

The Unhomely Sanctuary: Trauma, Memory, and the Postcolonial Gothic in *This House of Clay and Water*

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.63163/jpehss.v3i4.961>

Abstract

This paper argues that Faiqa Mansab's *This House of Clay and Water* (2017) operates fundamentally as a text of the postcolonial gothic, transcending its established reputation as a socio-realist critique of gender and class in Pakistan. By utilizing Sigmund Freud's concept of the *Unheimlich*, this research analyzes how the domestic and spiritual spaces in the novel specifically the elite household and the daata darbar shrine are rendered frighteningly unfamiliar through the return of repressed trauma. The study posits that Lahore acts as a gothic site where the boundaries between the living and the socially dead (the hijra, the grieving mother, the disgraced wife) dissolve. Through a close textual analysis of the protagonists Nida, Sasha, and Bhanggi- the paper demonstrates how their bodies serve as sites of "gothic memory," bearing the scars of historical and personal violence that refuse to remain buried. Nida's home becomes a tomb for her dead daughter, transforming domesticity into a source of horror, while the shrine serves as a paradoxical "unhomed sanctuary" a space of comfort that is simultaneously marked by violence and abjection. By situating Mansab's work within the postcolonial gothic tradition, this paper reveals how the novel uses the aesthetics of haunting to critique the stifling patriarchal structures of contemporary urban Pakistan, ultimately suggesting that for the marginalized, there is no "home," only a series of hauntings.

Keywords: Abjection, Postcolonial Gothic, Spiritual Space, The Uncanny, Trauma Theory

Introduction:

For several decades, South Asian Anglophone literature has remained predominantly anchored in the tradition of social realism, a trend that has conditioned readers to perceive Pakistani narratives as direct, mimetic mirrors of their socio-political environment. Within this framework, audiences typically seek out accounts of political instability, economic deprivation, and gender-based oppression delivered in a documentary or ethnographic style. While these themes remain critically significant, they do not exhaust the conceptual possibilities of the region's contemporary fiction. There is a burgeoning shift in modern Pakistani literature toward the "Postcolonial Gothic," a genre that deliberately eschews traditional European tropes, such as vampires or medieval castles, in favor of a more localized horror rooted in the trauma of history and the oppressive silence of the

domestic sphere. As Tabish Khair argues, the Postcolonial Gothic serves as a potent vehicle for articulating the postcolonial condition by focusing specifically on themes of displacement, historical disavowal, and the return of the repressed. In this specific modality, ghosts are divested of their supernatural essence; they are reimagined as traumatic memories that linger within the collective psyche of the people. Consequently, the classic "haunted house" is reconfigured as the modern domestic home where women are systematically silenced, and the "monster" is manifested as the human body that society has cast into the margins. Faiqa Mansab's novel, *This House of Clay and Water*, operates profoundly within this gothic system. Set against the backdrop of Lahore a city defined by a deep and often painful history as a central site of the 1947 Partition the narrative explores how this violent heritage has birthed "social ghosts" that continue to haunt the urban landscape today. Mansab constructs Lahore as a gothic landscape characterized by pervasive dust, sweltering heat, and buried secrets, where the home is reimagined not as a sanctuary, but as a grave. In this setting, the boundaries between the living and the "socially dead" become increasingly porous. The Postcolonial Gothic utilizes such landscapes to reveal the inherent "rot" of the nation-state; in Mansab's portrayal, the elite inhabit air-conditioned, sterile halls while the impoverished suffer in the shadows of the alleys. This creates a disjointed urban experience where the "new Lahore" is framed as a site of modern sin, while the "old Lahore" remains saturated with colonial and mystical history. The character Nida navigates these fractured spaces in a burqa, which functions as a "gothic veil" that renders her simultaneously invisible and spectral a ghost moving through a city of ruins. To fully grasp the atmospheric dread permeating the novel, one must apply Sigmund Freud's concept of the uncanny, or *unheimlich*. Rather than a mere definition of the "scary," the uncanny identifies the moment a familiar domestic space transforms into something frighteningly alien through the return of repressed trauma. This psychological sensation is pervasive in Mansab's work, specifically as Nida's expensive, elite home begins to function as a psychological prison. Despite the material luxury, she exists as an outsider, perpetually haunted by the memory of her deceased daughter, Fatima. This trauma transforms the domestic space into a terrifyingly vacant terrain where the familiar comforts of home are replaced by a chilling sense of absence that Nida cannot escape. Complementing this Freudian reading is Julia Kristeva's theory of "Abjection," which moves the gothic focus from the house to the body. The abject represents that which a society must reject and cast out such as the "in-between" or the "unclean" in order to maintain its internal sense of order and purity. Because the abject exists at the borders of identity, it inherently threatens the stability of social rules.

