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Reframing the Colonial Gaze: A Postcolonial Reading of 99 Nights in Logar by Jamil Jan Kochai

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Abstract

This article analyzes deconstructing the colonial gaze in *99 Nights in Logar* penned by Jamil Jan Kochai. This paper focuses on the Western stereotype underpinning Afghanistan in its development of characters and the narrative structure. Jamil Jan Kochai disintegrates the formed image of Afghanistan by incorporating a multi-angled and fragmented approach. This also offers an in-depth picture of Afghan identity. The book presents figures who tend to battle with the Western Gaze and Afghan identity. This shows the internalization and resistance of the colonial power dynamics. This reverses the unbending and rigid hegemonic lens of the war-torn narrative of Afghanistan to reveal the affluent vibrant culture underlying it. This paper analyzes how the narrative of Kochai adds to the portrayal of Afghanistan to resist the stereotypes of West and offer a dynamic interpretation of Afghan society.

Keywords: Deconstructing, 99 Nights in Logar, Afghanistan, Western, Dynamic Interpretation.



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Introduction

Jamil Jan Kochai in *99 Nights in Logar*, illustrates a vivid and complex narrative of Afghanistan which meticulously investigates the issues regarding the Western gaze and its impact on the identity of an Afghan person. The plot unearths the internal conflict of Afghanistan as a culturally affluent society and the war-torn remnants of decades long influence of Western torture. This time period in history, known as post 9/11, Afghanistan has seen the continuous representations of images of conflict, terror and war. These crises, additionally, push the decline of the Afghan land into a territory transfix with disarray and suppression. This narrative of War on Terror propagated by the media of West and political discourse has agonizingly characterized the way Afghanistan is discerned, sketching Afghanistan as backward and lacking of heterogeneous culture, history, life and, rich in orientalist clichés. Resultantly, this novel serves as an important document of literature that poses a challenge to these simple narratives in order to shape exquisite comprehension of the focus of Afghanistan on its literature uncovering the ordinary lives and inner thoughts of Afghan men and women.

The book reaches here by analyzing the colonial gaze—a term from post-colonial theory— which describes the divaricate lens through which the West looks at and represents the so called ‘other,’ especially the non-Western world. With its sophisticated narrative design and multi-dimensional cast of characters, Kochai's work counters the colonial gaze by undermining the flimsy stereotypes that portray Afghan life as a monolith. The varied opinions and voices that converge to shape the scattered structures of this book present the deep down identity crisis of Afghan people in order to attempt to look in a synthesized way of Western Outlook in their lifestyle. Kochai's characters in the book symbolize the struggles extracted about by them living in such a society which is inclined to define their identity in terms of geopolitical narratives or foreign media representations.

This book presents a core issue of exploring the identity of Afghan people. The characters from Afghanistan portrayed in this book, struggle with abundance of their cultural legacy and a try to bridge the gap of traditions with those demands of judgements from the images in Western society. This struggle is very much clear from the battling of the lead characters as they return to Afghanistan and re-examine their family that has got adjusted in the Western lifestyle. The negotiation of identity by the characters—suspended between the ambivalence of Afghan origins and the pressure of Westernization—is a rich site for analysis of how colonial discourse constructs and reconstructs identity. The novel is, therefore, not only critical of the colonial gaze but also of the tenacity of an Afghan identity, which refuses to be inserted into monolithic and simplistic narratives with which external forces tend to encase it.

Within the context of analyzing of *99 Nights in Logar*, this research attempts to uncover the manner in which Kochai deconstructs colonial narratives both within his prose and within his exploration of identity. Through examining the manner in which the characters respond to, resist, or internalize the colonized view, the study will make its contribution to postcolonial fiction's current controversy concerning the undermining of Western stereotypes. Kochai's depiction of Afghanistan presents a unique perspective that moves beyond the war-ravaged image often seen in Western media. This presents a multi-dimensional and humanized vision of the culture of Afghanistan. This article, thus, argues that Kochai's books serve as an important intervention in the reconstructing of Afghan narratives, offering an alternative to the dominant, usually distorted, Western presentation of Afghanistan and its people.

