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THE TAMING OF THE TRIBAL WITHIN PAKISTANI NARRATIVES OF PROGRESS, CONFLICT, AND ROMANCE

Uzma Abid Ansari

This chapter analyses representations of tribal identity in Pakistani anglophone works of fiction and examines how the tribal are ‘tamed’ by reducing the complexity of their social system to a simplified image which is easily judged and ‘othered’ by mainstream populations both in Pakistan and abroad. It demonstrates how tribal identities and their cultures are perceived and represented in such a way as to be made to perform the function of an imaginary ‘nomadic regime’, a concept from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s thesis on nomadology that signifies disruptive assemblages that counter the reified structures of the state, and shows how the tribal regions are rendered into a ‘smooth space’ that serves the purpose of warding off repressive state apparatuses (Deleuze and Guattari 2010).

‘Smooth space’ and ‘nomadic regime’ are concepts drawn from ‘Nomadology’, a section of Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus*. ‘Smooth space’ refers to the space occupied by the ‘counter-signifying regime’ of certain elements in and around the state that work in opposition to its apparatuses, in a metaphoric exteriority to it. Collectively these elements are called the ‘Nomadic War-Machine’, which occupies the spaces outside the ‘signifying regime’ of the state and is not stratified (i.e. it is free of the hierarchies and stratifications of the state model). By deploying this conceptualisation of an anti-state assemblage, I will critically interrogate three narratives by ‘progressivist’¹ Pakistani writers who have engaged with tribal identity in Pakistan. In the first narrative, tribal identity is romanticised as nomadic and peripheral; in the second, it is placed at the centre of conflict within the state of Pakistan in the post-9/11 era; and in the third narrative it is pitted against ‘progressivist discourse’, which juxtaposes Western feminism with tribalism in Pakistan. The novels selected for this analysis – *The Wandering Falcon* (2011) by Jamil Ahmad, *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon* (2013) by Fatima Bhutto, and *A God in Every Stone* (2014) by Kamila Shamsie – have purportedly made interventions in the field of cultural identity in the Pakistani context, but I contend that by framing tribal cultures within narratives of romance, conflict, and progress, their human and lived realities are skewed and simultaneously augment these narratives as internalised orientalist representations by authors whose subject positions reinforce the power structures put in place by the modern state of Pakistan.

These cultural representations of tribal ways of life are informed by prevalent hegemonic discourses, and in turn help to accumulate images of the tribal that support such discourses. In a symbiotic relationship with the dominant discourses of their time, they reinforce the image of the tribal as an outsider to city life, as a potential militant, and the trajectory of their life ways as running against the grain of progressivism and modernity. The following sections look at each narrative separately but with a view to underscoring the representation of tribal identities as 'nomadic' and occupying a smooth space outside the state model and progressivist discourse, which includes Western feminism and nationalism.

Narrative of romance

Ahmad's *The Wandering Falcon* is a compelling narrative fiction in terms of its representation of tribal culture and also the historical time frame it represents. Written in the 1970s, when Ahmad was serving as a government representative in the tribal belt of the then North West Frontier Province, present-day Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Baluchistan, *The Wandering Falcon* was published almost forty years later, in 2011. The significance of this detail lies in the fact that the novella, or collection of interconnected short stories, was released for public consumption a decade after the damaging events of 9/11, which were followed by an international military intervention in those very tribal areas that Ahmad had so affectionately depicted in 1974.

The result of this gap between writing and publication created an interesting anachronistic perspective on tribal representation, one which marks a shift from images of conflict-ridden and war-torn landscapes to a more romanticised visualisation of tribal culture that seeks to situate it in a conceptual smooth space outside the administrative apparatus of the Pakistani state. The novella sheds light on how tribal identity had been perceived prior to the many wars the region witnessed, and it demonstrates how this periphery was romanticised and even 'othered' by the 'centre' (i.e. the federal government of Pakistan). In this regard, Ahmad's subject position and agency as author and invisible third-person narrator are important points of departure for this cultural analysis, because they inform and provide the conditions for knowledge production related to tribal identity that had been relegated to the periphery. His social status during the two decades he spent in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and Baluchistan as a government representative and bureaucrat was without question a political position, which implicated him in the dynamics of power and knowledge production of the regions under his administrative control.² Ahmad's agency as author and third-person narrator of the novella is thus closely tied to the power relations and disciplinary techniques adopted by the postcolonial nation state from the colonial era, for the administration of the so-called 'Pashtun problem' in the Pakistani state's 'wild west', a space on the western borders notorious for its lawlessness. The role of the government representative, who exercised considerable authority in the tribal regions, was to implement the Frontier Crimes Regulation law among other disciplinary laws which were drawn up by the British Raj to control the 'martial' and unruly Pashtun tribes on the western borders of British India (Tripodi 2011: 8).

