

**Space, Transformation and Identity in
E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* and Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love***

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Abstract

This paper examines the representation of urban spaces in E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924) and Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love* (1999). In particular, it investigates how colonialism – as a cultural activity – produces traces of its hegemony and how these traces transform and fashion the colonial and post-colonial urban spaces in the two novels. Through examining how *A Passage to India* and *The Map of Love* present the utilisation of space, this paper explores the ways colonialist superpowers have left traces of their presences which are marked in all of the spaces they subjugate and dominate. Interestingly, space and its concomitant socio-political divisions/hierarchies are viewed, by and large, through the responses and perspectives of the women characters in both novels, represented by Forster's Adela Quested and Mrs Moore and Soueif's Anna Winterbourne. The paper will also show how employing Edward Soja's term of Thirdspace can illuminate the significance of the courtroom episode that each novel presents.

Keywords

Urban space, E.M. Forster, Ahdaf Soueif, Thirdspace, Colonialism/Post-colonialism

Introduction

The ability to possess, command and take control of urban space allows the coloniser to establish control, and consequently, achieve hegemony. Creating an urban identity allows the coloniser to create a social setting that conveys a specific and unique sense of character and spatiality onto the taken area. Therefore, control and manipulation of the urban space are vital to colonialists since its form and structure represent a colonial power's authority and supremacy. Urban space acts as a method and tool for colonial practice and dogma. That is to say, colonial power acts as a carrier for its ideology, and this power forms, impacts, and alters the colonial urban space through, to quote Jon Anderson's words, the 'ongoing production of traces'¹ which has the capability of re-structuring and re-shaping the colonial urban environment according to its own codes and principles. By identifying colonial traces, we are able to locate colonial ideology, its objectives and motives, and understand how these traces influence the perceptions of the people

¹ Jon Anderson, *Understanding Cultural Geography: Places and Traces* (London: Routledge, 2010) 5.

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living within the colonised space. In other words, colonial powers sought to re-create the colonised urban spaces in such a way that it becomes an extension of their imperial identity. The designated space would later become both unique and identifiable only to colonial identity.

The concept of urban space has become a major focus and interest for researchers in recent years, especially literary theorists and critics. According to Petr Chalupský and Anna Grmelová, the city has always been associated with literature.² As Malcolm Bradbury states, ‘there has always been a close association between literature and cities. There are the essential literary institutions ... There, too, are the intensities of cultural friction and influences, and the frontiers of experience.’³ The city offered people the chance to express themselves, something which the rural did not. This newly gained and exciting urban experience was often reflected in literary texts.

Critical perspectives on *A Passage to India* & *The Map of Love*

Forster’s *A Passage to India* and Soueif’s *The Map of Love* can both be read as critiques of the British imperial administration in India and Egypt in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Both works make use of the characters’ journeys and experiences to represent the racial and ethnic tensions and conflicts that separate the coloniser and the colonised. Moreover, by setting the characters in a historical and colonial milieu, these texts provide the reader with a glimpse, albeit fictional, of the life under British colonial rule in India and Egypt, respectively. By doing so, they reveal the truth behind the colonial enterprise and expose the hypocrisy of the colonisers.

Overall, urban space plays a crucial role in developing the events of the two novels, and hence, analysing how the two authors depict urban space reinforces the reader’s understanding of colonialist and imperialist discourses in the two texts. Both works have been dealt with from various perspectives; however, they have not been compared or analysed together within a spatial-geographical context. Despite the fact that the two novels were written in different periods, their representation of urban spaces makes the comparison between them viable. This is especially facilitated by the fact that Soueif’s novel is a historical novel set in the early twentieth century, that is during the same period that Forster portrays in his novel. In addition, the socio-political spatial divisions are viewed through the eyes of the female characters in both novels represented by Forster’s Adela Quested and Mrs Moore and Soueif’s Anna Winterbourne. Still, the two novels’ representations of urban spaces reflect the differences between novels written during Britain’s colonial era and those written in a post-colonial world.

² Petr Chalupský and Anna Grmelová, ‘Urban Spaces in Literature,’ *Litteraria Pragensia Studies in Literature and Culture* 20 (2010) 1.

³ Malcolm Bradbury, *The Modern American Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983) 96. Ellipsis inserted.