Background

In Post-colonial narratives, colonial discourse means a point of view which is incorporated by the colonial powers in a way to comprehend and portray the colonized subjects. This is usually done in stereotypical representations, presenting a culture in an exotic way, and making their lives

impersonal. This impacts the representation of Non-Western societies including Afghanistan as well as in International media. Unfortunately, Afghanistan has been the subject of the colonial gaze for a very long time. This has not started just now but it has started from the Imperialism of Britain to the invasion of US after the horrific events of 9/11. Afghanistan has, always, been portrayed in such a way that is characterized by oppression, violence, and lack of modernity. This results in showing Afghanistan a poor, chaotic and backward country in international media. These are not depictions far from true because they are based in geopolitical interests of West as they have to justify intervention and military actions in this region.

In the history of Afghan literature, one of the major themes is this colonial gaze as it has been shaping in the Afghan and Western narratives. This Afghan identity has been shaped continuously by the legacy of colonialism not only in its pre-dominant times but also in these modern times as well. Afghan and diaspora authors have challenged these generalizations and in this run they have gone in contrary to the singular depiction already floating in the popular media. This is very much clear in contemporary Afghan writers like Jamil Jan Kochai. Writers like them resist challenge these stereotypes generated by West regarding Afghanistan. Kochai in his book *99 Nights in Logar*, examines the way this colonial gaze impacts live of common Afghan people. Books like these break the shackles of stereotypes that have long been wrongly associated with Afghanistan and its people.

The novel in discussion offers a unique angle on Afghanistan by nullifying the one-sided portrayal of tragedy and terror most often associated with Afghanistan by the Western media in various discourses. Instead of such discourses, this novel presents the complicatedness inside Afghan identity by putting light on the meeting paths of history, culture and personal experiences. This book counters the dehumanizing portrayal this land and it comes up with a strong narrative deeply rooted in actual culture and reclaiming it. This book out rightly resists the colonial gaze. This book not only offers a very meticulous and unique approach to identity and domestic life of Afghans and Afghanistan but also a social and historical commentary to the influences of colonial powers on the society of Afghanistan. By incorporating this unique method of narrative and character development, the writer takes the readers on a new experience on internalizing Afghanistan from the inside and not from the view point of popular media. This makes the readers inculcate into their minds a form of resistance to challenge the hegemonic narrative that try to shape Afghanistan through propagandist view point.

Research Questions:

1. How does Kochai in *99 Nights in Logar* dismantle the colonial gaze through its character development and narrative technique?
2. In what ways do the characters in *99 Nights in Logar* internalize or resist the colonial gaze, and how does this affect their sense of identity?
3. What role does the novel play in challenging Western narratives about Afghanistan, and what alternative vision of Afghanistan does it offer?

Research Objectives:

- To explore the concept of the colonial gaze in *99 Nights in Logar* and analyze how it is deconstructed in the text.
- To investigate the impact of the colonial gaze on the identities of Afghan characters and how they negotiate between their Afghan heritage and their experiences in the West.
- To analyze Kochai's narrative techniques and how they challenge or subvert Western stereotypes of Afghanistan.

Limitations:

This study is primarily concerned with the deconstruction of the colonial gaze and thus addresses only that topic. It does not discuss other potential postcolonial issues in the novel, such as the effects of

war, gender dynamics, or socio-political issues, which can be addressed in separate studies.

Research Problem:

The research problem presents the gap in the existing academia about the dismantling of the colonial gaze in present day Afghan literature, particularly in *99 Nights in Logar* by Jamil Jan. The contemporary post-colonial literature dealing with Afghanistan and its culture is characterized by the narrative in the way in which it is represented in historical narratives and Western media but critical analysis of how these Afghan origin writers subvert and actively resist this colonial gaze in the contemporary literature is on the minimal side. Jamil Jan Kochai in this ground breaking work not only challenges but also dismantles the stereotypes regarding Afghan culture by portraying the multi-faceted and complex Afghan identity. This article tries to investigate how Kochai's characters and its structure inside the novel serve as a critique of the colonial gaze regarding Afghan identity. Through examining how Afghan characters internalize or resist Western perspectives and how the Afghans' cultural heritage intersects with the globalized world, this research aims to fill a crucial gap in understanding the role that modern Afghan literature plays in remaking global perceptions of Afghanistan and deconstructing the dynamics of colonial power.