The evident institutional connection with the colonial era, due to the transference of the state apparatus from the British colonists to the newly founded state of Pakistan, has not moderated the discourse surrounding the administration of the tribal regions. The anti-colonial resistance encountered by the British in the border regions was translated and depicted by them as romanticised battles fought valiantly by a British army who had finally met its match in the tribals. By reifying Pashtun character traits, they diminished the element of human mutability and adaptation to new and changed environmental and social circumstances of the Pashtun stereotype, mounting him as the quintessential noble savage on their colonial wall of fame

(Tripodi 2011: 3, 43). In what follows, I demonstrate how Ahmad, with his subject position embedded in a colonialist and ultimately orientalist discourse of the legacy of the British Raj, deploys the tribal stereotype to produce a romanticised narrative about what can be read as the smooth space of the nomadic regime which counters the state apparatus.

Ahmad's *The Wandering Falcon* is a collection of nine short stories loosely based around the figure of Tor Baz, or 'black falcon', a wanderer of Baluchi origins who ekes out a livelihood roaming among the various tribes of the rugged regions in the western borders of the state of Pakistan. The first story or chapter of the novella tells the tragic tale of Tor Baz's conception, his parents being eloping lovers who were hunted down and ruthlessly murdered in the name of honour by his mother's father, a tribal chief, and her fiancé (who then proceeded to kill the tribal chief as well). From then on, the novella follows Tor Baz's passage through life in the rugged landscape between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The remaining eight chapters or short stories depict major and minor life events in the various tribes among whom Tor Baz happens to pass. The reader soon realises that the novella isn't particularly about Tor Baz, but he is a point of reference creating an itinerary across the tribal belt and a means of loosely linking the short stories together. He constitutes this space, yet at the same time he is external to it because he doesn't belong to any of the tribes. His character is embedded in what Mieke Bal terms the hidden or naturalised ideology of a narrative representation (2009: 31), consolidating a *mise-en-scène* of a smooth 'nomadic space' external to the state but passively constituted by the 'noble savage', represented as violent yet domesticated. The externality of the tribal region to the state is established early on in the narrative:

This way of life had endured for centuries, but it would not last forever. It constituted defiance to certain concepts, which the world was beginning to associate with civilization itself. Concepts such as statehood, citizenship, undivided loyalty to one state, settled life as opposed to nomadic life, and the writ of the state as opposed to tribal discipline. The pressures were inexorable. One set of values, one way of life, had to die. In this clash, the state, as always, proved stronger than the individual. The new way of life triumphed over the old.

(Ahmad 2011: 8)

In the above excerpt, Ahmad pits the state against the individual instead of the communal collective of nomadic society. This reduction of a pastoral community to a single individual opposed to the state is an interesting perspective on what is a semi-nomadic and pastoral social system which transacts with the state, and whose members are extremely communal and inter-dependent. Although he does point out the incongruous association of civilisation with sedentary urban life, in referring to the juxtaposition of civilisation with the nomadic 'individual', Ahmad reiterates the binary opposition of civilisation/nature, with the idyllic tribal individual falling neatly into the category of nature. The tribal discipline by which this individual abides lends him humanity and primitive clarity, so that despite being close to 'nature' (i.e. far from civilised), he nevertheless possesses an appreciable degree of dignity and nobility. This individual, isolated from communal contingencies, is pitted against the state, creating a romantic image of a noble savage, to be respected yet recognised as the Other who cannot be assimilated into the urban or civilised milieu, because his lifestyle in the present is relegated to an old, more 'natural' lifestyle, incompatible with the new values of 'civilised' life.