In the novel, the character Bhanggi represents this abjection perfectly; as a *hijra*, he occupies a liminal space between male and female categories that society finds inherently "monstrous". Society reacts to his presence with horror because his very existence challenges the foundational myths of social and biological purity. His scarred body serves as a visceral, cartographic symbol of a society built upon systemic lies and historical violence. This study applies these theoretical frameworks to illuminate the intrinsic link between Mansab's characters and the city they inhabit. While traditional Gothic literature, such as Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, often utilized the house as a literal or metaphorical tomb, Mansab adapts this trope to the Pakistani context to destroy the cultural myth of the home as a "safe kingdom" for women. Nida's residence becomes a site of "domestic gothic" where, despite her status and wealth, she identifies as a "ghost" trapped in a repetitive cycle of sorrow. She performs the role of the dutiful wife while remaining emotionally entombed, a state enforced by her husband, Saqib. Acting as a metaphorical warden, Saqib ignores her psychological pain, thereby making the house feel increasingly suffocating and repressive. Finally, the most complex and contradictory space in the novel is the Daata Darbar shrine. While traditional literature often portrays the shrine as a source of spiritual peace and communal healing, Mansab subverts these expectations by rendering it through a dark, gothic lens. It is a space defined by dust, addiction, and the presence of the marginalized, yet it serves as a paradoxical refuge for

Nida. In a final expression of the uncanny, Nida finds herself escaping her luxurious but "choking" home to seek solace in the unsanitary, haunted environment of the shrine. In Mansab's world, the home has become a frightening, alien terrain, while the "strange" and abject space of the shrine becomes the only place Nida can truly feel at home. Through this geography of trauma, the narrative reveals that in a society built on repression, the only true sanctuary is often found within the shadows of the socially dead.

