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DECOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE ON LITERARY SPACE: INTERSECTION OF ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE AND IDENTITY IN *TWILIGHT IN DELHI* AND *IN CORDOBA*

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ABSTRACT:
Ahmad Ali's Twilight in Delhi and Alamgir Hashmi's In Cordoba challenge colonial narratives and reclaim identities that have been marginalized and lost under the shadow of colonialism by Using the decolonial ideas of Ngũgĩ wa Thiongo, Edward Said's Orientalism, and Anibal Quijano's Coloniality of power. The core concern of the study is how both texts reimagine historical landscapes that have been damaged by imperial violence. Twilight in Delhi shows how Old Delhi's culture and environment fell apart while the British were in charge and portrays the identity crisis from which colonized Muslims are going through by describing how indigenous traditions and rituals are fading and Mughal heritage is being erased. In the same way, In Cordoba brings back Islamic Spain as a place of spiritual and historical memory also highlights that how colonial rule changed literary space and how language and narrative can fight imperial discourse; how memory and poetry can keep spiritual continuity alive. Ngũgĩ's criticism of language alienation, Said's exposure of the East-West binary, and Quijano's theory of epistemic domination help us understand these works as decolonial gestures.
Keywords: *Decolonial interpretations, Identity crisis and reclamation, literary space, Colonialism, socio-cultural resistance.*

INTRODUCTION

Colonial rule in South Asia changed the region's ecology, culture, and identity in ways that will last forever. European imperial expansion "envisioned ... massive devastation of indigenous social ecology" (Ali, 1940). and the misuse of natural resources which caused deforestation, pollution, and loss of biodiversity. At the same time, colonizers changed the way people thought about knowledge and social hierarchies. Edward Said famously showed in Orientalism that Western writing often looked down on the "Orient" and portrayed colonized people as backward or stuck. Under British rule in South Asia, this mean that long-standing cultural traditions of colonizers such as religious practices, literary forms, and customs, were not allowed to exist or were made less important. Both *Twilight in Delhi* and *In Cordoba* are postcolonial texts that deal with these complicated legacies. People often read Ali's novel *Twilight in Delhi* as a sad picture of life for late Mughal Muslims on the dark eve of the British rebuilding of Delhi. Some people have called it a work of "modernist pessimism" and "elegy for Delhi life in the 1910's" saying that the characters are "split" between their nostalgic love for a glorious past and their fear of an uncertain, colonized future. Ali's writing often brings to mind the natural and cultural wealth of Delhi that is no longer there, like the pigeons on rooftops. the fragrant gardens, and ghazal poetry from its old bazaars, only to show how colonialism has caused a widespread decline. These texts implicitly call for justice and resistance against imperial erosion of indigenous identity by showing the city as a palimpsest of history and loss. Alamgir Hashmi's poem *In Cordoba* also uses images from the environment, culture, and spirituality to make a point about colonial histories. Hashmi leads the reader through Andalusia by saying to a fellow Muslim, "Cordoba, put on a new pair of shoes...your footprints in the blue stretching over Andalusia!" (Hashmi, 1992). His lines bring

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to mind the River Guadalquivir, Alcazar's Roman bridge, and fields of cotton, corn and barley There are references to both Christian and Islamic heritage along with blooming orange and almond trees, olive groves, and old mosque arches. For instance, Hashmi says to ″stand near La Mesquita and let heaven's music fill in for light turn the shadows in the nave″ (Hashmi, 1992). These pictures mix history and ecology, hinting that the landscape of Cordoba holds the memories of many different cultures. When read in a decolonial way, *In Cordoba* can be seen as a way to reclaim a multicultural spiritual heritage by embracing a syncretic identity that goes beyond religious or colonial divides. These texts work together to make literary spaces where culture, environment, and identity come together in the shadow of colonialism. Both works show how land and cities, like Delhi and Córdoba, are inextricably linked to the people and customs that shaped them. At the same time, they complain about and fight against the colonial stories that make those traditions seem unimportant from a decolonial point of view, these kinds of stories are the opposite of orientalist and colonial stories. Said's point that Western scholarship often misrepresents the “East" for political reasons helps us understand how these writers go against that legacy. By rewriting their own histories in conversation with land, they take back control of the story. In this way, *Twilight in Delhi* and *In Cordoba* show how postcolonial literature can deal with loss of culture and the environment, turning memory and nature into places of resistance to colonialism.

This article explores how *Twilight in Delhi* and *In Cordoba* give voice to resistance and express a demand for justice in the face of colonial oppression. It examines the ways in which both writers use storytelling to reclaim literary space, indigenous language, and cultural heritage that colonial rule sought to suppress. At the heart of the discussion is the close relationship between culture, environment, and identity, especially how natural and man-made landscapes damaged during colonial times are remembered, reimagined, and given new meaning. Through these spaces of loss and remembrance, the texts challenge colonial silencing and affirm cultural survival and continuity.

