with its own environmental and cultural geography, is on display in each and every section of the poem, including the tenth, where he reflects on "clammy shirt," and "muslin kurta drenched in June's heat." The sweat soaked physicality of the shirt says as much about the immediacy of the city's heat as it does to the emotional weight of it. It induces Pavlov's idea of spatial metaphors through this sensory overload of memory. The sensory details; the sweat on the skin, the feel of the shirt's heat, the city itself, are metaphors for the city itself. Akhtar's body is made a vehicle for remembering what it is to be Lahore; each bead of sweat is a clog

sparking the memory of the physical Lahore. West-Pavlov asserts that memory is not restricted to the mental but is mapped onto physical experience. In this case the shirt's sweat is a figure for the emotional residue that the city shakes upon the poet's body and mind. Akhtar uses these embodied recollections to speak to us about how memory and identity are located in and with the spaces we inhabit.

Akhtar's depiction of the Lahore Fort, "shaped into the rolling tears", reflects the theme of postcolonial memory and the decay of history in a city marked by both Mughal and colonial legacies. The fort's "chipped bricks" suggest not just physical erosion, but the decay of a larger ideological structure that once signified imperial power. This aligns with Mitchell's ideological map, where such sites of colonial power are not static but are actively engaged in the process of remapping histories and identities in postcolonial times. The Lahore Fort, both an architectural space and a cultural symbol, becomes a site of ideological struggle where the past and present continuously interact, challenging notions of authority and belonging. The "dark alleys" where lovers exchange letters "secretly" reflect the hidden, often suppressed aspects of Lahore's history, romantic, rebellious, and resistant to colonial structures. In this sense, the space of the fort, much like the city's other spaces, holds multiple ideological meanings depending on one's position within the postcolonial context.

In the end of the poem, Akhtar's declaration that he is "a box stuffed with compromises" encapsulates the postcolonial subjectivity, where identity is never fixed but always in negotiation. The "compromises" signify the internal struggle between Akhtar's cultural identity as a Lahore native and his position in a globalized, postcolonial world. His plea to "take an autograph from time" is an attempt to reclaim history and personal memory, symbolizing a desire to preserve Lahore's past amidst the erosion of its cultural and physical spaces. This idea ties back to both Pavlov's spatial metaphors and Mitchell's ideological maps, as Akhtar seeks to claim a space for his identity within the layered and contested cultural and historical maps of Lahore. In this sense, the poet's return to Lahore becomes an act of cultural reclamation, where the space itself is both a site of personal and collective memory.

Another poem by Akhtar, "Lahore 2009" also mediates between the cultural and historical tapestry of Lahore, where the city's identity is refracted through layers of colonial

history, indigenous traditions, and modern interferences. The poem evokes Lahore as a space of contradictions, shaped by collective memory, where colonial imprints and local culture intersect.

The poem encapsulates the complexity of urban spaces in a postcolonial context, portraying Lahore as a city that resists colonial impositions while grappling with the lingering effects of its historical disruptions. The poem begins with a claim to ownership, "The city is still mine" which is mediated through an act of inheritance from a grandfather's diary (line 1). This act signifies the retrieval of cultural and spatial memory, aligning with Pavlov's notion of space as a "social practice" that carries the marks of previous histories. The diary symbolizes both the material and discursive dimensions of spatial production, as it serves as a textual medium for reclaiming the cultural identity of Lahore against the erasures enacted by colonialism.

The depiction of Lahore's streets as "the vendor's junk food of words, fried / with a smattering of chilies and garnished with Punjabi" situates language at the heart of spatial representation (lines 5-6). The intermingling of languages reflects the city's cultural hybridity, countering the colonial spatial frameworks that sought to impose order and hierarchy. As Pavlov suggests, spatial metaphors, here, the culinary and linguistic blending, reveal the lived and contested realities of postcolonial spaces. The city's "lingual embrace" suggests an active resistance to the etymological and cultural homogenization imposed by colonial powers, affirming its status as a space where pre-colonial cultural practices endure and evolve.

> Sometimes, the dust storms hurt the eyes
> and history is censored, behind the dying fort. (Line 16-17)

The image of "dust storms hurt[ing] the eyes" and history being "censored, behind the dying fort" reflects the enduring colonial impact on Lahore's spatial and historical identity. The fort, a symbol of Mughal grandeur, becomes a muted witness to the colonial rewriting of history. This aligns with Mitchell's concept of spaces as "pre-inscribed sites of ideological conflict," where the colonial imposition of new narratives suppresses indigenous histories. Akhtar's poetic reclamation of these censored spaces challenges the ideological erasure of Lahore's pre-colonial identity, infusing the city with its lost cultural significance. Akhtar's critique of historical erasure and the city's continued ability to

"linger" despite these forces speaks to the ways in which Lahore, as a postcolonial space, resists being fully defined by colonial narratives. The "ghazal brewed in wine" symbolizes the blending of cultural forms, a poetic echo of the city's enduring vitality and the fluidity of its cultural practices despite political and historical disruptions. In this way, the poem mirrors Mitchell's ideological map, where history, culture, and memory are represented through spatial metaphors that both constrain and liberate the identities embedded within them.

The final image of the “cordless kite plummets, / at the mercy of its chasers is a poignant metaphor for Lahore’s vulnerability and potential” (lines 22-23). The kite’s descent symbolizes the precariousness of the city’s cultural identity in the face of colonial and neo-colonial forces, yet the act of chasing it reflects an ongoing effort to reclaim and preserve that identity. The kite, subject to the whims of its chasers, can also be seen as a metaphor for Lahore itself, always in flux, constantly shaped by both internal desires and external forces. This final metaphor connects back to Akhtar’s larger representation of Lahore as a city that is simultaneously defined by its past and constantly in motion. The concept of space as dynamic and constantly negotiated, as seen in Akhtar’s portrayal of Lahore, aligns with both Upstone's and Pavlov’s exploration of postcolonial spaces as contested and redefined through memory, identity, and cultural heritage. The poem suggests that Lahore, like its language and history, will never be fully contained or understood, always in the process of reconstituting itself through the memories and struggles of its people.

In “Winter’s Erasure,” Akhtar explores themes of loss, silence, and the erasure of both the natural and historical landscapes, crafting a reflection on the absence of what was once vibrant and alive in the city of Lahore. The poem opens with a striking image: "No one bothers about birds missing trees / nor actually notes how they struggle" (lines 1-2). The birds, absent from the trees, symbolize a disconnection or a loss of place, while the phrase "missing trees" evokes the imagery of environmental degradation or displacement. This lack of attention to the missing birds reflects the societal indifference to what is gradually erased, be it the natural world or cultural memory. The birds’ "struggle" underscores the idea that something vital is being undermined, but this struggle goes unnoticed by the wider community, mirroring the neglect of historical or cultural erasures in postcolonial spaces.

The physicality of the environment is rendered in a manner that recalls Russell Pavlov's spatial metaphors, wherein the space itself becomes a site of memory and cultural negotiation. Akhtar's description of the landscape, autumn's turf as "a shred of a lateral skin" and "wedged between touch and taste," represents the struggle of the land and its memory to remain intact while undergoing subtle forms of erasure. The "lateral skin" evokes the body, suggesting that Lahore itself, like the poet, bears the scars of historical processes that leave their traces in the landscape. Here, the city's sensory and material aspects, its very soil, become metaphors for the body, connecting personal and collective histories to the physicality of the land. West-Pavlov's notion of spatial metaphors underscores how these embodied experiences of land, like the weathering of a body, carry the emotional and cultural residue of history, often unacknowledged and fading away.

Akhtar's imagery becomes even more visceral as he describes "silent windows / fissures in words and creaking portals" (lines 7-8). The mention of "silent windows" and "fissures in words and creaking portals" speaks to the fragmented nature of communication, memory, and history in the postcolonial context. The "fissures in words" evoke the silencing of marginalized voices and histories, while the "creaking portals" suggest that access to the city's true history, like a physical space that has been altered over time, is restricted and fading.

> no one objects at silent windows
> fissures in words and creaking portals
> of foggy banks of the Lahore Canal ghosted
> by truncated denouements of shovels (Line 7-10)

The foggy imagery surrounding the Lahore Canal, the "ghosted / by truncated denouements of shovels," conveys a sense of lost or concealed history. The canal, a feature of Lahore's geographical landscape, becomes a metaphor for the cultural erasure of the past. The "ghosted" canal implies a once vibrant entity now fading into nothingness, while the "truncated denouements" suggest the unfinished, unresolved endings of stories, histories, or narratives. The canal, which once carried life and movement, now sits ghosted and diminished, much like the city's history in the postcolonial period, which continues to be erased or reconfigured by modernity and political forces.

> where pincered cranes grate alluvial mud

stumps of juicy roots stew in ochre slime (Line 11-12)

The image of the "pincered cranes" that "grate alluvial mud" further emphasizes the violence and destruction of the natural world (line 11). The cranes, often associated with growth or migration, are here depicted in a destructive, almost mechanical manner, contributing to the metaphor of cultural and environmental depletion. This imagery ties into Upstone's concept of post-space, where spaces in the postcolonial context are continually in flux, and history is both preserved and destroyed. The action of the cranes grating mud and the decay of the roots signify how cultural and ecological continuities are disrupted, with history and memory being submerged under layers of modernity.

