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"It's Karachi, Its, Where Life and Love Come to Die": Representing Gender, Space and Identity in *Karachi You are Killing Me*

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This paper demonstrates that Saba Imtiaz's Karachi *You Are Killing Me*, re-conceptualizes the relationship between urban spaces and female bodies. The traditional urban theories define space as unchangeable physical reality that profoundly affects its inhabitants. Feminist urban theorists question the traditional gendered perspective on both space and corporeality. Drawing on Elizabeth Grosz (1998) concept on bodies cities, I will investigate how woman as being both spectator and spectacle renegotiates her identity within the patriarchal urban spaces. This research argues that Grosz's (1998) concept on Bodies-cities is an important intervention in our understanding of spatial politics in postcolonial spaces, as it discusses how female bodies play an important role in the formation of urban corporeality. Her seminal feminist work invents a new insight on city-body nexus that also helps to address issues such as gender discrimination, inequalities and urban violence.

Keywords: Women, Urban Space, Identity, Corporeality.

تلخیص

یہ مقالہ صباء امتیاز کے ناول "کراچی یو آر کلنگ می"میں پیش کردہ عورت کے وجود اور شہر کے آپسی تعلق پر مبنی تصورات پر روشنی ڈالتا ہے۔ شہروں سے جڑے روایتی تصورات کے مطابق شہر ایسی غیر متغیر اور جامد جگہ ہوتے ہیں جو اپنے رہنے والوں پر گہرا اثر ڈالتے ہیں۔ اربن فیمنسٹ تھیوریسٹ (نظریہ ساز) جگہوں کے مادی وجود کے اس روایتی صنفی امتیاز پر مشتمل تصور پر سوال اٹھاتے ہیں۔ ایلزبتھ گروز (۱۹۹۸ء) کے نظریے وجود اور شہر کو مدنظر رکھتے ہوئے میں دریافت کرنے کی کوشش کروں گی کہ پدرسری نظام میں کس طرح عورتیں تماشا بھی ہیں اور تماشائی بھی۔ وہ اپنی شناخت کس طرح کرتی ہیں اس پر بحث ہوگی۔ گروز کا نظریہ ۱۹۹۲ء (شہر اور اجسام) کے باہمی تعلقات کو نئے انداز سے بیان کرتا ہے۔ پوسٹ کولونیل دور میں جگہوں کا سیاسی استعمال کیا گیا ہے۔ جگہیں دیکھنے اور دکھانے کا مرکز بنیں اور یہ بھی کہ کیسے عورتوں کے وجود نے شہروں کی بنیادیں رکھنے میں اہم کردار ادا کیا۔ گروز کی فیمنسٹ تحریریں شہروں اور اجسام کے تعلق کو عامیانہ نظر سے نہیں دیکھتیں بلکہ وجود اور شہروں کو نئی نظر سے دیکھنے کی صلاحیت بخشتی ہیں۔ ان سے جڑے دیگر مسائل جیسے کہ صنفی امتیاز، غیرمساویانہ برتاؤ اور شہری تشدد کو بھی سمجھنے میں نیا شعور عطا کرتی ہے۔

کلیدی الفاظ: عورتیں، شہری جگہیں، شناخت، ظاہری/ وجود

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Introduction

This paper demonstrates that SabaImtiaz's *Karachi You Are Killing Me*, re-conceptualizes the relationship between urban spaces and female bodies. The traditional urban theories define space as unchangeable physical reality that profoundly affects its inhabitants. Feminist urban theorists question the traditional gendered perspective on both space and corporeality. Drawing on Elizabeth Grosz's concept on bodies_cities, I will investigate how woman as being both spectator and spectacle renegotiates her identity within the patriarchal urban spaces. This research argues that Elizabeth Grosz's concept on Bodies-cities is an important intervention in our understanding of spatial politics in postcolonial spaces, as it discusses how female bodies play an important role in the formation of urban corporeality. Grosz's seminal feminist work invents a new insight on city-body nexus that also helps to address issues such as gender discrimination, inequalities and urban violence. This paper demonstrates that SabaImtiaz's *Karachi You Are Killing Me*, re-conceptualizes the relationship between the city of Karachi and the female bodies. Karachi is represented through the gaze of a female protagonist.

A variety of theoretical perspectives, notably, the neo-lefebvrian "right to the city", have come to "the fore as a means of claiming urban spaces" (Beebeejaun, 2015, p.1). Beebeejaun observes how "the right to the city offers a series of perspectives regarding the redemptive political potential of the urban experience" (Beebeejaun, 2015, p.1). However, the dominant scholarship within the field is covered by a patriarchal gendered perspective. Keeping this in mind, this research intends to point out how turning our gaze to the way everyday street life is negotiated , can be useful in promoting productive insights into the multiplicity of spatial practices that mainly illuminate gendered experiences. There is an enormous discrepancy between the ways in which the everyday rights are framed within city planning and the direct experiences of the marginalized dwellers. Lefebvre spatial insights are not feminist but still they have clear dynamics of the implication for gender relations. His theoretical understanding of the space highlights the alienating impact of the modern city, and the way it becomes the cause of an increasing disconnection between urban inhabitants and their abilities to participate in the production of those spaces. The feminist critique of urban theory highlights how urban planners have both planned and created gendered built environments that are predominately suited to the needs of men. As Qasim et al. (2014) postulates that patriarchy places "unreasonable demands" on women and denies them any kind of "liberating" space to nourish (p.84).According to Beebeejaun (2015), any space within a city can be gendered through "multiple actions and experiences of its inhabitants" (p.1). Imtiaz, through her female protagonist's constant engagement with every day spatial practices of Karachi provides critical insights into how claims to urban space and the exercise of rights are "inherently gendered" (Beebeejaun, 2015, p.1). Her novel also engages with this idea that not only spaces are highly gendered but the gendered binary is also highly spatialized (Doan, 2015, p.210).

