

Exploration of Literary Chronotopes in Contemporary Anglophone Pakistani Fiction

*Zakia Resshid**, *Dr. Amra Raza***

ABSTRACT: *Chronotope is a word given to timespace by Mikhail Bakhtin in his book The Dialogic Imagination (1938). There he explains that in a novel chronotopes serve as those literary tools which show time and its visible effects on the spatial expanses (84). He adds that, chronotopes are characterised as literary temporal and spatial indicators that are artistically visible and are intrinsically fused as a whole (84). The present paper uses Bakhtin's Chronotopic study of intrinsic interconnectedness of timespace as a framework to assimilate causes of violence and discontent on the geographical spaces of Peshawar and Afghanistan in Nadeem Aslam's The Blindman's Garden (2013) during the Post 9/11 terrorist attack. These countries represent spatially colonized nations where the regulation of colonial time period had disempowered the indigenous people from their communal spatial experiences. Hitherto, the collision and intersection of polar social, political and cultural forces caused due to the impact of war time on the spatial boundaries of these countries leave the native people in an emptied sense of disorientation. Hence, Bakhtin's concept of chronotopic analysis grants permission to expose the violence and political conflicts within these colonized nations and people embossed through weft of time; which primarily have been infused into the works of Contemporary Pakistani Anglophone authors.*

Keywords: Mikhail Bakhtin, Nadeem Aslam, chronotopes, violence, postcolonial, war, timespace, Peshawar, Taliban, Afghanistan, Contemporary Pakistani Anglophone

* Email: zakiashahzeb@gmail.com

**Email: amra.english@pu.edu.pk

The *Blind Man's Garden* explores the aftermath of 9/11 terrorist attack. The novel explores the conflict through the lives of ordinary people who become victims of an ugly war that uproots their happiness. Much of it is about the perils of living with bombings, torture, disappearances, beheadings and terrorism. The novel is set in Heer. It is an imaginary town in Punjab, where some parts of the plot gradually unfold. There are references to other geographical spaces such as Pakistan, Afghanistan and Peshawar where some fundamental incidents prove as pivotal to the plot. Rohan, (the protagonist) is blinded as he attempts to rescue the son of a bird-catcher from the prison of a warlord in Afghanistan. We have Mikal who is an innocent fugitive, so on and so forth. The novel gives detailed references to warlords selling away prisoners to the Americans for money. There are grotesque sketch of young boys sexually tortured for information and the novel is fraught with incidents about drone attacks on Taliban compounds obliterating families and patronage for Arab insurgents by rogue military officers. Through, Mikhail Bakhtin's proposed concept of chronotopes, the present research explores the ways these temporalities of war impacts in dislocating the indigenous people from their locale.

The word "chronotope" is derived from a Greek term kronos (time) and topos (space) (Renfrew 10). This term was first introduced by a German born theoretical physicist, Albert Einstein. He proposed in his seminal work, "Einstein's Theory of Relativity" (1915) that a chronotope characterizes a correlation between time and space. Mikhail Bakhtin later picked up this concept of interconnectedness of timespace and presented his chronotopic analysis to a novel. He defined chronotopes in a literary genre as "spatial and temporal indicators" which are "fused into a careful thought-out whole" (FTC 40). This suggested that the existence of either time or space as separate entities is meaningless because the chronotopicity could only be retained through their intrinsic reciprocity. In addition, Mikhail Bakhtin emphasizes that in the inseparability of timespace, time takes the center stage (FTC 84). He explains it is as if time initiates its action on space as "Time...takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible" (FTC 84), and in its response space follows its course along time by becoming charged and responsive to the movement of time, plot or history" (FTC 84). Hence, in Bakhtin's chronotopic proposition "Time" is termed as the "dominant principle" (FTC 86) or one may attribute it as a directing agent that catalyzes its action on space.

The paper explores how the impact of the temporal fabric is weaved for geopolitical needs of the powerful that resultantly drapes the social and political structure of the countries (mentioned in the novel and its nearby areas) into hazardous conditions. Bakhtin reiterates that his proposed critique of chronotopes in literature “devotes entire attention” (FTC 86) of the analysis “towards the problem of time...and those things, and only those things, that have a direct and unmediated attention relationship to time” (FTC 86). In this connection, Mikhail Bakhtin’s chronotopic analysis of a novel grants permission to observe how the temporal consequences of the Post 9/11 terrorist attack pose a threat to the geographical and social spatial expanses in Nadeem Aslam’s *The Blind Man’s Garden* (2013).