The final lines of the poem, "and leaves fell like stories from invisible mouths / holding calloused expressions" (lines 13-14), emphasize the theme of lost narratives. The falling leaves, like stories, signify the passage of time and the loss of meaning, but the fact that they "fall from invisible mouths" suggests that these stories are not being told, that their voices are unheard, and their significance is fading away. The metaphor of stories falling "from invisible mouths" suggests a postcolonial silence where important narratives are neglected or erased. These “calloused expressions” evoke the emotional numbness of a people who have been through so much historical trauma that their stories are no longer spoken, yet still linger in the atmosphere, metaphorically haunting the city.

In the concluding lines, "suggesting someone to wait for the right time / and a rebellious initiation in dead water" (lines 15-16), Akhtar presents the paradox of waiting for a "right time" in a world that has been so thoroughly marked by loss and disintegration. The "right time" can be interpreted as the moment for change, for reclaiming agency. The physical landscape, through its erosion, its “fissures,” and its altered forms, becomes a space where postcolonial histories are constantly contested, erased, and reformed, reflecting the fragmented postcolonial experience.

In the poem, “Evening on Lahore Canal,” Akhtar offers a portrayal of the urban space that encapsulates the complex postcolonial experience. The poem represents a site, both physical and metaphorical, that holds within it the fragmented histories and contested identities of a city shaped by colonialism and its aftermath. Akhtar’s depiction of the canal as an urban space reveals the tension between the city’s physical environment and the collective memory of its people.

The poem begins with the imagery of the "crooked sentinels" of trees, bending over the canal (line 1), which serves as a powerful metaphor for the way urban spaces are shaped by colonial and postcolonial forces. These trees, which should traditionally stand as symbols of rootedness and stability, are instead "crooked," reflecting a disjointed history and identity, one marked by colonial influence and the ongoing struggle for reclamation. Through the lens of Pavlov's spatial metaphors, the trees can be seen as representations of spaces that have been manipulated and reshaped by historical events, particularly colonialism. These trees, unlike the idealized notion of natural spaces, are bent and broken, suggesting how colonial forces have distorted and reconfigured indigenous landscapes and identities. The "black crows stubborn as death" evoke an image of death and decay, symbolizing the haunting presence of colonial history that continues to linger over the urban space (line 2). Read through Mitchell's view, these crows act as markers of a past that cannot be easily erased or forgotten. Crows, often associated with death and transformation, reinforce the idea that the postcolonial city, like the canal, is a site where history continues to haunt the present. The "cuffed crusted barks" further suggest a space that is marked by the scars of colonialism, decayed remnants of the past that cling stubbornly to the present (line 2). Mitchell's map of ideological space, which connects power, memory, and geography, can be applied here to interpret how the urban space of the canal is imprinted with colonial residues, even in its current state of decay.

The "skinny children" playing in the canal (lines 3-4), vulnerable and exposed, represent the younger generations who inherit the legacies of colonialism and struggle to carve out their own identities in a postcolonial world. The children's vulnerability, "roped by disheveled water," reflects the precarious position of postcolonial subjects who must navigate spaces fraught with historical and social tensions. These children embody the concept of post-space as defined by Upstone, where individuals and communities inhabit liminal spaces that are simultaneously defined by history and geography but are also in the process of being remade. The water, which both binds and threatens them, symbolizes the fluid, uncertain nature of postcolonial identity formation. Their interaction with the water suggests a cyclical relationship with history, where the past is both a foundation and a constraint.

swirling densities, broken rubber tires, and twigs
accumulate, a muddy and formless hiatus waits (Line 5-6)

The "broken rubber tires, and twigs" (line 5) that accumulate in the canal further underscore the idea of a space littered with remnants of the past, where history has left behind physical traces that refuse to be cleaned or erased. This accumulation of waste represents a post-space, a place where discarded remnants of the colonial past coexist with the lived experiences of the present, much like the debris in the canal. Upstone's concept of post-space is useful here, as it highlights how these remnants; broken, discarded, and ignored; form a crucial part of the space's identity. They are not only physical waste but metaphors of continuing struggle to reconquer and reshape the urban space in postcolonial idiom.

Through the space of canal, Akhter highlights the presence of human intimacy, as "truant lovers" lie on its banks in an effort to find reprieve from the crowds (Line 6). These lovers challenge boundaries between the personal and the political in a public urban space and personal, intimate space at once. This public space is thus a site where this "postured" intimacy reveals the difference between private desires and public expressions of colonial and postcolonial identities. Such an interplay is consistent with the theoretical notion of space as ideologically constituted, in which people are pulled in multiple ways by both personal histories and the political contexts. This also aligns with Upstone's idea of spaces as sites of resistance and redefinition, where individuals create their identities within restrictive environments. The lovers' "in the middle" positioning reflects the liminal existence of postcolonial subjects who inhabit both personal and collective spaces, simultaneously navigating between individual aspirations and the weight of shared history.

The final lines of the poem, "weak clouds hang elegantly over a sky losing sun" convey a sense of liminality and uncertainty that pervades the entire urban space of the canal (Line 7-8). The "weak clouds" and the "ochre brown watery silence" evoke a space suspended in time, neither fully present nor absent. This final imagery can be interpreted through Mitchell's idea of ideological space, where the landscape reflects the tensions between visibility and invisibility, between the colonial past and the postcolonial present. This imagery also evokes Pavlov's notion of spaces as dynamic entities, constantly shaped by temporal and sensory experiences. The canal, like the city it runs through, is marked by the traces of past lives, stories, and histories, serving as both a repository and a reflection of Lahore's complex identity. The canal, exists in a state of waiting, its future unclear, its past unresolved. By looking through Akhtar's representation of the canal, we see the space

itself as a metaphor of the intricacies of postcolonial identity where pasts and presents collide, and when the histories of colonialism remain in order to shape the postcolonial identity.

The poems in this section explore the complexities of the relationship between Lahore's urban space and the postcolonial interactions between memory and ideology. Using the city as a palimpsest of historical and cultural legacies, Akhtar's poetry situates Lahore as a site where pre-colonial legacy, colonial influences, and post-colonial readings, converge. The city plays a dynamic role in marking the poet's identity and ideology of resistance in the post-colonial context, rather than simply serving as a passive record of historical events.

Akhtar's work reclaims Lahore's cultural and historical spaces, contesting the colonial rewriting of urbanization by reclaiming the city spaces as indigenous story. Beyond being a simple reclamation of the culture and spaces, Akhter's poetry includes a dynamic process of making these spaces relevant now, while respecting their complex histories. Using Lahore as a site, Akhtar positions memory as an ideological tool for resistance to colonialism to reimagine its inhabitants' identities within and beyond the colonial shadow.

With the city's streets, buildings, and public spaces, Akhtar's poetry sees the city as a dynamic archive, where all these spaces speak to the fact that all histories of power are contingent and intersect with histories of culture and resistance. The analysis also emphasizes the engagement of the city's inhabitants with their physical and ideological environments, and looks at the city as a site where meanings are renegotiated. By imbuing the city's spaces with different layers of memory and ideological signification, Akhtar' reclaims cultural narratives and locates them in the contemporary postcolonial discourse.

5.3 Reclamation of Contemporary Spaces Through Localisation

This section considers Rizwan Akhtar's poetry as a critical component in reclamation and reinterpretation of space utilizing contemporary localization; an approach of rejuvenation through cultural and historical dimensions by placing these under the existing artefacts of daily life in the city. Reclamation through contemporary localization entails reviving, transforming spaces, harnessing local lived experiences, and reconstituting

local cultural practices as a critical counter to the process of colonial erasure or global homogenization. In his poetry, Akhtar uses evocative imagery, and nuances it with his relationship to Lahore's urban and cultural landscapes, arguing that reclaiming Lahore is significant to the preservation of identity, and resistance of cultural erasure.

Akhtar situates the local spaces within the contemporary existence while also commemorating their deep cultural and historical importance. His poetry does not romanticize the city of Lahore as if it is secluded; instead, it fuses contemporary reality with historical and ideological foundations and puts across a conversation between the city's past and its present. The localization process in his poetry emphasizes the actual realities of common individuals, their everyday challenges, pleasures, and relationships with their environments. This method not only restores the city from colonial narratives but also maintains its significance for contemporary residents.

Postcolonial space serves as a medium to exhibit the perspectives of colonizers about the marginalization or suppression of disadvantaged ethnicities, groups, and individuals. This place serves as a medium to construct narratives of formerly impoverished individuals and as a mechanism to emerge from the traumatic conditions endured by the poor during colonial rule. Concerning this, Sara Upstone clarifies:

> Postcolonial space refuses to follow the colonial in denying the fact that the territory is everywhere constructed and provisional. Instead space must be reclaimed for its inherent diversity and for the possibilities for moving beyond colonial experience that it consequently contains. (Upstone 13)

The necessity of this reclamation lies in the need to preserve cultural memory and foster a sense of belonging in a rapidly modernizing world. In the postcolonial context, spaces have often been subjected to ideological reconfigurations that prioritized colonial or neoliberal agendas at the expense of local identities. Contemporary localization, as exemplified in Akhtar's poetry, challenges this by rooting the city in its own cultural traditions while simultaneously reflecting the evolving realities of its people. This dual focus ensures that the city remains a site of cultural continuity and transformation, resisting erasure and asserting its place as a dynamic cultural entity within the global landscape.