The key idea in such a romanticised conceptualisation of the individual versus the state is that of the 'nomad', an exonym with which the tribes in question do not identify (Tapper 2008: 98–99). Nomadism is a concept that covers a wide range of social mobilities and transnationalism,

and the 'nomadism' represented in Ahmad's short story is identified as the *powindas*, which he translates as 'people on foot'. But a more accurate translation would be 'grazers', implying pastoralism (Tapper 2008: 98). In addition, the migratory tribes who self-identify as *powindas* cannot be isolated from their historical geopolitical importance in the region in a simplistic way, nor from the role they play in the political economy of a country like Afghanistan. Historically, these tribes, who are pastoral Pashtuns, have held important military and political positions in the largely Pashtun-dominated history of the region (Titus 1998: 670), and they still contribute to the economy of Afghanistan to a considerable extent, which arguably suggests interdependence between the state and the pastoral social structure.³ Therefore, to say that the nomad is a creature of the past who could not fit into the modern political scheme of the state is to fall into a binary logic which overlooks the complexities of the pastoral lifestyle on the frontier between Afghanistan and Pakistan, one which is firmly rooted in the geopolitics of the region.

While pastoral tribes are depicted as the passive victims of a modern state defined by a heavily militarised frontier, the more sedentary tribes come across as groups of swashbuckling trigger-happy men whose basic means of subsistence is banditry on the frontiers of the state. They are described in a manner which merges them with their 'habitat', so to speak, so that there is little difference between them and an exotic animal species:

The Mahsuds, because they always hunt in groups, are known as the wolves of Waziristan. A Wazir hunts alone. He is known as 'the leopard' to other men [...] Nature has bred in both an unusual abundance of anger, enormous resilience, and a total refusal to accept their fate [...] To both tribes, survival is the ultimate virtue. In neither community is any stigma attached to a hired assassin, a thief, a kidnapper, or an informer.

(Ahmad 2011: 20)

These semi-pastoral tribes historically inhabited the mountain passes between the Delhi Sultanate and Afghanistan, and later British India and Afghanistan. Opinions on their conduct towards outsiders are part of a colonial discourse that has been passed on to the Pakistani state's administrative authorities who politically represent the central federal government. Ahmad's description of the Mahsuds and Wazirs as 'wolves' and 'panthers' is part of this colonial orientalist discourse, and has been deployed as a truism since the account of Waziristan by the last British governor, Sir Olaf Caroe, in his book *The Pathans*, which was published in 1965 (Ahmad 2004). Paul Titus has pointed out that the massive armed uprising on the frontiers faced by the British in India shaped their perception of the Baluch and Pashtun tribes there, but individually their views on the tribes 'ranged from romantic admiration to utter revulsion' (Titus 1998: 662). According to Titus, such views depended on the nature of their holders' interactions with the tribes: the more administrative their interactions, the friendlier their relations were, and the more confrontational their interactions due to the aggressive 'forward policy', which involved military intervention in the region, the more negative the attitudes developed towards the tribals. Although these are seemingly anthropological observations, they were not conducted by academics but by government representatives and administrators during the British colonial era (Titus 1998: 663).⁴ And they too relied heavily on previous accounts by colonial officials who mostly wrote down their observations of the region and tribal inhabitants in travel journals and correspondence. Nevertheless, this created a discourse which has lasted to this day.

A similar ambivalence of romantic admiration and revulsion is present in Ahmad's fictionalised representation of the frontier region's various tribes. The narrative representations of the various tribes, which include the Baluch, pastoral Pashtuns, sedentary Pashtuns, and Gujjars, are based

on Ahmad's observations of and interactions with them as a bureaucrat who held office as a government representative in Baluchistan and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). And, not unlike the British predecessors of this government instrument, his observations, as a non-academic, are peppered with stories of violence as well as admiration for a lifestyle that defies the dictates of the state. Revulsion at the acts of violence is evident in the depiction of ruthless honour killings and infringement of the state's laws; admiration is evidenced by the sympathy shown for the non-nationalist sentiments of the tribes. This ambivalence present in the narrative voice is denotative of the relegation of tribal society and individuals to a dual temporality, that is, they exist and represent for the narrator an originary past and a present, so that their originary characteristics are permanent fixtures in the present, thus perpetuating a stereotype that embodies a violent primitivism at the same time as an admirable individualism that refuses to merge with the modern state. In *Orientalism* Edward Said speaks of a similar bureaucratic Western observer of natives who categorises them into fixed types of communities like Aryans, Semites, etc., thus:

