

Postcolonial Gothic Psyche and the Haunted Mind: Transgenerational Hauntings in Nadeem Aslam's Works

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Key Words

- Psychology,
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- Anxiety

Abstract

Psychology and Postcolonial gothic writing often collide. One obvious preoccupation both share is their responsiveness to the inner workings of the human mind; another is that both play out implications of the repressed emotions and childhood experiences by capturing the psychic secrets and psychological dysfunctions. These psychoanalytical dissonances are the defining traits of Postcolonial gothic. Using qualitative research methodology, this article unfolds the psychoanalytical layers of Aslam's (2004) narratives. The introductory part of this article unfolds the psychoanalytical layers of what Aslam's (2004) writings conceal: the repressed childhood fears, deep seated traumas, and behavioral imbalances resulting from claustrophobic atmosphere of the fictional world. The theoretical grid for the article is Abraham and Torok's (1970) psychological theories of transgenerational haunting and the effect of the uncanny produced through such psychological derangement. The article examines how Aslam's (2004) fiction conjures up the terrifying psyches and explores the characters' defensive positions and strategies against the onslaught of hostile foreign forces. The article further interlinks gothic terror with immigrants' psyches and fears to highlight the ensuing sense of displacement characters feel in the light of the theory of transgenerational haunting. The study is unique in that Aslam's work has not been previously analyzed through the critical lens of transgenerational haunting and postcolonial Gothic psyche, and so far it has remained an under researched area.

1. Introduction

“What I see is nothing I want what it hides that is not nothing” (Rhys, 1996, p. 21).

Fields of Psychology and Postcolonial Gothic writing often share commonalities in that both play out implications of the repressed emotions and childhood experiences by capturing the psychic secrets. This article unfolds the psychoanalytical layers of what Nadeem Aslam’s (2004) writings conceal; something which haunts the mind: the repressed childhood fears, deep seated traumas and behavioral imbalances resulting from claustrophobic atmosphere of Aslam’s fictional world. Psychological theory of Abraham and Torok (1970) based on the concept of transgenerational haunting and the effect of the uncanny are employed as the theoretical framework of the article. Review of previous critical literature focuses on how Aslam employs the Gothic form to reflect wider anxieties in relation to nature of reality and society in his works. The study aims to interlink gothic terror with immigrants’ psychic states and fears, and the haunting sense of displacement they feel in the light of theory of transgenerational haunting. The discussion further reflects how the novelist conjures up terrifying psyches: his own traumas through autobiographical references and those of his characters by employing gothic topography. In laying bare and dissecting fraught psyches, this article explores how the characters in Aslam’s (2004) fiction take on defensive positions and strategies against the onslaught of hostile foreign forces. The study is unique in that Aslam’s (2004) work has not been previously analyzed through the critical lens of transgenerational haunting and so far it has remained an under researched area.

Psychoanalytical dissonances characterize Postcolonial Gothic writing. Aslam’s (2004) novels mirror the ruptured human psyches through a keen exploration of the archives of the human mind. The psychological reading of the text underscores the autobiographical interpretation of his works in context of his life in Pakistan. Growing up in suppressed circumstances calls for a keen perception with which Aslam (2004) analyses his life in Pakistan and abroad. Cavallaro (2002), a writer specializing in cultural theory and the visual art, establishes in his *The Gothic Vision* that story telling is one of the strategies to deal with troubling emotions. “Submerged psychic contents are themselves a source of apprehension insofar as their surfacing (however partial and haphazard they may be) impels us to stare at the darkest beyond- the stranger within over very selves”, and “by acknowledging those psychic contents, we may at least begin to develop strategies for dealing with troubling emotions and for enabling our anxieties to feed, rather than stunt, our creative and imaginative faculties for example, through story telling” (p. 48). The writer’s relationship with his family, parents, and his career choices are all reflected in his works. His own repressed wishes are hinted at as he dreamt to be a painter but was made to study science. His parents thought painters didn’t earn enough to have a reasonable living. Consequently, he had to retreat to humanities. Such biographical elements can be traced in the minor characters of his novel as in his *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004). Charag, Kaukab’s son, wishes to be a painter, but faces resistance from his family. Kaukab, in a discussion with her son mentions that he had to abandon his chemistry degree immediately, a clear biographical reference to the writer when he had to quit his science degree due to lack of interest in science studies. Likewise, in *Maps for Lost Lovers* the reader finds a clear reference to Aslam’s own childhood: “A painter is not a secure job when we come to this country. We lived in broken-down homes and hoped our children would not have to” (Aslam, 2004, p. 32). Such autobiographical references in his writing help him establish