Akhtar’s poetry functions as an intervention in which spaces–whether they are forgotten or overlooked, reveal themselves in sharp focus. His rich detailed descriptions of alleys, streets and everyday life re-inserts the city's identity onto the spaces of local residents. Not only does this act of reclamation allow the city’s spaces to regain agency but it also empowers the people of the city to lend agency to the spaces they live in to reassert their connection to these spaces. Akhter creates connection between spaces and individuals and highlights those spaces can only be read through human connection in his poetry. For instance, Akhtar's “Lahore: A Pictorial Triptych” presents the readers with a layered poetic exploration of Lahore; its chaos, vulnerability, and human connections. The poem is structured as a triptych which is a set of three panels which come together to create a coherent story. Through this triptych, Akhter examines the city from several points of view. He considers the urban dynamics, ecological anxieties and human resilience of Lahore and brings issues of the complex interplay among colonial legacy, modernization, and cultural continuity into the conversation.

The first section of the poem provides a description of urban confusion and despair. As "the dusty sky" as a "drab desire" metaphorically signifies the suffocating atmosphere of the city where exhaustion has taken over its inhabitants together with the environmental degradation. Akhtar uses traffic as a spatial metaphor for the urban modernization, where “endless lines of cars” that are “copulating” suggests a grotesque imagery, transforming traffic as symbol of progress. The roads "creak under their lust", highlighting the unbearable pressure exerted on the city's infrastructure (Line 4). This depiction reflects the colonial foundations of Lahore's urban planning, which was structured to serve colonial officials and elites rather than the extensive postcolonial people it currently supports. The beggar's enactment of "dramatised misery" in this "amphitheatre of honkers" illustrates the performative aspect of existence in a commodified urban environment and the pronounced inequities that persist in postcolonial cities (Line 6-7).

The roads “creak under their lust” also points to the pressure which is put on the city’s infrastructure by the colonial paradigms. This imagery relates Lahore to the colonial urban planning that took place in order to build new structures in the city to accommodate colonial administrators and bourgeoisie. This highlights the colonial planning of urbanization which only had its own agendas at the forefront, and the locals discarded to the periphery.

Moving the focus to ecological and spatial frailty, the second section of the poem is focused on the space of the city of Lahore and how it is vulnerable. The metaphor ‘the city’s trees are scared children’ in the first line asserts an anthropomorphized representation of nature as fearful and vulnerable to the uncontrolled growth of cities. The comparison of the ‘electricity poles’ to the ‘ancient gods’ (line 6) underscores the substantiality of the structures that men create in their short historical existence. Such imagery tells how stark colonial-built form that was planned for order, for efficiency, productivity has been subverted, reclaimed, transformed for the new needs of a city in post colonialism. In keeping with Pavlov's idea of spatial metaphors, that states that environments are dynamic and perpetually molded by human interactions, the quiet that "adapts faces" suggests the city's resilience and capacity to change. Lahore is shown by Akhtar here as a palimpsest, with layers of colonial, indigenous, and modern influences all interacting to create a metropolis that is at once eerie and vibrant.

Electricity poles stand
like ancient gods
still and stubborn,
silence adapts faces
wedded by fate or will. (Line 17-21)

An important aspect of the city's rhythms is the stillness that "adapts faces wedded by fate or will," which highlights the way human agency meets the will of the land. The poem’s subways, poles, and silent spaces serve as palimpsests of colonial and postcolonial histories, bearing the weight of both progress and loss which is reminiscent of Upstone's concept of "post-space," where urban environments are sites of both fragmentation and unexpected unity.

The third part of the poem has a slightly optimistic note, since it notes that in the middle of all the destruction there were human encounters. The “surprises” and “the people smile, care about words” suggests a hopeless and isolated humanity struggling against urban alienation is suggested by (Line 1-2). These small gestures are "obvious in this chaos,” providing moments of respite and meaning. The metaphor of "a painter [imagining] climax on a riddled canvas" aligns the city's turmoil with an artistic process, suggesting that beauty and coherence can emerge from disorder (Line 26-5\27). This artistic lens evokes

Mitchell's concept of the "ideological map," where space is not only physical but also symbolic, shaped by the narratives and emotions of its inhabitants. Akhtar's triptych reveals Lahore as a city caught between past and present, nature and industry, chaos and connection. The colonial legacy of urban design, originally intended to segregate and control, has given way to a postcolonial metropolis marked by overpopulation, environmental degradation, and socio-economic disparity. Yet, amidst these challenges, the poem finds moments of human resilience and creative possibility. Akhtar's use of fragmented imagery and layered symbolism mirrors the complexity of Lahore itself, making the poem both an intimate and expansive exploration of the city's identity.

Similarly, in the poem "Promenade," Akhtar offers a contemplative reflection on the nature of urban spaces and their capacity to carry memories, histories, and emotions, especially in the context of postcolonial landscapes. The promenade is portrayed not merely as a physical pathway but as a space rich with untold stories, unspoken histories, and overlooked narratives. In constructing these poetic images, Akhtar hints to the fact that the cities formed by colonialist and post-colonial forces retain remnants of human presence but also reflect how humans are estranged from the deeper narratives and significance that such environments may once have held.

Akhtar begins the poem by the expression "The promenade is another language lying / unattended along veering expressions of city" (Line 1–2), establishing the metaphorical examination of urban space as a kind of language. The promenade, a symbol of movement and passage, becomes a space where expression is both present and absent. It is also portrayed as a transitional space, embodying both activity and stillness. It serves as a reminder that much has been traversed, indicating its function as a quiet custodian of both collective and individual narratives. The "bursting stamina of a jogger," the wild cat's natural instinct, and the gardener's struggle with leaves illustrate the convergence of human endeavor and the relentless force of nature. The details illustrate the resilience of Lahore's public spaces, where human narratives, frequently transient and fragmented, are integrated into the broader continuity of the city's existence. This aligns with Pavlov's concept of spaces as dynamic entities influenced by human interaction and memory. The promenade, characterized by its "chiselled memory," serves as a repository for these ephemeral encounters, safeguarding them within its enduring stones. The space becomes "unattended" suggesting that the space is neglected, a feature which is common in postcolonial cities

where the urban realities obscure the removal of past temporal and spatial practices. This language of the promenade, like the city, therefore tells an interrupted or partial story of the city that is produced and re-constructed through colonial and postcolonial discourses that are constantly re-writing the narratives of the city.

West-Pavlov's notion suggests spaces are not merely physical but are deeply intertwined with the temporal and emotional landscapes of those who traverse them. The following line, "lonely like a line, a strip of chiseled memory / holds a reminder that much has been tread," emphasizes how the space, though trodden by many, remains solitary in its existence (Lines 3–4). The image of a "chiseled memory" evokes a sense of something carved into the cityscape, a trace of the past that is both permanent and inaccessible, as if the city itself is haunted by its own history. The promenade bears witness to all who have walked upon it, yet its significance as a site of historical memory is in tension with the "bursting stamina of a jogger" or "wild cat / dropping excrement on edges" (Line 5–6). In this sense, the promenade is as much a psychological and cultural construct as it is a physical one. The promenade is also depicted as a site of conflict between memory and oblivion. "Unable to articulate / in rains and in wet darkness / abandoned to silence," the space becomes a metaphor for the inability to articulate the historical traumas and cultural shifts that have marked the city (Line 9–11). It is as though the promenade itself, despite its rich potential to house history and connection, is silenced by the forces of time, modernity, and colonialism.

The promenade is also important element since it can tolerate neglect and environmental change. This is dubbed "an archive where words and footholds wait," which means it serves up as a quiet witness to the city's evolution (Line 16-17). This aligns with Mitchell's concept of the ideological map, which states that spaces have historically and ideologically tensions. Moreover, the promenade's transformation into a site of reflection emphasizes its role in contemporary localization. The walker's soliloquy transforms the space into one of introspection and personal connection, bridging the past and present. The promenade becomes not just a path but a stage for cultural memory, where individuals reconnect with the city's layered histories. By highlighting the ordinary, graveled stubs, wrappers, and joggers, Akhtar underscores how everyday interactions with spaces reclaim them from obscurity, embedding them within a broader narrative of cultural significance.

In this context, the promenade is a reflection of the characteristics of urban spaces in postcolonial cities where they often associate with intricate histories, amalgamated cultural provocations and constant obstacles where identity and memory appear. By including the expression "prick imagination of loitering hands" and "soliloquy to vent a day's content on a bench," the poem identifies the dying and dying away of human interaction in the urban environment (Line 13-15). The gestures although fleeting, are indicative of a desire to communicate with the space in a major way, to substantiate presence and expression in a situation where silence too often rules. It speaks to the way in which urban spaces, once teeming with diverse histories and cultures, have been reshaped by colonialism and modernization, leaving behind traces that are both visible and hidden, fragmented yet persistent.