Significance:

The strength of this research lies in its substantive contribution to the increasing body of literature on postcolonial narratives, and Afghan literature in particular—a subject area that is underrepresented relative to other postcolonial perspectives. In times, when Afghanistan is widely represented through reductionist, generally dehumanizing aspects in Western media, the works of authors like Jamil Jan Kochai is especially significant. His writing technique challenges dominant narratives by portraying layered, depictions of history, of the live of Afghans, and their identities. By investigating Kochai's work, this article seeks to point out the ways in which literary work can serve as a form of resistance and reclamation, presenting other perspectives that deconstruct monolithic views of Afghan society. Moreover, it deals with the wider concepts of postcolonial identity, displacement, and the diasporic struggle for cultural preservation. In doing this, it highlights the agency-restoring power of narrative: to give voice to those who have far too long been spoken for, not heard.

Literature Review

The core idea of the colonial gaze, first explored by Edward Said in his groundbreaking book-Orientalism (1978), has been a central concept of postcolonial theory and scholarship into how Western powers historically represented the East as exotic, primitive, and requiring Western intervention. Said's Orientalism discussion holds that Western images of the East (the Middle East, Asia, and North Africa) had been shaped by a deeply ingrained power hierarchy under which the West constructed the East as the "Other" in order to justify colonialism. The colonial gaze, in other words, not only reflects Western views of non-Western societies but is also a tool through which control is exercised, reinforcing stereotypes and reducing the diversity of cultures to an out-of-date, monolithic image (Said, 1978). In Afghanistan, this appearance has all too frequently been grounded in political, military, and cultural portrayals of Afghanistan as a violent and troubled nation, shaped by a colonial and postcolonial past of foreign intervention.

Afghan literature, both in the diaspora and Afghanistan, has been one area where this colonial gaze has been challenged. Classical Afghan literature was largely dictated by oral traditions, and subsequent written traditions under the influences of Persian and Arabic. However, contemporary Afghan literature, especially since 1970s Soviet invasion and after 9/11, the U.S.-led invasion has largely dealt with the concept of displacement, war, and identity in manners that speak to and resist against the Western depictions of Afghanistan (Barth, 2009). Authors such as Atiq Rahimi, Khaled Hosseini, and notably Jamil Jan Kochai have largely impacted reshaping Afghan identity through their writings. In particular, Kochai's *99 Nights in Logar* presents a resisting narrative to the war-torn,

monolithic portrayals of Afghanistan that has become the sole representation of Afghanistan in Western media. His work, with its narrative techniques and complex characters, deconstructs these stereotypes and offers a more meticulous understanding of Afghan culture.

The Kite Runner (2003) by Khaled Hosseini is one of the most famous literary texts in the Western world that addresses Afghanistan's contemporary history, though it often revitalizes the Western stereotypes regarding Afghanistan as a land of tragedy, misery and suffering. Scholars like Ahmad (2007) have argued that although Hosseini's novel humanizes Afghan characters, it still falls in the trap of portraying Afghanistan as a nation state of constant warfare, building up a Western-oriented narrative of Afghan identity. Alternatively, Jamil Jan Kochai's *99 Nights in Logar* resists these stereotypes by presenting a complex and more private portrait of Afghan life. The disjointed state of the narrative, forever jumping between different perspectives and experience, breaks the single coherent image of Afghanistan and opens the way for a more nuanced exploration of Afghan identity independent of the horizon of the colonial gaze.

The Patience Stone (2008) by Atiq Rahimi is another very important work in this perspective. Although this work depicts Afghanistan in a very different way yet this book challenges the Western depiction of Afghanistan. Rahimi uses a sole character-woman. This woman talks to her husband in order to reflect on personal experience of trauma and the impacts of psychological influences of war in Afghanistan. Critics like Taji-Farouki (2012) are of the opinion that the work of Rahimi is introspective and intense. They add that this work resists with the narrative depicting Afghanistan as a land of endless misery. They also agree that these works appreciate the resilience and resistance of Afghan people during these hardships. However, Both Kochai and Rahimi's works share a resistance to the externally imposed and one dimensional explanations of the Afghan identity in the Western dominant media.

Jamil Jan Kochai's *99 Nights in Logar* is a more direct shot at the Western colonial gaze in that it provides us with a self-reflexive, self-determined account that honors the lives of everyday Afghan citizens. The protagonist of the novel, a returnee from America to Afghanistan, embodies the conflict between Western values and Afghan traditional values. As Kochai (2020) interweaves his own life as an Afghan-American with Afghanistan's lush cultural landscape, the book offers a space for Afghan individuals to speak for themselves in their own terms, counteracting reductionist and single-dimensional portrayals offered by much of Western writing. The book also touches upon the inner conflicts of numerous Afghan members of the diaspora as they balance their cultural heritage against Western identity imperatives. As scholars, such as Alam (2019) have contended, Afghan-American writers such as Kochai are well-placed to overthrow both the colonial gaze and victimhood narrative that comes to be superimposed over the homeland.

