ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

TRACING VIOLENCE, TERRORISM, AND URBAN SPACES IN OMAR SHAHID HAMID'S *THE PRISONER*: A RE-ORIENTALIST PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract:
This study examines Omar Shahid Hamid's novel The Prisoner (2013) through a re-orientalist lens, focusing on the depiction of violence, terrorism, and changing dynamics of urban spaces within the socio-political structure of Karachi. While The Prisoner appears to offer an insider's view of the crime-ridden streets of Karachi and their intricate electricity dynamics, it additionally raises questions about re-orientalist tendencies in Post-9/11 Pakistani Anglophone literature. Intersecting the themes of corruption, conspiracy, and the portrayal of Islamophobia, this study examines how Hamid misrepresents contemporary Pakistan and reinforces Western discourses by homogenizing urban ills and Islamic extremism. The study also examines how Hamid's reputation as an insider (as a former policeman) lends an air of authenticity to the narrative while reinforcing familiar tropes regularly associated with contemporary Pakistan in the Western media. The study also highlights the intersections of authenticity, representation, and re-orientalism in Hamid's narrative, the harshly assumed objectivity of neighborhood narratives, while also exploring the cultural politics behind the development of "terror" and "violence" in urban areas.

Introduction

Omar Shahid Hamid's *The Prisoner* is a book that whisks readers into the turmoil called Karachi-a city torn apart by crime, terrorism, and an especially tenuous system of law and order. This is a powerhouse of a portrayal of a metropolis in which violence and instinct for survival have become ingrained in day-to-day living, a sort of tug of war that always seems to exist between authority and chaos. It is against this chaotic backdrop that Hamid created a multilayered narrative of deep-rooted corruption and sectarian conflict that ran way deeper than most superficial representations of turmoil could ever have been able to imagine. Further, through the use of the re-orientalist vision, he also takes a dig at the reductionist view built around postcolonial cities, more particularly about those lying within the world of the Muslims, and tries to rewrite such urban spaces both in vernacular and international imagination.

Hamid's narrative confronts the fixed stereotypes framing Muslim-majority cities like Karachi as inherently violent or dysfunctional. He deconstructed this oversimplification of a portrayal through the insights of re-orientalism to show the socio-political and historical forces enabling such situations to arise in the first place. The novel presents the case that violence is not instinctive to the city but, rather, a product of systemic forces conditioned by colonial legacies, political mismanagement, and tussles between global powers. This is a daring perspective that contests Western views and local ones, which have reduced cities like Karachi to no more than chaotic emblems, instead placing them within complex universes sculpted by historical injustices and structural inequities.

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL

One of the recurrent themes in this novel is how closely violence and survival are related. As the novel puts it "A man with no hope is a man with no fear" (Hamid, 2013, p.62).This echoes throughout the story as it describes the characters' mindsets caught in a world where morality often has to be put aside to ensure survival.It reflects how hopelessness can drive people toward violence, not inherently, but as a result of systemic failures. In Karachi, where law enforcement is often intertwined with corruption and criminality, the line separating the protector from the perpetrator is blurred; the moral ambiguity that defines individual and institutional actions blurs it.

Hamid's rendering of Karachi does not reduce the city's tale to a simple story of good vs. evil. This fragile moral respectability in the social fabric of the city is a motif that pops up throughout the book, representing pervasive influences of power and corruption. This is well reflected in the text as **"**Respectability is just one step removed from outright criminality**"**(Hamid, 2013, p.153). It reveals just that fine layer of propriety disguising the deeply entrapping relationship between systemic corruption and societal norms. It also extends to the critique of institutions that collude in this violence, underlying political and social features that give legitimacy to lawlessness. In that respect, Hamid's account is a critique not only of the systemic flaws within Karachi but of the macro-structures that create such a condition.