[F]unctionally speaking this came to mean that for the Orientalist no modern Semite, however much he may have believed himself to be modern, could ever outdistance the organising claims on him of his origins. This functional role worked on the temporal and spatial levels together. No Semite advanced in time beyond the development of a 'classical' period; no Semite could ever shake loose the pastoral, desert environment of his tent and tribe.

(Said 2001: 234)

By the same token, no tribal in Ahmad's narrative representation can distance him or herself from their pastoral, desert environment. Even though the novella was written in the mid-1970s, there are references to the pre-Partition period, since which time the Pashtuns and Baluch have seemingly remained unchanged in their originary societal design, with no mention of internal mobilisation due to large-scale urbanisation and their role in the political economy of Pakistan. This has only led to a reiteration of the colonial discourse on warfaring tribes, which subsist on either illegal or nomadic activities in order to survive in the vast hinterland on the peripheries of the much more stable federal centre of the state.

Narrative of conflict

In a much more contemporary setting, Bhutto's *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon* is a riveting narrative of a family from Mir Ali, a town in North Waziristan, recuperating from the war on terror and the marginalisation of their home town and people by the federal government of Pakistan. Although it is a relevant and even timely projection of the socially marginalised region of North Waziristan, the novel's contextualisation appears misplaced as it instrumentalises the actuality of the region and its nominal space in the geopolitics of Pakistan as a mere prop in the narrative. I contend that Mir Ali is factual only in name and its representation in the narrative relies heavily on the narrative agent's subject position in a discourse of separatism that emerged in the political and feudal culture of southern Pakistan in Sindh, with its leftist intelligentsia and political workers based in the urban centre of Karachi, rather than Waziristan in the north of the country.

This is Bhutto's first work of fiction, her previous literary works include a compilation of poems, *Whispers of the Desert*, and the biographical *Songs of Blood and Sword* about her father, Mir Ghulam Murtaza Bhutto, who was killed in an encounter with police in front of his house

in Karachi. Both of these works are touching reflections of the dramatic history of the Bhutto clan, from the time when Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto was executed by a military regime and the tragic events that unfolded in its wake in the lives of his children. Fatima Bhutto's childhood was spent in exile in Damascus with her father after his leftist insurgent activities with a terrorist organisation by the name of al-Zulfiqar led him to hijack a PIA aeroplane to Kabul, in which an army major was shot and killed. Although Mir Murtaza's involvement with al-Zulfiqar predated her birth in 1982, Bhutto grew up in exile, and on their return to Pakistan she was a witness to her father's work for the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD), a left-wing political alliance with communist leanings. Despite being an alliance of political parties from all over Pakistan, it nevertheless remained active mostly in the south of the country, where the Bhutto family had a large following in Sindh province.

This brief background of *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon* is important because it helps place Bhutto as author in a wider historical context, which in turn is of paramount significance for assessing the political basis of the established cultural hegemony of the centre over the periphery. Interpreting the author's subject position in a discursive field is thus important, as Mieke Bal points out in *Narratology*, so as 'to develop a politics of reading that draws its legitimacy from political positions, not from any fictitious "real" knowledge' (2009: 16). In this case, even though she does not claim a commitment to any political party, Bhutto has a strong political position, more so than Ahmad, because she writes from a position steeped in power relations between state and leftist insurgents from, ironically enough, a feudal cultural background. Having grown up almost stateless in exile with her father, Western educated, and transnational in outlook and lifestyle, Bhutto writes from this subject position for an international and urban readership which has access only to anglophone works such as hers, and hence she has the privilege to claim knowledge of a region invisible to this readership.