The traditional urban theories define space as unchangeable physical reality that profoundly affects its inhabitants whereas feminist urban theorists question the traditional gendered perspective on both space and corporeality. The image of the female walker is both part and symbol of the spectacle of urban culture. Women walkers have historically been represented as an interruption in the city, "a symptom of disorder and a problem" (Wilson, 1992, p.9). The urban feminist theorists (Elizabeth Grosz, Janet Wolff) challenge the traditional phallocentric representation of a female urban walker, and explore the concept of identity and a mode of urban corporeality from a feminist perspective. Nord (1995) suggests that the most important thing is to explore the complexity of the female gaze, especially what difference gender makes to the position of observer (p.12). According to Grosz (1998), bodies- cities are not monolithic but mutually co-defining entities. She redefines the relationship between cities-bodies, without prioritizing one of the binary over the other. Viewing urban life as a site of micro politics, the urban walker in the novel, provides an alternative and a more fluid sense of urban space. Like minorities within a nation-state, as Qasim and Yaqoob (2022) argue, the gendered spaces also create "confused feeling" within the heart of its inhabitants, because both are "created through strict exclusion" (p.79). This sense of everyday demands a fuller interpretation of "women's spatial and temporal experience of the city" (Vaiou, 1992, p.248), and it must be understood as something different form men's everyday life.

Imtiaz's novel on the practice of everyday life expresses the way urban spaces can be created or re-created through the everyday practices of the city's inhabitants. Grosz's essay, 'Bodies-Cities' engages with the role of sexual difference in the production of city spaces. The main protagonist in the novel, actively re-uses culture to "appropriate the spaces, organized by techniques of socio-cultural production" (De Certeau, xviii). In *Karachi You Are Killing Me* (2014), the walking and gazing is shown as an individual modes of exploration as opposed to collective modes of appropriation. These activities are tactical in nature. The female walker-cum-journalist never follows an "organized map strategically to colonize space, rendering geographical knowledge as an abstract, a historical place that erases the spatial practices" (Collie, 2013, p.5). Like a pedestrian, the female walker in the novel also tells her story through every day moments. These movements weave together different spaces that potentially transgress the abstract map imposed from the above by the panoptic gaze of the city planner.

Literature Review and the Theoretical Framework: A Review of Existing Literature on Karachi

Urban geographers often present a mechanistic view of modern cities. Mumford (1961) defines cities as places of human habitation whereas Taylor (1951) has tried to map their historical development. Harvey's (1973) Marxist inspired works on urban spaces has also greatly influenced urban studies. But all the above mentioned empirically conceived

models fail to highlight both individual and collective human experiences contained by the city. As Saul Bellow (2017) rightly defines the city as "the expression of the human experience it embodies" (p.124). Keeping in mind Bellow's perspective on city, I intend to analyse Karachi as a living being whose body is composed of hopes, aspirations, disappointments and pain of its inhabitants. Like any other modern city, its air also carries human emotions and feelings. In this research, I also refuse to view city merely as a built environment or a static object but more of a set of socio-economic relationships. I intend to view the city as a living being, "an experience to be lived, suffered, undergone" (Preston and Simpson-Housley, 1994, p. 2).

The city has always been an in important literary symbol, and it is explored widely in modern literature. Any literary or cultural insight on a city enables the reader to understand the overall fears and aspirations generated by its urban spaces. Karachi is a metropolis centre that solicits both controversy and attention in the contemporary writings. Karachi can be described as "a megacity", like other megacities, it also possesses "fragmented, polycentric" and "socio-spatial structure" (Soja, 2000, p.235). Cilano (2013) argues that the city's increasingly discontinuous structure captures "the complexity of claims of belonging to Karachi" (p. 144), and the ever changing identity of the city comes in conflict with "boundary-laden discourses that demarcate identity in ethnic or class terms" (p. 144). In Steve Inskeep's views (2011), Karachi is an "instant city", a kind of metropolis that has grown so rapidly that a returning visitor would scarcely recognize it" (p.144). Although the city has embodied several literary values and forms, the literary representations of the city do not do justice to its complex socio-political scenario, as Farrukhi (2017) rightly observes that this "shadow of absence lies heavy on Karachi" (p.26). In the introduction of the book *Look at The City From Here*, an anthology of Karachi writings, Farrukhi (2017) also complains about the city's under representations as a literary location. Although he also acknowledges that in the contemporary literary scenario, a large number of books on the city have appeared on the literary scene and became accessible to a large number of audiences. The large number of these books occupy with the way, over the passage of time, the city has turned into a wasteland. The reader also comes across various feminist gazes on the city, particularly in Azra Abbas's poetic collection, the reader can find the "ways violence is embedded into overall every day experience" (Farrukhi, 2017, p. 26). She documents a wide range of female experiences in her poetic collection. From discerning the imprints of violence on the daily routine of ordinary household to "venturing into the relatively uncharted domain of female sexuality", her poetry tries to capture all kind of female experiences with all its delicacies (Farrukhi, 2017, p.27).