In the poem “A Day at Daman-e-Koh,” Rizwan Akhtar portrays an urban landscape that reflects the complex interplay of memory, colonial legacies, and the process of spatial transformation in postcolonial Pakistan. The poem’s description of Daman-e-Koh, a popular viewpoint in Islamabad, becomes a metaphor for the disjointed and contested spaces that are characteristic of the postcolonial city. The poem begins with the description of the space that has been “wiped like myths denuded” which immediately creates an imagery of erasure and the stripping away of the historical layers present in the space. The spatial metaphor, concept given by Pavlov, is central feature of postcolonial spaces that have seen the histories and cultures of colonized peoples erased or obscured by the colonial enterprise. Spatial metaphors, as proposed by Pavlov, imply that such landscapes express some specific ideological attitude. The characteristic “denuded” encapsulates the condition of postcolonialism in which the legacies of the colonial project, both as physical form and as memory of the city persist. The land that was once alive with its own cultural histories was 'wiped'—rendered barren by colonial forces similar to that which tried to erase native identities and standpoints.

The mention of "town planners" who “took care of angry roots” introduces the theme of urban development and spatial manipulation (Line 2). The planners, with their ability to control and reshape the environment, symbolize the colonial and postcolonial power structures that impose a vision of progress on the land, often at the expense of local cultures and histories. This manipulation of space is a direct response to the colonial desire for control and order, as W.J.T. Mitchell's ideological map suggests, power relations are

inscribed onto the land itself. The "angry roots" that resist the town planners symbolize the persistence of pre-colonial or indigenous ways of being—forces that refuse to be entirely uprooted. These roots are not easily erased, and their resurgence in the form of "dogged lovers" reveals the enduring tension between colonial order and indigenous resistance (Line 3).

The physical journey up to Daman-e-Koh, with "small cabs" navigating "bumpy strides" (Line 3-4), echoes the struggles inherent in postcolonial existence—an existence shaped by both the remnants of colonial infrastructure and the efforts to redefine it. The bumpy ride can be seen as a metaphor for the disjointed progress of postcolonial nations that, while striving for development, are often caught in the unresolved contradictions of their colonial past.

The "virginal forest" for Akhtar is a post space, an abandoned, neglected, or untouched space (Line 7). This virginity is not necessarily a return to the untouched past, but a sign of negotiation that is carried on between the urban space and colonial forces that aim to define the local spaces. "Mystical regularity of hills camouflaging" adds to the notion of a space both present as well as absent, where human intervention leaves traces in the land (Line 7). The urban and natural landscapes of Upstone's post-space concept provide a framework to read the weight of past histories and future possibilities of both urban and natural spaces.

The last phrase "to herd back, and to unburden" embeds a sense of complexity in which individuals and collective memory are both interwoven and at odds in postcolonial spaces (Line 8). The act of herding can be considered a return to the past, an ongoing reconciliation with the past. Hence, the space of Daman-e-Koh becomes a space of reflection as well as action; a place for the interacting of the individual and collective consciousness with the landscape through creating new meanings, and new histories.

This section has explored how the poetry of Rizwan Akhtar stages the reclamation of the urban spaces through processes of contemporary localization. The anchoring of the analysis within the postcolonial framework provides Akhtar the opportunity to link the cultural and historical weight of local spaces to the lived experience of people through a contemporary, globalized world. His poetic intervention with the city restores these places not only as physical settings but as active settings of memory, identity, and belonging, in

which the past and the present collide. This analysis shows how Akhtar resists the colonial erasure and neoliberal homogenization, by grounding his representations of urban spaces in the local experience and cultural practices. His poetry reveals how tradition and modernity intersect intensively, a counter narrative to cultural memory that narrates the changing reality of contemporary life.

CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

The present study focuses on elucidating and explaining the research questions presented in the first chapter of the thesis. An analysis of the poetic works of Taufiq Rafat and Rizwan Akhtar is conducted through the use of the theoretical concept of "spatial metaphors" provided by Russell West-Pavlov, "ideological map" by W. J. T Mitchell, and “post-space” by Sara Upstone. These concepts were utilized in order to highlight the representation of spaces in Postcolonial Pakistani English poetry.

6.1 Findings of the Study

Taufiq Rafat’s and Rizwan Akhtar’s poetic works are considered to not solely be about the representation of postcolonial narratives in Pakistan, as there is political spatiality present in their work which is to invalidate the colonial aspects of these spaces and to connect them with the pre-colonial elements of spaces in order to reclaim them as their own. This process of reclamation of space with local cultures embedded in it is significant because it adds Pakistani writing in English to the global English literature. The exploration of this argument has been conducted by the theoretical concept of “spatial metaphors” by Russell West-Pavlov, “ideological mapping” by W. J. T Mitchell and “post space” by Sara Upstone.

The main aim of the thesis was to first figure out how the spatial metaphors in selected poetry of Taufiq Rafat and Rizwan Akhtar confront the colonial spatial frameworks. The spatial metaphors in poetry of Rafat and Akhtar presented the readers with rich collection of cultural and historical elements embedded in spatial metaphors. Rafat’s poetry evokes the historical and cultural upheavals of the Partition through his evocative portrayals of spaces through which memory and identity of these spaces were inscribed. By illuminating the effects and impact of colonialism on indigenous mapmaking, the erosion of indigenous cultural spaces and the subsequent change in spatial meaning in postcolonial Pakistan, his works highlighted how the forms and ideas of orthodox spatial history erode with time. Similarly, Akhtar’s poetic explorations of postcolonial spaces also does this reclamation through an engagement with the fragmentary realities of

contemporary Pakistan, and through fusions of personal and collective narrative. He reinterprets and reclaims both urban and rural spaces in the region.

This research builds upon Russell West-Pavlov's theoretical concept of spatial metaphors, it is revealed that the selected poets use the metaphoric language of spatial production to negotiate the convergence of history, memory and identity. Rafat's descriptions of architectural and landscape forms in urban and rural settings are typically imbued with metaphorical imagery that brings cultural dissonance and reclamation found in postcolonial spaces to the fore. He presents his poetry as contested spaces or areas where cultural identity becomes hybrid and where indigenous cultures refuse to be erased. In contrast, Akhtar sets up a demarcation between modernism and deeply ingrained cultural histories to describe the fragmented nature of the contemporary Pakistani space using spatial metaphors. Besides being tools of resistance, they are also tools with which a spatial imagination beyond existing spatial boundaries is constructed.

W. J. T. Mitchell's concept of ideological mapping provides substantial evidence of spaces in Rafat and Akhtar's poetry becoming contested ideological sites where colonial domination has left its scars but where its legacy of colonialism still persists. The second and third research questions posited in the thesis are answered by Mitchell's concept of ideological mapping. His framework enables a reading of what Rafat and Akhtar's work does in complicating and reimagining spaces as dynamic entities that are culturally charged and political. Sara Upstone's idea of post space also helps us understand Rafat and Akhtar's work to dismantle the static spatial hierarchies imposed in colonial discourse and relocate the residents in a dynamic and hybrid space where they enjoy plurality and resistance. Upstone's articulation of post-space highlights the possibility of restaging the spaces which are being reasserted and reappropriated. Rafat and Akhtar's poetry in this context epitomizes the role of literature in the transformational alteration of spatial imaginaries and questioning colonial paradigms. Their works as seen in the analysis conducted in the chapter four and five of the thesis offer a new vision for a postcolonial future premised on cultural diversity and historical continuity, and by presenting spaces as fluid and hybrid, their works resist fixity imposed by colonial narratives.

Secondly, the research further justifies how the use of spatial metaphors in Rafat and Akhtar's poetry informs creation of post space through input of pre-colonized culture

present in the colonized space. Akhtar's account of Lahore as a palimpsest of histories shows how colonial transformations and modern disruptions have shaped the city. Through the usage of spatial metaphors, Akhtar critiques, in *Lahore I Am Coming*, the British colonization for the erasure and reconfiguration of indigenous spaces, and yet, Akhtar does not allow these sites to be erased, but rather claimed back through the reinsertion of the resilience of cultural memory in the very spaces that he critiques. From its Mughal splendor to its reformulated colonial urban areas, its contemporary cultural spaces to its fragmented history, we have his exploration of Lahore at hand in a layered narrative of cultural survival. By equating colonial urban markers like Mall Road or Government College with the resilience of local traditions, Akhtar creates a commentary about the city's ability to shift ideas between colonial proto-types with a plateau for local traditions.

Thirdly, spatial metaphors are critical and political because they become tools of ideological mapping and reclamation for creation of postspace. The poetry of Rafat and Akhtar make space of spatial resistance an important aspect of memory. Both of them stress at the need to retrieve histories that were erased by colonialism. Akhtar's depiction of Lahore seems to point to Lahore, as a city, caught up in constant cultural struggle and reformation. He combines past and present to produce new meanings and possibilities through his works, which are post-space. Lahore is not just a city for Akhtar, it is a metaphorical landscape to symbolize the suffering and defiance of the people. Subsequently, rural spaces are powerfully echoed in the poetic works of Rafat and get transformed into warehouses of pre-colonial cultural practices and collective memory. He utilizes his works to call attention to the grand narrative of colonization, and how it has made the spaces that define their identity subdued. Taking cities like Karachi, Sialkot, Lahore as example, he addresses the spaces that are affected in the hindsight of colonization. He then reads these cities as the site of an ideological map which reconfigures its space to its pre-colonial elements.