According to Judith Scherer Herz, upon its publication, *A Passage to India* was first 'received as a political novel'⁴ because of Forster's critical account of the British Raj in India; however, soon after, reviewers began to examine the novel from different perspectives. To quote Herz's words, critics have extensively studied the novel for 'its complexity of theme and structure and its metaphysical implications.'⁵ For instance, Said argues that the novel draws 'narrative form from the triumphalist experience of imperialism into the extremes of self-consciousness, discontinuity, self-referentiality and corrosive irony, whose formal patterns we have come to recognize as the hallmarks of modernist culture.'⁶ In contrast, Lionel Trilling criticises Forster's portrayal of the English characters, claiming that 'Forster's portraits are perhaps angry exaggerations.'⁷

The Map of Love has been explored and analysed by critics such as Shao-Pin Luo and Catherine Wynne as a study of transculturation, with the main focus being on the trans-cultural experience, travel, and cultural hybridity. The novel sheds light on other important issues like Oriental discourse, identity, and British imperial rule in Egypt. The idea that Soueif's novel concerns itself with both oriental and postcolonial topics may appear to some critics as inconceivable. For instance, Anastasia Valassopoulos raises the question, 'how can a novel be harlequin romance ... and an embodiment of postcolonial discourse at once?'⁸ In the novel, Soueif explores the impact of colonial rule and domination from the perception and experiences of her characters through time by depicting a transnational relationship. Joseph Massad states that 'Soueif uses letters, diaries, flashbacks, and political communiqués to contextualize, layer and interrupt the narration.'⁹ In this context, it can be argued that Soueif employs the technique of flashback 'to create parallelism'¹⁰ to connect the past and the present together, allow the reader to re-examine colonial Egypt through the present and to draw attention to post-colonial issues. Therefore, spatiality in *The Map of Love* can be explored through its 'temporal peregrinations.'¹¹ Moreover, this back and forth journey through time and space allows diasporic writers like Soueif to further explore their geographic dislocation.¹²

Forster's *A Passage to India* provides a profound insight into the intricate relationship between the British and the Indians, a relationship which encompasses the complex struggle

⁴ Judith Scherer Herz, *A Passage to India: Nation and Narration* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993) 35.

⁵ Herz 35.

⁶ Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993) 188.

⁷ Lionel Trilling, *E.M. Forster* (Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions Books, 1943) 146.

⁸ Anastasia Valassopoulos, 'Fictionalising Post-Colonial Theory: The Creative Native Informant?' *Critical Survey* 16. 2 (2004) 28. Ellipsis inserted.

⁹ Joseph Massad, 'The Politics of Desire in the Writings of Ahdaf Soueif,' *Journal of Palestine Studies* 28.4 (1999) 78.

¹⁰ Rasheed El-Enany, *Arab Representation of the Occident: East-West Encounters in Arabic Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 2006) 9.

¹¹ Massad 79.

¹² Samia Mehrez, 'The Map of Writing: An Interview with Ahdaf Soueif,' *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* 20 (2000) 171.

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between the coloniser and the colonised. The novel consists of three major parts or landscape structures: the Mosque, the Cave, and the Temple. Forster employs the three structures to presents a colonial India that is spatially divided and controlled by imperial domination. Thus, the novel explores how urban spaces were shaped by the colonial project and it also reveals traces of hegemonic colonial power that are reflected in the segregation of the geographical and urban spaces of colonial India at the beginning of the twentieth century.

By the same token, *The Map of Love*, as Amin Malak succinctly puts it, is ‘a tour de force of revisionist meta history in the twentieth century.’¹³ The novel intertwines several themes: it introduces the reader to the historical, cultural, and socio-political aspects and issues of colonial and post-colonial Egypt. Similarly to *A Passage to India*, *The Map of Love* explores the possibility of a meeting between two different peoples from two different cultural backgrounds under colonial rule. Despite the difficulty of such a meeting, Soueif is able to bring down language and cultural barriers through tolerance, compassion and understanding. Her novel treads on a carefully drawn line between an Orientalist and post-colonial novel. The title of the novel contains the word map which, like *A Passage to India*, also suggests a journey across geographical places. Soueif portrays Egypt in two different periods: one in the late nineteenth century, where the events take place in London and in British colonial Egypt. The remainder of the events take place during the twentieth century in New York and post-colonial Egypt. Like Forster’s novel, *The Map of Love* portrays colonial urban spaces and shows how they have left their traces on post-colonial Egypt.

Space, social production and traces

Space as a term, is often associated with an empty area. As a discipline, space is dealt with as an abstract notion. However, Marxist French urban sociologist Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991) has argued against this approach. In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre argues that space or social space is not a medium or a mode of production, rather it is produced and reproduced by social forces and is considered fundamental to everyday life, experience and activity.¹⁴ According to Lefebvre, spaces are ‘empty abstractions’.¹⁵ They only obtain real meaning through the social or cultural context. Space, therefore, is defined by analysing the context it is produced in.¹⁶ However, Lefebvre’s major focus revolves on the production of social space and argues that social space is produced as a consequence of the interaction between society and social relations; that is, space is produced and influenced by the different social factors, practices, and set of operations and it is their interaction with one another that makes up the space. Lefebvre also

¹³ Amin Malak, *Muslim Narratives and the Discourse of English* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005) 128.