In *The Blind Man’s Garden* (2013) Peshawar and Afghanistan pose as chronotopes of “war” spaces. Some of the novel’s major violent incidents occur in Afghanistan and Peshawar. In the novel these spaces are frequently referred to as “war zones” (Aslam TBMG 84). Jeo, a young passionate doctor goes to Afghanistan to help victims of drone attacks in Afghanistan and leaves his newly wedded wife, Naheed, behind in Heer. After his departure Naheed prays to God to look after him “in the war zone” (74). Kate MacLoughin in her study “Authoring War: observes that the war zone could be easily characterized as a chronotope because it is a particularized space where time both flies and hangs heavy” (104 2011). Like Afghanistan and Peshawar, Heer is also enclosed within the geographical boundaries of those spaces where “time” for the indigenous people has halted. For them there is no passage of time. The meaning of the word loses its essential meaning (FTC 147). The analysis incessantly reminds the readers about the impact of events which unfold on the spatial stretches mentioned in a particular time frame bear significant relevance to the lives of the dwellers. Mikal finds a torn letter written by a school teacher to United Nations imploring for “help” (Aslam TBMG 60). The letter stated that “she is in Hell, and this is her 197th letter over the past five years” (Aslam TBMG 60). Time of despair has never changed in many years. The moments of misery of the people are stretched into hours, and hours are dragged into days and eventually time hangs suspended forever. At another instance the protagonist encounters a kidnapped child who implores him to “take” him “away” somewhere safe. He points towards a building and tells him that there the Warlord holds back children for ransom. Warlords are stakeholders who work in alliance with American soldiers to capture religious extremists. He adds that children are

sexually assaulted in the building and are later sold as Taliban suspects to the American militants. He reveals that each “suspected terrorist” is traded to American soldiers for \$5,000 (Aslam TBMG 80). Rohan tries to seek help from the American Soldiers on duty for help but is in vain. Here time for the prisoners has no end in their enclosed space of captivity. The people will find no justice against the corrupted Warlords, while the land will remain captured by pseudo religious Taliban who wage a war against the America nationals. In consequence, the American Militants will provide no help to the helpless. The continuity of discordance is seen to be relentless. Here it should be analysed that the times of war becomes visible through the social disruption emanating on the spaces of Peshawar, Afghanistan and Heer (FTC 84), and in response to the movement of time” (FTC 84), these spaces cast their impact on the lives of the people. Every passing minute of the present times moves ticks to a despair future, leaving the passing moments into an unregistered history of a disoriented past (FTC 147). Thus, every moment that uncovers the contradictions of the peoples’ present time forges ahead into a disruptive future and leaves behind a history of social injustices. This runs in confluence with what Bakhtin advocates that “every distinctive detail” occurring in an event in a given spatial locus should have a distinct “traces of an era” (FTC 91) and every possible minute that ticks off should leave its trace and become “the days and hours of a human life” (FTC 94). Which means that the events strung together within the spatial boundaries of Peshawar or Afghanistan presented during Post 9/11 era are not be, by any means, random contingents (FTC 100), but in fact highlight their social or political influence on human life (FTC 109).

Peshawar or Afghanistan have their specific “geopolitical and historical sense” (FTC 100) and distinct historical significance in the novel. Afghanistan is a similar country that is attributed to “crosshairs of history” (Aslam TBMG 47). This suggests that war had never seized on its land. In 326BC the Heracles, son of Zeus conquered the land. Later Genghis Khan had pursued the last Muslim prince of Central Asia to this place...and during the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries (Aslam TBMG 12) up until Peshawar and Afghanistan were colonized by the British regime during the Pre-partition era and World War 1. Mikal, the protagonist finds a stable filled “to the rafters with weaponry-grenades, rockets and firearms” (Aslam TBMG 59, 60) with dates stamped on them from the time when British were contesting the area ((Aslam TBMG 60). Misery was their past history, the present circumstances