Colonialism cut communities off from their ancestral lands and forced them to follow new social rules, which caused deep cultural and environmental damage. In *Twilight in Delhi*, British rule destroys the social structures that were in place during the Mughal era and turns once-fertile city gardens into wastelands and dumps of garbage. This shows that the Muslim characters are going through a deeper identity crisis. Hashmi's *In Cordoba* also talks about what happened after a conquest, from the man-smell, skin-smell, the smell of conquest and vanquishing of Muslim Andalusia to the idea that sacred spaces have been hidden by time and power. Most researchers have looked at these texts separately, and only a few have used decolonial frameworks to connect their ecological themes. So, this study looks at two problems at once. First, there is the historical disruption itself: colonial power has destroyed indigenous identity and environment, so it is important to understand how literature shows that process. Second, there is a big gap: it doesn't look like there is a full study that looks at *Twilight in Delhi* and *In Cordoba* at the same time through the lens of decolonial environmental-cultural theory. Most of the time, people who write about *Twilight in Delhi* commonly talks about its political change or poetic form. When they write about Hashmi's poetry, they usually talk about spiritual or universal themes. What hasn't been looked at yet is the intersection of the two texts how they both use ecological imagery and cultural memory to fight against colonial erasure. This thesis fills in that gap by putting the two works in conversation with each other. Using decolonial theory followed by (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Edward Said, Aníbal Quijano) to clearly frame the issues they all care about.

This study uses a qualitative, interpretive research design based on the ideas of decolonial literary analysis. The study looks at how space, environment, culture, and identity work

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together in postcolonial literary texts and how these texts fight against colonial and neocolonial ways of seeing the world. The qualitative approach enables us to observe closely the language, imagery, symbolism, and spatial representation in the chosen texts in a way that gives us a lot of information. This method also enables the researcher to look into the hidden or foregrounded meanings, cultural codes, and power dynamics that can't be measured but are important for understanding postcolonial literary spaces in a more complex way. A qualitative approach that followed literary theory and postcolonial hermeneutics is best for this study because it is not trying to measure or generalize but rather to interpret, deconstruct, and contextualize; observed through the lens of the decolonial framework set up through Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Edward Said, and Aníbal Quijano are some theorists**.** Along with literary devices, the social and historical settings in which we will look closely at the writing of *Twilight in Delhi* and *In Cordoba.* We will look at colonial urban planning, the decline of Urdu, Muslim identity in India before Partition, and the memory of Al-Andalus as cultural and spatial forces that shape the stories in the texts.

Decolonizing the Mind (1986), Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o says that language is both a way to communicate and a way to pass on culture. When colonial languages take over, they become tools of domination. Ngũgĩ's idea about literary space show how English literature in colonized societies often changes cultural identity away from its native roots, moving native spatial imaginaries to new places. The slow disappearance of Urdu, which was the cultural and symbolic backbone of Delhi's precolonial culture, shows this displacement in *Twilight in Delhi*. Ngũgĩ would say that this is more than just a loss of language; it's a loss of worldview, as the environmental, historical, and cultural landscapes that are encoded in native languages fade away. Ngugi's work is a sad portrayal of Urdu-speaking Delhi that has been taken over by colonial ways of thinking. In the same way, *In Cordoba*, even though it is written in English, it brings back lost Islamic geographies by using Andalusian space as a mythic and symbolic landscape of cultural abundance. Hashmi's poetic use of Cordoba builds a Muslim identity that goes beyond time and place. The framework of European epistemologies, which fits with Ngũgĩ's call to "re-member" identities that have been broken up through cultural memory. Ngũgĩ's framework will let us see literary space as a cultural battleground where language choices and symbolic geographies fight over identity and environment.

Thus, Said's books *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) look at how colonial powers built the "Orient" not just as a place on a map, but as a place to be controlled, represented, and disciplined through knowledge and literature. Said says that in colonized places, the literary space is never neutral; it always has a political meaning; and mentions the colonial concept of misrepresentation of colonizers as orient in front of world. Said's theory helps us understand how Ahmad Ali criticizes the British remapping of Delhi through sanitation drives, road building, and the destruction of old mohallas, which change the city's layout as a way for the British to control it. Said's spatial theory shows how British modernity in the book is linked to decay, dislocation, and loss of the environment. In the same way, Hashmi's *In Cordoba* poetically deals with the ruins of Al-Andalus, not to romanticize the past, but to take back Muslim spatial history from Western stories of decline. Said's idea is helpful here: the poem fights Eurocentric historicism by imagining an Islamic civilization that continues outside of Western time. Said lets us see how power shapes space in literature, like how cities, landscapes, and ruins become palimpsests where imperial and native imaginations meet or clash.

Aníbal Quijano's coloniality of power sees colonialism not just as a historical event, but as a global system of power that shapes knowledge, space, and identity even today. Quijano says that modernity and coloniality are connected. The modern world system is based on colonial

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hierarchies of race, language, and space. Using Quijano's ideas to look at *Twilight in Delhi*, we can see how British spatial planning and economic systems create a modern colonial order that pushes aside religious rituals, traditional knowledge systems, and cultural institutions like the bazaar or Sufi shrines. The changes in Delhi are a good example of how coloniality affects space; even nature like the Yamuna, flowers, and birds becomes a place where culture is lost. Through Quijano's lens, Hashmi's poetic imagination *In Cordoba* can be seen as a decolonial epistemic move that goes against the Eurocentric view of history that sees Cordoba as a "lost" past. The poem, on the other hand, re-maps space as memory, showing that cultural identity isn't limited by Western ideas of progress or decay. So, Quijano let researcher see literary space not just as a metaphor, but also as a reflection of the colonial matrix, where identity, geography, and knowledge are all connected.

Recent criticism shows that both *Twilight in Delhi* and *In Cordoba* are ways of reclaiming memory through space. In these works, the places themselves hold cultural identity. Fatma (2023) uses Pierre Nora's idea of Lieux de Mémoire to say that Ali sees Delhi as a "site of memory," a place where personal and group histories come together. The novel connects Mir Nihal's family history to certain places and times of year. For example, the sun's cycle and the city's rhythms remind me of Mughal festivals and gardens. As colonial modernity creeps in, keeping these memories of space alive becomes a way to fight back.