In the representation of the small North Waziristani town of Mir Ali, a narrative of conflict and sedition frames the actuality of the region. Bhutto literally produces knowledge about a geopolitical space that had until recently been visible to the public as a hinterland breeding violence and terrorist activity, because of its proximity to the war-torn country of Afghanistan. The geographical location of Waziristan, on the borders of the state and visible only in the peripheral vision of mainstream media, has made it a smooth space external to the state and its apparatuses, and thus the object of a leftist discourse that projects a narrative of sedition onto the region, producing 'real' knowledge for the centre's consumption. By 'centre', I refer to the mainstream and urban population, which is far removed from the border regions of FATA, where North Waziristan is located. Being a citizen of Pakistan and a journalist allows Bhutto access to such areas, but then the knowledge she produces as a narrative agent is filtered by their cultural representation in her narrative fiction. Revolving around the lives of three brothers in the town of Mir Ali, *Shadow of the Crescent Moon* depicts the traumas inflicted on a Shia Pashtun family who grapple with the takeover by the fanatical Sunni Taliban, as well as the injustices of the state meted out in their region as the military apparatus brings down a heavy hand in order to quell any and all insurgencies along the border. The three brothers, Aman Erum, Sikander, and Hayat, have chosen different paths in life: Aman moves to the United States for a better future, leaving behind his childhood love, Samarra Afridi; Sikander becomes a doctor and marries Mina; and finally the youngest, Hayat, runs a covert leftist political organisation from his university with the help of Samarra, carrying out small-scale insurgent activities against the military presence in their region.

The scenario depicted in this narrative fiction brings to light the heavy military intervention and its complicity with drone attacks carried out by NATO forces in North Waziristan from across the border with Afghanistan. But apart from this detail, the entire context is fabricated

as an urban setting where the characters are not only unaffiliated with the dominant tribes of the region, but also display urban features like having a local university in their midst and a young girl riding a motorbike in public. Such scenes are completely removed from the reality of the region, which is inhabited only by the Mahsud and Wazir tribes, with the Shia Pashtun population settled in Parachinar district and the Afridis around the Khyber Agency and Kohat. This point is important because the areas affected by military action against the Taliban were not Parachinar and Kohat; consequently, the inhabitants of these areas, the Shia Pashtuns and the Afridis, were not displaced, and nor were they involved in seditious activities against the state. This seemingly minor detail leads one to question the representation of North Waziristan in Bhutto's narrative as a region whose primary inhabitants, Wazirs and Mahsuds who were displaced from their villages and towns in huge numbers during the war on terror, are conspicuously absent along with an authentic depiction of their plight. On the contrary, the town of Mir Ali, where military action did take place in 2007, is represented as a small, almost modern town replete with a local university where a small group of students is planning and carrying out anti-state activities in the style of Cuban revolutionary guerrilla warfare:

Hayat remembers comrades, men who had devoted their lives to the cause of Mir Ali, abandoning their careers, money and families. Those men sat at desks all night and smoked and typed leaflets and posters and articles. They recited poetry because no one heard them when they used their own words.

(Bhutto 2013: 17)

The fact of the matter is that no such insurgent activities were ever planned or carried out by the locals of North Waziristan, who are mostly poor farmers, and certainly not by the Pashtun Shia population who live in and around Parachinar, or by the Afridis who historically helped the newly founded state of Pakistan in its war against India over Kashmir in 1948 (Tucker 2010: 2109).

So why does Bhutto take such liberties with the cultural representation of Mir Ali and its inhabitants? Given her subject position and her target audience, she relies on a hegemonic discourse concerning the region. This discourse reiterates that the region harbours, as it has always done in the past, militant tribals of local origin because they have not been assimilated into the mainstream population. The dominant discourse is perpetuated by the mass media and consumed by urban populations, rendering the lived realities of the locals of North Waziristan invisible and distant, both culturally and physically. Because of its invisibility to mainstream vision, the region has come to serve the purpose of a smooth space for an urban leftist intelligentsia that exists outside the oppressive regime of the state and functions as a 'war-machine' that has the potential to disrupt state apparatuses, such as the military. But the narrative of the novel focuses only on the spatio-geographical aspect of the 'war-machine', chiefly because it exists on the peripheries of the state as well as in the peripheral vision of the centre, and it is therefore easier to ignore the lived reality of the tribes who are not an eclectic mix of urbanised Pashtun families but are rather small-scale landowners who subsist on agricultural activity. Hence, this underdeveloped area becomes a convenient conceptual smooth space upon whose surface a leftist subject position can project its discursive construct. Bhutto has essentially done the same by projecting her Westernised, urban, albeit leftist, discourse onto this space existing outside the urban centres of the state of Pakistan. By harnessing the unrest in North Waziristan and FATA generally over not being assimilated into the provincial jurisdiction, and representing it as seditious activity, the novel's narrative caters to a Westernised and anglophone readership who have internalised an orientalist outlook that lets them view the tribal regions as an exotic