¹⁴ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991 [1974]) 77.

¹⁵ Lefebvre 12.

¹⁶ Lefebvre 31-33.

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maintains that social space includes all the activities that the 'built environment'¹⁷ produces, and hence, it is not a product of its own.

In post-colonial literature, space is crucial in relation to power. In this context, Lefebvre argues that social space is 'a means of control, and hence of domination, of power.'¹⁸ Lefebvre concludes that the produced spaces act as a 'tool' of 'thought' and serve as a 'tool' of 'action.'¹⁹ That is to say, the spaces produced can be used by dominant groups to achieve power and authority. Hence, space is used as an expression of colonial power. As a result, in colonised spaces the 'built environment' such as cities, markets, buildings, houses ...are marked with symbols of colonial presence and can be easily distinguished from other, native, spaces.

In this context, Jon Anderson introduces the notion of 'trace-making'²⁰ by cultural groups and their activities which generate the similar effect of influencing and modifying urban spaces. Places, according to Anderson, are made up of a 'blend' of what Anderson terms as 'traces'. Symbols of colonial presence and power are represented through traces. Anderson defines traces as 'marks, residues, or remnants left in place by cultural life'.²¹ They are either material, like physical and/or visible traces, or non-material that we sense, feel or reflect upon in memory.²² As diverse cultural activities leave various traces, each in accordance with the dominating cultural activity which happens to be taking place within the place or spatial context, these traces embody and reflect the cultural activity in both forms. Seen from this perspective, one may argue that colonialism is a cultural activity produced by social activities and relations and that it is generated by a group of people and their activities. Therefore, colonialism has the ability to produce traces that impact the urban environment and influence the perception of the people living in these surroundings. Put differently, colonialism – as a cultural activity – represents one form of a power establishment, which influences and in turn is influenced by the geographical context or space it takes place within. In order for such a cultural activity to fully colonise the geographical place or setting, colonial power must gain control and modify the geographical urban space.

Space, according to Lefebvre, can be analysed by understanding the 'Lived space.'²³ The analysis of *A Passage to India* and *The Map of Love* shows that spatiality in the two texts is best expressed in Lefebvre's notion of 'Lived space' which he defines as 'the space of "inhabitants" and "users", and also of some artists and ... is the dominated – and hence passively experienced

¹⁷ David Harvey, 'Labor, Capital, And Class Struggle Around The Built Environment In Advanced Capitalist Societies,' *Politics & Society* 6.3 (1976) 265.

¹⁸ Lefebvre 26.

¹⁹ Lefebvre 26.

²⁰ Anderson 20.

²¹ Anderson 5.

²² Anderson 5.

²³ Lefebvre 38-39.

– space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate.’²⁴ It is also endowed with specific marks like ‘images’ or ‘symbols’ associated with the urban environment that represents colonial power and is articulated and manifested in the form of traces. The production and representation of the ‘lived space’, thus, depends on the authors’ encounters with the designated space, meaning that it is their ideas, views, or experiences that construct how spaces are perceived. This is reflected in the characters’ own confrontation with urban space which is limited by the authors’ preconceived notions and experiences, which shape and affect the discourse of their fiction. It is also limited by colonial discourse, a major factor which determines the characters’ attitudes and responses towards native space. When comparing the two novels, it is evident that the authors’ and characters’ perception is represented as either ‘nothingness’ or ‘muddle-d’²⁵ as seen in *A Passage to India*, and an ‘in-between’²⁶ or a space of change as presented in *The Map of Love*.

The Representation of Urban Spaces in *A Passage to India* & *The Map of Love*

By presenting the utilisation of spaces in colonial and post-colonial India and Egypt, the authors explore the ways colonial authorities have created spatial divisions that reflect the cultural division between the two cultural groups and are marked in the segregated spaces between the coloniser and the colonised. Both novelists depict the socio-political spatial divisions between the colonised and the coloniser from the perspectives of the female characters represented by Forster’s Adela Quested and Mrs Moore and Soueif’s Anna Winterbourne. In *A Passage to India*, Forster’s portrayal of India can be considered both sympathetic and stereotypical. His conventional views stem from the fact that he is an Englishman and a product of his own time. Most of Forster’s English characters associate India with negative and derogatory words like ‘ineffective’, ‘low’, ‘abased’, and ‘dangerous’. This ‘pejorative framing’, is mostly due to these characters’ inability to make sense of the ‘Other’ where they were not able to find a place among the unfamiliar landscape, and thus, the novel mirrors Westerners’ colonial mentality and their inability to grasp what is different and unknown.