The novel speaks to Karachi in specificity and universality, echoing its peculiarities while placing its struggles in a global context. Hamid's portrayal of neighborhoods like Lyari, which are notorious for gang violence, simultaneously underlines their function as sites of political and cultural resistance. This double function bears witness to the resilience and agency of Karachi's residents, rebuking reductive renderings of the city as a monolithic space of terror. By illustrating how individuals and communities live with such violence, Hamid offers nuance that challenges dominant discourses on urban violence in the Global South. Akbar Khan is the medium through which this story will travel into the human cost of systemic corruption. An unyielding moral ambiguity caught in the labyrinth of power and violence, Akbar personifies the struggle the commoner has to endure within Karachi's vortex. His story is the aggregate of all socio-political challenges that define living in Karachi and presents, in a humane form, the systemic forces at play for violence to be perpetuated. Akbar's story recounts, if anything, actual moral dilemmas that agents undergo within oppressive systems with personal agency vis-à-vis structural constraints.

This further enriches the engagement that Hamid undertakes with global discourses of terrorism and violence in the novel. He challenges reductive narratives about the intrinsic chaos of Muslim-majority urban spaces by placing Karachi within the wider framework of post-9/11 securitization and global power relations. Rather, he attempted to interpret and explain how these phenomena have been the product and consequence of a range of powerful historical and sociopolitical forces, from colonial exploitation to international inequalities. According to this approach, such factors contradict the global gaze as a means for reducing the violent urbanism of the Global South to questions of cultural pathology; instead, these factors bring into view one nuanced relation by historical and structural analysis.

The multilayered narrative structure of the novel reflects the multi-dimensional themes being unfolded. Hamid interweaves different perspectives together into a mosaic of experiences of the manifold ways in which violence and insecurity impinge on Karachi's residents. The complexity of this narration rhymes with the re-orientalist intention to undermine dominant discourses while accounting for systemic realities that define urban life. By avoiding homogenization, Hamid paints Karachi in much more vivid, honest, and compassionate colors by inviting readers to do something far more urgent: an intellectual

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

exercise on the core assumptions that underpin the current notion of a city throughout the Global South.

By delving deep into systemic corruption, *The Prisoner* critiques the entwinement of law enforcement with criminal networks in a way that shows how this complicity extends the cycles of violence and impunity. Hamid's nuanced characterization extends to the residents of Karachi, who show remarkable resilience amidst the challenges they face. This emphasis on local agency runs against reductive portrayals of the Global South as a passive victim of violence and instead highlights the ways individuals and communities resist and adapt to their circumstances. The landscape of the city is inextricably linked with its socio-political dynamics, acting almost like a backdrop and an actor in the telling of a story. Hamid's descriptions of Karachi's streets and neighborhoods come alive, painting a picture of the vibrancy of the city, but also of the challenges. This attention to detail underlines the importance of place for any analysis of the complexities of urban violence and highlights how space and identity are intertwined.

By the end of the novel it moved way beyond being a tale of the disintegration of cities to a deeper, valid criticism of the systemic drivers that maintain violence and insecurity in postcolonial cities. Hamid contests simplistic stereotypes of Karachi and the Muslim world with re-orientalism as the critical framework in a nuanced and understated manner, imbuing within the reader's consciousness certain socio-political and historical factors that give rise to those realities. This reflects a very complex interplay of global discourses with the local experiences of engagement with the themes of terrorism, corruption, and urban resilience. Such multivocal narration in this novel therefore creates an important counter-narrative that reshapes the global perception of Karachi and other cities, claiming an informed and equitable comprehension of urban violence and terror. Hamid's work epitomizes the power of literature as resistance and reimagines cultural narratives toward an empathetic re-engagement with urban life in the Global South. By presenting the multilayered city, *The Prisoner* challenges readers to question their assumptions about terrorism and violence and the way to approach such cities. Ultimately, Hamid's portrayal brings to light the resilience and agency of Karachi's inhabitants-a powerful testimony to the indomitable human spirit in the face of systemic adversity.

Literature Review

The representation of terrorism and violence in urban spaces, while envisioned in *The Prisoner* by Omar Shahid Hamid, should therefore also be placed within the ambit of a re-orientalist perspective reflecting larger post-colonial and global concerns. Re-orientalism is a critical way of making sense of the dynamics of power and identity that shape urban violence, especially in cities such as Karachi, which, within Hamid’s work, is depicted as a site of profound socio-political tension. This literature review discusses violence and the colonial legacy in urban space, examined through a re-orientalist theoretical approach. Key quotations are included herein, through which to engage in a critical discussion of themes.