Literature Review

Critical analysis of Faiqa Mansab's debut novel, *This House of Clay and Water* (2017), has largely been contextualized within the established canons of South Asian Anglophone literature, including social realism, feminism, and identity politics. Since its release, the novel has been acclaimed as a heartfelt and visceral reproach of rigid socio-religious hierarchies in modern Lahore, becoming a significant subject of scrutiny for both reviewers and scholars due to its graphic cultural details and unflinching depiction of systemic oppression. Nevertheless, a comprehensive survey of the literature demonstrates a clear inclination among critics to interpret the novel as a sociological document, often treating it as a mimetic mirror held up to the patriarchal crevices of contemporary Pakistan. While this realist methodology effectively explains the material and socioeconomic circumstances of the characters, it tends to overlook the atmospheric, psychological, and spectrally resonant nature of the narrative. This literature review demonstrates that while social aspects are well-charted, spatial and psychological dimensions remain significantly undertheorized. Specifically, there is a conspicuous absence of scholarship dealing with the Postcolonial Gothic or the Freudian Uncanny (*unheimlich*), a gap that serves as the primary motivational foundation for the current research. This research seeks to move beyond the "what" of social suffering to focus on the "how" of atmospheric dread. The most popular critique of Mansab's novel focuses on the domestic sphere as a site of confinement for the female subject, aligning with the broader feminist critique of the "Good Wife" archetype in South Asian fiction. Saeed and Rehman (2021) utilize the concept of the "Other" to interpret the protagonist, Nida, arguing that her identity is systematically eroded by the patriarchal "Subject" represented by her husband, Saqib, and her father-in-law. These scholars argue that the household space functions as a panopticon a structure of permanent visibility where Nida is constantly monitored by both people and the weight of social expectations. However, Saeed and Rehman leave the specific Gothic nuances of this alienation unexplored; they acknowledge the house as a source of alienation but do not fully theorize why Nida refers to herself as a "ghost" or how the house is haunted by the spectral memory of her deceased daughter, Fatima. By stopping at the sociological level, they miss the opportunity to analyze domestic trauma through a spectral lens. Similarly, other researchers employ spatial theory to argue that the physical world is inherently gender-biased, contending that public space is aggressively dominated by men while private space is a claustrophobic area of female entrapment. This analysis is vital in establishing the house as a fundamental antagonist, yet it treats the setting as a mere building of bricks and mortar, failing to respond to the emotive and poetic aspects of the "uncanny" the silence, the dust, and the sweltering heat that enliven the house into a sentient, frightening location. In line with these feminist readings, scholars have engaged with the character of Bhanggi and the *hijra* community by applying Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity. They argue that Bhanggi's existence challenges the heteronormative foundations of Pakistani society, representing the misunderstood "Third Gender" rather than serving as a mere vessel for ideological thoughts.

While these readings are indispensable for understanding the novel's progressive gender politics, they maintain a socio-political focus and rarely address the "abjection" of Bhanggi through a psychoanalytic lens. In Gothic literature, the "monster" or "grotesque" is often the suppressed "Other" who returns to haunt the centers of power, yet existing scholarship fails to see Bhanggi as

the quintessential Gothic monster in the sense of Julia Kristeva's "Abject". Bhanggi's body is a cartographic monument to the violence of Lahore, a symbolic expression of repressed trauma that embodies the history elite characters wish to forget. Moving away from pure identity politics, current scholarship questions the novel's philosophical underpinnings, suggesting the work is a profound study in Jean-Paul Sartre's concept of "Bad Faith". Critics argue that Nida's isolation is also an outcome of her rejection of her own radical freedom and agency, shifting the focus from victimhood to choice. Furthermore, framing the novel within the "Age of Anger" suggests characters are motivated by "sad passions" like resentment and envy produced by an inequitable caste-based society. These philosophical readings offer a solid foundation for identifying motivations but remain rooted in the realm of conscious morality, failing to explain the subconscious or irrational fears in the text the visceral dread of the dark, the loss of the child, and the "unhomely" refuge found in the squalor of the shrine. In non-academic literature, reviews often cite "tonal inconsistencies" and a lack of subtlety as primary flaws, arguing the effort to maintain a solemn tone is overstated. Other critics praise the ambition but critique the heavy "thematic load" or "excess". From a realist perspective, an intense atmosphere may appear clunky, but this paper contends that melodrama and atmospheric intensity are the essential building blocks of the Gothic mode. What critics perceive as a failure of realism is a hallmark of the Gothic necessary stylistic tools to present the sublime horror inherent in the postcolonial condition. The absence of a sustained Gothic examination represents a significant void, as theorists have overlooked the spectral. Tabish Khair argues that postcolonial writers employ Gothic tropes to articulate an "Otherness" that social realism cannot capture, disrupting the rationality of the family and the nation. Similarly, Gina Wisker posits that the Gothic narrates "unspeakable" domestic traumas, which in Mansab's novel are manifested in the dead child, the "in-between" body of the *hijra*, and the failure of the home to provide safety. Existing literature mentions Nida's sorrow but fails to examine how grief transforms her house into an *unheimlich* space simultaneously familiar and terrifying. To sum up, while existing literature provides profound insight into sociological aspects, the academic community lacks a theoretical framework for the atmospheric suffocation and the "doubling" between the lead and the pariah. There is no discussion of how Lahore acts as an active agent of trauma. This research paper aims to fill this critical gap by adopting a Postcolonial Gothic vision, demonstrating that horror is a spatial and psychological reality rooted in the transformation of the home into a tomb and the shrine into a sanctuary of the dead. By tracing this geography of trauma, we reveal a deeper criticism of the human condition in modern Pakistan.