Native spaces such as Indian Chandrapore are depicted as mysterious and tangled in their own environment, while colonial spaces like the Chandrapore Civil Station are viewed in an orderly and civil manner to further enhance the colonial image; they are also segregated so as to isolate the British from the natives. Anderson terms this method as the ‘pejorative framing of particular actions, people, or places that they claim are “dirty” or “polluted.”’²⁷ According to Anderson, the ‘pejorative framing’ can be judged as ‘natural, novel, or normal’. In this context,

²⁴ Lefebvre 38-39. Ellipsis inserted.

²⁵ E. M. Forster, *A Passage to India* (London: Penguin Books, 1979 [1924]) 58. Subsequent references to this novel will be included in parentheses in the text.

²⁶ Ahdaf Soueif, *The Map of Love* (London: Bloomsbury, 1999) 66. Subsequent references to this novel will be included in parentheses in the text.

²⁷ Anderson 58.

‘natural’ is what people want to associate themselves with since it is described as ‘good, right, and appropriate’; on the other hand, ‘novel’ is viewed more as ‘risky, dangerous, and even evil.’²⁸

A Passage to India begins with a detailed description of the geographical setting of urban Chandrapore. Indian Chandrapore ‘presents nothing extraordinary’ (3). The India that Forster depicts is a mystery and its people and their actions are as confusing as the tangled environment around them. Forster likens the landscape and the Indians to mud. The landscape of the city, according to Forster, mirrors the features of the people living in it. Forster uses different words to describe the Indian Chandrapore like ‘mean, ineffective, hidden, filth, and deters’. By associating the Indian spaces with ‘novel’ labelling, colonisers guarantee the outcome or the necessary perception generated of those places, which implies that the people inhabiting the native spaces are dirty, confusing, and mysterious, and hence, uncivilised, which in turn, justifies the colonial presence for the newcomers or other observers. Moreover, by framing these places with selected choice of colonial labelling, it further deepens the spatial segregation and generates a general opinion that the people inhabiting the native places are unwelcome and out of place.

In contrast, the Civil Station is ‘sensibly planned’ where the British are unambiguous, ordered, and are clear of any mystification. The colonial Chandrapore where the Civil Station is located ‘appears to be a totally different place’ and is described as a ‘city of gardens’. The colonial space is described as ‘a tropical pleasance, washed by a noble river’ (3). The Civil Station is categorised with ‘natural’ descriptions, which has an appropriate impact on influencing how people perceive the colonial space. The English are physically and purposely separated from the natives; hence, they are separated from their everyday lives and have no physical or emotional connections with Indian culture, people, or traditions. The newly-arrived settlers would be tempted to stay, while those living inside the colonial space would use it to project their agenda. As for the natives, they would feel intimidated by that power, and thenceforth, British control and hegemony can be successfully applied or established.

In contrast, spatiality in *The Map of Love* is portrayed differently. As a British Arab writer, Soueif seeks to inhibit the ‘Mezzaterra’ which she defines as ‘an area of overlap, where one culture shaded into the other, where reflections added depth and perspective, where differences were interesting rather than threatening.’²⁹ She sets up this ‘common ground’³⁰ or neutral space of cultural understanding by deconstructing the colonial discourse and by depicting a transnational relationship. In the novel, as Yousef Awad argues, ‘the two interlocking stories of Anna and Isabel ... foreground the possibility of a cross-cultural dialogue.’³¹ By utilising native

²⁸ Anderson 58.

²⁹ Ahdaf Soueif, *Mezzaterra: Fragments from the Common Ground* (London: Bloomsbury, 2004) 7.

³⁰ Soueif 6.

³¹ Yousef Awad, *The Arab Atlantic: Resistance, Diaspora, and Trans-cultural Dialogue in the Works of Arab British and Arab American Women Writers* (Saarbrücken: LAP Lambert Academic Publishing, 2012) 127. Ellipsis inserted.

spaces and her protagonists' experiences through time, Soueif subverts some of the conventional images and ideas and transforms what are at once exotic and dangerous spaces into familiar and identifiable places. Soueif presents fragments of Anna's diary that documents her travel experiences and thoughts, and at the same time, she goes back and forth between two time periods to reveal the effects of colonial domination on post-colonial Egypt.

Soueif explores how identity and urban and racial segregation entwine since the latter is as a symbol of colonial power and British superiority versus Egyptian inferiority. The city is divided into two different spaces. The colonial urban space or colonial town is inhabited by the British authorities and settlers. The structural layout of the colonial town is designed to create spatial divisions, articulate the historic, cultural, and social identity of the colonial power and to visually claim the taken space as their own. Upon arriving in Cairo, Anna describes Cairo and how the city is not quite as she imagined it to be. Anna immediately recognises the impact of British colonial power and its influence over the city which is represented in the segregated communities where the British settlers live. If it were not for the familiar traces of native life, she would have assumed she had arrived in another typical 'European city' (61).