“Never before in human history have so few owed so much to so many … A handful of men in this country have trained the remaining 99.9 percent – as strong, as talented, as intelligent in every way – to exist in perpetual servitude; a servitude so strong that you can put the key of his emancipation in a man’s hands and he will throw it back at you with a curse”(Adiga, 2008, p.149). It goes to the very core of the postcolonial condition of servitude that defines the lives of many in postcolonial cities. The violence and corruption, in the instance of *The Prisoner* dealing with Karachi, represent a scale higher than an articulation of individual criminality since it reflects more with that greater system of inequality kept intact long after the forces of colonialism ended. This quote says volumes with regard to political

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ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

structure in post-colonial nations entrenching power differences; the few individuals at the commanding helm take advantage of and brutally oppress the majority into accepting a situation without changing any potential leeway. This dynamic reflects the better-known violence in Karachi, but is essentially the same processes of a few, politically/economically excluded individuals enacting frustrations in a condition that is still fostering an acceptance of servitude toward violence and terror in said city.

This systemic inequality is reproduced and sustained through power relations decipherable through a re-orientalist critique of representation. This has become one of the most familiar motifs of postcolonial studies. "The notion of the real, such a system of truth, continues to convince us. The case of Orientalism shows us, moreover, how this supposed distinction between a realm of representation and an external reality corresponds to another apparent division of the world, into the West and the non-West"(Mitchell, 1998, p.472) that speaks to how it is that colonial powers constructed the Orient as some set-apart space of wonder and inferiority, which is fundamentally Other to the West. Karachi is similarly figured as a space of violence, corruption, and disorder-as legacy of colonialism. However, by portraying Karachi's violence as the product of both local and global forces, Hamid resists the simplistic portrayals of the city as a site of chaos, instead pointing out structural and historical forces that continue to shape urban violence.

In any case, "the representation of the Orient within colonial discourse is more often than not one which aspires to set the East as an object, devoid of the influence of the colonizers from Europe. As Edward Said argues in his seminal book on Orientalism, The representation of the orient, in its attempt to be detached and objective, would seek to eliminate from the picture the presence of the European observer … To establish the objectness of the Orient, as a picturereality containing no sign of the increasingly pervasive European presence, required that the presence itself, ideally, become invisible"(Mitchell, 1998, p.470). It is significant in understanding how violence in urban spaces is represented within colonial and postcolonial contexts. In the case of *The Prisoner*, the Karachi violence is not a pure function of local crime but is instead shaped by the persistence of both colonial and postcolonial structures of domination. The novel critiques the invisibilized colonial presence within this representation of violence by pointing out the functions and policies of those in power that continue to have an impact on the lives of ordinary people in postcolonial cities.This is indeed the perspective of re-orientalism, which serves to illustrate how the legacies of colonialism continue through the lives of urban residents-violence is theirs alone and a product of personal failure rather than a larger symptom of systemic and historical effects.

The idea that "One has only to … consider the concentration of time involved in treating a human life in two hundred pages, or to remember the necessary limitations of experience and perception of any single novelist to confirm that reality, in any literal or complete sense, cannot possibly be rendered in the novel"(Cruickshank, 1970, p.35). It gives a good insight into the inability of literature to depict fully even a part of reality. In, *The Prisoner*, the horizon of Hamid's imagination in portraying Karachi is constricted by his personal, subjective experience and by the form of the novel he employs. Yet, this would not be a limitation in itself; instead, such a limitation corresponds to a situation of postcolonial life that is itself inherently incoherent and fragmented. There is violence and corruption in the deep-rootedness of real-life experience within the narrative the book gives, but at the same time, it also partially recognizes the impossibility of representation. In acknowledging limitations, Hamid launches a critique of ways in which literature has objectively been used to either sanitize or demonize the East. The incomplete focus of the novel on urban violence

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

points to the struggles of individuals caught within systems of power shaped by both colonial and postcolonial histories.