Theoretical Framework

The current study adopts a qualitative and interpretative paradigm to interrogate Faiqa Mansab's novel, *This House of Clay and Water* (2017). Deviating from mainstream sociological and realist perspectives, the analytical approach opts for a Postcolonial Gothic framework to demonstrate how the novel utilizes specific tropes such as the "uncanny body" and the "haunted domestic space" to map the psychological trauma of marginalized subjects in Lahore. By synthesizing Sigmund Freud's *Unheimlich* (The Uncanny) with Julia Kristeva's theory of "Abjection," this methodology employs hermeneutic methods to deconstruct the text, ultimately capturing the narrative as a work of psychological horror that transcends simple social commentary. The study is grounded in qualitative textual analysis, a modality selected specifically to explicate complex literary symbols, atmospheric descriptions, and character arcs that are inherently non-quantifiable. This hermeneutic approach recognizes the text as a cultural object that encodes deep-seated anxieties regarding gender, class, and history. Consequently, the research utilizes a deductive methodology, applying the theoretical constructs of the Uncanny and Abjection to concrete textual material, including Nida's grief, Bhanggi's physical form, and the atmospheric decay of the Daata Darbar shrine.

The research incorporates three intersecting theoretical strands: the Postcolonial Gothic, the Freudian Uncanny, and Kristevan Abjection. The overarching lens remains the Postcolonial Gothic, which reimagines the traditional eighteenth-century European tropes of haunted castles and supernatural monsters within a contemporary Pakistani context. As scholars such as Tabish Khair and Gina Wisker argue, the Gothic in postcolonial literature responds to colonial trauma and displacement by engaging with "social ghosts" and forgotten histories. In this study, the "Other" manifests as the *hijra* or the "imperfect" woman, while the haunted castle is replaced by the modern Pakistani residence a site that harbors secrets of domestic abuse and systemic obliteration. The primary psychoanalytic tool utilized is the Freudian Uncanny, which explains why domestic spaces often evoke terror. Freud's theory begins with an etymological analysis of *heimlich* and *unheimlich*, identifying a paradox where the "homely" can simultaneously mean "concealed" or "hidden." This study applies this concept in two distinct ways:

1. **The Unhomely Home:** The research explores how trauma transforms Nida's opulent house into a site of the uncanny, where everyday objects become *memento mori* and the inhabitant is stripped of psychological belonging.
2. **The Doppelgänger:** Drawing on Freud's suggestion that "doubling" represents a repressed aspect of the self, this study posits that Bhanggi serves as a Gothic "Double" to Nida. Both characters are outcasts one confined by elite domesticity and the other by social abjection whose interaction creates an uncanny mirror of their respective psychological breakdowns.

The final theoretical tool is Julia Kristeva's theory of Abjection. The "abject" represents that which disturbs identity, system, and order; it is what society must expel to maintain its boundaries. Because the abject does not respect borders or rules, Bhanggi functions as a quintessential abject figure who demolishes the rigid male/female binary. Existing in the liminal space of the shrine, Bhanggi's presence highlights the perceived "danger" he poses to social purity. This theory allows the research to symbolize the horror of a society built on structural lies, turning the shrine into a Gothic space of confrontation. By following a systematic cycle of selection, deconstruction, and synthesis, this methodology ensures a focused literary enquiry. To avoid the pitfall of Eurocentrism, the study anchors these Western theories within a postcolonial framework, providing a systematic approach to reading the novel as a psychological map of Lahore. Ultimately, this framework blurs the lines between home and tomb, providing a vocabulary for the connection between the living and the "socially dead."