his bond with his troubled past as his passion for painting is evident from the repeated references to art works and paintings. In *The Wasted Vigil*, Zameen's son has been named Bihzad. "That was the name Zameen had chosen for her son. Bihzad—the great fifteenth century master of Persian miniature painting" (Aslam, 2008, p. 7). This shows Aslam's own love for art and painting which, every now and then finds an outlet in his novels. Not only this, an autobiographical account of his early life in Zia's martial rule, as a result of which his family had to flee to some other country, finds an echo in his first novel *Season of the Rainbirds* (1993). His father Mian Muhammad Aslam was a communist poet who wrote under the pseudonym of Wamaq Saleem. He never forgets to pay homage to his father. He says, "sometimes the constraints are too much for one person to become a writer in one generation; you need two life times to do that, so I hit the ground running after my father prepared the way" (Chambers, 2011, p. 56). Great fictional Urdu poet of the same name Wamaq Khan, appears in *Season of the Rainbirds*. He appears again in *Maps for Lost Lovers* (Aslam, 2004) when Nusrat Ali Khan is shown to sing his poetry on an occasion. Again same character of a luminous poet appears in *The Wasted Vigil* (Aslam, 2008) when he visits Afghanistan to recite his poetry. Another biographical detail makes its way into *Season of the Rainbirds* (1993) where a strict Muslim fundamentalist is shown to break a child's toy for the reason that it appears to be idolatrous, and this can be linked to his own childhood where, one of his uncles broke his toy for the same reason. To Kaukab's orthodox Muslim character, he replies; "she is an amalgamation of my aunts and the mothers of my friends and girlfriends" (Chambers, 2011, p. 56).

Not only does the writer himself but his characters also feel nostalgic about their childhood wishes and their intensions to preserve the older tradition. These autobiographical details echoed in unfolding plot of each novel of Aslam enables the reader to learn the causes of traumatic experiences of the immigrant families. The characters continuously compare their lives in England with their lives in Pakistan. On the Eid day, Chanda's mother describes the colourless Eid in England " ' what is the point of Eid in this country—no relatives, no friends, no going up to the roof to see the Eid moon...no special Eid programmes on TV, no balloon sellers in the streets and no monkey-wallas...in short, no tamasha, no raunaq' " (Aslam, 2004, p. 128). In *Season of the Rainbirds* (Aslam, 1993), the life of many characters depends on the missing sack of letters which contains the secrets of many lives. Similarly in *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004), the characters' link with their years back in their hometown is what contributes to the gothic effect of mystery and ambivalence. For instance, Kaukab's relationship with her past is not a passive recording but a constant negotiation with her memories. In a discussion with her daughter Mah-Jabin, Kaukab lets her nostalgia speak loud in following words: "If I tell you something everyday it's because I relive it every day. Every day – wishing I could rewrite the past- I relive the day I came to this country where I have known nothing but pain"(2004, p. 101). As a result of this strong connection with her past much like Aslam had with his own, her mind becomes haunted—living away from her home and living in a country where she along with many, has been treated as the 'Other'. It is through some apparently insignificant incidents that the narrator establishes this sense of being marginalized, of being the inferior 'other'. Her loss is twofold i.e. loss of her family and relatives whom she left back in Pakistan and loss in this foreign land where her own children are not in her control. Kaukab's fidgetiness on meeting a foreigner can be perceived through her gestures and body language when she applies perfume in her armpits to avoid any adverse remarks from the white who might accuse her of being dirty and slovenly. Likewise, a Muslim driver was racially abused when he demanded fare from some passenger. "Oi, Gupta, or whatever it is

