

## Commodified Relationships: A Study of Khan's Fiction through the Lens of Consumerism

Sonia Irum<sup>1</sup>  
Munazza  
Yaqoob<sup>2</sup>

The materially considerable and socially paltry rise in the standard of living . . . is reflected in the hypocritical propagation of intellect. Intellect's true concern is a negation of reification. It must perish when it is solidified into a cultural asset and handed out for consumption purposes. The flood of . . . brand-new amusements make people smarter and more stupid at once. (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1895/2002, p. xvii)

### Abstract

This paper attempts to explore the impact of commodity culture on contemporary Pakistani society as depicted in Uzma Aslam Khan's novels *Trespassing* (2006) and *The Geometry of God* (2008). Drawing insights from the Marxist literary criticism and Frankfurt School's critique of culture industry and consumerism the paper analyzes the selected texts to investigate the factors which have reified human consciousness and transformed human subjects into commodities and commodified relationships in contemporary Pakistani society. Our analysis of the texts illustrates that the socio-political sphere is produced by material circumstances, so cultural practices cannot be comprehended in isolation but only in conjunction with an understanding of economic conditions of a particular society. The paper thus examines the influence of the culture industry, which through powerful instruments like film, music, advertising and other such means have weakened human abilities to think rationally and build meaningful human relationships. The selected novels are set in the metropolitan cities of Lahore, Islamabad and Karachi; therefore, our study reveals that contemporary urban life in Pakistan suffers the detrimental impact of consumer culture where people are blinded by the artificial pomp of consumer products and the entertainment industry and live as commodified subjects. The analysis of the texts highlights the power which consumer culture endows in material objects and artificial styles, which also results in the promotion of materialism and artificiality in human relationships.

**Keywords:** *commodification, consumer culture, ideology, Pakistani anglophone fiction*

### Introduction

This paper presents textual analysis of Uzma Aslam Khan's two novels *Trespassing* (2006) and *The Geometry of God* (2008) to explore the impact of consumer culture, introduced and reinforced by the culture industry, on the life styles and relationships of people in contemporary Pakistani society. The study draws insights from Marxist literary criticism,

and particularly studies of the Frankfurt School on consumer culture, to highlight how pursuit of material standards have had a detrimental impact on the lives of people as they are blinded by powerful images of mass media and continue to live in a false reality constructed by the tools of consumer culture. Our study of the novels regards films, music, advertisements and other forms of entertainment as the powerful discursive and ideological tools of the culture industry to control the thinking abilities of people and render them subservient to consumerism. The study also investigates how people, as they are transformed into reified subjects with their consciousness interpellated, take superficial consumerist practices and materialistic approach as markers of social and economic identity and status, which further results in commodifying social bonds. In contemporary societies which are overpowered by material culture and where humans have been turned into reified subjects, human values disappear and “character is degenerated” (Schudson, 1984, p. 7). Uzma Aslam Khan finds Pakistan one such society and mourns the loss of human values. Khan criticizes the superficially maintained and commodified human bonds built on material concerns, and points towards the social and economic inequalities which are perpetuated as a result of mindless pursuit of material standards of life.

Critics of consumer culture, such as Sassatelli (2007), Ritzer (2011), and Aronowitz (1973), believe that consumer culture and its ideology deeply affect lifestyle and behaviour. According to Sassetelli (2007), things become reflexive of one’s status and become the “blood and bones of everyday consumption” (p. 144) whereby human to human bonds are weakened and finally destroyed. Both *Trespassing* and *The Geometry of God* are reflection on this deterioration brought on by commodified psycho-social behaviour within consumer culture. The novels discuss the culture industry and its instruments, most importantly advertisements and brands as recurring images and symbols which promote commodification in Pakistani society. The result is visible, as the novels show, in the form of disintegrated psyches and social relationships of the characters. The author criticises consumerism in the novels by showing how the social existence of individuals, including their emotional and physical potential, becomes a victim of the brutality of corporate culture, and subsequently results in deterioration and degradation of social bonding. In societies which are affected by the consumer culture, like Pakistani society in the selected novels, emotions and feelings are commodified, packaged and sold for material benefits. Thus, our study of the two novels explicates that the ideology of consumer culture has trapped people into a vicious cycle of materialism and commodified human relationships and values.