bring them no hope and the consequences of their present would result in a more despair future. The feeling of hopelessness does not change and there is no indication of passing time. . Mikal states that “the world sounds like this all the time” (Aslam TBMG 47). Now, at present Peshawar and Afghanistan are colonized by Talibans and Warlords who rule there with an “iron fist” (Aslam TBMG 47). In the meantime, buildings, orchards and hills of Afghanistan are torn apart by bombs and fire-shells weeks later the World Trade center attack (Aslam TBMG 6). In the novel the geographical boundaries of Peshawar and Afghanistan are not “naked” or “abstract expanse of spaces” (FTC 100). There is no visible change in the miseries of the people to which Bakhtin states an ‘historic inversion’ (FTC147). He clarifies that present loses its integrity if it is taken outside the relationship to its past and future. There is no “question of reflecting an epoch outside of the passage of time” or “outside any contact with past or future” (FTC 146). The homogeneity of time present of these spaces is severed with their once existing rich cultural history and every passing moment pushes time farther away from a better future. Hence, the time frame of the aftermath of 9/11 attack have brought the path of their lives to a standstill.

The present analysis provides the readers a chance to view spaces like Peshawar, Pakistan, Heer and Afghanistan as chronotope where time of be-wilderness and uncertainty has obstructed the thinking faculties of the characters. The characters are unable to construe the logic behind all this loot and unrest. Mikal, a suspected Taliban, is compelled to imagine how the serenity of “Heer”, “Peshawar” and “Afghanistan” is affected after the 9/11 attack. Mikal sees that whatever happened during the 9/11 attack was a “set up” (Aslam TBMG 30). He is unable to comprehend how America, a giant in technology and scientific success, couldn’t catch a “flying aircraft at low altitude in an urban sky?” and “how could everything go unnoticed on the 9/11 terror attack?” (Aslam TBMG 30). He begins to believe that “everything” related to this terrorist attack and to the invasion of Afghanistan in search of terrorists “is a lie, A conspiracy” (Aslam TBMG 30). He feels that there must have been someone behind this event to manipulate the air traffic control. He muses that 9/11 “was all staged”, and thinks that it was invented as “an excuse to begin invading muslim lands one by one” (Aslam TBMG 30). He ceases to understand any connection made between the two worlds. He questions, “how does Heer know about New York, or New York about Heer? They are two different worlds” (Aslam TBMG 117).

The novel suggests that definition of morality and human values turn sour during war times and simultaneously war spaces turn into zones where violence and cold-blooded murder is licensed to restore civilization. War times converge the life of American Militants to a blind spot as well. The novel registers innumerable deaths of innocent people during unannounced drone attacks by the American Militants at random places in these countries. The American Militants administrate proxy wars on the locale because they assume these spaces as possible hide-out places for Talibans. They state that “the logic” (Aslam TBMG 6) behind their unannounced attacks “is that there are no innocent people in a guilty nation” (Aslam TBMG 6). The protagonist pleads the American soldiers to help the helpless captive, but the soldiers callously reiterate that it is “none of” their “business” (Aslam 131). Instead, they condescendingly declare that their interpretation of war is not to restore “peace but civilization and civilization is purchased with violence and cold-blooded murder” (Aslam TBMG 131). Hence, the American soldiers justify their annexation over the territories of people of Heer and Peshawar because it conforms to their ideological of war and justice. The connectedness of spatial mayhem with the fate of the people during the time of war makes time itself a “bewitching entity” (FTC 155).

The architectural sites of mosques and educational institutions pose chronotopes wherein the understanding of education, human values and religion in relation to schools and mosques has undergone a major transformation. Over the years it is a tacit inference that schools are places to nurture the intellectual faculties of pupils and educate them to value rules and regulations. In the same manner mosques tend to centralize individuals to a specific religious belief. Nevertheless, in general the knowledge imparted in both these institutional spaces, in their diverse ways, no matter how subjective it maybe, share a common understanding that is to educate students with the idea to be open-minded, respectable and love humanity. In Nadeem Aslam’s novel *The Blind Man’s Garden* (2013) Rohan and Sofia founded an education institute named as “Arden Spirit” and engraved on the arch of the gate that “Education is the basis of law and order” (Aslam TBMG 30). The building and its segmented portions were named after the sacred places like Mecca, Baghdad, Corodoba, Cairo, Dehli and Istanbul, that “intended to remind the children of their legacy and Islam’s long inheritance of knowledge and achievement” (Aslam TBMG 8). As soon as Arden Spirit was taken over by its former student, Ahmed, and his

brothers, Rohan could see how his school became a chronotope of pseudo-Islamic Education that imparts recklessness. It was initially established to educate students as responsible citizens, but now these spaces have transformed into places where pupils are educated about the principles of intolerance and hatred which have become the manifesto of the temporal immediacies. Hence every “particular details” (FTC 100) of the social and political unrest on these spatial loci contribute to be the “determining factors” (FTC 100) that show their “technical or abstract” (FTC 100) connection with temporalities of post 9/11 attack.