Similarly crucial in the framing of urban violence in the context of understanding how *The Prisoner* represents the constitution of culture and identity is the role literature itself plays. "Texts operate in worlds where ethnic writings get co-opted as representative of cultural groups" (Shankar, 2009, p. 46). It suggests that literature often operates within systems of representation which attempt to fix and simplify complex cultural identities. In the context of *The Prisoner*, Karachi is a microcosm of larger global issues, with ethnic and social divisions contributing to the violence and chaos. But such a portrayal of violence does not, of course, come without its own set of ideological implications. The novel resists allowing its depictions of ethnicity and culture to be co-opted into grand, reductionist narratives that reduce Karachi into little more than a mere synecdoche of postcolonial dysfunction. Rather, Hamid sets before the reader a variegated, complexly layered vision of the city, inescapably aware of the fact that at the core of the contemporary condition of Karachi is an enabling conjunction: of different forces, of different kinds-historical, social, global.

This also goes to reveal the pressure that writers in postcolonial contexts have to resist or justify the dominant ideologies of one's time, as noted in this statement "Writers are compelled to resist, justify, or celebrate precisely this aspect of the postcolonial field's arrangement, in accordance with their circumstances" (Brouillette, 2007, p. 4). In *The Prisoner*, Hamid's depiction of Karachi's violence comes not only in response to the political and social realities of Pakistan, but also as a criticism of the global systems which still shape the course of the country's destiny. The novel opposes the dominant postcolonial discourses that either romanticize or demonize the East; instead, it offers an articulate and critical investigation into the violence that permeates urban space. It, therefore, challenges readers of the novel to revise a simplistic view of postcolonial cities and to contemplate the multifariousness of the lives in these environments.

In all, *The Prisoner* becomes an evocative lens through which to consider the violence and terrorism that afflict urban spaces in postcolonial contexts. The re-orientalist perspective on the novel reveals that Hamid critiques the effects of colonialism, which have survived into the postcolonial cities like Karachi, where violence is a symptom and a consequence of larger systemic forces. It contests dominant visions of East and South by articulating an agnostic urbanicity and a violence that is decidedly irreducible; this prevents any real or rhetorical co-optation of the violent particularities of postcolonial existence. Through an unfolding cartography of Karachi, *The Prisoner* broaches the intersecting spaces of localizing and global forces that concretized the historic, contemporaneous legacies that constitute urban violence.

Theoretical Framework

An Orientalist reading of the representation of terrorism and violence within the urban spaces in *The Prisoner* by Omar Shahid Hamid has, first and foremost, to be premised on how the idea of the "Orient" was constituted and used within European discourses. This is not some insulated chronicling of the postcolonial experience but a grand record of Karachi's Transformation into a city with all-pervasive violence, speaking to wider themes of urban transformation, identity, and the lingering legacies of colonialism. Drawing from postcolonial insight, it is the Re-Orientalist theory that could benefit a conceptual framing of such urban spaces – that violence in these areas can only be understood through delinking such practices from purely criminal matters into embedding in socioeconomic and historic processes engendered through colonial and postcolonial dynamics.

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

"The Orient was almost a European invention, and … had been a stage on which the whole East was confined, the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other" (Said, 1978, p. 1). It indicates the starting point of any critique of Orientalist discourse. By portraying an unknown and often dangerous East, the European colonialist powers created a narrative through which they could maintain feelings of human superiority to justify their intrusion: their exploitation and domination of that world.

In the city spaces in Karachi from *The Prisoner*, there is more violence and terrorism that are central to the portrayal of the identity of the city, by extension, the broader narrative of Pakistan and its relations with the West. It is a city where the reverberations of colonial history find an intricate social and political tension in its present. Violence here is not something that exists in a vacuum but rather as an expression of deeper historical processes. The legacy of colonialism-a continuum of exploitation, domination, and resistance-finds a replay in the dynamics of power in the postcolonial urban landscape. Hamid's Karachi is a city at the crossroads of power and identity politics, reflecting the historical processes of colonialism and its aftermath.