The results of the analysis of Rafat and Akhtar's poetry show that spaces in postcolonial literature are beyond just a background for thematic exploration; rather, they are active and constructive participants in the process of forming identity and memory. Through their works, they expose how postcolonial poets turn spaces into arenas of resistance, resilience, and cultural revival.

Through this exploration, the politics of space is explored by building on the understanding of the decolonization and cultural restoration in Pakistani English literature. At the same time, their poetry regards indigenous traditions and practices as lasting. In doing so, their poetry reintroduced to the modern-day spaces traditional elements which were affirmed through their evocative imagery and spatial metaphors as relevant in the post-colonial present. Their poetry also recognizes indigenous traditions and practices as enduring at the same time. Through their poetry they reintroduced traditional elements into modern day space through evocative imagery and spatial metaphor that renders them indispensable in the post-colonial present.

Lastly, it can also be concluded that Taufiq Rafat and Rizwan Akhtar's poetry points out that Pakistani poetry has transformational content within postcolonial frameworks. They reclaim and reimagine spaces permeated in colonial history, focusing on the strength of the cultural memory and of reclamation. In addition to answering the research questions, the selected poetry also provides for a larger discussion of how literature, space and identity interact in the contexts of postcolonialism. These poets, by refusing colonial frameworks, creating postspace, and reclaiming territories ideologically, show the persistence of spatial metaphors in the present work by negotiating cultural memory and resistance. While the poetry explores themes of spatial politics, cultural continuity and resistance, they situate Pakistani English poetry in the global literary arena as a new, evolving space in which the association between space, identity and history in the postcolonial context can be explored.

6.2 Recommendations

Studying spatial politics in postcolonial literature has enormous implications; therefore, scholars in the arts and humanities should consider a few avenues for future research. Despite the great potential that this area of research can have in improving our understanding of cultural identity, urban evolution and the legacy of colonialism, it remains underexplored, particularly within Pakistani academia.

While the current research is focusing on political dimensions of spaces in Pakistani Poetry and how they attempt to undo the colonial infusion in culture, and history; there are majority of areas through which Pakistani poetic works can be looked at. The researcher can investigate the ways in which literary narratives reclaim urban spaces by combining

historical memory with modern cultural practices. Rafat and Akhtar's poetry showed how spaces are modified palimpsests that are mixed with indigenous, colonial, and contemporary influences. These narratives can be analyzed to improve studies on urbanism and cultural preservation projects because of their detailed depiction of changes in cityscapes over time.

It is important for the analysis of literature, and urban environments that it incorporates postcolonial spatial theory. West Pavlov's, W. J. T. Mitchell's, and Sara Upstone's theoretical contributions offer useful tools with which to understand the ideological and cultural dynamics of urban environments as well as spaces. These frameworks offer researchers opportunities to assess their applicability to other Pakistani and globally focused literary works, hence, expanding the field of postcolonial urban studies.

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Appendix A
Selected poems by Taufiq Rafat

1. Karachi 1955

The screaming wind transplants the soil
particle by particle. The roar of the sun
is silenced by distance, but its muscular rays
crack the most stubborn rock like a nut.
And yes, the sea: biting into the beachhead
with an ancient rasping sound. All the forces
of nature crowding man off his perch
so that the land can return to its ways.

In this city of scarce sweet water and little rain
each man protects his rood of greenery
with panicked care. The municipality plows
the heart of the road for a strip of grass
and jealously counts its trees on week-days.
The bald sparrow scrounges in the dust-bin;
only the spendthrift gul-mohur spills its gold
in the pitiful spring that time allows.

We wear our features to suit the landscape,
and malice moves like a rainless cloud
over the brown cliffs of the teeth.
From opposite the terminus I stare
at the commuters storming the gates, and see
where the roof bulges the effeminate rise
of a dune, and where the lamp-post stands
the arms of the cactus lifted in prayer.

2. Circumcision

Having hauled down my pyjamas
they dragged me, all legs and teeth,
that fateful afternoon, to a stool
before which the barber hunkered
with an open cut-throat. He stropped it
on his palm with obvious relish.
I did not like his mustachios, nor
his conciliatory smile. Somehow
they made me sit, and two cousins
held a leg apiece. The barber
looked at me; I stared right back,
defying him to start something.
He just turned aside to whisper
to my cousin who suddenly cried
'oh look at that golden bird',
and being only six I looked up;
which was all the time he needed
to separate me from my prepuce.
'Bastard, sonofapig' I roared,
'you catamite', while he applied
salve and bandaged the organ.
Beside myself with indignation
and pain, I forgot the presence
of elders, and cursed and cursed
in the graphic vocabulary of the lanes,
acquired at leap-frog, marbles, and blindman's buff.

3. A Positive Region

A positive region, almost smothered
by confident pines, and bursting-over
with green springs at every nook.

Away in the background a waterfall
rests like a white tie against
the mountain’s heaving chest. The road
descends steeply, and the automobile,
its engine shut off, masterful, sleek,
coasts to a five o'clock appointment.
What could such a place deny?
Not sustenance, surely. Everywhere
grass, impossibly lush; sunny terraces
of rice; and the occasional patch
of maize; see how the sweet-sour apricots
growing wild by the way-side insist
not a living thing shall be hungry here.
Bushes brim with birds, the slopes
are littered with shaggy, sure-footed goats,
apparently untended. And the trees
are functional--each pine is belted
low at the waist and buckled with a cup.
And certainly not health. The breeze
with a hint of rain makes one cavil
at the stink of upholstery and petrol.
Oh to be young again, to have the courage
to disembark at will, and with a shout
slither down to where the stream
among the smooth pebbles at the bottom
sparkles like soda. Here everyone
has Mr. Universe calves. And the women
need no brassieres.
At various points
along the route, the road-menders stand,
indolent, cheerful, yet overwhelmingly
industrious as each vehicle turns
the corner before them. Not a sickly

face have l seen all afternoon. The
children salute smartly as we pass,
and the old women gathering faggots
have a smile to spare for the stranger.
A positive place, indeed. Each hill
has its quorum of tin-roofed dwellings,
while here and there, a cypress
stands like an exclamation mark.
A gust of rain overtakes us, makes
the wipers frantic, and is gone
as suddenly, leaving no puddles
or flooded gutters. Even as we sigh,
the road levels and straightens out,
the tall pines have dwindled to shrubs.
With one last long backward look
we resign it to the uncomplicated
men, the cicadas, and the Iordly eagle.

4. A middle-class drawing room

As soon as you enter, the room's poverty
strikes you like a blow. The mohri carpet
may have been priceless once; now its worst
patches are hidden by strategic placement
of occasional pieces. You sit stiffly
on the sofa’s edge to avoid the stains
at the back where many an oily head
has rested. On the mantelpiece
an aluminium tiger is ready to spring,
and on the wall a set of three geese
carved in a dark wood, their wings fully
extended, diminish towards the ceiling.
What am I doing here? Ostensibly
a neighbourhood call, but the real purpose

is to judge the suitability of this house
for a cousin to be married into.
The host is effusive. His collar
is as frayed as his carpet. I cannot
meet his eye. Instead, I look over
his shoulder at a girl in Sindhi costume
smirking from an airline calendar
torn to a December three years gone.
Tea is served. This is too much like home.
I fidget as I balance the cup on my knee,
and hear his version of the latest joke,
and laugh politely, as anxious as him
to appear respectable and to please.
From the book ‘Arrival of the Monsoon’

5. The squalor in which some people live

The squalor in which some people live
disgusts me, and when l see a man
pissing on the road, it makes me mad.
Dear God, have l forgotten so soon
my own beginnings?
The oblique house
in Shahalam where my mother was born
is no longer there; in its place
stands a dry fountain, a symbol of
the act that severed a continent.
But it inflames the eye of memory
like a mote: room piled upon room,
and not a ventilator anywhere
to let the stale air out. Down one side
a gutter ran like a sore; the other
shared with a Hindu dealer in brass.
My grandfather, splendidly moustached,

boisterous, semi-naked, who turned
from mashing bones to mending them,
the most skilful bone-setter of his day,
with a certificate from Lord Kitchener
to prove it, still young at eighty,
held court on the ground-floor, surrounded
by the appurtenances of his trade
and the patients' relatives. l can see him
cajoling a wayward bone into place
cannily aided by a burst of invective
so fierce it makes me shudder still.
As we stood by at a respectful distance
memorizing his words, he pointed us out
to his neighbours proudly as the children
of a millionaire, hastily adding,
of course, he did not care a damn.
ln that smell of oil and lint and dung
and unaired quilts, how carefree we were,
for a few ecstatic weeks each winter
like the barna tree, all flower
and no leaf. The filth was part of us,
as we grew tall in that time of love.
The hands of the clock in moving forward
are moving back. The family business
slides downwards imperceptibly
while l bandy words in a foreign tongue.
From the book 'Arrival of the Monsoon'

6. The Village

I

We wander curiously through the lanes
of the re-occupied village,
if you can still call

it a village, for roofs, doors, windows,
of each house are gone, giving us
the appearance of
tourists in an excavated
site. Yet only six months ago
this was a thriving market-square.
Here ordinary men
haggled for a pile
of mangoes, or a yard of silk.
The beams of the low roof blackened
by winter fires
before which squatted
four generations of story-tellers,
have ended in a camp-fire, round
which drunken soldiers
have told each other
tales of real and imagined prowess.
And doors through which have entered
brides weeping, and seen
grandfathers leave lamented
have been chopped up to warm
the shaving water of some lieutenant.
And the best quilts hoarded
for guests lie stained
with the blood of ravished daughters.
Now picture them, if you can,
watching in terror
the deliberate advance
of the green and greedy centipede,
who clutches them in its hot embrace
to appease a lust
that has festered there
for more than a thousand years.