In the novel the geographical spaces act as chronotopes as the habitants are trapped in the temporal turmoil of violence and destruction. War and violence for the indigenous people of Heer and Peshawar have put their lives on a winding path. Road is attributed to the life of the character. Here “road” signifies a chronotope to a never ending path of torture, wait and destruction for the dwellers of Heer, Peshawar and Afghanistan. The recurrent reference to “road” in the novel alludes to Bakhtin’s chronotope of road, where the narrowed striated space of road is “strictly delimited” (Renfrew 119) and blends with time which dislocates the characters from the normal flow of time. Bakhtin refers to the path of life as a chronotope of road (FTC 98) where the characters meet some unknown and unpredictable encounters. In connection to Bakhtin’s notion of road, in the novel road becomes a determining marker of the characters’ fate, where the space of road becomes saturated with time and marks concrete chronotopic significance (FTC 120) in the life of the characters. The “road” stands for a space where the “Americans hunt down anyone they suspect as enemy” (235). Jeo, who journeys to help the victims injured by the Taliban attacks, is captured on a road; and later mistakenly killed in a riot between Taliban and the natives. His wife, Naheed’s, eyes are always fixed on the road path waiting for her deceased husband to return from his long journey. Mikal, the main protagonist, spends almost all his time wondering on roads as a fugitive. The sudden(ly)ness and abruptness of such encounters on the road side mark “a major turning points” (FTC 120) in the lives of the characters and their fates (FTC 120). The lives of the deceased are guarded and mapped on the spatial stretch of the roads in the war affected countries. Mikal looks at the map to plan his four hundred kilometer route back to Heer. (Aslam TBMG 235). Like other elements of destruction Mikal comes across a “wall” stacked “of cardboard boxes” (Aslam TBMG 279). As he opens the cardboard as finds that

“there are hundreds of documents—booklets, instruction manuals on how to make and use explosives, training manuals for guerrela warfare. The notebooks, their covers rubbed off by handling and grimy like the ones of which butchers keep customers accounts. On the pages are techniques for kidnapping and assassinations. He lifts out a folded letter dated 12 Feb 2001. I am sending five companions, who are eager to be trained in explosives and other methods of joyful bloodshed. Concerning the expenditure, they will pay you themselves. All are trustworthy...” (Aslam TBMG 279).

The manuscripts and letters show how Talibans have designed to execute catastrophe in Peshawar and other parts of the world. The aforementioned of physical images of maps, letters, mauls, booklets and pages of a book conform to Bakhtin’s idea that “Everything from an abstract idea to a piece of rock on a bank of stream- bears the stamp of time”. He adds that “it is saturated with time, and assumes its form and meaning of time” (Bakhtin *Speech Genres and 42*). Like the winding road extends its metaphoric configuration from merely being analogous to the flow of lives of people. This suddenness and unpredictability of events at a specific time and space allows means of “seeing” (Bakhtin *Speech Genres and 42*) time and its affects in the spatial and physical world. The “visibility” ((*FTC 87*) of time and its effects on the physical and spatial world could be felt in the represented images of documents and manuscripts. Renfrew clarifies that chronotopes could be defined as a “treasure-house of images”, where the physical presentation of an image provides means to assimilate time funded with rich factual material (*Chronotopes 84*). After the 9/11 terrorist attack Talibans aim to eradicate the American soldiers and in consequence more air raid would be done on helpless people by the Americans and more people will be traded to the Americans by the corrupted warlords. The fate of the indigenous people and American soldiers will be defined by the time marked to strike an attack. While the plan sketched on the spatial expanse of these letters and document trap the ticking momentum of the victims’ lives to a hiatus at their specific place. Mikal muses that human

beings are “all bodies assigned for wounds, sites of destruction” (Aslam TBMG 241). The example speaks volumes of how documents become chronotopic by testifying factual truths about the unpredictable dangers the live of the indigenous people of Peshawar, Afghanistan and Heer would encounter in response to these attacks.