According to the study of Bashir and Hussain (2025) Ali "intertwines themes of cultural conflict" with a longing for what is disappearing, mourning the "loss of ancient customs, cultural practices, and behavioral norms". Ali's writing is full of memories, even small things like the sunrise over the river or the pigeons in the park. This way, the land itself teaches a postcolonial reader about a hidden heritage. Hashmi's poetic spaces work together. In *In Cordoba* he directly brings up the physical monuments of Al-Andalus to put together a broken family tree. The poem begins with "Near La Mesquita," which refers to Córdoba's famous mosque, and talks about a God "who will bless without design, not convert" These points are beyond sectarian divisions and a way to save Andalusian pluralism that had been broken by conquest and later by Western history; Edward Said talks about how Western literature has historically made colonial ideas about space more important by showing colonized places as strange, backward, or in need of Western help. His idea of "contrapuntal reading" is important for looking at literary space from the outside.

Quijano (2000) sees coloniality as a way for one group to control space and knowledge. It goes beyond physical colonization to include the Eurocentric ways that modern spaces like cities, schools, and books are mapped. This is important for figuring out how *Twilight in Delhi* and *In Cordoba* go against these spatial hierarchies

Moreover Casey (2000) gives a philosophical explanation of memory as being tied to place, saying that places hold memory and identity. This is important for looking at the architectural and symbolic spaces in *In Cordoba.*

Analysis and discussion:

This study goes into great detail about the themes in Ahmad Ali's *Twilight in Delhi* and Alamgir Hashmi's *In Cordoba*. It does this by looking at how literary space works as a decolonial site where culture, identity, and environment are all up for debate, and how linguistic displacement during colonialism stands for a bigger cultural erasure.

Theme 1: Language Loss and Cultural Erosion

Textual Evidence from *Twilight in Delhi:*

> *"Urdu, which for centuries had been a language of the people, was now being pushed into oblivion. It was replaced by English, which sounded harsh and cold to the ears of the old generation."*

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Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's theory that forcing people to speak colonial languages breaks up their cultural identity is shown in this line. English becomes more than just a new language; it also separates people from their own culture, making them feel like strangers in their own land. Urdu is starting to fade as younger generations use English for school and social mobility. This shows that people are losing their roots to links to Decolonial Literary Space; Language is more than just speech here; it is a storehouse of shared memories and closeness to the environment. As Urdu becomes less popular, people lose their connection to their cultural heritage. This is because traditional poetry, local idioms, and descriptions of space in Urdu become less important in a world where English is the main language.

Theme 2: How Colonial Changes in Space Made People Feel Disconnected from The Environment

Textual Evidence from *Twilight in Delhi*:

> *"All the old mohallas and bazars, full of life and smell, were being demolished to make way for wide roads and straight lanes. The trees, laden with mango blossoms, were cut down... to make room for the white man's civilization."*

There were wide roads and straight lanes being built where all the old mohallas and bazars used to be. They were full of life and smell. The trees, which were full of mango flowers, were cut down... to make space for the white man's way of life.

Edward Said would call this line the "colonial re-mapping of space," which is the process by which native environments are "cleaned" and "rationalized" to fit European ideals. This kind of spatial restructuring breaks the connection between people and nature, which used to be strong in trees, flowers, and traditional architecture.

Colonial urban planning isn't just an environmental change here; it's also a cultural erasure. When shrines, bazaars, and gardens that are important to Muslim and South Asian life are destroyed, so is the identity that is tied to those places. This is what Quijano meant by "coloniality of space," which is when controlling the environment is used to control cultural expression.

Theme 3: Cultural Memory and Transhistorical Spatial Identity:

Textual Evidence from *In Córdoba*:

> *"The arches still whisper the adhan, even though no Voice is raised in the halls of silence."*

Hashmi uses sensory memory (sound, silence, echoes) to bring back Cordoba's lost Islamic past and show how space keeps traces of cultural identity even after political loss. The silence in the mosque, which used to be full of life, shows a desire for continuity a desire to get back a decolonial spatial memory that goes beyond linear time.

Decolonial Intersection:

The poem connects culture (adhan), environment (architecture), and identity (Muslim heritage) by bringing up Islamic architecture and memory. Even though Spanish colonial and post-Reconquista forces have tried to erase Islam's physical and cultural presence, the literary space brings it back as a way of resisting and reclaiming culture.

Theme 4: Language Shift Between Generations vs Cultural Decline

Textual Evidence from Twilight in Delhi:

> *"The children now speak English even at home... Their tongues no longer twist around Urdu couplets. The poetry of Ghalib and Zauq is Greek to them."*

This part backs up Ngũgĩ's claim that the language of the colonizer becomes part of the colonized people, especially the younger generation. As the language of the colonizers becomes

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more common, the way they think, speak, and feel slowly takes the place of indigenous ways of thinking, speaking, and feeling.

Effect on Identity:

This change means that Urdu is losing its ties to literary traditions, religious references, and local environmental metaphors. When an indigenous language dies, people lose their sense of space because they stop using the language that used to describe Delhi's plants, smells, seasons, and feelings.

Theme 5: Memory as a Way to Resist Space Textual Evidence from Córdoba:

"Memory, a prayer rug, laid in dust."