Discussion and Analysis

This paper deconstructs the narrative architecture of *This House of Clay and Water* to reveal how Faiqa Mansab employs Gothic tropes to map the psychological trauma of her protagonists. By moving beyond a traditionally realist reading, this analysis locates the novel's horror not in supernatural entities, but in the *unheimlich* (uncanny) spaces of the domestic sphere and the "abject" bodies of the marginalized. The discussion is organized into three pivotal sections: the transformation of the home into a tomb, the somatic horror of the *hijra* body, and the gothic geography of the shrine. In the postcolonial gothic tradition, the home is rarely a site of safety; rather, it functions as a locus of confinement where the past refuses to remain buried. For the protagonist Nida, the domestic space typically celebrated in South Asian literature as the woman's sanctum is rendered *unheimlich*. As Sigmund Freud (1919) defines it, the uncanny is "that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar." Nida's home is familiar in its luxury and routine, yet it becomes frighteningly alien because it is haunted by the repressed memory of her dead daughter, Fatima. Consequently, Nida does not merely inhabit her home; she haunts it. From the outset, Mansab establishes Nida's existence as spectral rather than

corporeal, with Nida describing her movement through the house as a phantom disconnected from the material world: "I strayed from room to room like a ghost. My loneliness both sustained and disintegrated me" (Mansab, 2017, p. 87). This self-ghosting serves as a classic Gothic response to trauma; unable to escape the physical prison of her marriage, Nida dissociates, turning her own body into a haunting presence. The house itself actively participates in this oppression, acting as a gothic antagonist that absorbs life. Nida observes her collection of expensive souvenirs "fat, scented candles" and "stone models" and realizes the absurdity of these objects in the face of her spiritual emptiness. She notes that in the "stalemate" of her marriage, her only return was this "house of bricks and mortar" (p. 43). The term "stalemate" suggests a state of permanent entrapment where the house acts as a mausoleum for a marriage that has already died. This uncanny atmosphere is exacerbated by the "Bluebeard" figure of Saqib, who exerts violence not through physical force, but through the violence of silence and denial. He represents a patriarchal order that demands "normalcy" at the cost of the female subject's sanity. Nida acknowledges her incarceration explicitly, noting that "imprisonment leads to either love or hate of the incarcerator. I chose love" (p. 32). This chilling admission reveals a survival mechanism akin to Stockholm Syndrome induced by the "unhomely" environment. The climax of this Domestic Gothic occurs when Saqib's lack of grief over Fatima's death is revealed, turning him into a gothic villain in Nida's psyche. A potent symbol of this decay is the Greek clay urn; by ritualistically destroying it with water, Nida symbolically erodes the "house of clay" that represents her body and her marriage, signaling a "Death Drive" toward oblivion. If Nida represents the haunting of the mind, Bhanggi represents the haunting of the flesh. In Postcolonial Gothic, the "monster" is often the marginalized subject who bears the physical scars of oppression. Bhanggi, the intersex (*hijra*) protagonist, is the embodiment of Julia Kristeva's "Abject" that which "disturbs identity, system, order" (Kristeva, 1982). Mansab inscribes the history of violence directly onto Bhanggi's skin, introduced as a collection of scars that serve as topographical markers of his abjection. Bhanggi internalizes this, viewing himself as a "vilest sore," a site of infection in the social body of Lahore. Mansab subverts typical *hijra* depictions by focusing on the biological horror of Bhanggi's existence, where his body is a "cage of bones and flesh" (p. 13). When Nida looks at Bhanggi, she sees her own internal fragmentation reflected in his external ambiguity, establishing the trope of the Gothic Doppelgänger. Their sexual encounter at the shrine is the novel's most transgressive Gothic moment; it is "uncanny" because it violates the deepest taboos of class and gender in a dismal, grave-like setting. By sleeping with the "monster," Nida destroys her identity as a respectable wife and embraces her own abjection, finding a dark liberation in the process. The final element of this framework is the setting. Lahore is depicted not as a vibrant cultural hub, but as a necropolis a city of the dead. The narrative constantly blurs the line between the sacred space of the shrine and the horrific space of the grave, creating an "unhomely sanctuary." While the Daata Darbar shrine is traditionally a place of refuge, Mansab paints it in gothic hues of dust, heat, and suffocation. It is populated by the "living dead" drug addicts and outcasts. Nida prefers this danger to the safety of her home, stating, "This mausoleum has always been more my home than that house I live in" (p. 245). This inversion, where the tomb is home and the home is a tomb, defines the Gothic protagonist. Beyond the shrine, the entire city is mapped as a graveyard of dreams and innocence, where the "Postcolonial Gothic" landscape reveals the decay of the nation-state. Nida navigates these spaces in her burqa, which acts as a "gothic veil," rendering her invisible and spectral. The novel concludes with the inevitable exorcism of the "abject" element: the murder of Bhanggi. In the end, Nida takes his place, becoming the "asexual qalandar" who haunts the graves of others. This permanent haunting confirms that in a society built on repression, we are all ghosts. Through the "domestic gothic," the "grotesque body," and the "uncanny shrine," Mansab argues that the only true sanctuary in a world of psychological horror is often death itself. The narrative trajectory of *This House of Clay and Water* culminates