Along chronotope of road there are variant chronotopes that hint the hidden mysteries of the people lives and unresolved labyrinth state of the characters’ existence. In alliance to Bakhtin’s proposed concept of chronotopic study the images of maps, prison cells, chains and cages serve as chronotopes which operate more than mere translating their figurative meaning of confinement or imprisonment. In fact they operate beyond the characteristics of a metaphor. This could be understood in the light of Mikhail Bakhtin’s own explanation about what he considers the artistic function of a metaphor and how he relates it to his study of a chronotope. Bakhtin explains that for literary criticism he has borrowed chronotopes “almost as a metaphor” (FTC 84), which are artistically expressed (FTC 84) in fiction. Oxford online dictionary defines metaphors in generic terms, as those literary markers that figuratively express the characteristic qualities of things, objects or images. It is should be noted that Bakhtin qualifies the function of chronotope in Literature “almost like a metaphor”, and “not entirely” as a metaphor (FTC 84). He asserts that for him a metaphor is “self-contained” and “self-sufficient” (FTC 84). His stress on the words “almost”, “self-contained” and “self-sufficient” extend the metaphor’s poetic valency from its connotative function to the denotative/realistic one. Lee Sun explains this by saying that metaphor functions as an artistic tool that appropriates reality (19). Tara L. Collington in her article “Bakhtin’s Chronotope and metaphoric Models in Hermeneutic Discourse” coins a term “chronotope metaphor” where she draws a close connection between chronotope and metaphor (133). She clarifies that Bakhtin’s chronotope metaphor in fiction distances a metaphor’s function as a mere trope and uses it for the sake of redescribing reality (133).

The motif of the cage demonstrates enclosure of human corporeality in the novel as well. The recurrent image of the dead “birds” in the cage (Aslam TBMG 128) symbolically relate to the helpless captives of “Heer” and “Peshawar” who “are sought” and then “trapped in cages” (Aslam TBMG 224). The social and political disrupt in “Heer” and “Peshawar” in the post- 9/11 context pushes the epistemic interpretation of a cage beyond the metaphoric connotation of confinement. Pakistan, Heer, Afghanistan and Peshawar all refer to a

cage at various places in the novel. The analogy drawn between these spaces to a cage describes these spaces as places arrested in anonymity. However, the chronotope metaphor of a cage also implies a hermeneutic enquiry to the epistemic reconfiguration-it triggers a process of generating new meanings with specific relationship with temporal and spatial deictics. The cage is strategically used to re-describe reality about the political functioning of powerful states over the powerless. Cage for the indigenous people is a space arrested in the temporality of proxy wars, corruption and hopelessness. Naheed muses that Heer has lost its music. An urchin recounts the story of the game of sexual harassment is played by the Taliban on the children caged in the torture cells. These torture cells become an enclosed space for the children where the tortured boys are pushed into a state to kill themselves (Aslam TBMG 120). Time here is severed from the continuous flow of normal time. Whether the cage is physically empty or occupied, its sight and its physical image becomes a torque, an axis of intersection of different narratives of slavery, violence, hatred and, even, hopelessness experienced by indigenous people by proxy wars and territorial invasion of American soldiers. Let alone the American soldiers, the countries turn into places where local influential people also exploit the place and people to exercise their power and influence.

The local warlords trade Mikal (the protagonist) to the American soldiers for money and he is thrown into a “cage” (Aslam TBMG 224). Rohan sees how “time” has “slow”(ed) down” and “the world moves away” (Aslam TBMG 132-133). During Mikal’s imprisonment he is “brought to chamber” where “...as the light is switched off, the room” becomes “a perfect vacume... pulsing like a blood beat of a living creature”. He could see as “time ceases to exist altogether as he stands or slumps in the measureless void” (Aslam TBMG 233). He could see the ghosts of the prisoners who had died a few days ago in this chamber. Though, he manages to escape, but he incessantly feels that “he is still trapped” in a cage (Aslam TBMG 224). Whenever, Mikal closes his eyes, he feels that “he is back in one of the cages” (Aslam TBMG 225). Mikal calls his nation caged “in killing everyone, it has transformed into a land of revenge attacks, while the warlord marvels in spreading violence and terror” (Aslam TBMG 191). The spatial boundaries of these spaces are chronotopic in a sense because different narratives of experienced by characters arrest the abnormal momentum of time. He feels that as a consequence of the 9/11 attack “Heer” has become a chronotope of exploitation and corruption