By re-orientalizing *The Prisoner*, one might think through how the contemporary global contexts are still determined by colonial histories, not only in terms of politics but in the ways in which urban spaces are conceptualized and inhabited. In postcolonial discourse, this leads us to the critique that "If postcolonial studies is to survive in any meaningful way, it needs to absorb itself far more deeply with the contemporary world, and with the local circumstances within which colonial institutions and ideas are being moulded into the disparate cultural and socioeconomic practices which define our contemporary 'globality" (Loomba 1998, pp. 256–57). This call for deeper engagement with the contemporary world finds particular resonance in the context of *The Prisoner*, where issues of crime, terrorism, and social unrest in Karachi are framed as products of the complex interplay between local conditions and the lingering effects of colonial structures. The violence of the city is not something like a random eruption but rather an outcome-a result of an intersection between local experiences and global forces, especially those rooted in colonial history and postcolonial identity struggles.

It makes this violence in *The Prisoner* an integral reflection of broader struggles over identity, power, and belonging in postcolonial urban spaces. From a re-orientalist analytic perspective, it is abundantly evident that these urban cities reflect contesting narrative representations between the local representations against colonial legacies on one hand, and between those reproducing legacies of colonial power and domination on the other. Indeed, urban spaces such as Karachi become grounds for material and symbolic conflict between the forces of globalism and post-colonial legacies that juxtapose. This reflects a deeper historical truth that cannot be understood without acknowledging the enduring influence of colonialism, which continues to shape the lives of those in the postcolonial world.

The portrayal of urban violence in Karachi within the novel *The Prisoner* is informed also from the literary tradition that usually shapes the form of the novel. The quote perhaps says it all: "The development of the novel form is coextensive with the history of modern realism as it reflects this radical transformation of the culture; and realism has not only been the distinctive mode of the form but remains the dominant stylization of the novel, taken over all, up to the present day"(Cruickshank, 1970, p.37) which again hints that Hamid has made use of realism in his novel as a tool to represent the raw and dingy details of city life in Karachi. Realism, as a mode, is inalienable in such representations of violence since the

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

literary mode provides realism embedded within the socio-political and historical particularities of the city-the key with which the factors leading to such acts could be perceived. The novelist also presented Karachi not as an exoticized space but rather as a complex, many times brutal urban environment. In that respect, Hamid is resisting the romanticization of the East that was at the core of many Orientalist discourses. The novel's realism about violence constitutes a counterpoint to idealized visions of the Orient that have been constructed by the West, positioning the city as a site of oppression and resistance.

Indeed, ideology is central in the creation of narrative in *The Prisoner.* As noted, "A writer's ideology is merely a synthesis of the totality of his experience on a certain level of abstraction … without ideology, a writer can neither narrate nor construct a comprehensive, well-organised and multifaceted epic composition" (Lukacs, 1970. pp.142–43). Hamid's account of Karachi is profoundly marked by his broader ideological formulation of postcolonialist identity and the colonial legacy. Notice how his account is not alone about observing the urban category of violence but presents ideology about how those things do connect to larger historical as well as global forces. Hamid's ideological stance speaks to an understanding of the sociopolitical milieu which the denizens of Karachi live in, and the novel works at constructing one big narrative that links up the personal experiences of violence with the larger postcolonial condition.

Further, the tension between authenticity and ideological representation is one of the most salient in the postcolonial world. Karem (2004) implies that the "paradigms of authenticity in publishing and criticism are failed ideals in themselves, conceptually unstable and dangerously reductive" (p. 15). It shows the limiting nature of more traditional postcolonial narratives that posit a unified voice of authenticity in resistance. Hamid's novel complicates this with a complex narration of Karachi's violence that hardly speaks to, let alone satisfies, the more facile categories of victim or resistor. The characters in *The Prisoner* are not mere victims of colonialism or global capitalism but are caught up in the web of these larger forces, committing acts of violence to survive and assert an identity in a world that is at once global and local, colonial and postcolonial.

This last aspect-that is, the global dimensions of postcolonial studies-is important to place the role of violence in the context of urban spaces. As Chakladar (2000) suggests that "metropolitan postcolonial studies threatens an imperialism of its own, one in which the third world produces texts for the first world academic's consumption" (p.186). Hamid's *The Prisoner* resists and challenges the idea of the postcolonial narrative needing to be consumed by a Western audience to hold any validity. Violence in the novel is not a spectacle for the Western reader but an actual condition of lived realities by those inhabiting postcolonial urban spaces. It is here that the novel resists the imperialistic tendencies of postcolonial studies that elide complex local realities into consumable narratives for a Western audience. Instead, Hamid insists on the relevance of the local, situating this violence in Karachi within the global discussion of postcolonial identity, resistance, and colonial legacy.