'other'. This tribal 'other' not only allows them to define themselves in a certain way (i.e. progressive, urbanised, transnational etc.), but in sympathetic accounts of this 'other' they project their self-image onto tribal regions' representations in various media, thus effectively erasing the culture and identity of the tribals.

In Bhutto's case, being of Pakistani origin and a journalist has built her image as an authentic voice from a global periphery in her transnational circuit. But this perception tends to overlook the diversity of the region in which Pakistan is situated, which includes not only disparities between urban and rural populations but also various ethnicities, linguistic groups, and communal structures, of which disparities Bhutto is a part since she comes from a privileged feudal background. In her first fiction, Bhutto has effectively utilised a socially marginalised frontier region to project her narrative of conflict which is based on personal memories and experiences of her father's Marxist activism in Karachi, and in the process facilitated the erasure of cultural awareness of the Wazir and Mahsud tribes, who are the indigenous inhabitants of Waziristan.

Narrative of progress

As the world moves on from 9/11, writers from Pakistan are beginning to explore alternative themes from those areas affected by the US-led war on terror in order to create a counter-narrative that is more empathetic towards local sensibilities but does not lose sight of the global context. Shamsie's latest novel, *A God in Every Stone*, is such a narrative fiction that places the much-hyped but little understood Pashtun tribal region in a global historical context, highlighting the complexities of historical transculturalism and inter-civilisational ties that have made the region what it is today. This work aims to present a nuanced narrative which explores meetings of cultures over time and space, and their effects on intra-cultural dynamics by inducing change and sociocultural metamorphosis. The narrative highlights spatio-temporal complexity by moving from a distant past to a specific modern historical moment when anti-colonial movements were gaining momentum, and issues of identity and loyalty to one's 'land' had taken on nationalist overtones. Shamsie highlights social change in two social milieus, in Britain as women became more aware of their rights and began asserting themselves politically, and in the subcontinent as Indians began demanding their political rights against the British Raj. With this approach, Shamsie takes the focus away from a discourse of Islamist extremism and instead steers the narrative within a discourse of progress, teasing out issues of feminism, nationalism, and inter- and intra-cultural relationships. Hence, feminism and nationalism, which are constitutive of progressivism, are juxtaposed with raw tribalism, which is represented as regressive and, again, exterior to the politically correct discursive space occupied by progressivist ideologues such as Ghaffar Khan.

The plot of *A God in Every Stone* straddles two narratives, one that begins with a young British woman, Vivienne Rose Spencer, apprenticing as an archaeologist in Turkey, and the other involving a young Pashtun man from Peshawar, Qayyum Gul, serving in a British regiment as a *sepo*y stationed in Marseilles, France, and to later fight in the battle of Ypres. After losing an eye in the battle, he returns home to Peshawar, where he briefly crosses paths with Vivienne, who is in Peshawar in search of an ancient artefact belonging to a Carian called Scylax from 515 BCE. Although the two narratives merge eventually, they remain distinct in their representation of a young British woman's growth into a feminist during the heyday of the suffrage movement in Europe and the USA, and of a Pashtun man's reprioritisation of loyalties and reconstitution of selfhood on the lines of the non-violence movement. As these two narratives merge, Shamsie raises the issue of Vivienne's European or white feminism as

an exclusivist yet universalising movement that tends to overlook women's struggles in other global, especially postcolonial, contexts. In parallel to this but worlds apart, the other narrative develops around Qayyum's recognition of the vicious cycle of violence and revenge inherent in his culture, and his initiative to overcome this by joining the Khudai Khidmatgar movement, a non-violent nationalist struggle against British colonial rule. Both these parallel narratives are embedded in a discourse of progress from which proceed issues of feminism, nationalism, and cultural/political reform.