This strong metaphor links memory and holy space. The "prayer rug," which used to be a symbol of devotion, identity, and direction, is now dusty and neglected, as if it were a legacy that has been forgotten. But its presence also suggests that it still has some strength and the ability to remember, reclaim, and resist being erased. The Western story might see Córdoba as a relic, but Hashmi brings it back to life as a living literary space where identity is rebuilt through poetic memory.

Where Language, Environment, Culture, And Identity Meet

The decline of native languages (Urdu in *Twilight in Delhi* and Arabic/Islamic expression in *In Cordoba*) both texts show how colonialism takes away people's rights. Ngũgĩ stresses that this change in language is not an isolated event; it is connected to:

- Losing cultural memory (through oral and written traditions)
- Re-mapping of urban and sacred spaces (colonial planning)
- Not being connected to the environment (trees, shrines, rivers, mosques)
- Changing how you see yourself (internalized inferiority, mimicry)

This backs up Quijano's idea of coloniality, which says that language, identity, and space are all connected in power relationships that last even after colonial rule ends but in the decolonial literary space, these texts fight against that erasure by:

- Keeping memories alive.
- Nostalgia about the loss.
- Rethinking what it means to belong to a culture.

Textual Analysis

Textual Analysis of Ahmed Ali's "Twilight in Delhi"

Pictures Of Decay and Moving Around

"The city, once the abode of kings, was now wrapped in the shroud of dust."

This strong picture brings to mind a city in mourning. The word "shroud" suggests death, burial, and silence, which all point to the decline of Delhi's Mughal heritage during colonial rule. Dust stands for time, colonial neglect, and the loss of spirituality.

Environmental Imagery: "Dust" stands for both cultural death and neglect of the environment.

Cultural Space: Delhi is no longer the "abode of kings," which means it is no longer a place of power and grandeur.

Decolonial Insight: The change of Delhi into a dusty ruin is like Quijano's "coloniality of space," which is when imperial powers make things fall apart on purpose.

Language Death as A Metaphor

"The sounds of Urdu were now lost in the clang of English footsteps."

This auditory metaphor compares the end of Urdu to the rise of British imperialism. "Footsteps" suggests invasion and conquest, while Urdu becomes a fading echo.

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Linguistic Spatiality: Urdu is seen as an ambient presence and English as a marching invader in this context.

Ngũgĩ's theory says that losing a language is the same as taking over a culture. As colonial languages become more common, indigenous culture becomes harder to hear.

Symbolic Silence: The decline of Urdu is like the silencing of Muslims literary identity and the flow of history.

Destruction of Traditional Delhi's Space

> *"The lanterns that once danced on doorsteps are now gone; instead, the straight iron poles of electric lights rise where the pigeons once flew."*

This contrast shows how Delhi's past was more natural and poetic than its present, which is more industrial and cleaner. The images show how the colonial remapping takes away the city's natural beauty and emotional warmth.

Visual Symbolism: "Lanterns" stand for traditional beauty, while "iron poles" are cold signs of colonial modernization.

Loss of Biodiversity: The disappearance of "pigeons" may mean that both the environment and culture are running out.

Edward Said's Theory: This shows how stories about empires change over time.

space in the name of "progress," getting rid of native symbols.

Spaces for Spirituality and Culture Were Replaced

> *"Once the Friday prayers echoed through the air from the Jama Masjid, but now it stood lonely, dwarfed by buildings the British erected with no soul."*

The mosque, which is a sacred cultural and community space, is now alone and hidden by colonial architecture.

Spiritual Space Undermined: The Jama Masjid's centrality is lessened, showing a change in religious and spatial power.

Loss of cultural identity: A place that used to be a community center is now a relic.

Quijano says that sacred spaces are intentionally desecrated to weaken cultural sovereignty.

Textual Analysis: Alamgir Hashmi's "In Cordoba"

Memory of Space and Silence

> *"The arches still whisper the adhan, even though no one speaks in the halls of silence."*

Hashmi uses personification and sound imagery here to show how space keeps memories. The arches don't stay quiet; they "whisper," which suggests that cultural identity is still there even when it's hidden.

Spiritual Resonance in Architecture: The arches are a reminder of prayer and memory, which goes against the idea of erasing history.

Said's Counterpoint: Space talks back to the main history. Islam was kicked out of Spain, but it still lives on in the bones of buildings.

Memory as Resistance: Even quiet can be powerful.

The Dust and Prayer Metaphor

"Memory, a prayer rug, set down in dust."

This metaphor shows cultural memory as something holy (the prayer rug) but also something that has been left behind or forgotten (the dust). The picture shows deep sadness, but there is also a glimmer of hope for new life.

Layering in space: The dust stands for time, abandonment, and exile.

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Cultural Continuity: The prayer rug is still there; it's just buried.
Decolonial Reading: Space is a container of many histories, and poetry can bring it back to life.

Al-Andalus's Intertextual Echoes

"These stones used to sing." They listen now."

The poem says that Córdoba's past was full of Islamic voices, expressions, and life, but now it is quiet. But the stones still "listen," which means that they are still there even when they are quiet. The difference between voice and silence is that voice is cultural agency and silence is subjugation.

Stone as Witness: Space turns into a record of history.
Postcolonial Spatiality: The poet fights against the way the West frames
Andalusia is called a "lost paradise," but it is still very much alive.

Nature and Civilization Are Connected

> *"Orange blossoms scenting the dusk where fountains remember the steps of scholars."*

This line of sensory words combines nature (flowers), time (dusk), and history (scholars) into a living, breathing ecosystem. It suggests that the environment remembers civilization and civilization remembers the environment; Orange blossoms stand for life, and fountains stand for Islamic learning.