Karachi in many literary writings seem both dystopia and utopia. Its utopic glimpses can be presented through its "generative environments" that initiate intellectual debate and create opportunity for "artistic experimentation" (Bradbury, 1976, p.6), and promote "the

complexity and tensions of modern consciousness" (Bradbury, 1976, p.6). Karim (2020) observes that the impacts of "new hierarchies of power led to a deterioration of Karachi's cosmopolitan culture, once symbolized by Jazz culture and the presence of a synagogue in the city" (p.2). During Zia regime, the old socio-political institutions were destroyed without creating the new replacements. Similarly, emerging social change was suppressed and the regressive and orthodox norms were imposed on the city. This very process effectively destroys the rich culture and ethnic diversity of the city "leading to fragmentation, suspicion, and conflicts between different religious and ethnic groups" (Hassan, 2017, p.81). Thus, by the end of Zia regime, Karachi like the rest of Pakistan became " a cultural desert"(Hassan, 2017, p.181), as the regime was " anti-women" and "anti-change", irrespective of class affiliation (Hassan, 2017, p.181).However, in the modern time period, the pressures of the city life and the new global technologies (internet, satellite) have transformed the city and created new kind of regressive conflicts between its aspirations and the legacy of the values created by Zia regime. Therefore, Karachi appears more of a character in the novel. Karachi is not presented as a homogenous space but there are so many cities within the city. Nicola Khan (2017) observes that "the migrants" who came to the city after Partition have "transformed Karachi's geography" (p. xviii). It is the city which is divided into different economic zones. In Das Gupta's views there is no single Karachi but "many Karachis […] exist simultaneously" that highlight the way Karachi has been developing in an unplanned way (pp. 299-313). Its upper middle class and elite are westernized, mainly due to postcolonial legacy of the British Indian administration. As Hassan (2017) rightly observes that the elite of Karachi supported Zia regime in reaction to Bhutto's "socialist populism" (p.180). However, they have never approved orthodox changes introduced by the regime in both educational and socio-political organizations. As a result, they not only stop participating in the public life and soon the social institutions "cease to be multi class" (Hassan, 2017, p.180) but created "elite enclaves, separate from the rest of the city and became "depoliticised" (Hassan, 2017, p.180). Thus, the separation of Karachi elite from the public sector resulted in a decline in standards of education and the growth of public sector real estate.

Imtiaz's feminist gaze on Karachi unmasks the crude realities of the city and exposes its pretentiousness, its shallow moral standards and patriarchal value system. Interesting, the whole novel does not seem to dwell on the negative literary representation of the city but also draws our attention to the rejuvenating spaces allotted to women within the city where they can breathe for a time being and where they can also occasionally indulge into small acts of rebelliousness. Although, one cannot deny the fact that the city's violence always remains a continuous menacing in the novel. Overall, the novel concentrates on the city as seen through the eyes of the female protagonist, whose gaze becomes a particular kind of witness to the challenges, frustrations and stresses experienced by women of Karachi. The novel provides a glimpse of contemporary

Karachi, where working women are challenging the monopoly of an extended family structures and seem to challenge the prevailing ideas about family honour and traditional value system. Erasure of clan system has further leads to a change in marriage pattern in the city. Hassan (2017) observes that first time in the history of the city, a younger generation of the city is consisted of "an overwhelming majority unmarried, literate young people" (p.181) that is rapidly changing both family structures and gender relations in the city.

Theoretical Framework

In the dominant urban narratives, cities are represented as static entities that influence its inhabitants in both positive and negative ways. Grosz (1998) argues that city-body relationship is always interpreted through two dominant narratives. The first narrative emphasizes on the one way casual relation between bodies-cities. It defines cities as physical entities that mainly designed by the minds of the people and built by the human bodies. She further elaborates on her point of view:

> City-bodies are mutually defining and co-defining assemblages … or collection of parts, capable of crossing the thresholds between substances to form linkages, machines, provisional and often temporary sub_ or micro groupings (Grosz, 1998, p. 248).

It is not a holistic view, one that stresses the unity and integration of city and the body, their "ecological balance" (Grosz, 1998, p.248). Instead [she is] suggesting a fundamentally disunified series of systems and Interconnections, a series of disparate flows, energies, events, or entries, and spaces brought together or drawn apart in more or less temporary alignments (Grosz, 1998, p. 248).

In the late 1970s, the concept of monolithic female body was challenged on two accounts. First, various theories about the body gave way to new "conceptions of multiple identities, positionalities and locations that countenanced race, class, disability and sexual orientations" (Zita, 1996, p.786). The collapse of gender/sex binary, an idea central to 1970s feminism, reveals how this turn gave birth to a new determinism, due to which the corporeality of the pre-discursive body began to disappear .Thus, the body became "volatile, liminal, and slippery_ a function of fragile and shifting discursive terrains and at times, a mere blip in cyber space" (Zita, 1996, p.786). In 1990s, a number of new feminist writings on the body have appeared; Judith Butler's *Bodies That Matter*: *On the Discursive Limits of Sex*, Elizabeth Grosz's *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism, Susan Bordo's Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and The Body.* All the above mentioned books are known for bringing the body back into theory. All of these theoretical writings on female corporeality reopen the "question of the body's materiality, seeking to rescue the body from discursive evaporation without

returning to the mire of biological essentialism" (Zita, 1996, p.786). Butler's book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the subversion of Identity* proves to be more crucial in a way that it has raised a very important question regarding the body, as she asks from where one can find the materiality of the body.