Apart from *99 Nights in Logar*, post-Taliban Afghanistan has been represented by postcolonial literature, including *The Bookseller of Kabul* (2002) by Asne Seierstad and *The Taliban Shuffle* (2011) by Kim Barker. These works tend to reinforce the prevailing "war-torn" narrative about the nation. Seierstad's work, although providing an image of the life of an Afghan bookseller, still portrays Afghanistan from the point of view of a Westerner and emphasizes the suffering and adversity that the Afghan nation lives with. As Alavi (2013) highlights, literature such as Seierstad's plays a role in forging a narrative that confines Afghan identity within paradigms of victimhood and despondence. In comparison, Kochai's novel transcends such constraints by presenting a picture of Afghan society not only marked by war and strife but also by the complicated individual and cultural dynamics of its characters.

In addition, theorists of postcolonial criticism, such as Fanon (1961) and Spivak (1988), argue that literature from formerly colonized countries, like Afghanistan, plays a fundamental role in the identity reclamation process. In the case of *99 Nights in Logar*, Kochai's writing approach—blending personal

narrative with political background and local issues with international concerns—demonstrates literature's potential to reshape the narrative about Afghanistan and to dispute the colonial gaze. Based on postcolonial theory, Kochai's writing offers another narrative of Afghan identity that challenges the stories foisted on it by Western perspectives in order to make space for a more authentic, multiplicitous representation of the nation and its citizens.

Research Gap

Though considerable scholarly attention has been given to understanding the colonial perspective and its effects on Afghan identity, little research has investigated how modern Afghan writers like Jamil Jan Kochai undermines this vision through creative narrative devices and characterization. A great deal of recent research deals with Western representations of Afghanistan, frequently as a place of violence and underdevelopment, bounded by colonial and imperial histories (Said, 1978; Lutz, 2002). Such analyses most prominently discuss how Afghan identity is framed from the outside by Western media, politics, and literature, yet they do not discuss the resistance and challenge actively posed to such constructions by Afghan authors. Kochai's *99 Nights in Logar* offers a much-needed counter-narrative that simultaneously undermines Western stereotypes and provides a complex and multifaceted portrayal of Afghan identity, specifically through its fractured narrative structure and diverse character perspectives. While some attention has been given to the novel's exploration of Afghan-American identity, little analysis exists on Kochai's particular use of narrative experimentation and character development to dismantle the colonial gaze. This study seeks to fill this gap by critically exploring how Kochai's work counters simplistic Western portrayals of Afghanistan to present a more realistic and complex perspective on Afghan culture grappling with the intricacies of heritage, identity, and the influence of Western powers.

Theoretical Framework

This study employs postcolonial theory as its overall theoretical framework, drawing most directly on Edward Said's seminal work *Orientalism* (1978), which critically analyzes the manner in which the West has historically constructed the East as the "Other"—a process that both distorts and objectifies non-Western societies for the sake of colonial domination. Said contends that these paradigms are not merely theoretical but are instruments of power, perpetuating the perception of Western dominance and orientaling the East as exotic, backward, and requiring Western intervention. Extending Said's concepts, Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1961) provides further insight into the manner in which colonized people internalize the humiliating colonial perception and the ensuing psychological implications on their understanding of self. Fanon speaks about the complex relations of forming identity in the colonial context, where the colonized subject grapples with an inferiority complex imposed by the colonizer. These structures will be utilized to explore how characters in Jamil Jan Kochai's *99 Nights in Logar* interact with, assimilate, or undermine the colonial gaze. The study will examine how the characters' interactions with Western-imposed notions of Afghan identity shape their understanding of self and belonging, both within the context of Afghan tradition and the wide sphere of the globalized world. Drawing on the theoretical models set forth by Said and Fanon, this research aims to unveil the complex facets of how the colonial power dynamics influence identity construction, self-perception, and cultural negotiation in a postcolonial Afghan context.

Research Methodology

This paper uses a qualitative framework and textual analysis method to analyze *99 Nights in Logar* written by Jamil Jan Kochai. The paper has employed a close reading method to discuss the dismantling of the colonial gaze by Kochai's character development and narrative technique.

