



مجلة جامعة الزيتونة الدولية - مجلة علمية محكمة تصدر عن جامعة الزيتونة الدولية

<https://journal.ziu-university.net>

30/05/2024

53-37 ص.ص. العدد الثاني والعشرين: Issue: N22

Al-Zaytoonah University International Journal for Scientific Publishing

## Decoding Diaspora Narratives: Unraveling Western Feminist Perspectives through *Kartography* and the Occidental Gaze

Nawal Al-Sheikh<sup>1</sup>  
English Language  
Department  
Palestine Technical  
University  
Palestine

[Nawal.hasan@ptuk.edu.ps](mailto:Nawal.hasan@ptuk.edu.ps)

Sufia Humayun<sup>2</sup>  
Department of English Literature and  
Language  
Govt. Gulberg College (W), Gulberg,  
Lahore.  
Pakistan

[Sufiahumayun1745@gmail.com](mailto:Sufiahumayun1745@gmail.com)



## Abstract

The research paper uses Kamila Shamsie, a Pakistani diaspora Anglophone writer's novel *Kartography* as a primary text to critique the influence of occidental gaze on the diaspora female writers of Pakistan and how they end up projecting the Pakistani women from their perspective of affluent, educated status mimicking the western feminist philosophy. The study uses textual analysis and closed reading methods within the post-colonial feminism and narrative theoretical framework. The discourse of the occidental gaze, representation/misrepresentation of the Orient, objectification of women, and Western feminism have been used to question the authenticity of narratives of these diaspora writers. The purpose of this research is to highlight that the feminist theory is not monolithic and that the diaspora writers lack the authenticity to define regional feminism in Asia. In other words, they cannot shed the influence of the Western feminist philosophy and the occidental gaze because they share the same experiences of living in Western society. Since they have spent most of their lives in the West, they have been conditioned in the occidental discourse and viewpoint about their native land. This project aims to highlight variations in the feminist stance and how Asia and Pakistan specifically need a different treatment to define feminism to encapsulate Pakistani unique idiom and experiences and that diaspora women writers have the least credibility to develop one.

**Keywords:** Occidental Gaze, diaspora, western feminist philosophy, narratology, victim and performance studies.



## Introduction

Pakistani diaspora writers overwhelm the literary canvas of Pakistani literature so much so that these writers hold representational positions when it comes to thematic concerns regarding feminism and women's socio-cultural and religious position in Pakistani society. On the one hand, they become a dominant voice of Pakistan, while on the other hand, their immigrant status renders their stories a perspective of an outsider who is living in a Western society, under the influence of their socio-cultural norms. The research focuses on the narratives about Pakistani women written by diaspora women writers. The text of *Kartography* by Kamila Shamsie has been picked up as a case study to prove the thesis statement that the depiction of women in diaspora literature is more under the influence of white man's gaze, self-fashioning narratives, negative stereotyping, nostalgia, binary opposites, imitation of western feminist discourse, specularization and objectification of women. Kamila Shamsie's works also reflect the perspective of the Western feminist discourse under which influence she ends up portraying Pakistani women from the ideals of Western feminist discourse. Bhattacharya (1998) in her book *Tales of Dark-Skinned Women* gives an example of contextual interpretations of Salome's dance of seven veils. According to her, for the Western audience, the dance is about the woman's urge to take off her clothing and seek liberation through nakedness. This might not necessarily be the case with Asian women, for whom sexual liberation might be one of the last priorities and that too of very few and privileged women. Rafia Zakriya (2017) voices the same idea in her book *Veil*, she talks about different interpretations of as simple a dressing as a veil. For the Western women before 9/11 veil represented the oppression of Muslim women but after 9/11 particularly after the 2008 seige of Lal Masjid by Hafiza Jamia Madrassa women the same veil meant militancy and terrorism. In contrast, Zakriya points out multifarious uses of the veil for Pakistani Muslim women: some women prefer wearing a veil to maintain anonymity in public spaces, especially in acts of transgression (dating men) or during court trials, traveling jewelry laden brides wear a veil to protect themselves from the robbers. According to her veil-wearing women could be more confident and threatening in public spaces because of their concept of self-righteousness and socio-religious approval of the act. She also points out that despite the veil how these