Grosz comes up with a new definition of corporeal feminism. Grosz(1998) points out a double error of earliest feminist theory, criticizing some feminist theorists for committing to a biological materialism that completely ignores the body's cultural construction whereas others feminist for committing to "a cultural constructionism that neglects the body's matter" (Zita, 1996, p.786). Grosz's texts provide a starting point for rethinking the body beyond the mind/body dualism promoted by the western culture. She challenges both perceptions of body, like post modern's notion that of an imaginary body or the reductionist concept, according to which all bodies are stuck in matters of fate. Grosz (1998) uses the metaphor of the Mobius strip, where the finger's movement from the inside out and from the outside in seems quite useful in providing a new way thinking about mind/body binary. According to Grosz(1998), spaces are also not static sites, in fact, they possess physical characteristics that are constantly evolved by its interactions with history and with the people inhabiting those spaces. Thus, urban spaces are actively constituted through the spatial practices exhibited by the people inhabiting them. Lefebvre defines everyday life as "the site of authentic experience, of self, of the body and of engagement with others" (Shields, 1999, p.77). Grosz does not view mind/body as two disconnected substances but as two sides of the same coin that continuously enfold and inform each other. Grosz emphasis upon this point that the body has a mind of its own, and "our experiences of inner depth is mapped from the outer surface of the body, which we experience as already inscribed by cultural meanings and values" (Zita, 1996, p.786).Elizabeth refuses to see body as a closed or "solidified thing" defining the meaning of our corporeal existence (Zita, 1996, p.786), rather the body is "volatile and shifting, able to strip and seep from its discursive boundaries and to open itself to various cultural forms of life" (Zita, 1996, p.786). According to her, sexual differences are "indelible differences" that can never be erased, even by the body's diverse discursive formations (Zita, 1996, p.786). The female walker in the novel also sees everyday spaces as political sites and a closer examination helps her to unmask their importance in reclaiming belonging and rights. These overlooked spaces often help the feminist urban theorists to recognize the very process of negotiation and appropriation that mediate everyday spatial practices and where gender relations are discursively created.

Methodology

Drawing on Grosz's concept of bodies –cities, I intend to analyse Karachi as a gendered city where women are struggling hard to strive for a meaningful identity and this struggle is further complicated by multiple factors, as Qasim and Yaqoob (2020) rightly point out

that Karachi and its violent urban spaces can be compared to a monstrous body that is "concomitantly corporeal and tangible" (p.101). Therefore, the violent urban spaces within the city demand from the female journalist "a radical rethinking of conventional boundaries of normality" (p.101). In this research , Grosz's ideas of defining Karachi and its female protagonist as mutually co-defining entities are deployed to view the city not only a gendered monstrous body but as a "simulated world of deceptive and baffling identities" (Moin & Qasim, 2015, p.110).

Analysis

This article explores the way, the female protagonist of the novel Ayesha, revisions the city and how the city reshapes and transforms her subjectivity. *Karachi You Are Killing Me,* captures the glimpse of Karachi through the perspective of twenty eight years old journalist Ayesha. The novel is consisted of a number diary entries by a young female journalist based in Karachi, named Ayesha who remains surrounded by various colourful characters like her hard to please editor Kamran, her best friend Saad who is also defined as a playboy with golden heart and her fellow journalist, Zara. Ayesha's job, as a journalist, entails reporting on almost everything around, from Sipah-e-Sahabah rally and its slogans 'Death to Shias!' to 'Pakistani Fashion Week', where male models are dressed as suicide bombers. Her life as a single woman gets further disturbed when she comes across a gora journalist, Jimmy from CNN.

Her perception of Karachi is different from the traditional male journalist whose privileged position as a man in a patriarchal society protects him from the curious gaze of the crowd. Being a woman, Ayesha is both an observer and an object of observation. Her vision derives from "her consciousness of transgression and trespassing" because her position "implies vexed sexuality", as she often struggles "to escape the status of spectacle and becomes (a) spectator" (Nord, 1995, p. 12).However, the female walker can never be a privileged observer and mainly remains a sexed body or an object of male desire, as Collie (2013) postulates, woman walker just remains "the corporealised other", unable to become either "an all seeing eye or "disembodied subject"(p.4).

The city of Karachi shapes her subjectivity, and the role of urban architecture cannot be ignored in the creation of "the sexed body"(Grosz, 1998, pp.242-43).Ayesha renegotiates her identity in multiple ways in the diverse patriarchal landscapes. She constantly changes her appearance, wears casual dress when hangs out with friends, Sari at a fashion show, dupatta when she has to cover a religious procession and veil (Naqab) helps her to run from dangerous man following her. Saba Imtiaz states in an interview: "No doubt, female journalist can get more access to families as well as it is easier for them to get into places. [but] these advantages are outweighed by how the odds are stacked against women because of their gender" (Anika, 2017, p.1).Nord (1995) stresses upon the importance of woman's

clothes at specific places during certain time periods. She argues that women often use it as a strategy to avoid male stares or any kind of verbal abuse (p.237).

Ayesha, as a female journalist, moves in the streets quite differently from a male journalist. Saba Imtiaz argues that female journalist has to face a set of challenges: "there is a level of hesitance at times, and it is hard to get same level of access that male reporters do_ particularly in crime and political beats or to build same kind of relationships with contacts"(Anika,2017, p.1).Unlike the traditional hero of the classic urban narrative, who knows how to penetrate and conquer the urban landscape, Ayesha's walking excursions within the urban landscapes question the traditional gendered perspective on both space and corporeality. Like a fiercely independent male journalist, Ayesha wants to go ahead in life and does not want to end up as someone whose sole purpose in life is to cover literature festivals and fashion shows.