Colonial traces can be found throughout each narrative. Traces produced by colonialism in *A Passage to India* have the capability to border and define places. This is best illustrated by the British Club, where it only consists of English members since the natives were prohibited from entering it. The colonised spaces were designed specifically to imitate the kind of lifestyle they enjoyed in their homeland. These duplicate spaces were saturated with cultural ideas that were meant to represent the British in a superior and civilized manner. This disconnection is emphasised when Adela Quested and Mrs Moore express their wish to see and experience the 'real India' as they were met with heavy criticism by members of the club. The Club also consists of several material and non-material traces that are symbolic of colonial power and identity and they act as borders that determine who is welcome inside the club and who is not. For example, 'the windows were barred, lest the servants should see their memsahib's acting' (17). Other non-material traces that identify the club as a symbol of colonial power are the National Anthem and theatrical plays like *Cousin Kate*. Overall, the Chandrapore English Club serves as a sanctuary for the Anglo-Indians and by producing material and non-material traces, it further reinforces British cultural values, morals and ideals onto the colonised urban space.

Likewise, traces of colonial power in *The Map of Love* come in various forms. For instance, Shepherd's Hotel, like the English Club, is a material trace that reflects colonial culture. The hotel is highly symbolic and stands for many historical and cultural aspects of the British culture. Anna ponders: 'I sit in my room at Shepherd's Hotel possessed by the feeling that still I am not in Egypt'. Ironically, instead of feeling at home and welcome, Anna begins to feel a sense of displacement. Anna feels that there is something that 'eludes' her and she is unable to 'grasp' it (102). At the same time, the hotel asserts the space that it is built upon as colonial or, to use the

words of Anderson, 'as a space of empire.'³² Therefore, when locals, tourists, or colonial settlers see or observe these material traces, it does not simply represent for them an urban structure used to accommodate locals and travellers; rather it is 'a material trace, tightly bound up in a range of cultural ideas'³³ which, in this case, would represent colonial ideas and these traces would later come to form and construct a major part of what makes up the place of colonial Cairo.

Other material traces in *A Passage to India* are also seen in the Bridge Party which ironically highlights the cultural and spatial division between the British and the Indians. The real reason that Mr Turton suggested the Bridge Party was not to bridge the gap between the cultures or to mix and get to know the natives even though that was the wish of Mrs Moore and Adela. According to Mr Turton, the 'Bridge Party did good rather than harm' and at the proper moment Mr Turton 'retired to the English side of the lawn' (36). The Party is deemed unsuccessful, mainly because the Indians are not welcome to socialise with the British, and the atmosphere becomes awkward and makes both Mrs Moore and Adela feel uncomfortable and aggrieved. As both parties turn up, the social divide becomes more evident in the way both cultural groups avoid each other, and each stick to their own as 'most of the Indian guests ... stood massed at the further side of the tennis lawns doing nothing' (30). Moreover, the physical arrangement of the tennis court in the middle is another example of material trace that divides rather than brings together the British and the Indians.

Similarly, in *The Map of Love* social events that are meant to shorten the distances between the colonised and the coloniser ironically deepen the chasm between the two groups. For instance, like in the Bridge Party, in the Khedives' Ball, the English and the Egyptians stay closely together within their own social circle as observed from Anna's perspective: 'Naturally there was a very large British presence. The Native notables were there ... But they kept to themselves' (94). The Ball, described as a 'grand affair' where 'all the Nations mingle' (92), increases and widens the social and cultural divide. The physical space created as a result of their separation represents a material trace. Interestingly, both groups, English and Egyptians, are successful in creating a social and racial divide between the British and the Egyptians that is expressed in the spatial separations in all the areas they take.

In *A Passage to India* road signs are tools that the colonisers utilise to demonstrate their power and authority, and hence they may be viewed as colonial traces. While travelling on the roads, Aziz reflects on the street signs and muses on the fact that they were named after British generals to celebrate British control and victory: 'The roads, named after victorious generals and intersecting at right angles, were symbolic of the net Great Britain had thrown over India' (46). Non-material traces are also recognised in *The Map of Love*. Anna's journey into native spaces continues to enrich her experience and alter her perception of the other. This is illustrated in the

³² Anderson 5.

³³ Anderson 5-6.

Harem scene. Stories from the Western Oriental tales depict the Harem as exotic, a place where women are oppressed and subjugated. However, Anna finds out that 'the harem is not a place of licentiousness and sexual indulgences, but a secluded space where socially and politically active women discuss political and cultural matters in a safe and quiet environment.'³⁴ In fact, for Anna, the Harem becomes a space of peace, harmony and spiritual indulgence; it 'brought a certain awe into my heart and I realized it was like being in church' (378).