in a supreme act of Gothic horror: the ritualistic murder of Bhanggi and the subsequent psychological "burial" of Nida. Bhanggi's violent death serves as the inevitable exorcism of the "abject" element by a dominant social order that cannot tolerate the blurring of its rigid boundaries; he is beaten to death, his body left unclaimed, effectively completing his transition from social death to physical oblivion. Nida's reaction to this loss is chillingly numb, signaling her final retreat into what Jean-Paul Sartre terms "Bad Faith," or what might be characterized here as a "Gothic submission." She returns to the suffocating confines of her marriage, realizing with devastating clarity that "the monster was alive and well. It was love and innocence that had been killed" (p. 259). In this subversion of the Gothic ending, the "monster" is no longer the marginalized *hijra*, but the patriarchal apparatus itself. Ultimately, Nida's transformation into the "asexual qalandar" at the shrine suggests that in the Postcolonial Gothic, there is no restoration of order only a permanent state of haunting. By donning Bhanggi's green robes and sitting at the periphery of the graves, Nida occupies the liminal space between life and death, stating: "I haunt other people's graves because I can't find mine... I am the androgynous ghost" (p. 255-256). This haunting serves as a final, silent rebellion against the "house of clay," suggesting that for the marginalized in Lahore, the only path to agency is to become a ghost that the city can no longer ignore. Thus, Mansab's "geography of trauma" is completed, mapping a world where the living beings are entombed and the dead are the only ones truly free to roam. In the overarching "geography of trauma" that Mansab constructs, if Nida represents the haunting of the mind and Bhanggi the haunting of the flesh, Sasha represents the haunting of the social contract. While she appears at first to be the most "realist" character, driven by material ambition and class mobility, a Gothic reading reveals her body and domestic life as sites of profound abjection and spectrality. Sasha's narrative arc serves as the crucial third pillar of Mansab's postcolonial gothic system, representing the "disgraced wife" whose existence occupies the porous boundary between the living and the socially dead. While Nida is entombed in luxury, Sasha is entombed in the precariousness of her middle-class performance. Her character deconstructs the "Good Wife" archetype not through Nida's silent dissociation, but through a frantic, grotesque pursuit of social survival that eventually renders her a "social ghost" within the elite circles of Lahore. For Sasha, the "unhomely" or *unheimlich* does not manifest in the chilling silence of a dead child's room, but in the constant, frightening familiarity of domestic instability. Her home is a site of "domestic gothic" where the threat of expulsion is the primary haunting force. As Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection suggests, the abject is that which threatens the stability of social rules. Sasha's life is a constant battle against the "threat" of her own abjection the fear of falling back into the "dust and shadows" of the impoverished alleys that Nida seeks out for comfort.