Discussion

Jamil Jan Kochai's *99 Nights in Logar* complicates conventional representation of Afghanistan in media in the West, deliberately deconstructing the lens by which it is observed via its narrative forms, characters, and hybridized forms of language. Afghanistan ends up being not an exoticized or war-torn landscape in the novel but a lived-in, complex homeland full of humor, mythology and deep storytelling traditions (Sya'adah et al., 2024).

A. Narrative Structure as a Site of Resistance

Challenging the Western gaze in *99 Nights in Logar*, Jamil Jan Kochai decontextualizes Afghanistan further than war-centric narratives allow. Afghanistan might get boring with all the war like in *Journalism* or *Photograph* but *Novel* gives the other side with much nuanced one that respects even in war, still the people of Afghanistan are people who can smile. The protagonist, Marwand, recalls coming back to Logar in 2005 and says: "This all happened only a few weeks into my trip, my family's homecoming in the summer of 05, back when it cost only a G to fly across the ocean, from Sac to SF to Taipei to Karachi to Peshawar all the way up to Logar, where, at the time, though it was not dead, the American war was sort of dozing, like in a coma" (Kochai, 2019, p.12). Instead of describing Afghanistan as a place mired in a current shooting war, this passage treats war as something subsumed, a dead zone, one that doesn't define the nation or dictate everyday experience. With the phrase "dozing, like in a coma," Kochai upends the myth of Afghanistan as solely a land suffocated in violence, drawing attention to the notion that war is not Afghanistan's only facet — or a defining identity. This subversion is crucial to resisting the colonial gaze, which is usually trained on Afghanistan through the prism of conflict and intervention. Moreover, the fragmented narrative structure of the film — fluctuating between memories, folk tales and lived ones — is also a way of resisting this violence by refusing to submit to the linear storytelling techniques that ultimately deprives the Afghan history of its complexity out of the needs of the Western audience who want to swallow digestible morsels about war. Kochai's novel, then, is also an act of narrative defiance: It imagines Afghanistan as some dynamic home rich in culture, humor and complexity, rather than just a site of Western geopolitical conversation.

B. The Colonized and the Colonial Gaze

The novel eschews stock Afghan characters as resigned victim or insurgent. Instead, Marwand and his cousins bristle with mischief and cleverness, files that resist tidy categorization. "We will put it to a vote. Raise your hand if you want Gwora to come along" (Kochai, 2019, p.13). The scene, in which the boys plan their journey, presents Afghan youth as architects of their fates, in contrast to the notion that they only occupy space as the subjects of war. In addition, people like Rahmutallah Maamaa and Gul also represent Afghan perseverance and agency. Rahmutallah, a former fighter, is no villain or warlord; he is deeply enmeshed in community politics and honor, good and bad, and the inevitable debts both entail.

"These days any young Khar with a rifle can claim they are with the Taliban or the Americans or whoever else. They stop you on the road and then they are cutting you up, robbing you of your insides. Leaving you to die in a canal" (Kochai, 2019, p.34). This analysis illustrates the complexities of making sense of Afghanistan — the forces that contribute to Afghanistan's making and unmaking — as opposed to framing it merely as "good vs. evil" like much of the writing on this topic in the West. Its focus on Afghans as human beings rather than mere objects of war demolishes the colonial gaze. Its fractured storytelling, unwillingness to give us a digestible Western narrative, and intensely personal character development all help to redefine Afghanistan outside of Orientalist cliches.

The cognitive dissonance of static natives and Arab savages is resisted, because the characters in *99 Nights in Logar* do exist in the act of gazing to see themselves as more than their colonial stereotypes-especially through their hybridized identities and relationships with Western modalities

(Sya'adah et al., 2024). The protagonist Marwand, an Afghan-American, embodies this tension as a man who both internalizes and resists Western narratives about Afghanistan.