Understanding the impact of colonialism on urban spaces allows us to grasp how deeply imbedded the colonial culture is in post-colonial societies. Soueif demonstrates that traces that alter urban spaces are not as significant as the 'trace-chains' that are produced later. This is because trace-chains carry ideas of generations that have been influenced and modified. Amal, who is trying to reconstruct Anna's story, reflects on the fact that the British colonial rule in Egypt is replaced now by US hegemony: 'I think of the officials of the American embassy and agencies today, driving through Cairo in their locked limousines with the smoked-glass windows, opening their doors only when they are safe inside their marine-guarded compounds' (70). Amal links the colonial past to the post-colonial present. American diplomats in contemporary Cairo utilise space just as British colonial administrators did in the past. Massad compares the American limousines to 'the veil that Americans must wear in public spaces inhabited by dangerous, yet seductive locals.'³⁵ The limousines, one may add, are another form of colonial bordering and segregation that ensures racial and spatial separation. Thus, by imposing their life style in order to establish control, these hegemonic powers have left traces of their cultural and belief system in all the spaces they take.

Borders, Nature and Transformation

When comparing *A Passage to India* and *The Map of Love*, it becomes evident that Anna's attempt to see Egypt can be viewed as a vastly different experience from that of Adela Quested who wants 'to see the real India' (18). Even though they are both English and both are influenced by the same colonial discourse on the Other, the differences between the two protagonists lie in their different approaches. Adela's approach to India is naïve: her inexperience and the fact that she builds her judgment of the Other on Orientalist scholarship rather than first-hand experience, eventually lead to the unfortunate interpretation of events in the Marabar Caves. On the other hand, Anna's approach to Egypt is much more nuanced and experienced. She is careful, observant and does not make her own impressions about Egypt and its people by relying on preconceived notions and prejudiced concepts: 'I am very sensible that I know very little of the country and must be content to try and educate myself until such time as I am equipped to form my own views' (71).

³⁴ Awad 131.

³⁵ Massad 80.

The colonisers attempt to culturally delimit and influence the colonised spaces, including the natural landscape. As Bill Ashcroft puts it, 'boundaries are critical in the colonial taming of the wild and the control of space.'³⁶ This is because vast areas of 'blank' spaces, creates a pressing need amongst colonisers to 'develop' those areas, which, in turn, leads to the control and exploitation of native lands.³⁷ Therefore, for both the coloniser and the colonised, the act of inhabiting is crucial because it is where a conceptual shift occurs from spatiality to 'place-ness.'³⁸ For the coloniser, it helps to create and gain their 'ideological identity' through transforming the colonised spaces, and hence, they can acquire control over the colonised space and enforce their power on the natives.³⁹ For the colonised, 'habitation of a place' is crucial since it represents a spatial boundary or location which cannot be penetrated by the coloniser; it highlights their ability to 'transform the external cultural pressure which constricts them.'⁴⁰

In *A Passage to India*, the natural elements refuse to be controlled by colonisers. That is to say, nature in *A Passage to India* is a symbol of India's unity and integrity; it encompasses all elements of India and all attempts at defining it are futile. Nature refuses to be subdued by the English; it is mighty, powerful, defiant and is capable of conquering waves of invaders. It rejects this sort of colonial bordering or 'inhabiting'; it is the one element that remains unchanged, and unidentifiable to the coloniser. Forster describes India as an 'appeal' where 'generations of invaders have tried' (120-121) to take a hold of it and make sense of it but have failed. Despite the persistent attempts by colonisers to understand India, India refuses to make home for the coloniser and remains unfathomable and unidentifiable to all foreigners and invaders.

Forster employs the many elements of India to illustrate how both cultures are almost completely disconnected and are unable to comprehend and grasp one another, thus emphasising the gap between the two cultures. Refusal to overcome their differences and become friends is central to the conflict between the two cultural groups. In the novel, Forster suggests that beside cultural divisions that separate the two groups, there are ideological and power differences that deepen the chasm between them. However, Forster suggests that while it might seem impossible to form a friendship between the two cultures, hope still exists perhaps in another time or place where colonial power no longer intervenes: "No, not yet," and the sky said, "no, not there" (288). Nature, represented by the sky, is adamant that it is not time yet for colonised-coloniser comradeships.

For Adela, nature remains a separate entity, outside of any colonial or cultural influence. She is unable to inhabit it because she cannot make the 'shift from space to place', and therefore, to use Ashcroft terms, Adela is unable to 'live horizontally', where the true 'force of

³⁶ Bill Ashcroft, *Post-Colonial Transformation* (New York: Routledge, 2001) 162.

³⁷ Ashcroft 162.

³⁸ Ashcroft 158.

³⁹ Ashcroft 158.

⁴⁰ Ashcroft 159.

transformation'⁴¹ is made possible. In other words, Adela cannot realize the possibility of living beyond colonial boundaries.