Sasha's body, much like Bhanggi's, serves as a site of "gothic memory," bearing the psychological scars of systemic violence. Her beauty is not presented as a source of power, but as a "gothic veil" or a mask she must wear to navigate a patriarchal society that views her only as a commodity. This performative femininity is a form of "Gothic submission," where she must ritualistically "kill" her own agency to satisfy the demands of the "Subject" represented by the powerful men she seeks to influence. When Sasha realizes that her social mobility is a "stalemate" similar to Nida's marriage, her domestic space transforms into a psychological prison. The "atmospheric dread" surrounding Sasha is rooted in the "rot" of the nation-state and the inequitable distribution of wealth. Her interactions with the elite are characterized by "sad passions" such as resentment and envy, which Mishra (2017) identifies as the driving forces of the "Age of Anger". In a Gothic context, Sasha's envy is a form of haunting; she is haunted by the life she cannot fully possess, and she haunts the elite spaces of Lahore as an interloper who can be "exorcised" at any moment.

Furthermore, Sasha serves as a "Gothic Double" to Nida. While they belong to different social strata, they are both "imperfect women" who fail to satisfy the patriarchal demand for a "safe kingdom" within the home. Sasha's "excess" and her refusal to remain "silenced" are seen by

critics as tonal inconsistencies, but as this paper argues, this intensity is an essential building block of the Gothic mode. Her desperation is the "sublime horror" of a woman who knows that her "home" is merely a series of hauntings. In the final movement of the novel, Sasha's descent into disgrace completes her transition into the "socially dead". She becomes a "social ghost," a figure that the "new Lahore" seeks to erase to maintain its internal sense of purity. Her failure to secure a permanent "sanctuary" reinforces Mansab's argument that for the marginalized, there is no restoration of order only a permanent state of haunting. By analyzing Sasha alongside Nida and Bhanggi, we see that the "geography of trauma" in *This House of Clay and Water* is a totalizing system. Whether through the haunting of the mind (Nida), the flesh (Bhanggi), or the social status (Sasha), Mansab reveals that the postcolonial condition is one of "living death". Sasha's frantic movement through the city's ruins mirrors Nida's spectral wandering, confirming that the "monster" in this narrative is not any one individual, but the patriarchal apparatus that entombs them all.

Conclusion

This paper establishes *This House of Clay and Water* by Faiqa Mansab as a landmark work in the collection of postcolonial gothic and goes beyond the framework of social realism to outline the geography of trauma. The analysis shows how the novel folds Freudian concept of the *Unheimlich* with the concept of abjection by Kristeva to the re-establishment of the realm of the domestic into a mausoleum and the marginalized body as a site of dread. The ethereal Nida in her monstrously unhomely marriage and the corporeal Bhanggi in the shrine show that the actual antagonist of the novel is not confined to patriarchal principles, but to the repressed historical memory that cannot be lost. To expand the cartographical range of Pakistani gothic studies, future studies can map this system onto the eco-gothic plane, questioning how the ecological destruction of Lahore, reaching its peak in heat, dust and pollution reflects the inner decay of the postcolonial state. Moreover, a specific study of the maternal gothic might help shed light on the horror of reproductive failure and the monstrous birth in a eugenic, whereas a queer gothic approach presents a fruitful approach to considering the intersection of Islamic mysticism (Sufism) with non-normative corporeal ties. In the end, this question advocates the fact that the novel is a discourse of failed exorcism. It compels readers to confront the reality that, for subaltern communities in Pakistan, survival is frequently experienced as a form of living death. The killing of Bhanggi and the silencing of Nida sanction that in a society structured around the suppression of the Other, Lahore remains a space where the past persistently intrudes upon the present, haunting it relentlessly.

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