you call yourself, Abdul-Patel, Mr. Illegal Immigrants-Asylum Seeker...‘show us some respect. This is our country, not yours.’ ” (Aslam, 2004, p. 178). Kiran, A Sikh by religion, meets a similar treatment in her school days where she, developing feelings for a ‘white’ class fellow, approached him and the reply she got was that “ “you are a darkie” (the word Paki wasn’t invented until the 1970s)” (Aslam, 2004, p. 268). Such a treatment never lets the immigrants have a sense of security and this is the reason why Pakistan for them always remained their home, their “own country” (Aslam, 2004, p. 283). Later Shamas, realizing that England will never be a home for them, says; “what the ideas of honour and shame and good reputation mean to the people of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh can be summed up by a Pakistani saying: He whom a taunt or jeer doesn’t kill is probably immune to even swords” (Aslam, 2004, p. 145). And to a question regarding intermingling of culture, he says:

... migration is terrible traumatic, particularly for those people from the Indian subcontinent who are not affluent ...if people assume that migration to the West brings comfortable wealth and happiness, they should speak to a taxi driver. I can protect myself from racism of certain White people, but a taxi driver can’t, because they are getting into the back of his car, drunk, on a Saturday night. His idea of immigration would be totally different from mine and, as a writer, I have to keep that in mind (Chambers, 2011, p. 56).

1.1. Objectives

This paper attempts to examine Aslam’s (2004) fiction from the perspective of the Gothic and describes how Abraham and Torok’s (1970) psychological theories of transgenerational haunting can be employed to study the effect of the uncanny produced through such psychological derangement in Aslam’s fiction.

1.2. Significance

The present study is significant in that Gothic psyche is rarely a field of exploration in South Asian fiction let alone a Pakistani writer. Aslam (2004) uses different Gothic tropes to capture the transgenerational hauntings.

2. Literature Review

The world of Aslam’s novels not only captures the traumatic experiences of the immigrant families, their suppression at political level, but also explores the role of religion in sustaining the oppressive political and social orders as is evident in the novel *Season of the Rainbirds* (1993) where every character is oppressed by and entangled in religious extremism. The description of the town in *Maps for Lost Lovers* further sheds light on the sense of political isolation and religious segregation immigrants suffer from.

Dashte-e-Tanhaii—“The Wilderness of Solitude or The Desert of Loneliness”—is the name inhabitants give to their town which represents their state of mind (Aslam, 2004, p. 29). The author does not reveal the city’s English name with the intention to afford liberty to inhabitants to choose a name which can convey well their state of mind. Failing to accept any foreign name of the town, the immigrants from various countries i.e. Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka mutually agree on a name reflective of their effort to form a union against the white race. Sethi (2008) interviewing Aslam says: “In Urdu poetry and as a metaphor, Dashte-Tanhaii, of course, is not just a desert or world of solitaire or

loneliness” ; it is a one word comment on their entire existence in that foreign land (p. 356). Aslam (2008) gives real names of deserts in *The Wasted Vigil* which convey many disturbing truths about the people’s lives: “Dasht-e-Margo, Desert of Death, Sar-o-Tar, Empty Desolation. Dasht-e-Jahanum, Desert of Hell” (p. 16). The names comment on how their psyches fed on the anxieties and hard living conditions during and after war. The name of the town in England is contrasted with the names of places in Afghanistan: the former was named after their mental and social conditions, while the latter were named after the hostile weather conditions as in *Dasht-e-Jahanum* where temperature had gone beyond fifty degrees, and “on the dunes the spiders stitched together sand grains with their silk to make sheets to shelter under” (p. 49).