The image of chains is chronotope of enslavement. Mikal's chains are the only sound resonating in silence (Aslam TBMG 148). He notices that his chains are "very long" (Aslam TBMG 149). Here the length suggests never-ending continuity of entrapments. The image of chains evokes the novel's obsession with metonymic connections discussed by Woloch in *The American Slavery and The Victorian Novels* (2008). He writes that the chains "thematically signify contiguity itself" and "is rooted in the dynamics of subordination and distortion" (17). In the same manner, in *The Blind Man's Garden* (2013) chains metaphorically appropriate its generic connotative meaning of confinement with the denotative meaning—a political reality of continued enslavement the victims of Heer, Peshawar and Afghanistan witnessed by them from generation after generation as being slaves to the wealthy warlords, jihadi's, Talibans, Warlords, and American Soldiers after the 9/11 attack. Mikal is reminded of his own father in Lahore Fort when he is told about a "skeleton chained to the wall in an underground chamber" (Aslam TBMG 62). In contrast, chains for the powerful people are a means to exercise their authority on the powerless, while victims view chains as chronotope metaphors of subjugation and their continued entrapment. Consequently, the character's individual connection with the place and time of his enslavement becomes distinctive through his individual relative experiences of miseries. It is during this personal experience the images of chains, cages, enclosed houses and prison houses manifest distinct meanings which could only be associated to a particular character. In relevance to chronotopic framework proposed by Bakhtin, the research gives us a chance to assimilate the spatial actualities of violence and victimization fused in concrete images during political and social unrest; it simultaneously challenges and displaces an already existing relationship of meaning with objects or things. A chronotopic analysis of the novel within its metaphoric model shows the architectural encroachment and the physical presentation of chains, prison and other concrete images successfully assimilates the idea of violence and confinement.

The spatial boundary of Arden Spirit serves as chronotope of spaces where characters are incessantly in war with their own conscience. Amidst the rising tension about the true religious teachings, the people of Heer have begun to question their own epistemic understanding of religion. Rohan is introduced as a tolerant Muslim who becomes visually impaired while struggling to safeguard the rights of innocent people. But his intermittent visitations to the Arden Spirit

unfurl his disoriented knowledge of religion which led him to murder his wife. Every time he entered the boundary of Arden Spirit, he could hear Sofia's "voice present in the walls" of the building. He remembers that Sofia believed "God" to be "just a name for our wonder". She overtly denied god's relation with divinity (Aslam TBMG 44). Her convictions about the existence of God ran in conflict with Rohan's epistemic views about Islam. He feels that "everything in the rooms outlived her, he senses the flowers on the walls, the ink stained table" (Aslam TBMG 249). Rohan expresses that "it is as though she still exists but choose(s) to stay away from his eyes" (Aslam TBMG 249). As Bakhtin would state that in solitude the rooms and garden develop a specific relationship with the protagonist and his fate (FTC 120). In solitude the place saturates with moments of realization within his conscience which marks concrete chronotopic significance. Here time of solitude invokes Rohan's guilt trapped in the past moments when he wanted his wife to repent for her blasphemous convictions about God and religion. He delayed in providing her medicine while she was sick. The building enlivens with Sofia's virtual presence. This mirrors the guilt and intolerance towards religion. The character comes in "conversation with himself" (FTC 134) in this solitude. He opens up with himself and realizes his act of sin. These moments of guilt and self-punishment are invoked in the spatial physicality of the building during a separate segment of solitary time. This particular of time of realization at some particular spatial dimension breaks and is separate from the normal daily routine time sequence of the protagonist life. Bakhtin calls it an extra temporal segment that runs opposite to the cyclic (normal) duration. This extra-temporal and allows him to interact with inner-self. Bakhtin calls this time a "self-sufficient temporal segment" when it is broken down into an isolated segment from the normal flow of time, which has a holistic significant connection with the over-arching temporal framework set in the novel. Bakhtin emphasizes that these moments "serve as the basis for a method of portraying the whole of an individual's life in its more important moments that show how an individual becomes other than what he was" (FTC 115). Such moments are shorter than the length of a character's whole life (FTC 116) but these moments "shape the definitive image of the man, his essence, as well as the nature of his entire subsequent life (FTC 116). In the times of silence garden and the Arden House serves as a space where Rohan's outward self struggles with his private self through meditation and self-evaluation. This realization of guilt and wrong doing enables him to identify the injustices of other people around him. The awakening of

empathy from his inner self that works at personal level grows and operates at a wider human level. During the course of the novel Rohan is able to put aside his religious prejudices, his grief for his son's loss is seen to subside when he sees the griefs of other victims. He fights for everyone regardless of their religion or ideological faiths.