Edward Said's Legacy: This is a contrapuntal space that looks at history from the outside.
Nature itself takes part in the retelling of colonized stories through spatial reclamation.

Literary Space and Resistance to Colonialism

Both texts use images and metaphors to show how language, culture, and the environment are all connected when people are forced to move because of colonialism or postcolonialism. Ahmed Ali shows how British colonialism in India destroyed both the land and the culture. Alamgir Hashmi's poetry brings back lost Islamic space, turning Córdoba into a metaphysical archive of resistance.

Together, they show how literary space can be used as a decolonial tool, a canvas for language to paint memory, identity, and resistance.

"The smell of conquest and vanquishing;"

Edward Said's Orientalism

This line reminds me of the violence in imperial history and how Córdoba changed from a thriving Islamic civilization to a Christianized, touristy place. The physical "smell" of conquest shows that colonial takeovers of space are both material and cultural. Said thinks that this kind of poetic reference shows how the West tends to romanticize or clean up the East, hiding the violence that happened there.

"Near La Masqita / and let heaven's music fill in for light–"

"La Masqita," which used to be a mosque and is now a cathedral, becomes a disputed symbol of space. Said would see this change as the rewriting of Eastern sacred space by Western powers during the colonial period. The phrase "heaven's music" suggests that there is still an Islamic spiritual resonance, even though people were forced to convert to Islam and take back the Oriental space from Orientalist stories.

"The city's angels take new language courses / and operate the official grapevine."

Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o's Book Decolonizing the Mind

Ngũgĩ says that colonialism doesn't just take over land; it also replaces native languages with imperial languages, cutting people off from their cultural roots. The "angels" are a joke about people who have lost their own language and have to learn the language of the colonizers to

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get by in modern society. The "official grapevine" is like state-run, Eurocentric information systems that control stories and communication.

"What remains is relict."

This strong, short line shows that Ngũgĩ believes that native culture can survive even when it is ruled by colonizers. A "relict" is not dead; it is a living trace, a memory that has been buried and is waiting to come back to life. Hashmi says that even though modernization and conquest have made things look better, cultural memory lives on in poetry and symbols.

Anibal Quijano's Coloniality of Power

"New electrical fittings, of course, / and chapters of endless"

This difference between modern infrastructure and ancient farming life shows how colonialism works by forcing "progress" on local rhythms. The dismissive "of course" makes fun of the idea that modernization is better, while "chapters of endless olives" brings back the long-standing indigenous connection to land and tradition. Quijano would call this the fight between Eurocentric modernity and alternative, colonized temporalities.

"A white handkerchief across the city's face."

This picture of a veiled city shows how Islamic identity has been silenced by modern, secular, or Christian governments. The "white handkerchief" could mean both mourning and erasure. In Quijano's words, it stands for the colonial masking of real histories and identities, which were replaced with sanitized, commodified versions that are good for tourism and Western consumption. By analyzing These Lines, We Can See How "In Cordoba" Subtly and Strongly Participates in The Conversation About Decolonization.

Said shows how space has been conquered both physically and symbolically, especially sacred Islamic sites.

Ngũgĩ shows how colonial language policies have an effect and how strong cultural memory is.

Quijano criticizes how modernity and state power hide local traditions and change how people learn.

Loss of the Environment and Reorganization of Cities

After 1857, the British aggressively redesigned cities. In 1911, the colonial government moved the capital from Calcutta to Delhi. Construction of New Delhi (1911–1931) Colonial policies also had an effect on the environment. The loss of trees, the building of more railroads, and changes in how rivers were managed all hurt Delhi's biodiversity. British landscaping removed native plants like neem and banyan in favor of imported one's species or ornamental imperial gardens. Ali uses these changes as symbols in his novel; fallen trees, dirty air, and the quiet of pigeons all represent the decline of the environment, which is similar to the decline of culture.

So, colonial Delhi became a place of layered dislocations; cultural, ecological, and spiritual all of which *Twilight in Delhi* mourns. Understanding the city's literary representation requires understanding the historical destruction of its organic identity.

The Christian Reconquista and The Destruction of Culture

Alhambra Decree (1492) said that Jews and Muslims had to leave or convert to Christianity. Arabic was banned, and mosques were turned into churches; and manuscripts were burned in mass purges. La Mezquita was turned into a cathedral, but a lot of its Islamic architecture was kept, which made it a layered structure that visually shows how history has been erased and taken over.

Islamic culture was systematically and permanently suppressed. The Inquisition hunted down former Muslims (Moriscos) for centuries. Córdoba's Muslim past was either downplayed or romanticized as a time of mysticism. Hashmi's poem mourns this break and spiritual silence, asking the reader to "step into a new pair of shoes" and rediscover a lost cosmopolitanism. The

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natural references to olive groves, the Guadalquivir, and orange blossoms serve as living records of the past.

Forgetting the Past and Getting Back to Culture

Spain has only recently started to openly talk about its Islamic past. For hundreds of years, historians left out Andalusia's contributions to science, agriculture, and the arts. Hashmi's literary pilgrimage fights against this forgetfulness by putting memory into landscape and verse. His poem is a decolonial gesture that doesn't just look back on the past but also reimagines Cordoba as a place of mixed identity. By connecting Islamic Andalusia to larger postcolonial issues, Hashmi brings back what colonial and nationalist stories tried to hide. The poem's spiritual and ecological recovery is based on its historical context.