Ayesha passes through the different areas of Karachi and there is hardly any similarity among them. The city is consisted of a series of disparate spaces and the inhabitants of these spaces hardly cross each other's paths. Karachi is depicted as a city of "twenty million people" but still a "wasteland" where it is "easier to hire an assassin than meet an attractive, intelligent, normal single man" (Imtiaz, 2014, p.15). Ayesha views Karachi, as McGraw and Vane argue, not a material but socio-political construct, "a body politic" modelled on the structure of the body, an "anatomical allegory" (Grosz, 1998, p.67). The city is like a body which is run by its political rulers that are traditionally assumed as the head of the city. Every city designs various kinds of rigid gendered geographies that are mainly informed by patriarchal politics. Elizabeth Grosz suggests that female bodies can never be gender neutral, because women's subjectivities are rooted in their bodies. Therefore, female bodies are always, "sexually specific" and viewed as "the locus and site of inscription for specific modes of subjectivity"(Grosz, 1998,pp.241-43).

Imtiaz (2014) represents Karachi as a living entity, a unique and highly individualized living space in the novel that transforms and redefines the female body in multiple ways. Simmel (2002) posits in his famous essay "City and The Mental Health" that modern city has created a sense of uneasiness, as people have to adapt themselves to new rather strange situations. The modern individual has to protect his sanity from an endless number of disruptions that are the result of the overstimulation of the senses. This kind of overstimulation creates a specific emotional reaction _ blasé attitude which, according to Simmel (2002), produces fragmented consciousness and a sense of detachment. Ayesha often complains about the insensitive attitude of the people around her. She is constantly worried about her life that is full of loneliness. On several occasions, she confesses, "for some reasons I feel like I'm going to cry. I just want to put my head on and tell how miserable'ye been" (Imtiaz, 2014, p.11). Ayesha feels alienated in the city and her work routine makes her sick of the world around, as a result she cries alone in the bed at night.

Her life revolves around "the twilight zone of misery and bad news" (Imtiaz, 2014, p.17). She works as an intern, and always remains at the beck and call of the office. She is often called; texted and "dragged out of the bed" even at odd hours (Imtiaz, 2014, p.17). Ayesha is disillusioned with her job too, as she knows that the newspaper in which she writes her intellectual article 'Threat To Coalition', and many other newspaper articles like it, are "being used to soak up the grease from puris" (Imtiaz, 2014, p.17). In this regard, she learns to console herself with this painful fact that "today's newspaper is tomorrow's fish and chip paper" (Imtiaz, 2014, p.40). For her, the "grease saturated new paper" that carries her article proves to be a critical moment that gives her deep insight into the nature of her work (Imtiaz, 2014, p.40).

Eating chili chips and spending time in the company of her cat, are two of Ayesha's favourite hobbies. Her desperate desire to get company is reflected in her hunt for eligible men. She confesses on several occasions: "I really want to meet someone new. Like, Someone I don't feel ashamed about fucking" (Imtiaz, 2014, p. 409) and time and again she expresses her desire: "I really, really need to have sex, to feel someone's body pressing against me other than the cats. Make a mental note to procure morning after pills at the hotel pharmacy" (Imtiaz, 2014, p.115). The novel gives an insight into the changing socio-political scenario where matters like pre-marital sex and post marital affairs have lost the power to shock and often taken as casual matters. Ayesha openly embraces her sexuality and shares her sexual escapade with Jimmy, a CNN reporter with excitement: "I actually wore lacy black underwear tonight. As I get into a cab all I think about is how I want to rip Jamie's clothes off" (Imtiaz, 2014, p.28). She further elaborates: "I felt like every single part of me had come alive, like a head rush, an erotic ice-cream headache. Was it possible I'd actually spent so many months with this deadened body? Why did I not jump Jamie the first night we met" (Imtiaz, 2014, p.22).Her fling with a British journalist denotes her insecurities and desperate desire to avoid loneliness, as she confesses that "I vow for the umpteenth time not to engage with fuckwits for fear of ending up alone" (Imtiaz, 2014, p.108).

Saba Imtiaz in *Karachi You Are Killing Me* casually touches all the sexual matters that are considered social taboo in Pakistani society, and are usually pushed under the carpet. Ayesha drinks and smokes without any hesitation. De Certeau (1984) in *The Practice of Every Day* argues that the ordinary walker of the city often tries to re-appropriate the urban spaces by using certain tactical moves. These moves often help him to appropriate the spaces "organized by the techniques of socio-cultural production" (p.xviii). Like De Certeau's walker, Ayesha excessively smokes and uses it as a tactic to become the part of the man's world. She also freely moves in the kind of social circle where the consumption of alcohol is taken very casually and considered as a status symbol. Ayesha tells her friend, "If you can't handle it, don't drink. These new money types I will tell

you" (Imtiaz, 2014, p.106). There are several incidents in the novel that show her buying and consuming alcohol:

"I pray silently that the cops don't stop us instead; I have a bottle of Murree beer in my handbag!..." Well, yes, but how else is one supposed to survive fashion week?" (Imtiaz, 2014, p.106). On another occasion she posits: "Isloo is out of red wine after the cops shut down the Korean's bootlegging ring. It is fucking disaster" (Imtiaz, 2014, p.237). Shealso celebrates all night with her friend Zara who hands her "tumblers" of "whisky and coke" (Imtiaz, 2014, p.14).