Focusing exclusively on the representation of Pashtun tribal identity, Shamsie frames it in a narrative of progress that attempts to make sense of it outside the discourse on Islamism⁵ by envisioning it in a linear historical progression. The aim of this ambitious linear chronology is to touch upon the deep historical roots of the region and the presence of the 'Pactyikes', ancestors of the present-day Pashtuns, in the region and their civilisational interaction with the Greeks and Persians. By placing the Pashtun in a historical context, his essentialist traits are made to appear ontologically inherent and to perpetually define his identity. For instance, while Qayyum endeavours to adopt the moderate ideology of Ghaffar Khan, founder of the Khudai Khidmatgar, his younger brother is being taught about his originary identity by Vivienne Rose: 'But we are Pactyike, the most warlike of the Indians' (Shamsie 2014: 204).

In Shamsie's narrative representation, two aspects of the Pashtun character emerge: they are more human than they are normally portrayed (i.e. as just one-dimensional fanatical tribals); and their masculinity, often seen as dominating their culture, tends to manifest itself as aggressive and sexually vigorous. Two pivotal scenes depicting violent confrontation, the battle of Ypres and the British attack on unarmed protesters of the Khudai Khidmatgar, are preceded and followed, respectively, by acts of sexual intercourse by Qayyum, the token Pashtun male representative in the novel. He is shown to be taken by French culture and the beauty of French women, and when an opportunity for intimacy with a French woman soon arises in the form of a prostitute, he avails himself just before his journey into battle against the Germans at Ypres. This double excitement of a sexual encounter followed by a bloody fight gives him an 'understanding at that moment [of] what it was to be a man – the wonder, the beauty of it' (Shamsie 2014: 57). In the encounter between the British and the unarmed protestors of the Khudai Khidmatgar, Qayyum is witness to the brutality of the soldiers and their indiscriminate killing of his fellow protestors, after which he hides with some other men in a nearby courtesan's house. On seeing a beautiful young prostitute in the house, the men are tempted to stay for the day, despite the strike on all businesses which they themselves had organised. Qayyum has recourse to his 'regular' woman, in whose room he has another insight into his maleness, in that 'he was a man, like all the other men who came here' (Shamsie 2014: 263). Once again, his essential maleness, like the other men with him, prevents him from acknowledging actions which could have been a source of shame when his comrades were dying on the streets, because this was something that was 'natural' to men, something that had to be done. Qayyum, a Pashtun man, thus becomes a quintessential, stereotypical male in a progressivist narrative with undertones of white feminism that tends to subject the Pashtun male to a European woman's gaze. Under this gaze, he appears as someone who cannot repress his overactive sexuality, even when not up in arms, which is an upshot of the rigid segregation between male and female spaces in the social structure. From a conceptual viewpoint, the Pashtun male and his tribal societal structure carry a potential for nomadism, which can disrupt the striated space of organised political movements for the political enfranchisement of English women and colonised subjects, as well as unsettle notions of sexual normalcy.

In fact, their overtly sexualised and violent masculinity is presented as an essential trait of Pashtun culture, one that needs to be restrained through more progressive means such as

non-violent political movements that will help to bring about social reform of their strict tribal codes. These traits are also seen through the lens of a British feminist who, as a foreigner to the local culture, incidentally only sees that male behaviour which has been used to characterise Pashtun men as not only homosocial but overtly homoerotic and sexually fluid. In the marketplace, Vivienne sees men and boys walking ‘hand in hand, flowers behind their ears and bandoliers across their chests. As if they had decided to be both man and woman at once, long of eyelash and broad of shoulder’ (Shamsie 2014: 189). And in another place, when at the museum appraising Qayyum’s younger brother’s cataloguing of archaeological artefacts, she muses over his pairing of two stone heads, one Greek and one Indian:

He had laid them down in profile so they looked each other in the eye, their mouths inches apart from each other. Was this an expression of his own proclivities or an acknowledgement of the passionate intimacy of Pathan men, sexual and otherwise?
(298)