The novel is replete with moments when characters could visualize time in various ways. The midnight time makes the houses, gardens and rooms places presented as detached spaces of the memories of bereft families. After Naheed's husband, Joe, is killed by the Taliban she wanders around the large house at midnight and at 10 o'clock she senses that the house begins to "drift in darkness" (Aslam TBMG 77). She visualizes "distinct" and "faint impressions" on the white pillars of the house. She calls them "half-ghosts" that also appear at other places in the house (Aslam TBMG 194). At 11 o'clock Tara, Naheed's mother observes the house becoming "detached from the earth and floating clearly while she read Quran (Aslam TBMG 79). She felt that she and the house are "alone with a war" (Aslam TBMG 79). In the quiet house she contemplates that "the times have something to tell" but no one "knows what it is" (Aslam TBMG 79). There is an instance in the novel when a character confesses that "it is in the watch of the night" when impressions are strongest and words most eloquent" (Aslam TBMG 325).

Mikal senses that "time to time" his mouth consistently has a bitter taste and he lives incessantly "on the very edge of time" (Aslam TBMG 225). Yasmin and Mikal share with each other that the people they loved are "all gone, but they are still here" (Aslam TBMG 313). They feel that "war is weak" (Aslam TBMG 313) because it is unable to eliminate memories of their loved ones from their hearts. Mikal, however, feels no consolation "in such thoughts" (Aslam TBMG 313) and sentiments. One could see that that war has trapped the war affected people in a void of hopelessness. Time never changes for them. Yasmin states, that we are entangled in all the past of mankind. (Aslam TBMG 215). Time of hopelessness for these people was suspended since war commenced ages ago and it remains the same till the present times.

On the acknowledgement page Nadeem Aslam confirms that his novel, *The Blindman's Garden* (2013) is purely a work of fiction: the characters and events taken from the past or present are all fictional. He reminds the readers that he has no political ideology underlying his fictional work. Therefore, the manifestation of spatiotemporal orientation in the novel lies remote to the contemporary geopolitical issues.

However, through Bakhtin's proposed concept of time and space, the analysis offers a different way of studying the socio-historic/psychological contexts presented in Nadeem Aslam's *The Blindman's Garden* (2013). The readers are given a chance to contemplate over the dehumanization of moral values caused by geographical spatial exploitation of Peshawar, Afghanistan during the times of war. A Bakhtinian study of this fictional work projects a real magnified picture about the contemporary geographical conditions of these countries prevalent since the onset of political unrest on their spatial expanses. Hence, the research endeavors to probe the reader's reception with the specific relationship between "temporal and spatial deictics" (Collington 133) and offers an opportunity to visualize the problems of time.

Work Cited

Primary Sources:

Aslam, Nadeem. *The Blind Man's Garden*. New York. Knopf, 2013. Print

Secondary Sources:

Bakhtin, Mikhail. 1982. "Forms of Time and of The Chronotope in the Novel." In *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, edited by Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov, trans. Vadim Liapunov and Kenneth Brostrom. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Bakhtin, M. M., Michael Holquist, Vern McGee, and Caryl Emerson. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Austin: U of Texas, 1986. Print.

Beasley-Murray, Tim. *Mikhail Bakhtin and Walter Benjamin: Experience and Form*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. Print.

Cirlot, Juan E, Jack Sage, and Herbert Read. *A Dictionary of Symbols*. New York: Philosophical Library, 1971. Print.

Herman, Luc, and Bart Vervaeck. *Handbook of Narrative Analysis*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005. Print.

Lee, Julia S. *The American Slave Narrative and the Victorian Novel*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. Print.

"Oxford Dictionaries - Dictionary, Thesaurus, & Grammar." Oxford Dictionaries - Dictionary, Thesaurus, & Grammar. N.p., n.d. Web. 01 May 2016.

Renfrew, Alastair. *Mikhail Bakhtin*. *Routledge Critical Thinkers*. Series Editor: Robert Eaglestone, Royal Holloway, University of London. Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, London and New York. Print.

Collington, T. *Philosophy, Method and Cultural Criticism*. New York, NY: Hampton Press, 2013. Print.