Finally, through the re-orientalist perspective, *The Prisoner* critically scrutinizes the violence and terrorisms plaguing urban space in the postcolonial context. While interrogating a critical aspect of Karachi with a view to the novels it has generated, a broad understanding of the deeper-structural placement of violence-hitherto understood as a merely symptomal operation of criminality-is possible within historical-social-political processes initiated or continued with different forces of colonialism and, now, postcolonialism. Indeed, the novel, against so many romanticized notions that are built up through a continuous process of Orientalism, presents a more reality-imbued and shades-of-gray kind of lifestyle within a

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

postcolonial city. This means it forces one to reflect upon how violence and identity combine within space or across spatially divided jurisdictions in this global context.

Discussion and Analysis

Hamid undertakes an engaging journey of violence, and terrorism, but also systemic corruption within the sanguinary socio-political backdrop of Karachi in his creation *The Prisoner*. The novel truly reveals the urban dynamics of Karachi- to present violence and insecurity as artifacts concretized by historical and structural forces rather than cultural phenomena. Backed by such sensitivity the author launches a blistering attack against the mainstream top-down discourses portraying large Muslim-majority cities specifically from the Global South, not only as intrinsically chaotic at best but also violent. The authors have used the terms 'big beasts' and 'small game fishes' to refer to Pakistan and Afghanistan, respectively, metaphorically. Instead, he used a re-orientalist position to offer a sensitive, multi-layered discussion related to the systemic injustices affecting the urban realities of Karachi.

Hamid's representation of Karachi extends far beyond simplifying the city to the so-called chaos portrayal. He represents, in a clear vision, how historical injustices, legacies of colonization, and contemporary socio-economic disparity result in urban violence outlines and labyrinthine socio-political mechanisms. This is an imaginative reconstruction of forces at work from the local to the global, making the novel a grand critique of the imaginary perceptions of so-called "third-world cities." Situating the struggles of Karachi within the wider historical and structural contexts underlines an urgent need, as Hamid posits, to transcend such reductionist stereotypes.

At the core of the novel lies the relationship between violence and survival. Hamid threads them together as intertwining forces in one self-sustaining spiral that informs the psychic-emotional constitution of his characters. This sentiment captures the gruesome socio-political reality of Karachi, where law enforcement is deeply embedded with corruption and criminality, leaving no line between the protector and the perpetrator. Hamid's portrayal is an argument against the type of narrative that locates the source of violence in Muslim-majority regions within cultural or religious reasons, instead pointing at systemic inequalities and historical injustices as the root cause of this destructive cycle.

One of the critical interventions of Hamid is how he lays bare the fragility of moral respectability in the social fabric of Karachi. He exposes how societal norms and institutional life have become complicit in the perpetuation of violence and corruption. That **"**Respectability is just one step removed from outright criminality**"** (Hamid, 2013, p.153). **It** speaks volumes about a thin veneer of propriety masking deep entanglement between power, crime, and law enforcement. This observation corroborates the argument of Lisa Lau that re-orientalist texts simultaneously affirm and challenge stereotypes. As much as Hamid represents Karachi as a city full of crime and violence, he deconstructs such perceptions by showing the systemic forces that create such conditions. This duality enables the novel to challenge global stereotypes while remaining anchored in the lived experiences of Karachi's inhabitants. The city of Karachi itself becomes a protagonist in *The Prisoner*, both a backdrop and an actor in the story. Its neighborhoods, streets, and institutions reflect the socio-political and economic fault lines that nourish violence and insecurity.

The protagonist of the novel, Akbar Khan, acts as a conduit through which Hamid launches his critique of the moral ambiguities of persons embroiled in the systemic corruption of Karachi. Akbar, being a policeman, grapples with complex issues of power, corruption, and violence that demonstrate human cost because of systemic failures. His struggles, thus fall within the re-orientalist intent to counter reductive representations of the

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ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

East, focusing on the everyday experience and moral dilemmas that individuals face within oppressive systems. Akbar's case epitomizes the broader socio-political challenges faced by the denizens of Karachi-a humanized account of structural violence that has come to frame their lives.