Representations such as these are indicative of orientalist stereotypes of Pashtun men, where their masculinity is fetishised as hypersexual with strong homoerotic tendencies. The explanation given for this usually points to their tribal structure, which segments their social spaces into strict public and private areas, rendering Pashtun women invisible in public spaces, so that Pashtun men have no other recourse to sexual intimacy than with their male companions. Such depictions of a Pashtun man’s sexual preoccupations in narrative fiction are more than just ‘realistic’ cultural representations, they tap into the post-9/11 discourse on Afghan/Pashtun men’s deviant sexuality which emerges from conditions of violence and regressive tribal laws (Manchanda 2014). In Shamsie’s narrative, these essentialised characteristics are juxtaposed with a British woman’s progressivist feminism so that they stand out in more vivid detail. Even though there are nuanced instances where Vivienne’s ‘civilising mission’ to educate a young Pashtun man about his own identity is treated with slight irony, the essentialised Pashtun male traits remain a stronger motif throughout the novel, offset and framed within a narrative of progress which problematises the perceived and intense masculinity of the Pashtun man.

In all three types of narrative representation of tribal identity, the tribal is ‘tamed’ to fit the imagination and fantasy of the narrative agent or writer. As a concept, the tribal represents the smooth space outside the state apparatus, where the narrative representation can be projected and its fiction played out. In theory, the smooth spaces inhabited by the nomadic regime function to disrupt the oppressive regime of the state. In the above analysis I have shown how the periphery of the state is perceived as such a smooth space but is also deployed as a backdrop to the representation of tribal identity. And in each narrative, this identity takes on a different shape and different characteristics based on the discourse and historical framing of the narrative. The representational form of tribal identity, in turn, functions to support this very narrative framework, rather than saying anything about the lived realities of peripheral cultures in and around Pakistan.

The three narrative texts that have been critically examined in this chapter indicate a trend in anglophone Pakistani literature that engages with tribal identity as a perceived ‘smooth space’ or a space exterior to the state, which helps to underpin their respective narratives. The writers, in engaging with such identities, are neither themselves a part of this perceived smooth space, nor do they leave their privileged subject positions in the interiority of the state. It can therefore be concluded from this critical examination that when representing the culture of relatively peripheral communities in Pakistan, the anglophone writers discussed here maintain their

subject positions in their respective discursive fields. Because none of the three, Ahmad, Bhutto, and Shamsie, identifies with any tribal community, their subject positions are embedded in political positions of privilege which validate any fictitious 'real' knowledge they produce about areas and communities existing on the peripheries of the state, based on an urban, Westernised third-person perspective, as well as an orientalist discourse which relegates the tribal to the category of the other. Hence, tribal identity can be compromised in their narrative fiction to accommodate an author's fiction.

Notes

- 1 Progressivism is the ideology of social reform in the areas of politics, the economy, and science; its basis is in the European Age of Enlightenment and the concept of modernity. Progressivist discourse advocates sociopolitical movements that seek to reform society on the lines of modernisation and Westernisation of state institutions by supplanting local and indigenous societal structures. It is not to be confused with, nor is it a reference to, the 'Progressive Writers' Movement' from the subcontinent, which was formed in 1936 in Lucknow.
- 2 In 'The Work of Representation' (1997), Hall explains Foucault's theory on the subject position in relation to discourse and the production of knowledge in a discursive field.
- 3 Titus (1998) discusses several aspects of Baloch and Pashtun tribes, one of which is the use of nomadism or pastoralism as a political strategy. According to Titus, historically, the Afghan leadership, in particular the Pashtun Durrannies during the eighteenth century and a considerable part of the nineteenth, had pastoral elements and links.
- 4 Mountstuart Elphinstone, envoy to the court of Kabul in 1808, and then Governor of Bombay 1819–1827, is an example of such a government official. He is well known as a historian from the British Raj, and authored the famous book on Pashtuns *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul and its Dependencies: Comprising a View of the Afghaan Nation, and a History of the Dooraunee Monarchy*, published in 1839 in London. Accounts such as Elphinstone's built up over the period of colonisation and relied on each other for validation. This created a certain discourse surrounding the Pashtuns which was based on observations by British political agents.
- 5 'Islamism' refers to political Islam, and in the context of the topic under discussion it refers to the instrumentalisation of Pashtun tribal elements by political Islamists to wage a war against unorthodox practices of Islam, as well as secular states.

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