Mrs Moore's experience inside the caves is a devastating one. She is perhaps one of the most caring and considerate Western characters in the novel and most understanding of India's oneness with nature. However, when faced with the echo, she realises that not only is the sound 'entirely devoid of distinction' (130-131), but so is everything else in her life. The experience shocks and unsettles the kind lady; the echo causes Mrs Moore to disconnect and detach herself from everything. The echo shatters her mind and spirit, and makes her wonder about religion, life, and the utter meaninglessness of it all: 'everything exists, nothing has value' (132). Thus, by imposing colonialist perspectives on nature, Adela and Mrs Moore fail to appreciate its beauty and grandeur. They are less appreciative of nature; as a result, they become disoriented and bamboozled in the Marabar Caves. Symbolically, the echo represents the cultural gap which can never be identified or understood by both sides. It further represents the deep racial divisions between the two cultural groups and the obstacles which cannot be overcome or bridged.

In contrast, Anna's experience or confrontation with nature in *The Map of Love* is not nearly as dramatic or distorted as it is with Adela or Mrs Moore. Anna sets out on a journey across the desert in an attempt to step out of colonial boundaries and explore the native life. Therefore, Anna's attempt can be viewed, from Ashcroft's perspective, as a way 'to transform boundaries by seeing the possibilities – the horizon – beyond them.'⁴² Anna describes nature as 'a vastness which I have never before experienced – the land, the sea and the sky, all stretching unbroken and united' (190-191). In contrast, both Adela and Mrs Moore's experience was an attempt to 'inhabit' nature, and hence, it can be seen according to Ashcroft, as 'a way of engaging colonial boundaries' and occupying them 'in a way which redeploys the power they administer.'⁴³ Seen from this angle, Anna's experience with nature is far more successful than that of the two English women in Forster's novel since the former unreservedly embraces nature while the latter wish to impose their outlooks on nature.

That is to say, while Adela and Mrs Moore try to understand nature from their perspectives as colonialists, Anna is more open-minded and, and hence, tries to understand nature within its native context. Soueif portrays Anna as someone who seeks to step out of the colonial boundaries and expand her horizon. For Ashcroft the horizon is a way to resist the boundaries of the western thought.⁴⁴ He contends, that the horizon is about 'extension, possibility, fulfilment, the imagining ... a way of conceiving home, and with it identity which escapes the inevitability of the imperial boundary.'⁴⁵ For Anna, nature is the opposite of the colonial urban space, and

⁴¹ Ashcroft 183.

⁴² Ashcroft 183.

⁴³ Ashcroft 182.

⁴⁴ Ashcroft 183.

⁴⁵ Ashcroft 183.

hence, it offers a horizon of possibilities, and inner peace: she is captivated by nature and landscape and her experience in the desert is unlike anything she has ever come across before where 'no amount of reading of guidebooks or travelers' accounts, not even the stretch of desert I saw at Ghizeh, could have prepared me for this' (190).

Even though Anna presents a stereotypically orientalist image of the Egyptian landscape, namely magical, vast, and mysterious, the text itself deconstructs the orientalist image of the Other through Anna's journey and transforms the mystical space into a place of hope, peace, and possibility: 'I ... observed the sea, and the darkening of the waters ... and I too offered up a prayer ... for peace of mind and peace of heart, for it seemed that more than ever now they were within my reach' (197). Nature, thus, is not merely an empty landscape or painted scenery; it becomes, to quote Ashcroft once more, 'the scene of the transformative interaction of dominant and local cultures [...] the zone and interactive possibilities of boundaries.'⁴⁶ It is where Anna's transcultural experience takes place for it is a space where she is able to counter and subvert the colonial discourse that endeavours to exclude, marginalise, and even demonise, the other.

The courtroom as a Thirdspace

The struggle to define a geographical location where cultural power can shape the space according to its own cultural dogma requires the formation of a new space. In this context, urban geographer Edward Soja relies on Henri Lefebvre's theory of the social production of space and his spatial triad, as well as Foucault's concept of power to introduce what he terms as a Thirdspace. According to Soja, Thirdspace 'provides a different kind of thinking about the meaning and significance of space.'⁴⁷ It includes activity, city, geography, and territory etc.;⁴⁸ it is where all aspects of space, first and second 'subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable' combine.⁴⁹

The two novels depict episodes that take place in what Soja terms as Thirdspace. In this sense, one may argue that the courtroom in each novel is a Thirdspace where British colonial authorities attempt to claim the area as their own by enforcing colonial traces. As Anderson reminds us, 'power can be exercised by all individuals, yet the power to transform place is of paramount importance.'⁵⁰ This is because any act or exercise of power leads to the formation of place and creation of identity. In this context, Anderson defines two power groups that generally occupy the geographical space: they are the 'Dominating' power and the 'Resisting' or dominated power. According to Anderson, 'the Dominating power has the power to define'; on

⁴⁶ Ashcroft 194-195.