Sometimes Ayesha feels as if she is not living in true sense, and all the time her life is under the constant surveillance of a pair of eyes. Elizabeth Grosz argues that in a patriarchal society female body is often perceived, "as organically/naturally incomplete, it indeterminate, amorphous , a series of uncoordinated potentialities which require social triggering , ordering and long term administration regulated in each culture and epoch by what Michel Foucault has called "micro technologies of power"(pp.242-43).Ayesha complains how Pakistani society expects a certain kind of social behaviour from women, and the image of the woman smoker is considered the worst nightmare. She understands that it is hard to live in a society where "clearly women smoking passes for pornography" (Imtiaz, 2014, p.21). Even though Ayesha has been "smoking for years, the question always sends (her) into spasms of guilt" (Imtiaz, 2014, p.21). People often ask the reason for smoking, because nice girls do not smoke in Pakistani society. She interestingly narrates the way in which the image of a female smoker indicates "the end of humanity" and becomes "a sign that judgment day is near" (Imtiaz, 2014, p.88). She observes how "Ali's cameraman has a penchant for filming footage of women smoking, and showing it to everyone in the news 365 office" (Imtiaz, 2014, p.21). She also laughs aloud at the fact that being a single woman in her late twenties is also considered a different kind of crime in Pakistani society. Therefore, Ayesha likes Riffat Auntie for being the only "person to have not given (her) that spiel about getting married and 'settling down' as I am a cat on heat that needs to stop yowling" (Imtiaz, 2014, p.43). Salam (2015) posits: "She (Saba Imtiaz) has successfully crafted a female character that the average middle class woman can relate to, and the details are in the smallest things, like how Ayesha pulls out a faded jumpsuit hoping no one will notice in the dim lights of a party how old it is"(p.1).

The city is the key tool used in the social construction of gendered bodies in the novel. Saba Imtiaz's Karachi (particularly its built environment) affects the ways Ayesha sees others. As Grosz (1998) suggests that the city's:

> Built environment affects the ways subject sees others –as well as the subjects' understanding of alignment with, and positioning in space, the city is, also the site for the body's cultural saturation, its takeover and transformation by images,

> representational systems, the mass media, and the arts_ the place where the body is representation ally re explored, transformed, contested and rein scribed (p. 75).

The lines quoted from Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* in the beginning of the novels are symbolic, because Ayesha can also be defined as the child of "cosmopolitan culture" who is traumatized by "supermodels and too many quizzes" (Imtiaz, 2014, p.1). Rebecca Santana postulates that *Karachi You are Killing Me* is compared to *Bridget Jones Diary* that is often known as the single girls' Bible, but the similarity between the two is quite superficial too. According to her:

> Bridget Jones would never be able to deal with half of the situations that Imtiaz's heroine, Ayesha, successfully navigates. Sure Ayesha drinks too much, makes some atrociously bad decisions about men and complains relentlessly about her job just as Bridget did. But Ayesha, a journalist in her twenties, working in Pakistan's largest city of Karachi, has a toughness and professionalism that Bridget could never achieve (Santana, 2014, p.1).

Ayesha's subjectivity is transformed and redefined by the city in multiple ways. In her case, as Grosz (1998) argues the body and the city might be best thought of as "mutually defining as two way dialogue or interface that is, mutually productive in the practical sense" (p. 74). When she goes to conduct an interview of the ex-Guantanamo Bay Detainee, she plans to have "massive dupatta" that she could firmly wrap around to disguise her face. She even bravely interviews the gangsters in the gang-ridden neighbourhood of Lyari. There are several incidents in the novel that highlight the perils faced by a young female journalist. Once she is also followed by a member of the gang and the very first thought that comes to her mind is: "he was going to rape me and leave me for dead here" (Imtiaz, 2014, p.167). Jimmy, the CNN reporter also exploits her by stealing her intellectual work from the laptop, and jilting her after one night stand. There is another such incident when she is caught up in the worst situation where a terrorist guy becomes angry over the death of his brother. Her boss Kamran, gets panicky but she handles the situation by saying "Please accept your sister's condolences" and finds out the way to get out of it. Sometimes she feels amazed at her own capabilities: "How am I coming up with this stuff? Have I spent so much time with religious activists that their mannerisms have seeped in through some bizarre personality osmosis? I am your sister, "I say and look into the eyes of the guys with the gun." (Imtiaz, 2014, p.245) she learns to renegotiates her identity in different situations.

Neither the female body nor Karachi can be viewed as "monolithic or distinct entities" in the novel. Infact, both body and city emerge as "mutually defining co-building assemblage" (Grosz, 1998, p.1), as a "two way dialogue or interface that is mutually productive in the practical senses" (Grosz, 1998,p.1). In the novel, Karachi is also appears to be a living character that is perceived differently by different people. Saba

Imtiaz states that “Karachi itself is a character” not just a background to the novel. She further emphasizes her point: “it sculpts the way you live, changes your habits. For example, in any major city in the world, when your phone rings, you answer it immediately [regardless of where you are].But in Karachi you look around before answering it. Hopping not to get mugged” (Web Desk 1). In an interview with Mazhar (2014), Saba Imtiaz states that Inhabitants of the city are “an interesting mix of people” (p.1). It is difficult to explain the temperament of its inhabitants through certain reductive images. Karachiwalas are fond of Turkish soap operas and Humsafar drama.