Besides exploring the psyche of the haunted mind through autobiographical references, the most obvious relationship between gothic and the mind can be observed at the level of characters’ portrayal where Aslam introduces the characters through their minds and in most characters the signs of psychological derangement, obsessional or psychotic behavior are most starkly exemplified. From external signs of hauntings and psychological disturbance, the gothic anxiety has been internalized as Aslam employs the Gothic form to reflect wider anxieties in relation to nature of reality and society. Botting (1996) differentiates between external and internal gothic forms in the following lines: “External forms were sign of psychological disturbances, of increasingly uncertain subjective states dominated by fantasy and madness. The internalization of gothic forms reflected wider anxieties which, centering on the individual, concerned the nature of reality and society and its relation to individual freedom and imagination” (p. 11). It’s the latter aspect, the internalization of gothic, which has been employed by Aslam in his fiction to reveal that anxieties stem from the conflict between the individual and society. In each of the three novels, the characters’ psychological disturbances are not the result of the fantasy or any subjective state.

3. Research Methodology

The study’s research design is qualitative in nature and it employs the method of close analysis of text to interlink gothic terror with immigrants’ psychic states and fears, and the haunting sense of displacement they feel in the light of theory of transgenerational haunting. The study further reflects how the novelist conjures up terrifying psyches: his own traumas through autobiographical references and those of his characters by employing gothic topography. As the ‘primary methodology’ of literary texts (Jockers, 2013, p. 6), close reading method encompasses diverse activities ranging from unraveling Shakespearean puns to exposing the political unconscious of Victorian novels (Smith, 2016, p. 57). It is ‘an informed, fine-grained analysis of some piece of writing, usually in connection with some broader question of interest’ (Smith, 2016, p. 58). This qualitative literary study aims at exploring and producing new meaning of the indigenous text from psychological perspective.

4. Results and Discussion

The anxieties mainly stem from individuals' contact with the external world and the treatment they receive in foreign land. *The Wasted Vigil* (2008), a novel about Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and later events, begins with the haunting line: "Her mind was a haunted house" (p. 32), which intrigues the readers to know why the narrator has commented on a character's state of mind. Talking about Lara and her mind, the writer tells how he is at pains "to make it apparent that we are in somebody else' mind, through free indirect discourse" (Chambers, 2011, p. 57). The later events of the novel reveal that both the rationalizations and the unconscious desires turn Lara's mind into a crucible. The delusions caused by the killing of her brother, the atrocities of war, painful truths about the life of her kind host Marcus, all contribute to her plight with a piercing sense of guilt that she is a guest of the very man whose daughter was repeatedly raped by her cynical brother. Lara's brother exemplifies Cavallaro's (2002) idea of transgression and morbid desire: "The psyche often exhibits its darkest traits when its hidden drives do not find an outlet in action. In such cases, mental life folds and unfolds in its own interiority, spawning endless fantasies of transgression and morbid desire" (Cavallaro, 2002, p. 69).

The condition of those sent on war is no better than animals; after smelling death at every step, and living away from their own families, what they are left with is nothing but darkness. The narrator explains how the hidden desires find an outlet in violence when Benedikt, Lara's brother "again and again in darkness . . . found himself approaching her, ready to subdue, dizzy and almost sick with longing and desire and power" (Aslam, 2008, p. 5). Lara's futile search for her missing brother when Soviet Union "continued to tell lies or sent her from person to person to exhaust and frustrate her" (Aslam, 2008, p. 55) and the violent treatment she meets in that foreign country, all turn her mind into a 'haunted house'. The day her husband died "had become the first day of the rest of her life...she desired no real communion with anyone, entire days going by without her speaking to even one person" (Aslam, 2008, p. 31). The single concrete metaphor of the "haunted house" becomes a metaphor of confinement through which Aslam (2008) reveals a troubled psyche torn apart by conflicting emotions. Not only Lara, Marcus is also introduced as a "prophet in wreckage". " 'A daughter, a wife, a grandson.' Marcus had been saying earlier. 'You could say this place took away all I had.' ". And he further digs out that "the west was involved in the ruining of this place, in the ruining of my life. There would have been no downfall if this country had been left to itself by those others". Life has been so cruel to a man like him who "thought too lovingly of the other races and civilizations of the world...and was ruined as a result", but who now hesitates to meet his relatives even, "his first reaction is that of a mild incredulity whenever someone approaches him. They can see me...they can see me" (p. 140).