Such hate only those can understand
who have felt the rank breath
upon their necks or seen
the mad eyes drawing closer and closer,
while legs hold trembling legs in thrall,
and hard hands fumble
for the knot, and with
one jerk foul sense and innocence.
No matter which way the eye turns, there
is nothing, nothing,
which the evil
of their minds has left untouched.
Here where the line curves, the railway
track is like twin snakes
with their shining backs
broken with the passage of tanks,
which have also churned up the fields
the way wild boars do.
A mosque stands with
minarets down, like an armless beggar.
They have poisoned all the wells,
or filled them with muck,
and along the roads
hastily cut down the shisham trees
which gave shade to the lunch-bearing wife,
the creaking cart, and
the traveller to town.
These ravaged stumps will bear witness
to a civilisation just as surely
as the topless stupas
and mangled buddhas
that punctuate our northern valleys.
From the book ‘Arrival of the Monsoon’

II
For those who return to the village
the war is not yet over.
They will always remember
the unending weeks spent in exile

tormented with guessing the fate
of their unattended fields,
their cattle, their women,
whom (they are shamed to recall)

they left in panic; also weeping children
separated from them
by the length of a trench.
Now they know: the houses are gone,

the cattle eaten, the women raped and killed.
Houses will be re-built,
fields ploughed again,
but who can re-build a broken heart?

Whenever eyes look eastward, their minds
will fill with hate,
as a foot-print
by the river-side fills with water.

For many the war is not yet over.
Unwarily tilling
the fields, an overlooked mine
will blow man and oxen into the sky.

And any unexpected sound could
light the short fuse
of their nerves. The future
now means the day after tomorrow.

There is a woman's body in the well.
Who can say if she
was guiltily despatched
or whether she jumped in to hide her shame.

And there are many more women here,
or what remains after
the jackals have taken
their share; the agonised flesh

is gone; but the bones remain;
skeletons flung at
all angles to prove
the tragic theorem of death

7. Death in the Family

I bear my cousin to his grave
at the head of a slow procession
to be laid beside our common grandfather,
dead these fifty years,
and a host of half-remembered
or long-forgotten relatives.

His dirge is the shuffle of feet,
and the hissing of gas lanterns.

Even as we walk he eludes us.
He is not the weight we carry,

but the one who planted the silver oaks
in the courtyard; who could never
make up his mind; a white-haired army contractor
we half-expect to meet on our return.
He is dead certain now,
and properly contracted.

Is this the end of the ancestral home?
Friends will not come here in the evening
to hear the news and discuss the crops,
or the neighbours to settle their disputes.
A place survives as long as its keeper.

We reach the grave; it is not yet ready.
The night is cold, and we are thinly clad,
ill-prepared for this delay.
The shivering irritates us, so does talk
of business, sex, and politics.
The mask of sadness has slipped.
In a field hard by, a tractor sputters
into life. Each time it turns
it catches us in a pallid trance.

The diggers give the signal at last.

We rise from the mounds we've been sitting on,
and dust our clothes.
It is just as well my cousin cannot
hear the sighs of relief.
We hand him down gingerly
to the two men standing in the grave,
then cut off the sky.
A fistful of dirt, a fistful of prayer,

are the last salutes.
We turn our back on the graveyard. Now
he is really alone.

Seeing this death we think of our own,
and real tears start to the eyes.

8. Karachi 1968

Karachi is the only city I know
where barbers solicit like whores, and papayas
are considered fruits. Sandwiched between
the desert and the sea, it swell by reclamation,
and points to its belly shamelessly
A windy instant burg, it lionises
artists whose chief merit is a big mouth.
There is no weather here as we northerners
understand weather. The season telescopes
a sort of summer into a sort of winter,
topped by a mini-monsoon. Each new morning
brings no hope of change. Generally the clouds
are sexless, mute, and above our affairs.
A splitting sky announces a jet not rain.
No, I do not think I shall come to terms
with this grey place. It shortens my breath
and pinches my eyes. On bad roads automobiles
smelling each others' jostle their way
to the beach. A manure truck leaves its trail.
At 2 a. m. the whirling airport searchlight
brandishes its sword over the hushed city.

9. Wedding In The Flood

They are taking my girl away forever,
sobs the bride's mother, as the procession

forms slowly to the whine of the clarinet.
She was the shy one. How will she fare
in that cold house, among these strangers?
This has been a long and difficult day.
The rain nearly ruined everything,
but at the crucial time, when lunch was ready,
it mercifully stopped. It is drizzling again
as they help the bride into the palankeen (palanquin)
This girl has been licking too many pots.
Two sturdy lads carrying the dowry
(a cot, a looking glass, a tin trunk,
beautifully painted in grey and blue)
lead the way, followed by a foursome
bearing the palankeen on their shoulders
Now even the stragglers are out of view

I like the look of her hennaed hands
gloats the bridegroom, as he glimpses
her slim fingers gripping the palankeen's side
If only her face matches her hands,
and she gives me no mother-in-law problems,
I'll forgive her the cot and the trunk
and looking glass. Will the rain never stop?
It was my luck to get a pot-licking wench.

Everything depends on the ferryman now.
It is dark in the palankeen, thinks the bride,
and the roof is leaking. Even my feet are wet.
Not a familiar face around me
as I peep through the curtains. I'm cold and scared.
The rain will ruin the cot, trunk, and looking glass.
What sort of man is my husband?
They would hurry, but their feet are slipping,

and there is a swollen river to cross.
They might have given a bullock at least,
grumbles the bridegroom's father; a couple of oxen
would have come in handy at the next ploughing.
Instead, we are landed with
a cot, a tin trunk, and a looking glass,
all the things that she will use!
Dear God, how the rain is coming down.
The silly girl's been licking too many pots.
I did not like the look of the river
when we crossed it this morning.
Come back before three, the ferryman said,
or you'll not find me here. I hope
he waits. We are late by an hour,
or perhaps two. But whoever heard
of a marriage party arriving on time?
The light is poor, and the paths treacherous,
but it is the river I most of all fear.

Bridegroom and bride and parents and all,
the ferryman waits; he knows you will come
for there is no other way to cross,
and a wedding party always pays extra.
the river is rising, so quickly jump aboard
with your cot, tin trunk, and looking glass,
that the long homeward journey can begin.
Who has seen such a brown and angry river
or can find words for the way the ferry
saws this way and that, and then disgorges
its screaming load? The clarinet fills with water.
Oh, what a consummation is here:
The father tossed on the horns of the waves,
and full thirty garlands are bobbing past

the bridegroom heaved on the heaving tide,
and in an eddy, among the willows downstream,
the coy bride is truly wedded at last.

10. The Stone-Chat

So why embellish it with words.
The eye, too long used to green
And fruitful movement, is parched
For a desert beneficence, seeking
Subtleties where none seem to exist.
For instance, in Jhelum's eroded hills
Where we have stopped for a moment to
Relieve ourselves. They always remind me
Of a village crone, too seamed and bedridden
To be of value, yet somehow lingering on,
Still spitting out the occasional proverb.
Surfeit has cloyed my vision. To understand
This waste, I must try and know myself
As I must once have been, and become,
And become, why even be…even
If I have to become …that, that stone-chat there,
Almost lost against the no-color background.
I would have missed him, but for his tail
Vibrating with excitement. He hops up the slope,
Held in place by a slab of sunlight,
To a ridiculous terrace of wheat
Which does not seem worth the tending.
Once there, to burst into song. Never
Was anything so eager to survive!
Intolerant of excuse, he calls
This place home, has learnt to distinguish
Between the various shades of grey
Till the neighborhood is a riot of color,

And a ragged patch of wheat sufficient
Cause to be mellifluous about.

11. Sialkot

There are rumours of another war.
All day, from the border villages
a steady trickle of refugees
has seeped in, leaving behind
a tilted landscape, drained of feeling.
Their particulars are heaped on carts,
women and children on the heaps,
and they themselves walking alongside
Cousins in town who saw them before
at funerals, are yet unaware
of their luck, for they will be
playing host till the scare is over.

I am high up on the balustrade
of the fort that umbilically
overlooks the town. It is more
than a thousand years old. Only
a fraction of one corner retains
the character of a fort. From it
stone, arrow, bullet were launched.
Though elevated as an insignia
it is not so belligerent now.
The city fathers malfunction in it,
and a sprawling police station where
pickpockets are given a drubbing.

This is my town. Memories choke
its brick-paved arteries, and more
than double my fund of being.

To the south, there, two miles away,
is the house grandfather built,
where father and I were born, Beyond it
on clear winter nights one can see
enemy lights blink on the horizon.
That is why the town stagnates,
Those who make their money here
invest it elsewhere. This is my town.
It gives me a sense of belonging
and peace no other place provides.