The novel is not just based on few random journalistic escapades but gives insight into the socio-political situation prevailing in Karachi. Apart from the economic disparity, the fear of violence plague the city dwellers like a nightmare. It is not only Karachi that makes its inhabitants question the nature of their fears but people living in Karachi are also changing the city in various ways. Sometimes Ayesha feels like hating Karachi. She states: “I hate living in Karachi but it can be so heartbreakingly beautiful when it sets its mind to it” (Imtiaz, 2014, p.53). Karachi appears as cosmopolitan city where the characters are alone and longing for relationships. Ayesha makes desperate attempt to balance her intimate and professional life. She fails to find love in Karachi, “a massive metropolis on the country’s southern coast”, and Karachi is the city she “either loves intensely or desperately wants to leave” (Santana, 2014p.1). Ayesha mentions time and again that she is stuck in this “good for nothing city” (Imtiaz, 2014, p.93). But when one of the character calls it “Islamabad with the sea” (Imtiaz, 2014, p.49), she openly disagrees, “I hate living in Karachi, but for the city to be compared to Islamabad _one of the dullest, most out of touch places in the country _is ridiculous” (Imtiaz, 2014,p.49).

Karachi also appears as a cosmopolitan city that “not only organize(s) familial and other social relations” but also “produce(s) a pattern of automatic links and inequalities of power between otherwise unrelated bodies” (Grosz, 1998, p. 75).Ayesha tries to pursue her journalistic career in a “massive metropolis on the country’s southern coast” and her assignments are hard in many ways (Santana, 2014, p.1). They include “covering shootouts, the aftermath of bombings and riding Rickshaws through the countryside while being pursued by bandits” (Santana, 2024,p. 1). As a female journalist, she even covers the news that male reporters even deny to cover that includes “interviewing gangsters ____ I’ve interviewed so many that I have more of them on my phone than actual friends, for the love of God_seminaries, rape victims ,bootleggers ,even the bloody fashion designer lot. I won’t be unsafe, I promise” (Imtiaz, 2014, p.139). Ayesha is “an apt representation of young, hip, upper-middle class women that populated our big cities”, and according to Kamal (2014), most of Pakistani girls are not even familiar with the kind of life she is living (p.1).

Sabia Imtiaz mentions that covering Literature Festival is always considered as less important task but nothing is easy in true sense. Women journalist in Pakistan, are found to conform to certain gender stereotypes, according to Saba Imtiaz, "despite the fact that women have excelled at every beat in journalism in Pakistan, the challenge is when women are only considered capable of reporting on beats that are considered 'safe' or 'easy'___ even though nothing is easy(not even fashion as some people assume" (Anika, 2017, p. 1). She contemplates that writing every journalistic piece demands a lot of effort. In Karachi literary festival, she came across authors claiming that Pakistan is not the failed state because "You don't have literature festival in failed state" (Imtiaz, 2014, p.53). Ayesha observes that the only thing they are familiar with is to blame General Zia for everything; she also criticizes the pseudo intellectualism of the so called Pakistani thinkers and writers. Attending one such festival, Ayesha observes, "If there is ever anything you can count on at Pakistani cultural events, it's that Zia__ dead for longer than most people can remember_ can still be blamed for everything" (Imtiaz, 2014, p.553). In the end, she learns to distract herself from the boredom and begins to enjoy the company of her friend points out towards "every girl there. Single, married, nine months pregnant" (Imtiaz, 2014, p.48).

Karachi as a modern cosmopolitan city is also "subject to transformation and re-inscription by the changing demographics, economic, and psychological needs of the body", as Grosz (1998)argues "bodies re-inscribe and project themselves their socio-cultural environment so that the environment both produces and reflects the form and interest of the body"(p.242). The city is also evolving according to human needs as due to lack of space, "there are shoebox café" and "the small crammed places that play seventies music" (Imtiaz, 2014, pp.32-3). In the novel, there are various reference towards "residential neighbourhood" which is used for commercial purposes" as Ayesha points out "instead of tearing them down to build proper cafes and shop fronts, restaurants have just moved into the houses as they were, which makes you feel like you are having dinner in someone else drawing room" (Imtiaz, 2014,p.24).Grosz (1998) also draws our attention to the same phenomenon, the way "information technologies have transformed human world"(p. 251). It has further decreased the distance between home and the world and became the reason of "the diminution of interaction between face to face subjects, the continuing mediation of interpersonal relationship by terminal, screen and key boards, will increasingly affect/infect minutes of everyday life and corporeal existence"(Grosz, 1998,p.251).The cosmopolitan world is changed into the global village, the body and the city are "producing each other in the form of hyper real" and they often create "each other as form of the hyper real, as modes of simulation which have overtaken and transformed whatever reality each, may have into the image of the other"(Grosz, 1998,pp. 74-5). Therefore, people are dominated by the hyper realities in the modern world. Ayesha postulates the way people replaced "actual entertainment with surfing face book. My theory about facebook is that the worse the evening the more the photos" (Grosz,

1998, p.41).The novel depicts Karachiwalas's uncanny attachment with the cyber world; especially their obsession with the face book. She mentions that her boss, "Kamran is obsessed with Facebook likes and tweets, to the point where reporters have taken to begging their friends to please, for the love of god, tweet their story, so Kamran might notice them"(Grosz, 1998, p.112). She also makes fun of language and content used in some Twitter accounts: "looking for frandship" and "NO MORE SISTERZ only FrienDs No More than Friend!!!!"(Grosz, 1998, p.54).The cosmopolitan city shapes her subjectivity accordingly; unlike a small town girl, she is no longer interested in jumping into marriage bond but "perfectly happy being single" (Grosz, 1998, p.127).