Likewise, in *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004) the relationships among Kaukab and Shamas, Kaukab and her children, Shamas and Suraya are intriguing examples of the convoluted ways psyches and the ensuing psychological complications are laid bare. Ironically, despite being the patriarch of the family Shamas fails to provide protection to his wife and children. The concept of gothic heroines striving to break their way from villains and always waiting for a rescuer to save them from clutches of an evil patriarch is also problematized. Here the gothic theme of a protective family patriarch is subverted in terms of failed marriages, un-protective husbands, and defiant sons. This leads to an uncomfortable relationship between Kaukab and Shamas as is observed by their son Ujala,

who talks cynically about his parents' relationship and lets out his anger in these words, "There couldn't have been a more dangerous union than you two...he was too busy day dreaming about the world and the time his grandchildren were to inherit...for him the important ones were the ones that hovered above his head—those yet to be born" (p. 29). Kaukab perceives that she is alone and solitary despite her home and children as the narrator in *Maps for Lost Lovers* comments on her state: "when the doors of Pakistan closed on her, her hands had forgotten the art of knocking; she had made friends with some women in the area but she barely knew what lay beyond the neighborhood and did not know how to deal with strangers: full of apprehensions concerning the white race and uncomfortable with people of another Sub continental religion or grouping" (Aslam, 2004, p. 115). The space she occupies makes it difficult for her to know where she belongs. Such unhomey state continues to erupt around Kaukab. Not only Kaukab and Shamas, there are many characters who continue to lie beneath the façade of a stable, independent self. Mah-Jabin, Kaukab's daughter is another such example of a disturbed psyche. Apparently, she is happily married but later on she reveals the truth of her brutal husband in a heated argument with Kaukab. She tells her mother of her pain when she had to succumb to even his unlawful demands.

Such transgressive desires in Shamas, Kaukab, Suraya and many other characters of the novel are the consequences of suppression and anxiety and in an attempt to find an outlet they end up transgressing the bonds: both social as well as religious. This binds the texts to the gothic thread, with transgressions being a defining trait of gothic novels. In traditional gothic world, usually there is a single villainous character who is the central character responsible for the repression and exploitation of the young. In a postcolonial gothic text societal oppression, disturbed psyches and emotions and desires are the source of actual exploitation. The anxieties lead to transgression, and repression in the society triggers transgressions in those characters. The transgression is of varied forms. For instance, at times religious transgression is exemplified by the commissioner in *Season of the Rainbirds* (1993) who has been shown to have illicit relationship with his Christian maid Elizabeth Massih. Similarly, Charag, Kaukab's son enjoys a similar relationship with Stella. Besides religious transgression, there is also relational transgression which constitutes infidelity. That can be seen in Suraya and Shamas' relationship and even Shamas' relationship with his wife Kaukab. In *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004), the force of transgressive desire, when Shamas sinfully copulates with Suraya, underlines the reaction against a repressive society. In the same novel, Chanda and Jugnu transgress moral constraints and are stigmatized for doing it. They had to elope as the society put a restraint on them that they cannot marry each other. Likewise, in *The Wasted Vigil* (2008), Zameen, daughter of Marcus Caldwell, an Englishman who has spent most of his life in Afghanistan, elopes with her lover for the fear of being murdered.

4.1. Discussion

Cavallaro (2002) states that: "What seems to afflict the gothic psyche most intensely is an over arching sense of uncertainty as to whether the source of fear lies in the past or in the future" (p. 62). In a gothic text, the most reliable artistic device for producing uncanny effect is to leave the reader in uncertainty. In *Season of the Rainbirds* (Aslam, 1993) some of the characters fail to cope with the modern times. Yousaf Rao, a lawyer and a political activist, in a discussion with a cleric points out that; "I was wrong when I said that Maulana

Hafeez doesn't understand the complexity of the world. I think he does. He just embraces the lesser of two evils when it suits him and at other times absolutely refuses to compromise. It's the other maulana, Dawood, the fanatic, who doesn't realize that times have changed" (p. 141).