I feel the pulse of the town quicken.
It was once the centre of things.
Neglected and poetic, it broods
on the jealousies that pushed it aside;
and one wonders if these slow carts
are nudging it again into history.
It is possible; but for the moment
I am back with myself. Maybe
I shall die here and be carried
to the family plot. It is possible,
and apt that things grope forward from
the same root to which they wither.

12. Sacrifice

As he moves the knife across the neck of the goat
I can feel its point on my throat;
and as the blood geysers from the jugular,
a hot and sticky sweat breaks out on my body.

We are laying the foundations of a friend's house.
After a brief prayer that all who dwell here
may be blessed, we stand in a tight circle

around the animal to be sacrificed; it has
a civilized and patient look. The glare of the sun,
the heat, and the smell of blood make me dizzy.

The knife is with my friend; it is a necessary
part of the ritual that it is his hand only
which should draw the blood. How keenly it cuts!
The movement is a little unsteady, perhaps,
but forgive him, this is his first butchering.
Four calloused hands imprison my jerking legs.

The children are animated by the tableau,
and watch in fascination the blood flow
into the hastily dug hole. Two spadefuls of dirt
will cover me up for ever. A white-bearded man
chants something holy, and feebly thrusts the pick
into the virgin ground; the cameras click.
We are not laying the foundations of a house, but another Dachau.

13. Sialkot Bombed

On the last day of the war
they attacked our railway station,
so they got the bus-stand instead
which is just across the road,
and with it three bus-loads of
civilians, mostly women
and children and old men.

The attack came
during the busiest part of the day,
ten o'clock in the morning, when all
who are thinking of travelling
converge on the city's exits.

There were a hundred casualties.
I mean a hundred dead. I do not know
the number in hospitals. One week
after the raid the Civil Defence
were still exhuming bodies. They found
two more today.

A volunteer tells me
they have identification problems.
Most of the passengers were refugees
from the ravaged border villages
on their way to a safer place.
No one has come forward to claim them.
This particular boy has not slept
since the bombing; he keeps remembering
pieces of meat pasted on the walls,
and the screams of the wounded.

Death has such a casual approach.
Unhurriedly, the planes leaned
on their wing-tips, then straightened out
at a convenient height to drop
their load. One would think the pilots
were on a Sunday jaunt.

The passengers
are gone, though not to the destination
they set out for, and have taken with them
the attendant train of peanut vendors,
coolies, and beggars. Now the rubble
is being cleared, and other buses
are herded here, shouting their routes.
Business is brisk.

Our neighbourhood
has a relic of that grim journey.
One bus has been dragged on its hubs
by a bullock-cart to a vacant lot
adjacent to the house of its owner.
What does he want with it? Children
use it as a playground, for children
and maggots love wrecks. They swing
from the two ribs left of the rib-cage
that held the roof; scramble for the right
to occupy the sole seat remaining.
I would be content to stand in the sun
and watch them squirming in and out
of the carcass, and philosophize
on the good that comes of disaster, if
they did not make so much noise.
Their laughter sets my teeth on edge.
I place my hands against my ears
and want to disrupt their game,
but remember it is Christmas day
when some have the right to be happy.

Appendix B

Selected poems by Rizwan Akhtar

1. From Empire's Days in Lahore

In colonial days the Mall Road was laid
for clerks and officials who watched sellers

haggling through crooked binoculars, shying
people copied English words in small corners

an insinuation or swearing spilled in regular intervals
from pink pouting mouths of men wearing tricornes

they squeezed noses with muslin handkerchiefs
over vegetables and fruits, while a god-sent retinue

parted crowd for superior ghosts of the empire
correcting locals with obtuse stares

over city's geography of music and courtesans
and near canon Zamzama and Oriental College

where pigeons wafted all day taking flights
to shrines of Lahore's saints

who cultivated a mystic resistance
but Kipling, the son of her majesty covered Lahore

with all the might of a scholar rooted
in Victorian grandeur of ornate flourish

in markets he braved European merchandise
noted the lust of seller and the piety of invader

ginger-white bodies furling in French chiffon
flecked hands and threw coins to beggars

how they awed under bold exposure and an odd
shake hand in white gloves as if cleansed the land

from the malady of eastern magic and dormancy
whose tiny lives are wedged between

the love of betel-leaf and Urdu ghazal,
and passion for soldiers who vented guns

cocked into a language
as distance grew after slangs kegged

into a script of sedition until the Mutiny
routed our trusted clientele.

2. VIP movement on Lahore's Mall Road

a cavalcade of cars like an infinite python
lays it fangs on Lahore's Mall Road

on edges people wait like baited worms
they may rise from torpor and blink back

tamed in uniforms police carries
the dust of city, making sure

the clutch cabinet of many ministers
bred in feudal footholds of Punjab

get a godly cordon of snipers

who doubt every bystander by glances

vendors hold back in ridiculous postures
trees as if diseased bow in old reticence

in rickshaw a party of eunuchs curse
a child on zebra crossing skips elegantly

bikers' boredom kicks them into ribaldry
prime minister is coming to his home town

our story is all over, there is no pause
compromise and move on, people smirk

swear Punjabi vulgarity, the traffic of city
is counted by a decent wave of hand

spectral crows yell from electricity wires
the only protest government does not mind

drenched in sweating an ambulance blares
the last cacophony on this land of folk tales

where security is a dirge inside parliament
of bullet-proof cars snaking, and hissing

3. Voyagers

In the middle of evening mind is a postman
no one comes but a cranky vendor
with a stony tongue masticating tobacco teeth
delivers verbs lost in his languid yawns,

No response, no restraints, no following,

stars are remote beloveds without postcodes
distance has a taste of tantalizing kiss, after
a bomb blast the city is without moon.

The thing is we can weep and sleep
for ourselves-no morning is same, same is
with that lover chasing her-only on walls
and shops there are timings and schedules.

Who knows, I might take you along
to English gardens for dalliance, and
then just stare you out of my passport,
there is some logic in losing people.

But, I suspect, we'd miss our plane, and
behave like our cat that makes winter
its favorite time huddling around everything.
and sorts out continents in beds.

4. I Have a Faith Too

In a distant village a man built a mosque
dug a water pump and cooked humble food
peppered with anecdotes of love

crows and pigeons landed for crumbs
picked grains, screeched praises
tapped clay bowls, pecked pitchers

in hot afternoons dogs excreted on brown soil
vultures encircled over occasional corpses
of buffaloes died after giving tons of milk

when he chanted verses sparrows muttered

churned milk curdled in intricate whirls
some drowned in theophanies

but no one was concerned about the supplier
our man who wore a tattered turban and drank
from palms with a separate wet face

One day there came a man with a big moustache
and a woman heaving flesh and children
noisy and sullen bickering over clan titles

crows were harassed, goats bleated tones of escape
the call for prayer subdued them but the new man
haggled for space, kicked bowls and spat on ground

there came a new faith levied with words of fixity
garlands like creeds hanged over the simple arch
of mosque, plants around graves shriveled like opinions

5. Inside American Embassy Islamabad

Behind a glassy window
I meet a pink-white flat face
years of doggedness claim
his still eyebrows
and fingers working on keyboard
storing the story of my life
as if I had surrendered my copy rights instantly.

Clutching a bulging envelope
like a child I was spanked into silence,
I had to measure my chances secretly
beside the height and the spill-over effect
of biometrics, something is taken away

my hands' skin chaffed
for the rest of the day,
they placed me in boxes,
tabbing selecting details of rows and rows
of applicants murmuring and nudging
like unwanted poems whittle for interpretations
and find their way to uninterested listeners.

The wall-picture of a white hawk snaps
my home-grown pretensions.
The history is strangled inside barbed walls;
over vast gravel spaces diplomats' black cars
crunch their presence.

Shuttle service hiccups
at emblematic gates of embassies
emit people like prisoners
apply parole by choice.
Back there in Brooklyn a friend anticipates
my arrival-cold winds of Margalla Hills
bring a calming proximity of the shrine
Of Bari Imam where dervishes

in patched clothes smile and
last night lamps carry waxen shapes
of journeys of souls accepting everything.

The man behind window remains busy
his complacent jaws expands
like an empire manages
through a single click of word
to each answer Refused.

6. Lahore 2009

The city is still mine.
I sneaked it from my grandfather's diary

holding his finger, when the morning azan
throbbed at our door.

Its street is the vendor's junk food of words, fried
with a smattering of chilies and garnished with Punjabi.

Words drop into another's words.
The city keeps a tighter lingual embrace
and suddenly unclasps beyond the borders of courtesy.

Tales of elopement and wedding couplets
mix well with the cow dung dross of the Ravi.

Rough but innocuous, it's ultimately a decent courtesan,
well-versed in the art of betel-leaf chewing
and garlands of night blooming jasmine.
(She danced with and without anklets.
Her spidery luxury was uncased.)

Sometimes, the dust storms hurt the eyes
and history is censored, behind the dying fort.

Though lips are dried with heat
it lingers as if ghazal is brewed in wine.

On the dusk-dabbed horizon
a cordless kite plummets,
at the mercy of its chasers,
chase it, hunt it.