She loves to visit the world of fashion, and fond of reading the social pages of Sunday magazine where one only finds out "which politician daughter are decked out in diamonds" with "no good explanation as how they can afford it" (Grosz, 1998, p.30). Saba Imtiaz also shows the darker side of the modern world, how the social media is promoting a certain idea of beauty, and modern women are extremely dissatisfied with their looks. Guy Debord draws the reader's attention to the same fact in "the Society of Spectacle"; he uses the word spectacle to refer to "collapse of reality into the streams of images, products and activities sanctioned by business and bureaucracy" (Sadler, 1999, p. 14). In other words reality has become just a "manipulated spectacular form" (Sadler, 1999, p.19). Modern women are conditioned to conform to an unattainable standard of beauty promoted by the social media. Ayesha is not shocked to mention her boss's wife obsession with Botox shot. She mentions,

> His wife's just had another botox shot, her eyebrows are so far up her forehead they look like they were drawn on. And I swear I heard her saying that she wants a second nose job, even though she now snores thanks to the first one she got when she wanted to look like Nicole Kidman (Imtiaz, 2014, pp.224-25).

Money has emerged as a new god in the modern city, as Georg Simmel discusses the significance of money and fashion in "Philosophy of Money" that the desire for fashion depicts the conflicting desire of the modern citizen, who wants to conform and simultaneously feels a need to stand out. Fashion stands for the tension between the desire for uniformity and the need for differentiation (Muzzucchelli, *The Metropolitan*, p.3). Therefore, the philosophy of fashion narrates a socio-economic conflict between two different social class or hierarchical social categories that always try to be distinguished from each other. Moreover, Fashion also helps to fulfill the desire to stand out, "getting noticed and creating envy" (Muzzucchelli, *The Metropolitan*, p.3). Ayesha feels like an outcast in the world of fashion because she neither possesses an ideal body nor the money to buy brands. She constantly complains that she lacks the purchasing power that makes her less desirable in her social circle, as she complains: "I have no money to get my hair done, get waxed or get anything nice to wear. I leap into the shower hoping to at least give my legs once over with a razor only to botch it and the next thing I

know my knees spouting a river of blood" (Imtiaz, 2014, p.80). Varma (2012) argues that the economic globalization has re-formulated the relationship between city and the body. The fashionable images dominates the global market place but these images of fashion and glamour "barely conceal the dark underside of modern urban life_ of lives lived in slums, brothels and factories" (p.3).

There are two Karachi, one "offers the seductive arrangements of commodities" that are visible to the eye while the invisible Karachi hides "the real world of gritty", "unseemly human labour, and nasty relationship of economic and social exploitation" (Varma, 2012,p.3). There is no doubt that modern subject is the product of this contradiction_ the contradiction between the real and the image, between the glitter and the grime, between the labour and the commodity (Varma, 2012, p.3). Karachi is the city of disparity where people are insecure and living under the shadow of oppression, as one of Ayesha's friend warns Ayesha and requests her to take a look around, "even the juice guy has security guard, for the love of god, because he is scare someone will make off with his day's earning and the canned pineapples" (Imtiaz, 2014, p.215). On one hand jobless young men are struggling for basic human needs while on the other, the rich "factory boys", are blowing money "on cases of Black Label" (Imtiaz,2014, p.41). Ayesha narrates the condition of one of the factory boys "in two years he's in a rehab facility, four years later, he's married to an 18-years-oldwho has no idea what her husband does" (Imtiaz, 2014p.41). Every Karachi girl including her has at least "dated one factory boy and dumped him within the first two weeks"? (Imtaiz, 2014, p.42). The modern city is a "market place" where "the commodity luxuriates", and enters like cancerous tissue into the most irregular combinations" (Varma, 2012, p. 3).

Karachi You Are Killing Me captures "the absurdity of reporting" and living in Pakistan's most dangerous city (Santana, 2014,p.1). The novel is not just a humorous account of a female journalist's excursions around the city of Karachi. It also brings to light the darker side of the world of journalism .It highlights a whole set of problems, and different kind of harassment that only female journalists face. According to Saba Imtiaz, even the most brilliant journalist finds it hard to work in Pakistan (Anika, 2017, p.1). Violence is so prevalent in the city; it is wrong to assume that people of Karachi get used to violence around them but no doubt, the city dwellers have learnt to adjust their lives around it. Grosz (1998) discusses in an interview with Vikki Bell that oppression is capable of generating "various creative possibilities" and invents "ingenuity" that "necessitates sideways thinking"(Bell,p.117). Grosz's (1998) essay "Bodies-Cities" problematizes the opposition between inside (body) and outside (city) and promotes the concept of looking outside with the help of inner eyes (from the perspective of inside). Her work highlights how each component (city) is necessary to comprehend the other (body). Drawing on her insights, I have explored how *Karachi You Are Killing Me* highlights the way city-body relationship requires a constant renegotiation and are mutually co-defining.

Conclusions

Imtiaz (2014) provides us a deep insight into the multidimensional aspects of the city. On one hand, it appears to be a living organism that is generating pro-life forces, on the other a sinister being that is oppressing its inhabitants and exacerbating divisions between individuals and communities. Karachi carries within it, the legend, memories and dreams of its inhabitant. The negative literary images of the city also provides the reader an opportunity to see the city in a different light. The novel depicts Karachi as a wasteland, as the site of guile, corruption and intrigue. Thus, the depiction of contemporary Karachi leads to the reader to an important question, how can progressive societal values be developed in the city that can make the transition to a more humane society possible? How can more institutional and physical space can be created in a city, which is required for the expression of a progressive culture?

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