The historical paths of Delhi and Cordoba are important to the literary spaces imagined in *Twilight in Delhi* and *In Cordoba*. One was changed by British colonialism and the other by Christian reconquest. Both cities are palimpsests, meaning they have been overwritten by power but still show signs of resistance, beauty, and cultural memory.

Architectural styles, languages, and the rhythms of nature made identities in exile that were separate but still there. Ahmed Ali and Alamgir Hashmi don't rebuild empires; instead, they use words to give new meaning to old ones. Their texts remember places that were scarred by domination and bring them back to life as places of poetic and spiritual re-inhabitation.

A Decolonial Look at Literary Space

Colonial or imperial forces have deeply affected urban, cultural, and ecological spaces. These disruptions go beyond architecture or geography; they mean the end of cultural continuity, epistemic sovereignty, and spiritual rootedness. In *Twilight in Delhi*, Ahmed Ali doesn't just make Delhi a city; he makes it a character that embodies Indo-Islamic heritage under siege. The novel starts with sensory details: the smell of jasmine, pigeons flying over of space" by the colonizer (Said, 1978). The colonial power redefines Delhi, not only physically but ideologically, as a modern, rational, and "civilized" capital denying the legitimacy of indigenous cultural order.

In the same way, Alamgir Hashmi's *In Cordoba* shows Andalusia as a place scarred by imperial violence. Once a center of Islamic knowledge, the city is now framed by absence and memory. The poem talks about how La Mezquita became a Christian cathedral, using phrases like "Shadows in the nave" to suggest both architectural layering and spiritual loss. This is similar to what Aníbal Quijano calls the "coloniality of power," where physical conquest is matched by epistemic and cultural domination. Cordoba's spatial transformation becomes a metaphor for cultural suppression, showing how colonial histories continue to exist even in post-imperial contexts. In both texts, space is not neutral; it is politicized, rewritten, and contested. Delhi and Cordoba are literary palimpsests, bearing witness to cultural displacement and historical erasure

Identity, Memory, And Resistance

A central theme in both texts is the crisis of identity that people went through during colonial rule. In "Twilight in Delhi" Mir Nihal's decline is like the loss of Indo-Muslim identity after British rule. His despair is not just personal; it is also cultural. His refusal to accept colonial modernity, shown by his hatred of English, bicycles, and railways, shows that he is resisting the epistemic violence of colonization. His nostalgia is not just sentimentality; it is a decolonial act of remembering, based on what Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o calls "linguistic memory," a remembering of the cultural landscape that foreign power erased. Hashmi's speaker in "In Cordoba" goes through a similar process of spiritual recovery. The poem reconstructs Islamic Andalusia not as a lost paradise, but as a living archive. "Step into a new pair of shoes," the poet writes, urging the reader to reclaim a history that has been systematically denied.

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"Orange trees," "the river," and "fields of cotton" are all things that ground this memory in the earth itself. In this way, environmental space becomes a container for cultural and historical identity. So, resistance is not in confrontation but in re-remembering.

Edward Said says that reclaiming narrative is important for fighting Orientalist myths. Both authors fight against forgetting history and Western stories of progress by grounding identity in space, memory, and poetic continuity. Their works challenge the colonial view of Eastern societies as passive and broken by putting historical agency, spiritual endurance, and aesthetic sovereignty at the forefront.

Language and Story as Tools for Decolonization

Both Ali and Hashmi's language is not just a means of communication; it is also a way to resist. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o says that the colonial project starts in the classroom when children are taught to think in the language of the colonizer and forget their own. This linguistic dislocation leads to cultural alienation. In "Twilight in Delhi", Ali uses Urdu idioms, Islamic references, and poetic forms to challenge the colonizer's linguistic hegemony. The character Asghar writes love poems in Urdu, festivals are described using native terms (e.g., "Eid," "Moharram"), and the rhythm of the prose mimics traditional oral storytelling. This kind of writing is what Ngũgĩ calls "writing back," taking back linguistic territory even within a colonial tongue.

Hashmi's poem is similar in style. Even though it is written in English, it is full of Islamic images, Arabic place names, and spiritual references. The line "your footprints in the azure stretching over Andalusia" combines poetic metaphor with historical recovery. Hashmi refuses to write in Eurocentric poetic forms, which would flatten identity. Instead, his verse is elliptical, symbolic, and reflective, following Sufi poetic traditions and decolonial cosmology.

In both cases, storytelling becomes a political tool. The act of telling stories itself fights against colonial silencing. By putting indigenous rhythms, histories, and symbols into English prose and poetry, both writers turn the colonizer's language into a way to free themselves. As Aníbal Quijano points out, reclaiming epistemic autonomy is key to getting rid of coloniality. These texts are examples of that reclamation.

Intersection of Environment, Culture, And Identity

Violence in colonial times is not just cultural and political; it is also ecological. Both texts use the death and decline of nature as symbols of cultural loss. In *Twilight in Delhi* the disappearance of pigeons, the cutting down of neem trees, and the dust-filled air all show that the world is dying. Nature, which was once part of culture through festivals, gardens, and food, now stands by silently as people suffer. The British reordering of space has erased the relationship between people and their environment. This loss is not just material; it is ontological.

In Cordoba nature becomes a memory aid. The poem's repeated images of rivers, orchards, and sunlight link the present landscape to its Islamic past. But the tone is sad: "the smell of conquest and vanquishing" suggests an environmental haunting. The land remembers, even when the official histories don't. The Guadalquivir is not just a river; it is a witness to centuries of coexistence and then erasure.