women navigate their way out of the veil for acts of transgressions and liberation. Hence, Asian women demand a different version of feminism and liberation which is more in coherence with their socio-religious and cultural patterns and demands of the society. It will also focus on how the authorial guise of the diaspora writers renders them impotent to cast off the "occidental gaze" while narrating tales of their native lands to influence their readership. The paper proves this contention by highlighting the spaces where either a white feminist discourse or occidental gaze is adopted while writing tales of indigenous Pakistani women. This research will therefore prove that Kamila Shamsie uses the aforementioned devices to negotiate her national identity on the one hand but on the other, she consciously or unconsciously follows the Western philosophy of feminism and ends up portraying Pakistani women as objects or "two-dimensional mahogany princess". The representation of these women as objects regardless of their socio-religious context Shamsie reflects her distorted image of the inside as an outsider. And therefore, she does not stand as the accredited indigenous voice of Pakistani women.

### Literature Review

The works of criticism center on European or African writings, and how the diaspora writers tend to mimic White man's gaze. These studies have dealt with British and African writers mainly. There has been research on feminism in the Pakistani Literary canvas too. But these researches are confined to topics like the empowerment of women through fiction writing, the evolution of female characters, gender representation, identity crises, reading of gendered female bodies, and indigenous models of subjugation but no one has questioned the authenticity of these diaspora writers. The research attempts to establish that socio-political pressures in the tense atmosphere of the white man's gaze or 'one way looking' lead to certain narrative biases which can be studied as indicators of stereotyping, feminism, monolithic versions, or inversion before the oppressive gaze. Their scholarship does not encompass Pakistani diaspora literature and no one has focused on how this occidental gaze is not only restricted to the native occident but also transits to the migrated diaspora as well. The paper addresses this gap to prove that diaspora writings do not hold representational value and also a fresh angle is needed to start reading diaspora literature as narratives of the natives written by an outsider.



Theorists of narratology and feminism believe that a piece of art should exhibit the author's experience. One of the proponents of this idea is Showalter, she propagates that “a text should reflect the writer's experience, and that the more authentic the experience is felt to be by the reader, the more valuable the text.” (Moi, 2008, p. 35) She criticizes Woolf on the pretext that she being an elite-class woman cannot speak for the experiences of women belonging to different strata, she further reiterates how this very act hinders Woolf from creating "really committed feminist work" (p. 35). She believes that Woolf is not only too subjective and passive but also elusive, she escapes her 'female gender identity by embracing the idea of androgyny'. She also accuses Doris Lessing of merging the 'feminist ego' into the collective consciousness, negating the very fact that feminist discourse varies from region to region due to the multiplicity of cultural, social, and religious contexts. For example, in *The Grass is Singing*, Mary Turner the leading protagonist is the character who is trapped in her complexities. On the one hand, she marries Dick Turner to have the protection of home but on the other hand, her uncontrolled physical attraction towards Moses leads to her destruction. For what remains her sense of racial superiority over Moses, could be interpreted as less important in comparison to the sin of adultery or the vicious desire to mate outside wedlock by the other religious or cultural groups. This argument is further explained by the sociologist Hugo Beigel (Moi, 2008) how this insertion of white feminism into the collective consciousness is reflected among white female writers, in their attempts to write feminist writings they end up “obscuring the patriarchal character of Western culture and in their general tendency to attribute impossible virtues to women, have ended by confining them in a narrow and often remarkably constricting sphere of behavior” (p. 40). Likewise, Shamsie in her novel *Kartography* projects not even five percent of mainstream Pakistani women. The women in her novel look superficial and shallow i.e. Leila bragging about her third honeymoon, women visiting farmland with male friends and then having no qualms about switching partners, women drinking and gossiping at beach parties while leaving their young kids stay alone at the care of housekeepers and guards. The episode about the masseuse Naila and Raheen also raises concerns. (Shamsie, 2002, p.198) It is not that workers like waxing ladies or masseuse do not have ego or self-respect. No matter how much these women need cash, they are also well aware of the fact that well-to-do women also demand them or rather