⁴⁷ Edward W. Soja, *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions* (London: Blackwell Publishers, 2000) 1.

⁴⁸ Soja 1.

⁴⁹ Soja 56-57.

⁵⁰ Anderson 67.

the other hand, the 'Resisting' power seeks to intentionally oppose, challenge, and dispute acts of dominance.

The group that controls the dominating power can effectively and formally create its own versions of reality. This is because the dominating power 'seek[s] to influence how we think and how we act by defining actions in particular ways'⁵¹ and this influence generates a common sense opinion or attitude towards a specific cultural group which is achieved through tactical traces. According to Anderson, 'tactical traces...intend to re-establish order in the face of threat'⁵². In this context, tactical traces inside the courtrooms represented by foreign legal proceedings, colonial trial procedures, preconceived notions ...etc, all play a major role in defining the accused as guilty and dangerous. Hence, the dominating group is able to successfully transform their beliefs into an 'ideological order or law'⁵³, and achieve spatial domination.

In *A Passage to India*, each of the two cultural groups that occupy the space inside the courtroom represents a form of either power. Naturally, the British represent the 'Dominating' power. Inside the courtroom the two power groups encounter each other; the 'Dominant' group seeks to dominate the space by imposing their own 'oppressive acts' and 'colonial trial procedures'⁵⁴ to guarantee the reproduction of their ideas and system of belief. Ronny, Mrs Moore's son and the City Magistrate, believes that it is best to appoint Indian judges to the case because they are more subjugated and oppressed by the British: 'Conviction was inevitable. So better let an Indian pronounce it, there would be less fuss in the long run' (91). It was their duty to be kind to Adela, especially when the person who allegedly attacked her was an Indian, an uncivilized Other.

However, the British are faced with the 'Resisting' power. Traces of the 'Resisting' power are outside the courtroom where Indians employ the space to demonstrate their resistance to the colonial authority. Mr Turton, British official and tax collector, notices 'under his very eyes, the temper of Chandrapore was altering' (189). Traces of the 'Resisting' power are also seen inside the courtroom, and this is demonstrated by the outcry from the Indian crowds inside the court, and the defences, argument against colonial trial proceedings. The barrister from Calcutta objects to the presence of the British inside the courtroom because '[t]hey will have the effect of intimidating our witnesses' (196). The British colonial administrators, as the 'Dominating' power, were not successful in asserting their own trial procedures over the natives, and thus, could not claim control or power over space.

⁵¹ Anderson 59.

⁵² Anderson 63.

⁵³ Anderson 54-63.

⁵⁴ Allen Mendenhall, 'Mass of Madness: Jurisprudence in E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*,' *Modernist Cultures* 6.2 (2011) 1.

In contrast, Soueif portrays how British authorities had enforced their own legal procedures in the trial of Denshwai, named after the village where the incident took place. Soueif's depiction is based on historical records. The court consisted mainly of British colonial officials who have become the overriding power that transformed the space into a colonial space of power. The Egyptian *fellaheen* (peasants) were found guilty without a real trial and swiftly convicted for the killing of a British officer. The decision to have the *fellaheen* executed was already made: 'before the trial even [began] ... Cromer [British commander of Egypt] had decided to have the men shot' (428). Soueif shows how during the trial of Denshwai, the 'Dominant' power was ultimate: it was successful in suppressing any form of 'Resisting' power that might come from defence or public. Thus, by 'legitimizing a dominant redistribution of power that reduced Egyptians to minority status,'⁵⁵ British colonial authorities were able to successfully establish hegemony and transform the courtroom into a space that embodies colonial power.

Conclusion

This paper has provided a comparative analysis of two literary texts: E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* and Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love*. The two novels depict urban spaces from colonial and post-colonial perspectives. A closer examination of the two novels reveals how space has become a site contested by colonialist and post-colonialist ideologies. Urban space is defined in relation to its cultural power and those who exercise that power. Put differently, colonialism, as the analysis of *A Passage to India* and *The Map of Love* suggests, is capable of such power and influence because it has the ability to tear down cultural orders and borders, create and establish new ones, and introduce new cultural identities through the act of traces. The vast expanse of space and the unfamiliarity of places grant colonisers a feeling of entitlement to impose their geopolitical hegemony over land and people. Spaces produced in this manner are utilised by colonialists as a tool to enforce specific rules and codes that ensure colonial domination. How that power is implemented and by whom it is exercised defines and affects the space, which in turn leaves traces of its power and influences the people who live in it.

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⁵⁵ Salama, Mohammad, *Islam, Orientalism and Intellectual History: Modernity and the Politics of Exclusion since Ibn Khaldun* (London: I B Tauris, 2011) 170.

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