A. Marwand's Internalized Colonial Gaze

Raised in the U.S., Marwand comes to Logar with ingrained Western assumptions about Afghanistan. His initial communing with locals reveals the difficulties of interacting with Afghan perspectives from an American-oriented worldview. This internal struggle manifests itself in how he talks about how Americans see his identity as linked to terrorism: "Wallah, they will ask me where my grandpa is hiding so that they can go and kill him, thinking that is supposed to make me mad that they want to kill Bin Laden, and sometimes they will act like they're joking. Or like I'm in on the joke with them..." (Kochai, 2019, p. 28). This quote exemplifies how Marwand has absorbed the colonial gaze through which he sees himself—as other—and through the eyes of Western paranoia and suspicion. The mention of Bin Laden suggests he is not an individual but a representative of a stereotyped identity. His statement that people expect him to be "in on the joke" to some extent illustrates the alienation he experiences—he is both othered and expected to conform to Western tropes about Afghanistan. Through Marwand's eyes, Kochai critiques the ways Western discourse trains people of Afghan descent to regard themselves as would-be perils or subjects of surveillance. And that internalized distrust is the product of not just an American society but a perception of his Afghan identity that he feels is both in conflict with who he is, but also imposed from without." This struggle exemplifies a major theme of *99 Nights in Logar*: the difficulty of self-definition in a world of external misrepresentation.

B. Resistance Through Afghan Identity

And chronologically, too, Marwand struggles with his own identity but slowly but surely learns to see Logar not just through the prism of majority white Western narratives but on its own terms. His deepening relationship with Budabash, the wolfish dog, is one of the key symbols of this transformation, a symbol of the fear (and alienation) he feels toward Afghanistan in the beginning. When Marwand declares: "Seeing what I did, and with nothing much else to do in the country...I called a Jihad against Budabash" (Kochai, 2019, p.18). His hysterical reference to "Jihad" mirrors the Western identification of Afghanistan with fanatical violence, a showing of how he has taken in a reductionist, war-centered view of Afghanistan. Initially, his encounter with Budabash seems a reconstruction of the West's bogeyman dilemma, with suggestions that a doomed Taliban are engaged in a kind of intractable warfare due to their fatalism, as if they are somehow trapped within an Afghanistan that's always at war. Yet as the novel unfolds, Marwand's perspective evolves. Out with the idea that Budabash is a threat, he starts to understand the animal's independent agency, just as he learns to see Afghanistan beyond the binary of war and terrorism. This transformation is part of a wider rebuke of the colonial gaze. Marwand's tolerance for Budabash reflects his deepening view of Afghan culture — not as a place for Western intervention, but as a living world that has its own life force. In this way, *99 Nights in Logar* lays claim to Afghan identity as neither imposed on nor determined by external narratives but instead crafted through the lived experiences and changing relationships of its people.

C. Other Characters and Their Struggle

Gul, Zia, and Dawood are significant in resisting of the colonial gaze throughout the novel, not with an overt act of rebellion, but rather rooted in their foreness and inherent potential to disrupt the West's imagination. Unlike the clichés surrounding Afghan children as mere helpless victims of war, these characters engage with their environment, exhibiting agency and resilience. Zia matter-of-factly tells Marwand: "We are kids- Zia told him" (Kochai, 2019, p. 20). His assertion resists the Western drag to render Afghan youth infantilized, claiming their subjectivity and awareness of their environment. By mocking Marwand for his American assumptions and countering his

misconceptions, they highlight how his Western upbringing has trained him to view Afghanistan through an outsider's perspective. Moreover, they highlight an experience of Afghan identity that cannot be reduced to the binaries of victim or insurgent. Their stories capture a culture that existed before and continues after war, a culture shaped less by outside powers than by family ties, customs and the grind of daily life. *99 Nights in Logar* captures how the colonized internalize, but also resist, the colonial gaze, showing that Afghan identity is dynamic and deflected from Western narratives. Rather, it's fluid, self-determined and firmly rooted in personal and collective histories. Through Marwand's shifting expectations and the insistence on self-definition by his cousins and uncles, *99 Nights in Logar* shows the colonized are both internalizing and resisting the colonial gaze (Naderi, 2023).

99 Nights in Logar resists the prevailing Western story of Afghanistan as a land of unending violence and victimhood by essentializing community, fleetness and cultural tenacity. Afghanistan is not, for Kochai, a mere battlefield; it is a space defined by storytelling and adventure and traditions that run deep (Boehmer, 2002).

A. Challenging Western War Narratives

Kochai's *99 Nights in Logar*, however, pushes back against the dominant American narrative that constructs Afghanistan as, primarily, a war zone, and instead paints it as a place of continuity, humor and resilience. Though war is a backdrop, it does not define all of Afghan life. Marwand observes: "The American war was sort of dozing, like in a coma, or as if it were still reeling off a contact high..." (Kochai, 2019, p. 12). It is a metaphor that plays out with comic intent to undermine what the Western media have usually relegated Afghanistan to: an endless, meaningless war zone. By portraying the war as "dozing," rather than burning, the novel questions the reductionist idea that war is Afghanistan's only identity. Instead, it underscores its people's willingness to adapt as they go about their daily lives despite conflict — rather than being consumed by it. Kochai's style of fractured storytelling—melding folklore with memories and present-day drama—wields the very structure of a narrative to deconstruct the notion that the story of Afghanistan is only one of suffering, instead giving readers something rich and textured.