Another defining trait of a gothic text is to create fear in the reader. Cavallaro (2002), points out that "Fear does not affect us systematically, through the alternation of clearly demarcated moments of pain occasioned by the recognition that we are in its grip, and equally well-defined moments of pleasure resulting from the hope that we might extricate ourselves from it" (p. 81). In a traditional gothic text the effect of fear, terror and horror is created through the introduction of ghosts etc. The figure of ghost throughout the gothic genre had always been a complex figure. Very often such questions come to surface: Are ghosts real or mere hallucinations, who, out of feeling of their guilt or creation of their minds? Do characters take advantage of the situation when they claim to have seen such visions? Such questions complicate the presence of ghost figures in any gothic text usually replete with supernatural figures. From the ghosts in *The Castle of Otranto* (Walpole, 1967) down to the recent gothic texts, the ghost figure remains the dominant source of fear as ghosts are usually considered to be "an emblematic incarnation of the inexplicably frightening" (Cavallaro, 2002, p. 198). And "Those creatures return to haunt the imagination, their insistent resurgence mirroring the pervasiveness of fear as an existential condition". The following passage from Jean Rhys' (1996) *Wide Sargasso Sea* reveals the revengeful intensions of a ghost figure in a gothic text: "If I was bound for hell, let it be hell. No more false heavens; no more damned magic. You hate me and I hate you. We'll see who hates best. But first, I will destroy your hatred. Now my hate is colder, stronger, and you'll have no hate to warm yourself." (p. 56). Similarly, in this novel it is again implied that those who have been wronged, do come back to haunt. "They are children they wouldn't hurt a fly. Unhappy children do hurt flies" (p. 102). The complexity of the ghost figure is created through the forms they assume in gothic texts of each era. As in *Wuthering Heights* the concept of fleshly bleeding ghost had been introduced which is unlikely of the ghost figure, as they are supposed to be airy creatures. In *Turn of the Screw* the narrator leaves ambiguity about whether Mr. Quint and Miss Jessel, seen by the governess, were real ghosts or mere hallucinations. Similarly, in *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1996) Bertha was sketched in a way that she has been treated as a ghost while she is still alive. This complexity prevents us from understanding the ghosts through one interpretative thread or mode.

Some ghosts terrify us by blurring the boundaries between life and death, but some ghosts do not evoke such terrifying feeling. The appearance of ghosts in Aslam's (2004) fiction is also laden with psychological connotation. In Aslam's (2004) fictional world, ghosts articulate both communal and personal apprehensions without horrifying the living. They are portrayed to arouse our sympathy which is an uncanny feeling in context of ghosts. Narrative ambiguity is deliberately created through the treatment of ghosts which is unconventional in that the ghosts of Jugnu and Chanda in *Maps for Lost Lovers* (Aslam, 2004) or those of Zameen in *The Wasted Vigil* (2008), do not terrify the reader. "Frequently ghosts are capable of engaging sympathetic effects insofar as their return is not motivated by their thirst for revenge, but also by their determination to right a wrong" (Cavallaro, 2002, p. 202), and "the more familiar and habitual the site of an apparition is, the more sudden and disquieting are the effects. Ghosts insert themselves into the texture of the quotidian in baffling ways: they walk through walls, climb out of portraits, peer through

mirrors” (p. 209) In Aslam (2004), the ghosts strive to make their presence felt even in their absence. In an attempt to let the future generations know that a wrongful act of violence had been done to them and that it is not easy to forget the dead who are ruthlessly killed, they keep hovering on the pages of Aslam’s (2004) fiction without being venomous. Whenever they are mentioned, a feeling of sympathy surges in the reader’s heart for these fragile victims of violence and oppression. As in *The Wasted Vigil*, whenever the ghost of Zameen is mentioned, it always arouses sympathies in the way her father Marcus feels as if he were caressing his daughter’s face (Aslam, 2008).