depend on them. But the relationship between the masseuse and a lady is more than that of a work. It is also cathartic. The ladies are more like patrons to the workers like masseuses for listening to their tales of bitter realities and broken relations. Ironically, the manual workers understand the situation if a lady does not show interest in her tales. Likewise, Millett argues that one cannot keep aside social and cultural contexts while in an attempt to comprehend literature. Thus this contradiction between reader and author determines the 'premises of work'. Hence, no matter how authentic is the inner turmoil of the protagonist, one cannot avoid the response of the female reader who is entrapped by her female reality which might be different from that of the protagonist or the author.

There is no denying the fact that the representation of false images of women in fiction can be done by female writers as well. Moreover, female reality is not monolithic, it rather is replete with nuances and variations according to their respective contexts. Irigaray (Moi, 2008) furthers the argument by stating that woman is an outside representation: 'The feminine has consequently had to be deciphered as forbidden, in between signs, between the realized meanings, between the lines' (p. 130). Moreover, the female character of fiction is but the mirror image of the negative male subject's 'specularization' or man's secularized 'other'. Hence, the same image of femininity is inevitably represented in the Western philosophical discourse consciously or unconsciously. The only way suggested to ward off this specularization is inversion, negative stereotyping, and arrested representation.

One can deduce from their writings Bhattachariya (1998) in her book *Tales of dark-skinned women* purports how the South Asian diaspora writers tell the stories about their homeland as indicative of nostalgia. She calls them 'hungry for authenticity diaspora eyes' (p. 201) which in their nostalgic journey through their writings, try to conjure up their homeland or 'roots' under the impact of the Western philosophical discourse of feminism. She emphasizes that the stories of diaspora writers are nothing but 'cast-off tools of Western Knowledge production' or in other words occidental gaze. These writers have no choice but to reproduce the voice they have been hearing for a long while living in the West. No matter how much one tries to 'distrust' and 'unlearn' this occidental gaze from influencing their work of fiction and non-fiction, one gets caught up by the 'control freak of Western subject. "The instituted knowledge of society, as it exists in recorded history, is the



knowledge obtained by the dominant classes in their exercise of power. The dominated, by their very powerlessness, have no means of recording their knowledge within those instituted processes, except as an object of the exercise of power.” (Bhattacharyya, 1998, p. 122)

Their writings either exhibit the same victim image of the natives or inversion of the same image leading to labeling these writers' writings as both "victim studies" as well as "performance studies". The performance word itself indicates a political statement as it targets to seek 'audience's approval'. Therefore, after all the love and consideration for west audience's approval, the representation of native women is nothing but a 'two-dimensional mirage of someone else's look'. Ultimately their fiction ends up being, 'the fiction of the one-way look, a master lie to live by...' (Bhattacharyya, 1998, p. 316).

Mr. Basant Walter in his lecture “The Art of Fiction” emphasizes that the novelist must reflect the life experiences of the writer and that his “characters must be real and such as might be met with in actual life...”. (p. 05) This argument is furthered by Henry James in his article "The Art of Fiction" that how this sense of reality might be achievable by the writer but it does not rule out the possibility of 'selection' or the version of reality the writers ends up portraying out of the multifarious contexts. He also negates the idea of Mr. Basant that art has a purpose, and he replaces purpose with that of diffidence. According to him the sense of purpose behind a novel is nothing but a source of corruption. Therefore, these diaspora novels' writings influenced by Western feminist philosophy and their elite status, are produced keeping in view the Western audience consciously or unconsciously. They lack the authenticity that a piece of art requires.