B. Offering a Lived-In Afghanistan

Instead of falling prey to hatred or perpetuating destruction, the novel depicts Afghanistan as a rich homeland filled with agricultural beauty, communal legacies and cultural depth. One passage describes: "Rows of chinar & a thin stream ran along its edges. In the fields near the road, farmers and their laborers tended to their crop" (Kochai, 2019, p. 21). By focusing on the landscape and daily work of its people, the novel subverts the Western image of Afghanistan as a place made up of ruins. It shows the stubbornness of life: how Afghans make merry amid dirt and war; how they exist on their land through farming and storytelling and family. In doing so, *99 Nights in Logar* builds an alternative vision of Afghanistan — an acknowledgment of conflict that does not let it dominate the lived reality of the country.

C. The Role of Folklore and Humor

Ampoupour and Vasilyev reject the representation of Afghanistan as a site of cultural rupture and instead focus on the continuity of Afghan traditions, in particular, through storytelling and humor, which Vasilyev reflects in *99 Nights in Logar*. Such folklore and playful exaggeration are employed both as tools of resistance and as a way for characters to rewrite their own history and push back against reductive images of the Middle East propagated in the West. An amusing moment in the novel shows this dynamic: "First, we watched Van Helsing, the next night 'An American Ware wolf in London- I had my cousins see ware wolves everywhere'" (Kochai, 2019, p. 28). The boys' fascinations with Western werewolf movies create an ironic parallel to the way Afghan narratives mythologize Western movies. As they start to see werewolves in the shadows, Western media

fashions a version of Afghanistan that revolves around fear, violence, and superstition. Through this moment of humor, the film critiques how perception is shaped through dominant narratives, gently exposing the absurdity of externally imposed myths. By threading together humor, folklore and history, Kochai's novel pushes back against the conception of Afghanistan as a place of perpetual war. Rather than reducing Afghan identity to destruction and victimhood, *99 Nights in Logar* offers a self-defined Afghanistan — one in which resilience, cultural pride and storytelling traditions continue to thrive. The novel works to decenter war in favor of lived experience, illustrating that Afghan culture does not simply reflect a reaction to violence, but rather is a full, living—ever-evolving lifeform of its own (Dinakhel and Farid, 2023).

Conclusion

This research has investigated the means through which the author in *99 Nights in Logar* has deconstructed the colonial perspective. He also provides a complex but detailed solution of constructing an Afghani identity in a true sense. By incorporating Post-Colonial theory, particularly, focusing on Frantz Fanon and Edward Said, this paper has investigated the way in which the characters of this novel appropriately deal and resist the stereotypes and reductionist narrative propagated by the Western Media and Academia. Kochai opposes the dehumanizing representation of Afghanistan by the contemporary propagandist mainstream Western media by incorporating the fragmented narrative technique of the inclusion of Afghan voices. The writer gets successful in not only countering the external representations but also provides a culturally rich and authentic Afghan experience.

By exploring the intersection of the cultural identity of the Afghan people and the expectations from the West by inflicting the unwanted identity, this paper has uncovered the way through which various characters in this book have gone against the popular narrative of marking them as “Other” to form their true self-identities. This research has highlighted that by deconstructing the colonial gaze, Jamil Jan constructs a narrative which rejects the victimhood. He also highlights the ways through which characters tend to form their own identities. This book, in the genre of Afghan-American literature, is important because in this book the author challenges the dehumanized portrayal of Afghanistan by providing a more multifaceted and authentic image of Afghan lives.

Lastly, *99 Nights in Logar* is an important addition to the body of postcolonial literature, offering a reimagined Afghanistan in resistance to Western hegemonic discourses. In shedding light on the intricacies of Afghan identity and its negotiation of the discourses of tradition and modernity, the novel offers its readers a deeper understanding of the intricacies that shape the lives of Afghans. As such, this study not only contributes to the discourse on postcolonial literature but also calls for a more critical and nuanced approach to the representation of Afghanistan and its citizens in global discourses.

Conflict of Interest

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