This further makes the novel's framework even more re-orientalist in nature, with Hamid being engaged with the global discourses on terrorism and violence. The way Hamid places Karachi amid postmillennial securitization and a global configuration of power relationships, he contests reductionist framings that tend to fix Muslim-majority cities as quintessentially violent or unruly. Instead, Hamid reveals how historical and socio-political forces, colonial legacies, political mismanagement, and global inequalities have been responsible for such conditions. This perspective challenges the global gaze that simplifies urban violence in the Global South into a cultural pathology, advocating instead for a more nuanced and contextually informed understanding. With its multi-layered structure of narration, *The Prisoner* does not homogenize Karachi's realities. This is a mosaic that Hamid constructs, creating the reality that violence and insecurity happen differently for communities and individuals alike.

What is most striking in this novel, however, is how it portrays institutional corruption in Karachi. Hamid reveals how entangled law enforcement is with criminal networks, showing how such a collusive environment promotes violence and impunity. Characters like Akbar Khan show the way through this murky water, personifying a moral dilemma in which persons seek justice within a greatly flawed system. This can be viewed as challenging the representation of corruption as an individual failing by framing it as a systemic issue rooted in historical and socio-political contexts. Hamid's nuanced development does not stop at personhood; his portrayal of the inhabitants of Karachi is really about individuals with great agency, and survivors amidst challenges and difficulty. Such a line underscores a local agency as the reverse of the usual depiction of the Global South as a passive victim of violence and insecurity. He instead highlights that part which is resistance in different manners, adaptation. It brings forth a point more in balance and empathy. Inhabitants living in this city are surrounded by its landscape, which acts as a reflection of those forces acting upon their existence within it. Hamid's vivid descriptions of Karachi streets and neighborhoods bring the city to life, capturing at once its vibrancy and challenge. An approach hinged on this level of particularization upholds the importance of place in the understanding of complexities within urban violence, but also underlines how closely space and identity are bound. *The Prisoner* is a masterful critique of systemic and structural violence and insecurity in post-colonial urban spaces. Its re-orientalist critique challenges the simplistic stereotypes regarding Karachi and the Muslim world into a nuanced exploration of the sociopolitical and historical determinants of these realities. Hamid's engagement with the themes of terrorism, corruption, and urban resilience reflects the complex interplay between the global discourses and local experience. By humanizing the individual struggles of Karachi's inhabitants, the novel provides the much-needed counter-narrative that counters dominant global perceptions of the Global South. Hamid's work embodies the power of literature to contest and reimagine cultural narratives toward an empathetic appreciation of the multilayered nuances in urban Global South life. While *The Prisoner* presents a multilayered view of Karachi, it calls on the readers for an engaged critique of the assumptions lying at the heart of global discourses of violence and terrorism, hence pushing toward a well-informed, fair approach. In so doing, Hamid shows not only the problems that exist in cities like Karachi but also the resilience and agency of their inhabitants, which testify to the unyielding human spirit in a system that is so adversarial to it.

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

Conclusion

The Prisoner is a powerful exploration of the structural and systemic violence in post-colonial urban environments, with Karachi as its most vivid backdrop. Hamid 's narrative does not stop at portraying the chaos and violence often associated with such cities; instead, it unpacks the deeper socio-political, historical, and economic forces that sustain these conditions. The novel challenges, through a re-orientalist perspective, the reductive stereotypes of the Muslim world and postcolonial cities as essentially violent or chaotic and reveals how such views are hewn from within colonial histories, systemic inequalities, and global power structures. Hamid weaves together the complex pattern of terror, corruption, and resolute survival that binds global perceptions and local reality. His critique of systemic enabling of violence is ably matched by subtle expressions of how individuals negotiate this hard landscape. *The Prisoner* shows that literature possesses the power to challenge prevailing narratives toward greater understanding. Hamid provides a counter-narrative to simplistically globalized perspectives; he offers, instead, a more variegated and informed vision of urban violence and life in the Global South. He provokes readers to reassess all of their preconceptions and to consider these complications in a manner that is more just and layered.

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