### **Research Questions and Objectives**

In the discussion, the paper questions the theoretical validity or authenticity of the versions of diaspora tales about their long-left native lands. It also questions the authenticity of the narratives which are not based on personal or first-hand experiences and whether these writers living away from their native land or visiting it sparsely make them authentic voices to speak about the region. It also questions if their contexts as affluent, educated, and emancipated living abroad women get in the way of comprehending an entirely new version of feminism which is more in coherence with Pakistani indigenous



women in her diverse socio-cultural and religious backgrounds. The analyses also exhibit how the prevalence and populism of diaspora literature make the reader believe in the version of tales about Pakistani women even though few of them have merely visited Pakistan once or twice in years.

### Discussion

Kamila Shamsie is one of the most prominent Pakistani Diaspora Anglophone writers and a major figure in contemporary literature. She has written prize-winning fiction books including *Kartography* and *Home Fire*, which won the Women's Prize for fiction. She creates strong female protagonists but her female characters are created under the influence of the ideals of Western feminism. As Bhattacharyya (1998) says in her book, *Tales of dark-skinned women*, "We have been constructed in the shadow of the West as the shadow of the West, living our lives in shadow, away from the light of enlightenment. That is the world we know. We have learned to think as our masters and mistresses think, to see through their eyes, and to believe in what we see." (p. 234)

Bhattacharyya (1998) goes on to question the position of the diaspora vis a vis their writings about their native land and she questions the authority of diaspora writers' tales about their native land. "The South Asian diaspora looks to the subcontinent as an anchor for identity formation, however mythical and uncomfortable. India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka—these names must be fixed "national origins" if the particularity of the South Asian diaspora is to be maintained. A certain amount of belief in a distant national fiction seems necessary and reassuring to dispersed communities trying to name themselves in difficult circumstances...Inevitably, the story is constructed using the cast-off tools of Western knowledge production." (p. 234)

Hence when diaspora writers tell tales of their homeland they are caught up with nostalgia, two-dimensional stereotyping, arrested representation, victimage, performative tales last but not least the necessity to "keep the jungle alive".

*Kartography* by Shamsie has a profound impact on the readers. The main aspect of her writings is to depict the condition of Pakistani women in the patriarchal society but it is so ironic that her status as an affluent, educated, and diaspora female writer is reflected in her projection of female characters and situations. She consciously or unconsciously uses the narratological techniques: negative stereotyping, androgyny and inversion, and



outside representation, victim studies, and performance studies in the novel. Moreover, these techniques are mere reflections of Western feminist responses towards male writings rather than depicting the true essence of Pakistani society vis a vis Pakistani women's status.

Kamila Shamsie's *Kartography* is a diverse reading thematically, it talks about home and homelessness, a sense of belonging and detachment, the fall of Dhaka and its repercussions, ethnic clashes, migration and its trauma, and a story of love and betrayal. In the depiction of the story as well as the characters Shamsie being the diaspora writer falls into the trap of occidental gaze. According to Bhattacharya (1998), the diaspora writers' tales have the recurring theme of nostalgia. Likewise, one of the most prominent themes of *Kartography* is nostalgia. The novel opens by tracing the history of Karachi, a history which is ambiguous but has its linkage with Alexander the Great or one of his great Admirals. As Karim tells Maheen, "This used to be an ocean. If you squint, can't you almost see Mai Kolachi rowing a boat through the hibiscus in search of her husband, look! Over there, through the bougainvillea you can see a wave made up of the trees Alexander wept for Bucephalus." (Shamsie, 2002, p.04) The novel opens with a reference to the ideal past when Alexander the Great conquered it at the cost of his horse. The reference to Alexander the Great indirectly points out how the historic past of Karachi was powerful and intact until colonization and consequent decolonization happened. The conflicts and ethnic issues among citizens of Karachi haunt the peace of Karachi to date. The novel opens with a hot discussion among Zafar, Ali, Maheen, and Yasmeen regarding curfews and lockdowns in the city due to ethnic disturbances. Maheen calls it history repeating itself and Ali rebukes her by blaming disturbances in the city on the establishment. One argument or the other leads to the historic past of colonialism, partition, and the consequent migration. Ever since the independence of Pakistan in 1947, there have been clashes among Muhajirs (immigrants) Pathan Pakhtoons and the locals. Karachi has remained a hub of ethnic fights. Later on, when Ali comes to pick up Raheen and Karim from Asif's farm, Asif engages in a controversial debate about Mahajirs and the local Sindhis. Even after many decades of independence, the locals like Asif and Laila are not able to own the Mahajirs regardless of friendship and association. Thus, the novelist traces the reasons behind current tensions back to the colonial past and how decolonization led to the