Postcolonial critics say that colonialism causes ecological trauma by breaking up local knowledge systems and cutting communities off from the land. This idea is echoed in both texts, where death, in the form of cultural and ecological extinction, is a common theme. But even this death is not the end. The texts suggest that memory cultural, spiritual, and environmental can last, fight back, and maybe even come back to life.

Twilight in Delhi and *In Cordoba* show how literary space can be a place of historical and cultural struggle. When we look at space, memory, and language through a decolonial lens, we see that they are not just passive reflections but active terrains of resistance. Ahmed Ali and

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Alamgir Hashmi use narrative, image, and symbol to rewrite history against colonial silencing. These works bring together Ngũgĩ's idea of linguistic reclamation, Said's critique of Orientalist representation, and Quijano's theory of coloniality. They show that reclaiming narrative is not just an artistic act; it is also political, spiritual, and ecological.

By combining poetic beauty with a decolonial goal, both texts refuse to let identity die in the shadow of conquest. Instead, they create literary spaces where justice, memory, and belonging can continue to grow like jasmine in a neglected garden or sunlight coming through the arches of a mosque.

Taking Back Space as Cultural Sovereignty

Here, city is a metaphorical and physical space of colonized memory. *Twilight in Delhi* shows Old Delhi as a sacred, decaying body that has been violated by British architecture and cultural regulation. The changes to the Red Fort, the disappearance of the Mughal court, and the alienation of characters like Mir Nihal show how Indo-Muslim sovereignty has been displaced. Ali's Delhi is not just a setting; it is a living archive of culture that has been disrupted by the colonial agenda of spatial reordering.

In the same way, Hashmi's *In Cordoba* moves through the palimpsestic cityscape of Andalusia, where remnants of Islamic architecture (La Mezquita, ancient bridges, olive fields) are covered by Christian hegemony. The poet reclaims these spaces through acts of memory and re-vision. As Said says, colonial regimes often "normalize" the takeover of space by redefining it as their own cultural inheritance. Hashmi breaks this story by using poetic language to bring back Cordoba's Islamic heritage and its ecological presence.

Both writers say that when space is reclaimed through literary imagination, it becomes a place of cultural justice where the colonized person can write back, remember, and fight back.

Using Language and Poetry to Fight Back

Language is at the heart of each writer's method of decolonization. Ahmed Ali writes in English, but he uses Urdu poetic rhythm, Islamic rituals, and cultural metaphors in his prose. He takes back the colonizer's language as a way for indigenous people to express themselves, which Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o calls "decolonizing the mind." Ali's choice to write *Twilight in Delhi* in English while keeping the soul of Urdu literature is like the dual consciousness of the colonized writer: speaking back while keeping the sanctity of one's cultural vocabulary.

In the same way, Hashmi's *In Cordoba* resists Western poetic forms by using spiritual ambiguity, non-linear time, and multilingual allusion. His imagery is based on Islamic mysticism, Andalusian geography, and ecological symbolism. "Footprints in the azure," "shadows in the nave," and "the smell of conquest" are not just poetic devices; they are also ways of knowing that don't follow Western narrative logic. Language does two things in both texts: it keeps cultural memory alive and it breaks up imperial discourse. As Quijano says, taking back the power to tell one's own history is a key step in breaking down coloniality. These texts do just that.

Cultural Memory, Mourning for The Environment, And Spiritual Continuity

Both writers combine cultural and environmental loss to show how colonial disruption affects the natural world. In “Twilight in Delhi”, the cutting down of neem trees, the silence of pigeons, and the choking air all show how ecological degradation is linked to cultural ruin. The environment is a mirror of social decay: what was once abundant and rhythmic becomes barren and strange. This ecological grief is similar to Mir Nihal's emotional collapse and signals the end of Indo-Muslim sovereignty.

In contrast, Hashmi sees the environment as a memory system. His Cordoba is full of historical and botanical memories: orange blossoms remind him of Andalusian gardens, and rivers whisper stories of migration and loss. The Guadalquivir flows not only as water but also as

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cultural memory. The poem mourns and reaffirms spiritual endurance at the same time. The speaker's journey to the mosque becomes a pilgrimage of self-recovery, blending personal and civilizational grief with poetic resistance.

So, the texts make nature more than just a backdrop; it is the place where violence happened in the past and where people have been spiritually strong. In both cases, the environment becomes a vessel for collective memory and an active participant in the fight against colonialism.

How It Adds to Postcolonial and Decolonial Literature:

Both *Twilight in Delhi* and *In Cordoba* are important works of decolonial literature. They go beyond the postcolonial themes of trauma and nostalgia by claiming narrative sovereignty and refusing to let the colonial past control the indigenous future. As Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o says, *decolonizing the mind* means going back to ancestral knowledge systems, spatial imagination, and cultural idioms. Ahmed Ali's novel, which came out in 1940, was one of the first South Asian books in English to not romanticize colonialism. Ali writes against the imperial literary tradition that made Delhi seem like a beautiful place to live for its colonized Muslim citizens. Indian spaces as backdrops for British heroism. The novel's refusal to forget about colonialism helped pave the way for later writers like Bapsi Sidhwa, Kamila Shamsie, and Arundhati Roy, who also question power, place, and memory.

Alamgir Hashmi's poetry, especially "In Cordoba", shows a later generation of postcolonial consciousness that is aware of global displacement and the politics of memory. His work adds to what Aníbal Quijano calls "de-linking" from coloniality: by bringing back Islamic Andalusia and putting it in the context of Pakistani-Muslim identity, Hashmi makes the decolonial project more global, stressing the common histories that exist across empires and eras.