The narrator does not limit the scope of ghost to just Jugnu and Chanda as many of the characters interpret them through their own experiences i.e. Shamas sees in ghosts his own image and Suraya’s. “The two ghosts that are said to be roaming the woods near the lake – surely are he and Suraya, their baby inside her womb, his hands burning, giving out light” (Aslam, 2004, p. 187). Here Shamas relates to the story of Jugnu and Chanda. They stand for immortal lovers; many would come and relate to their story. Not only Shamas, but also the boy who represents next generation could also relate to the ghosts as a specimen of transgenerational haunting. In *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004) “beginning in about a month, they-Chanda and Jugnu-would lay in the various rooms of this house on secret trysts, the windows curtained and the cloths daringly put the way they are in casinos” (p. 193). The complexity of the ghost figure is established as the ghosts stand not just for Chanda and Jugnu; each character in the novel interprets them from their own perspective. “There is of course nothing there the boy has become unhinged. Ghosts? People said it was my brother Jugnu and his girlfriend Chanda. Jugnu’s hands glowing as always. Chanda’s stomach glowing brightly because of the baby she was carrying. Three ghosts, two adults and an unborn baby” (Aslam, 2004, p. 230). Another boy, seeing him and his beloved in those ghosts says: “I heard about that but it was not them its me and her stomach glows because that is where on her dead body my letter was placed; the letter I wrote to her on the day of funeral and my hand glows because of the orchids I am carrying for her” (p. 324). As the narrator in Margaret Attwood’s (2001) *The Blind Assassin* says; “Nothing is more difficult than to understand the dead, I’ve found; but nothing is more dangerous than to ignore them” (p. 621). Cavallaro (2002) puts forward a similar idea, “The dead may turn out to have a more solid identity than their living counterparts” (p. 52). This holds true for the ghosts of Chanda and Jugnu as throughout the text they have a stronger presence than the living as even the lives of the living somehow remain connected to the dead. In *The Wasted Vigil* (2008), the narrator admits that “The mind recalls the facts, remembers that some absences are more absolute than others” (p. 6). Zameen’s ghost appears with constant intervals and it is interesting that the ghost figures, through their presence, stress their absence from the thread of the living and that they were washed away from the fabric of life unjustly. The ghosts of Chanda and Jugnu resurface to re-awaken ‘the dead’ out of their dogmatic ideals. Whenever they have been mentioned, they never terrify like the traditional ghost figure. They have been shown as illuminating, peaceful yet powerful presence.

Their all-encompassing presence is what connects this concept with the psychological theory of transgenerational haunting. Through the immortal presence of the ghosts trauma can be handed over to the next generation without their experiencing it directly. Abraham and Torok’s (1970) theory of trans-generational haunting published in the 1970s and 1980 initiates the debate on whether trauma can be handed down to posterity. This theory develops the concept that traumas are transmitted to the next generations as in ghost stories and folk tales_ the dead who suffered injustice or were not given clean burial come back to