independence of the states but it also led to ethnic issues which still suck the peace of the city. Thus Bhattacharya (1998) quotes, "The stories about the pristine nation have a certain tasty nostalgia about them, perhaps particularly tasty to hungry-for-authenticity diasporic eyes. These stories promised to reshape the nation so that it looked like pretty pictures of its past, untouched by nasty alien forces which distorted its best features and made it something else altogether, not the thing we named home." (p. 250)

The next Western tool of occidental gaze is stereotyping rather than negative stereotyping. The characters are stereotypical in their personalities, situations, and choices, especially the female characters. There is a general sense of shallowness, capriciousness, and fatal societal oppression. For example, the character of Maheen remains the most disturbing character throughout the novel. Her Bengali background renders her outcast to her husband. She remains a target of constant taunts and mistreatments by her husband. She even loses her first fiancé Zafar because of the Fall of Dhaka and the consequent rising ethnic rifts. If one digs deep down into the psyche of the Asian region, the breaking of engagement might make sense but swapping of fiancés among both Zafar and Ali is not in rhythm with the sensibility of the region. No matter how liberal and how many close friends they happen to be, swapping fiancés is little less than incest in this part of the region. Even if it happens as the remotest of the possibilities, there is no possibility of a continuation of a lifelong relationship among the friends. Moreover, the characters of Maheen and Laila are stereotypical and two-dimensional, they not only lack psychological depth but also are unable to grow till the end. As Bhattacharyya (1998) points out, "This is the argument which says that some stories are downright dangerous. They hurt our sense of self when we hear them and remember them, and opportunities to revamp and rebuild ourselves are damaged by the wide circulation of these stories. We can call this moment of thinking the debate about negative stereotypes, the dangers of Eurocentrism, or the hegemony of privileged peoples; but whatever the angle. Increasingly the mahogany princesses imagine themselves as the two-dimensional mirage of someone else's look." (p. 37) For example, the remark of Maheen that 'Laila called a little while ago, just back from her honeymoon, says it was best of the three so far...' (Shamsie, 2002, p. 7) Then she continues to tell that she is finding it hard to settle in Asif's farm, this remark gives an



impression that Laila is materialistic woman who can marry a person for money and lust life. Furthermore, her negative remarks about Muhajirs endorse the apathy and shallowness of her personality. There are no details of why she feels 'aisy way' on Asif's big farm nor there is a detail of how and why she left her ex-husband. Later on, the references to beach parties and 'ghutnas'(stoning and drinking) further endorse the superficiality of the Karachiites. The character of Maheen is a true representation of a two-dimensional mahogany princess, her introduction in the novel is just one of the examples to authenticate the argument, 'Ever since she'd found those magazines under Karim's bed she had taken to dyeing her hair every time she tried to make an important decision regarding her son.' (Shamsie, 2002, p.7). She is the most voiceless character, there is no version of her story. Even if she speaks no one takes her seriously. When she implores Ali, Zafar, and Yasmeen to listen to her, Ali remarks, "It is sad she keeps missing her turns." (p. 7) She is the true embodiment of two-dimensional stereotyping of a character because she is the one who suffers the most due to her Bengali background and yet there is hardly any description of how she feels about those sufferings. First of all, she suffers a rejection from fiancé Zafar, and then mistreatment at the hands of Ali and she keeps suffering silently until she leaves Ali for some other man in the U.S.A. There are thicker chunks of details justifying Zafar for not marrying Maheen but barely a sentence to voice her feelings about the whole episode. As Irigaray (Moi, 2008) furthers the argument by stating that woman is an outside representation: 'The feminine has consequently had to be deciphered as forbidden, in between signs, between the realized meanings, between the lines'. (p. 131)