Bringing Back Indigenous Identity and Spiritual Geography

The two texts resist cultural flattening by bringing back indigenous identities that are based on space, memory, and language. In *Twilight in Delhi* identity is linked to more than just religion; it is also linked to rhythm, architecture, speech, and nature. Festivals like Eid, rituals like kite flying, and places like Chandni Chowk or the old haveli all make up a spiritual geography that resists colonial redefinition. The novel says that indigenous life cannot be reduced to imperial categories of civilization and savagery. Cordoba reclaims Muslim history in Spain by putting it into natural and man-made landmarks. The poem reads the river, the mosque, and the orchards as signs of a suppressed identity. This is important because of Islamophobia, migration crises, and the erasure of history. Hashmi's poetic pilgrimage challenges Muslim communities around the world and claims that Islamic heritage is valid in Europe multicultural past. His writing speaks to readers who are living in other countries, reminding them that their histories are based on being there, not on being in exile.

Both texts challenge what Edward Said calls the "systematic devaluation" of the East. They show different maps of belonging that are written in breath, stone, and soil instead of borders.

Cultural and Ecological Resonance in The Present

Colonialism's ecological legacies deforestation, river redirection, and urban overdevelopment continue to shape the physical and cultural landscapes of South Asia and the Mediterranean. In *Twilight in Delhi*, British modernization destroys gardens, silences birds, and pollutes the air. These environmental changes are part of a larger cultural erasure. Today, Delhi faces environmental collapse from over-urbanization, where heritage sites stand suffocated by smog and concrete echoing the novel's warnings. *In Cordoba* talks about the long-term effects of forgetting about the environment. The poem makes modern readers think about how memory plays a role in environmental justice. Hashmi's use of Andalusian nature as a keeper of history offers a way to combine ecology and decolonization in a time of climate change. The natural

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world is not a passive victim of empire; it is a witness, a bearer of memory, and a resource for renewal.

A Brief Overview of The Main Results

This article looked at "Twilight in Delhi" by Ahmed Ali and "In Cordoba" by Alamgir Hashmi through the lens of decolonial theory, focusing on how colonial regimes disrupt people's lives in terms of culture, environment, and identity. It looked at how both authors use literary space as a place of memory, resistance, and reclamation, based on important ideas from Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Edward Said, and Aníbal Quijano. The study found that colonialism changed Delhi and Cordoba in many ways, including physically, culturally, and spiritually. This led to environmental degradation, spatial reordering, and cultural suppression. Literary space is a powerful Language and is a key part of decolonial resistance. Both authors use poetic and narrative forms to challenge imperial discourse while affirming indigenous knowledge, aesthetics, and voice. Environmental imagery in both texts is deeply tied to cultural memory and identity, suggesting that the land remembers and reflects the historical trauma of colonialism. The works resonate beyond their historical contexts, offering contemporary relevance to debates on heritage, diaspora, identity, and ecological justice. Through these findings, the thesis affirms that both texts are not only postcolonial but fundamentally decolonial in nature; they actively reclaim and reimagine what colonial power tried to suppress.

Conclusion

Ahmed Ali's *twilight in Delhi* tries to highlight the colonial shadow even in the title. The word twilight indicates the time which is neither day nor night; represents the time of confusion and lost identity under colonialism. However, this is the first English novel which doesn't romanticized colonialism on the other hand Alamgir Hashmi's in Cordoba represents resistance in the title as well. The writer used the name cordoba which is named by Muslims; to recall the Muslim dominancy instead of Spain which is under English rule. However, in a time when cultural nationalism is on the rise, the environment is falling apart, and people are forgetting their history under colonialism it is more important than ever to remember and do so critically, poetically, and as a group. *Twilight in Delhi* and *In Cordoba* shows us how literature can hold the weight of memory without being buried by it. They do not bring back the past; they reimagine it. They do not deny pain; they change it. And by doing so, they create literary spaces where identity, culture, and the environment can survive not as ruins, but as roots. This may be the most important thing about decolonial writing: to hear what was silenced, say what was unspeakable, and picture what empire said was gone. In both texts, space is more than just a place; it's a political and poetic witness of loss, resistance, and cultural strength. These works show how decolonial literature works as both an archive and a way for colonized people to reclaim their histories, redefine their futures, and restore dignity to their identities that have been lost. They do this by combining language, culture, and environment they not just literary records of loss, but also strong expressions of justice, cultural survival, and epistemic resistance. Ahmed Ali's *Twilight in Delhi* was banned by British colonial authorities for a while. This shows how subversive the novel is in a decolonial context. The novel's vivid description of pre-colonial Delhi and its cultural splendor was seen as a threat to colonial stories. Ali's work went against the imperial logic that saw colonized areas as culturally inferior and in need of governance by showing a society that thrived without British rule and mourning the loss of that freedom. This censorship can be seen as a direct reaction to the novel's ability to raise awareness of cultural issues and anti-colonial feelings. The colonial state knew that the novel could bring back collective memory, reclaim indigenous identity, and fight the epistemic violence that is built into colonial discourse. *Twilight in Delhi* is a political act of resistance against the erasure of local histories, languages, and traditions because it is a text that is very

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interested in preserving a way of life that is disappearing. Ahmed Ali himself talked about the colonial fear surrounding the book, saying that the British were "afraid of its cultural and political implications". The fact that the novel was banned shows how literature can be a battleground, where representation is seen as a form of rebellion.

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