talk or to haunt the living. As in Morrison's *Beloved* (2004) the concept that "people who die bad don't stay in the ground" and "Anything dead coming back to life hurts" is established through the ghost of baby Sugs which returns to haunt the living (p. 42). The essential horror emanates from its latent power to revisit and rewrite the traumatic history of slavery and the treatment meted out to slaves. It is not Kaukab's personal history as a submissive woman that triggers her strict attitude towards her children; it is the same she inherited and which will be passed on to her children as well. The phenomenon of transgenerational haunting is reflected in the argument between Kaukab and her daughter Mah-Jabin where she refers to her mother's past traumatic experiences having been transmitted to her children. She points out how the hostile environment, the place where her mother could not but feel the deepest impossibility of being ever at home, is transferred to her children. Kaukab behaved the same way towards her children the way she was treated in her past. She says: "it was not easy! It's still a torment. What hurts me is that you could have given me that freedom instead of delivering me into the same kind of life that you were delivered into" (Aslam, 2004, p. 362). Schwab (2010) explores in his work that; "In violent histories, the personal is inseparable from the collective and the political" and that; "Abraham and Torok's (1970) concept of the phantom and transgenerational haunting not only moves psychoanalysis beyond individual life experiences and their intrapsychic processing but also deals with the cultural legacies or the unfinished business of one or more generations of a people and their transmission to the descendants" (p. 15), and such transmission is hinted at when in *Maps for Lost Lovers*: "The children are going around saying that in the lakeside woods a pair of sad ghosts wanders, luminous, like figures stepped down from a cinema screen, a man and woman, his hands and her stomach growing more than the rest of the bodies" (Aslam, 2004, p. 362). Similar streaks of transgenerational haunting can be traced in the postmodern gothic text *Beloved* where the ghost of the baby disappears from the house but her presence remains as in the back of "124 her footprints come and go, come and go. They are so familiar. Should a child, an adult place his feet in them, they will fit" (Morrison, 2004, p. 221). The next generation can feel the presence of traumatic experience of ghosts, which will continue to make themselves heard. "There on the opposite shore of the lake, in the dense trees, is where the ghosts of the two murdered lovers are said to wander, calling out to him, aglow, giving out a light like fireflies. Pale eyes change color soon after death...her ghost belly is said to be brighter than the rest of her, an indication that it contains a luminous child, the child that died with her" (Aslam, 2004, p. 365). Touching a mirror's frame and inhaling the scent of sandalwood, Lara admits that "the wood of a living sandal tree has no fragrance...the perfume materializing only after cutting down. Like the soul vacating the body after death" (Aslam, 2008, p. 86). Likewise, Jugnu and Chanda are known in every street even after their souls part with their bodies.

The novel resists closure as near the end of the novel, in autumn season a new couple of lovers has been introduced as if the narrator establishes that no matter how much violence has been directed against the defiant souls like Jugnu and Chanda, there will always remain some love rebels in every age... ghosts to haunt and transgenerational haunting of ghosts. Schwab (2010) further explores in *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma* that Abraham and Torok's (1970) work on transgenerational haunting suggests that symptoms are transmitted from one generation to the next when a shameful and therefore unspeakable experience is barred from consciousness or kept secret. The trauma is communicated without ever having been spoken, and resides within the next

generation as a silent presence or phantom. And this silent presence can be felt throughout the course of Aslam's novels. A similar idea is presented in *The Wasted Vigil* (2008) as well where "a nameless child becomes a ghost, he had been told once, because no one without a name can get a firm enough foothold in the next world. It roams the world, making itself visible to the living in order to be addressed in some way...but humans run away from ghosts and won't address them", a nameless child without name is someone without recognition, without any status which in turn reacts and becomes a ghost, constantly haunting the living, and this interplay of absence and presence continues as "some absences are more absolute than others", and like butterflies ghosts; "visible invisible visible invisible- they seem to blink in and out of existence as they fly amid the leaves" and roam around (p. 86).

4.2. Limitations and Suggestions

The study focuses on the concept of transgenerational hauntings in terms of how anxieties run through generations. The research is limited to a close textual analysis of Aslam's works and does not take into account the fictional works of Aslam's contemporaries. Besides, it does not encompass other psychological theories that deal with anxiety or trauma. Still, a closer analysis of Aslam's novels from this psychological perspective can lead to a deeper understanding of the characters' psyche that can help the readers develop a better understanding of the workings of the human mind in the society they live in.

5. Conclusion

In sum, psychological exploration of dark facets of human psyche reveals the paradox that even the mind isn't a safe place in a foreign land. The study examined the implications of violent uncanny experiences through the psychological derangement of characters in Aslam's fiction, his use of the metaphor of mind as a haunted house and through other images of confinement. Images of confinement scattered throughout his works reveal the author's attempt to portray the psychological aspect through gothic mode. The research portrays psychological states of mind of Aslam's characters, their anxieties, traumas, and dramatizes their relationship to nature of reality and society with the keen eye of a psychologist. In the gothic tradition of haunting and ambivalence, Aslam's novels create a haunted uncanny space. The study examined a deeper understanding of these characters' psyche in the light of psychological theories of Abraham and Torok (1970). Future researchers can analyze Aslam's most recent fiction in the light of other psychoanalytic theories and trace or examine other gothic tropes in his works.

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