7. Winter's Erasure

for Tammara Claire

No one bothers about birds missing trees
nor actually notes how they struggle

against hassled moorings of evenings
preening over patched portions of grass

autumn's turf is a shred of a lateral skin
wedged between touch and taste

no one objects at silent windows
fissures in words and creaking portals

of foggy banks of the Lahore Canal ghosted
by truncated denouements of shovels

where pincered cranes grate alluvial mud
stumps of juicy roots stew in ochre slime

and leaves fell like stories from invisible mouths
holding calloused expressions

suggesting someone to wait for the right time
and a rebellious initiation in dead water.

8. Evening on Lahore Canal

Trees bend over Lahore canal like crooked sentinels
black crows stubborn as death cuff crusted barks

skinny children do splash and jump rituals all day
dishevelled water ropes their vulnerable necks

swirling densities, broken rubber tires, and twigs
accumulate, a muddy and formless hiatus waits

truant lovers evicted from crowd recline on banks
postured to sensual ends they are in the middle

weak clouds hang elegantly over a sky loosing sun
an ochre brown watery silence arrests closure

9. Lahore: A Pictorial Triptych

I
A dusty sky is a drab desire
endless lines of cars
one upon the other copulating
roads creak under their lust—
a beggar mutters verses and then stares
for the sake of sonorous effect
after a pause he yells a dramatized misery
displaying his broken limbs
in an amphitheater of honkers.

II
City's trees are scared children
brawny workers axe
darkness fosters,
subways are sacred temples
late night they have the look
of an orphan.

Electricity poles stand
like ancient gods
still and stubborn,
silence adapts faces
wedded by fate or will.

III
Sometimes we find surprises
Sometimes people smile, care about words
something precious in this chaos
the way a painter imagines climax
on a riddled canvas.

10. Promenade

The promenade is another language lying
unattended along veering expressions of city
lonely like a line, a strip of chiseled memory
holds a reminder that much has been tread;
bursting stamina of a jogger, of a wild cat
dropping excrement on edges
of a gardener struggling with leaves;
its stones remain fixed in frames
graveled stubs and wrappers
garnish the gaunt regularity of direction
tempt lovers to feeble safety
and absorb privacy of strollers
who come from nowhere to capture
smudging its history; unable to articulate
in rains and in wet darkness
abandoned to silence, an archive
where words and footholds wait

prick imagination of loitering hands
steering a walk and a soliloquy
to vent a day's content on a bench

11. A Day at Daman-e-Koh

The forest was wiped like myths denuded
before their contents are exposed
town planners took care of angry roots
in time their companion-roots like dogged lovers
surfaced and found new soil for mating.

Tracking hurdles under a referential spreading
of Margalla Hills our bodies trundled in small cabs
romantic altitude of heart endured bumpy strides
we disappeared in glances and groups.

A few never return since history avoids exit
like overnight footprints of porcupines and monkeys
memory finds a virginal forest at its will
camouflaged by a mystical regularity of hills
to herd back, and to unburden.

12. Lahore, I Am Coming

1

My voice in a dusty evening of Lahore
echoes from the chipped roof
of grandfather's grave.
The map of my life is all wrinkled.
The dust cloaks my stubbled face
sleeves upturned into a muddy pouch,
my alphabets are singlehandedly sown in this city.
A new language emerges from my silence

a sound waves through the clogs of time
and my fingers dance to a dervish's manuscript.

2

I return to Lahore
riding on a tonga
hurled by emaciated horses
and decked rickshaws
the rides of passion and jolt.
The metaphors like me
also return after ten years
to search for themes squandered in alleys
for the Lahorites bury their dreams with grace...
the barber in my Mohalla circumcised me
in those days doctors were atheists
so that groggy old man leapt
as if I was a sacrificial goat
a little spurt of water and the fleshy other
regained a new form, the poetry
took many a slashing...
the barber left our house
on that day December 1971
his hands were stained with blood.

3

I return to the tree in which I was branched,
to the first verses I churned with my tongue
the first *molvi* who taught me
the first teacher who corrected my geography
the first woman hidden behind a black veil.

4

I return

after my hands have been dipped in wells
of amazing perfumes...
I have found no other graveyard to sleep in...
where I played balls
no longer did any other "child"
in the world stayed behind,
after the spinach steaming in globs of ghee
mother rolled dough into granular
(1 am still excited about meals)
the bitter gourd with milky lasi
and the carrot drink that she would pour—
now other foods have claimed my palate.

5

I enter the courtyard of the Baadshahi Mosque
see Moghuls sleeping on pillows made of Ghazals
neck deep drenched
brick upon brick, a sea of marble
pigeons cooing to pigeon, vibrations
I wander in the streets of Urdu script
And chose images stetting in a basket of words
and see with my eye the white marbles thinning in dust
and the mumbling mouths holding beads
an aperture swallows me and I am lost
so I sit near the pond of water
listening:
"Hayya 'ala 'l-falah"
"Hayya 'ala l-falalı".

6

Returning to you
submerged in the monsoons of my childhood
returning to sneak more coins from father's pockets

buying candy floss, chopped guava in plate,
peanuts skinned in smoky pots of the vendors
returning to my favourite fountain
for the pigeons at Trafalgar
are no compensation to the Lawrence Gardens
where we peeled mangoes like an event of history
(Anarkali ogled at the colonial admirers)
but Tesco and Iceland are no distant cousins
to that noisy Friday Bazaar,
but Westminster Abbey in London
is like the torn dream from The Lahore Fort...
pigeons coded during call for prayers
and more fortunate
than those ash-grey ones,
on Marx's monument in Highgate Cemetery.

7

I wander in the squeezed alleys of Lahore
behind the torn curtains wheatish girls
wink... letters hidden in diaries,
their smiles struggle for contours
and spare me...
the pigeons curve unexpectedly
and greet me
and the fluttering kites
become queens of that sky
patched into legends
beloveds of an air choked with dust,
greet me.

8

I croon Ghailb's ghazals
sitting in the *Devan e Khas*

bedewed in ponderous gems
clouds of saffron
and betel leaf aroma dazes me,
a rain of cinnamon and aniseeds fall
I do my silent prayers in the sequestered garden,
and in the straw-gliding water see reflections
of chipped minarets recalling Faiz's last couplets—
the exaggerated hoardings
encroach upon the footnotes of history…
Lahore I am in love with you
How have you subdued my images?
For I have been made
to recall the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam
amidst the wedding drums in the outskirts
and anklets-wearing saints patched and dusted
dancing wildly on the Fair of Lamps,
How do the gardens of Shalimar resonate?

9

I have come to recollect you
from the trunk of neglect
that corrodes furtively
like a loveless bride,
so is the Mall Road sprawled
in silent dissent, tempered with compromises,
spooled in barbed wires,
I have come to you to embrace you,
the cypresses and mulberries,
and the Punjabi folk tales.
And the "spontaneous wit"
That you taught me
I have come to you for the shy smiles of women
That first taught me restraints

I carried in European winters
I beamed at you, a Ghazal ripening...
And from my father's tasbih
I shed off the reluctance
and argued with my creator.

10

I unbutton the clammy shirt
one by one it exudes beads of sweat...
I remember my father's muslin Kurta
drenched in June's heat
behind a vendor yelling for a spicy Alo Chat...
And the sellers praising white cauliflower
And the rickety Chai walla
pouring in discoloured cups of tea
like histories; slow anodynes
it works and the mind opens...
I remember the towels
hanging outside the saloons
the massage men sprawling on straw mats
As if celebrating the bodies,
I remember the houses tucked in alleys
With their iron doorknobs
And their thresholds decorated with glazed tiles
And their cold red and white floors
That remind me of an oasis.

11

The Lahore Fort
shaped into the rolling tears,
poised on staggering imagination
for every brick is chipped
And every balcony is lighted with lamp

Lahore pours oil
Lahore claims dark alleys
lovers meet one another behind curtains
and exchange letters
secretly-at night, arms dangle.

12

When I was Shakespeare buff
ten years ago
My father would send letters
crisp and well-crafted
unfolding a smell of betel-leaf and turmeric
And when the English doubted the alphabets
They took them to the scanner
they sensed mutiny in Urdu alphabets
espionage in metaphoric flourishes
And when they found nothing
They made stories worse than mine
What is the aroma that you put in Paulo
Is it a coded smell?
a plot like mangoes chutney
much is lost in the cheap translation
I said to them: It's difficult for me to interpret
For betel-leaf is a tongue
It is our way of making love
Our dancing lilts
And if your great poet
Wordsworth had known of betel leaf
must have left Windermere and Cocker mouth
a brief a revolt against cartography and poetry...
My father loves Persian, he quotes Hafiz
And whenever he missed me
He would send me a letter,

a poultice of green pan
Because for him, it is a seal
upon the envelope: my address
And when the English didn't understand
they shifted to another paradigm.
The betel leaf was sent for a forensic
the dossier is now closed.

13

I put on the warm chadar on my shoulders
Lahore descends with its smells
carrying for my children stories of mangoes,
peaches, pomegranates and street junk food
women wearing etched bangles
and slobbering like ghazlas
I enter into them
an alcove of lust
gillyflowers, hibiscus
clustered jasmine join their wrists
and I speak in perfumes
but my passport is dank English
and my black brief case is full of explanations.

14

I am a box
stuffed with compromises
am yours, Lahore
let me take an autograph from time
before I claim for more indemnity.
I am also your prisoner
so be among you that punished me into life
Let me donate this
Because I haven't given charity for year