The female character of fiction is but the mirror image of the negative male subject's 'specularization' or as man's secularized 'other'. It is also interesting that the character of the protagonist, Raheen, is but the inversion of the character of Karim. For example, Raheen is bold, physically strong, and a loud person, unlike quiet and meek Karim. Hence, the inverted image of femininity as represented in the Western philosophical discourse is consciously or unconsciously imitated in the projection of the character of Raheen. As Kolodny (Moi, 2008) points out the stylistic feature of 'inversion' in *Sexual, textual politics*. According to Kolodny 'inversion occurs when the 'stereotyped, traditional literary images of women ... are being turned around' (Moi, 2008, p. 45). Or there might exist fear of 'being fixed in false images' or depiction of 'inauthentic roles' in imitation of male



discourse. For example, Raheen's character is an inverted version of Karim. The novel reads, "At the time, I was about four inches taller than Karim, and just weeks earlier, in front of our class, I had lifted him off his feet and deposited him in the waste-paper basket during one of his bouts of recalcitrance." (Shamsie, 2002, p. 12) She seeks her liberation by roaming around and sneaking her way toward the beach in opposition to instructions from their parents in cars with her male friends, yet ironically she depends emotionally on Karim. Her life as a whole revolves around Karim's words, decisions, and temperamental fluctuations. Ultimately, she is not physically strong, a liberal character with willpower but rather just an inverted version of Karim. Hence, Shamsie while creating the inverted version of a typical female in Raheen gets caught up in the dreaded result of depiction of 'false images' or 'inauthentic roles' as pointed out by Kolodny.

The fifth tool is the objectification of the women in the novel. The woman characters belong to wealthy and so-called educated classes. The representation of women in the novel is merely on a physical and materialistic level. During heated debates about War 1971 and ethnic issues, the women either imitate typical or stereotypical remarks or remain silent. For instance, Maheen, who is the direct victim of the 71 war, remains on the periphery as a mere sufferer at the hands of her critical fellows. One can't help but feel that these women are nothing but objects in the hands of society among the suppressed and oppressed Asian women. They are strong and liberated because of their status as affluent and lame women attending beach parties, dancing and getting drunk, gossiping, getting divorced and marrying, getting divorced and marrying again, and last but not least exchanging partners if such a need arises, but deep down they nothing more than objects. The protagonist, Raheen, who narrates the story in first person, is the most sensible female character, even though she keeps looking up to Karim for completion. Her every move, thought, and existence circles around Karim. Despite the fact, that physically she is stronger than Karim so much so that she could lift him when they were in school, emotionally she depends on Karim. Objectification of women is perceived as one of the most relevant notions discussed by feminists. It generally means treating a woman as an object. Martha Nussbaum (1999) defines objectification of women as reducing them to an instrument or tool for one's purpose, denying the power of self-determination, rendering them inactive by giving them no choice at all, as an interchangeable object, exercising ownership over her, and denial of



subjectivity. The most conspicuous features of the theory of objectification as pointed out by Nussbaum are interchangeability or 'fungibility', lack of subjectivity, and ownership which means that women are kept and owned like objects. Just like we have no qualms about exchanging our possessions with others, women are also exchanged private stuff. The character of Maheen is portrayed as if she is an object. There is a mention of the reason why Yasmeen made a move on Zafar after he broke up with Maheen, the narrator also tells how Ali already had feelings for Maheen. But Maheen like a miserable object gets rejected by Zafar and then accepts the first person who shows up for marriage. The tale does not end here, even after marriage Ali keeps mistreating her without any resistance from her. For instance when Maheen says 'Well, I think it's a wonderful idea,...And it's my turn to be right.' Ali retorts mockingly, 'But, sadly, she keeps missing her turn'. (Shamsie, 2002, p. 8) For Kant (1963), prostitution is the worst kind of objectification of women, but choosing a partner as a last resort or as the only choice available makes one even the worst kind of tool of the object. As Kant (1963) also writes in the *Lectures on Ethics that* "sexual love makes of the loved person an Object of appetite; as soon as that appetite has been stilled, the person is cast aside as one casts away a lemon which has been sucked dry." (p. 115) He goes on to say after appetite has been meted out 'all motives of moral relationship cease to function.' This is true in the case of Ali, as apparently, he liked Maheen and proposed to her but as soon as they are married he starts mistreating her. This is even worse than prostitution. As in the case of prostitution one expects such treatment but in marriage this treatment is the last thing that comes to mind. Her remark when this discussion stretches, "I don't need reassurance. Why can't he understand that? Why do the two of you always have to explain my husband and me to each other" (p. 10)? This remark not only leaves a remark about the relationship between Ali and Maheen but also indicates another feature etched with the objectification of women by Rae Langton i.e. silencing. Rae Langton (2009) further argues that the meaning of objectification of women also includes the idea of her reduction to body and appearance and silencing her by denying her voice. The absence of the narrative of Maheen in the whole episode of Fall of Dhaka, the consequent fights people picked up with Zafar, breaking of engagement as well as marriage with Ali renders her presence merely reduced to the appearance and body. Moreover, silencing also refers to snubbing the person whenever s/he speaks up. There are multiple



times Maheen is snubbed to silence so much so that when she shifts to America, her first move in America is to leave Ali for good. Moreover, the other female characters in *Kartography* are reduced to body and appearance and silence, one can imagine, Rukhsana, Laila, and Yasmeen as they look to the eye and what they do but there are few details about what they are thinking. They lack psychological depth and their characters do not develop and they remain in a state of inertia.

Most of the work written by diaspora writers is in the category of 'victim studies', as is the case with *Kartography*. There is a continuation of the projection of Asian stories about wars, conflicts, murders, betrayal, oppression, and bloodshed. Bhattacharyya (1998) believes that the diaspora writers are tuned to listening to the tales of their homeland replete with horrors bloodbaths and sufferings. *Kartography's* major themes are '71 war, its madness and its aftermaths, ethnic conflicts, and curfews how these ethnic issues remain a topic of hot discussions among even close friends. The characters even keep blaming decolonization and consequent migration after independence for bringing Mahajirs into Karachi to dilute the blood of local Sindhis. Even after five decades of independence, the local Sindhis blame Mahajirs for everything that goes wrong in the city. Fanon (1996) points out that this phenomenon of playing the victim is like "keeping the jungle alive." (pg. 235) Even though there is this wish for the Asian diaspora author to escape blackness and embrace all whiteness and yet they have to keep the jungle 'alive' to attract the readership. He believes this is the way the readers all around the world have been tuned to listen to Asian tales and these writers are afraid of losing the audience if they tell the tales differently. They have only two options: to narrate false representation or not to narrate at all. Bhattacharyya (1998) furthers the argument that this very act of choosing to narrate a story in the same self-fashioning manner of a white man renders their tales as 'performative studies.' The contrast between details of 'Ghutnas' or beach parties and the violence and wars is the finest example in *Kartography* about the necessity of keeping the jungle alive. The novel is replete with details of bloodshed, unending curfews lockdowns, and scandals of money embezzlements. For instance, Karim reads out the article of *Newslines: KARACHI: DEATH CITY*.

Roaming the dark, death-haunted streets of Saddar where even street lights were off, one would be confronted with the surreal glow of a flower shop not more than a



thousand meters away from the troubled area of Jacob Lines. Asked why his shop was open late into the night when all others were closed, a flower seller explained: 'This is the season not of marriage but of death. People come to buy floral wreaths for those who die in the riots.' (Shamsie, 2002, p. 147)

This quote sums up the religious, social, cultural, and geographical background of the setting where the story takes place. The quote reduces the complex history of the metropolitan with multi-ethnicity and multi-cultures into one phrase i.e. 'DEATH CITY'. Since the representation of the city of Karachi or its native land is constantly focused on stories of victims and massacres, the narratology automatically exhibits more of a performative characteristic. Therefore, no writing no matter how much creative, can bring out authentic stories. The stories written by the diaspora writers remain 'cautionary tales' with an agenda to appease the targeted audience or at the most to keep in line with the self-fashioning tales written by the Whites about the natives. Because this is how the stories about the natives have ever been told and any other way of telling a story, no matter how authentic, can lose the audience. There is a choice between misrepresentation or outside representation and the diaspora writers chose to misrepresent over authentic tales.

## Conclusion

Hence, it can be safely concluded that *Kartography*, just like most of the diaspora literature, exhibits traces of occidental gaze, and the writer consciously or subconsciously uses Western feminist tools or narratological techniques: nostalgia, stereotyping, negative stereotyping, two-dimensional mirage of one way looking, outside representation, objectification, inversion and androgyny, victim studies in her novel. The research paper not only questions the authenticity of the Pakistani diaspora writers but also sets trends for reading the bestsellers written by the diaspora from a different perspective. The perspective that keeps in view the geographical, social, and cultural distance of these writers from the native land and the native people. It also brings to the attention the traces of colonial literature i.e. 'the occidental gaze' which still haunts the diaspora narratives. It makes one wonder if the pervasiveness of the 'occidental gaze' in the diaspora writings leads to the 'diaspora gaze'.



## References

- Bartky, S.L. (1990) "Narcissism, femininity, and alienation", *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression*. Routledge.
- \_\_\_ (1998). *Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power*. Routledge.
- Bhattacharyya, G. (1998) *Tales of dark-skinned women: Race, gender and global culture*. London: UCL Press.
- \_\_\_ (2017). *The Futures of Racial Capitalism*. Rowman & Littlefield International.
- \_\_\_ (2020). *We, The Heartbroken*. Manchester University Press.
- Booth, W. C.(1998) *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- \_\_\_ (1974). *The Rhetoric of Irony*. University of Chicago Press.
- James, H. and James E. M. (1972) *Theory of Fiction: Henry James*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Kant, I. (1963) *Lectures on Ethics*, Louis Infield (trans.), New York: Harper and Row, Publishers.
- \_\_\_ (1785). *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals: With On a Supposed Right to Lie because of Philanthropic Concerns*. Hackett Publishing Company.
- Langton, R. (2009) *Sexual Solipsism: Philosophical Essays on Pornography and Objectification*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- \_\_\_ (2009). *Kantian Humility: Our Ignorance of Things in Themselves*. Oxford University Press.
- Langton, R, & Lewis. (2000). *Deflationary Pluralism*. Oxford University Press.
- Moi, T. (1987). *Feminist Theory and Simon de Beauvoir*. Blackwell Publishers.
- \_\_\_ (2008) *Sexual, Textual Politics*. London: Routledge.
- \_\_\_ (1994). *Simon de Beauvoir: The Making of an Intellectual Woman*. Oxford University Press.
- Nussbaum, M. C. (2006). *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership*. Harvard University Press.
- \_\_\_ (2013). *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice*. Harvard University Press.



\_\_\_ (1999), *Sex and Social Justice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

\_\_\_ (1999) "Objectification". *Sex and Social Justice*. Oxford: OUP.

\_\_\_ (2018). *The Monarchy of Fear: A Philosopher Looks at our Political Crisis*. Simon & Schuster.

Shamsie, K. (2002) *Kartography*. London: Bloomsbury.

Zakaria, Rafia. *Against White Feminism: Notes on Disruption*. Penguin Publishers, 2021.  
Print.

Zakaria, Rafia. *The Upstairs Wife: An Intimate History of Pakistan*. Boston, Mass: Beacon Press, 2015. Print.

Zakaria, Rafia. *Veil*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017.