Marx, in his seminal work *The Communist Manifesto* (1848/2012), maintains that human existence is shaped by the material conditions of society, whereby powerful groups seek to perpetuate their own domination. Similarly, Marxist critics such as Althusser (1971),

Adorno (1895/2002), Horkheimer (1895/2002), and Marcuse (1964/2006) highlight how material conditions and the mode of production shape human consciousness and

existence. They identify consumer culture as a culture of materialism, commodification and class consciousness. Within the material culture of consumerism, individuals try to preserve their relationships by exchanging commodities and commercial portrayals of images on the media. In this process of commodification, people experience ultimate subordination of identity to the market and purchase personality like any other commodity. This culture endows power to material objects and artificial styles and results in the promotion of materialism and artificiality in human relationships.

Critics, such as Bordieu (1998), Douglas and Isherwood (1979), are of the view that consumer culture, as a material culture, maintains and perpetuates class divisions, social and economic stratification, and oppression in capitalist societies. In such societies, consumer products and brands become markers of social privilege and reinforce the class system and social stratification and this process results in fake and materialistic relationships. The theorists of the Frankfurt School, Horkheimer and Adorno (1895/2002), also agree that society is corrupted under the influence of consumerism where false needs, absence of logical reasoning and critical thinking ability, commercialized art forms, materialistic thoughts and commodified identity are key features of a so-called progressive and advanced society culture. Their studies inform us that the power to own and consume commodities distinguishes individuals and accordingly marks their social hierarchy. The critical studies of the Frankfurt School are central to an understanding of the effects of the culture industry on society. These theorists reveal how technological advancement in the form of the entertainment industry furthers the process of commodification and degeneration. For Horkheimer and Adorno, technological advancement has given rise to “cultural chaos” (p. 28) and “Film, radio and magazines — each as a branch of culture — constitute a system of mass entertainment that produces trash” (pp. 94-95). It aims at producing consumers and promotes consumerism through advertisements that generate artificial desires. Allan Johnston (2005), supporting this view in his article “Consumption, Addiction, Vision, Energy: Political Economies and Utopian Visions in the Writings of the Beat Generation”, is also critical of the power of technology, and regards forms of technological advancement as a weapon to instil commercialism in life.

The French philosopher Gilles Deleuze and the Psychoanalyst Félix Guattari (1984) also regard the market oriented social system as ‘libidinal investments’ of capitalism, which are seen to promote created desires that animate the action and drive people to commodities and materialistic relationships. According to them, commodity culture is pivotal in shaping the desires of individuals who become willing subjects in the hands of capitalists. They explain that capitalism sustains this market-driven system, in which suppressed and repressed desires are intensified and new desires constructed. Tormey and Townshend discuss “fluidity and plenitude of desire” which gives rise to social

stratification, repression and “ceaseless channelling of desire into socially reinforcing behaviour, such as

consumerism” (2011, p. 43). Consumer culture, as a tool of capitalism, reduces society to industrial production and makes personal life inextricable from commodified cultural manifestations. This form of life generates expressions of emotion and behaviour, which are commodified not only in psychological and economical ways, but also through political means.

### Analysis

The consumerist critique of these two novels is based on the realisation that ideological cultural forms serve to reify individuals and construct them as subjects with false consciousness (Althusser, 1971), (Weber, 1958), (Baudrillard, 1998), (Tyson, 2006), (Slater, 1997), and (Lury, 2011). According to Buck-Morss (1992), reified and interpellated individuals are reduced from human beings to non-beings because as they become victims of the ideology of consumerism they measure and establish their relations on the basis of commodities. The “reified” (p. 169) consumerist subject, according to Althusser (1971), is ideologically allured by materialistic ideas to the extent that he/she loses the capability to see reality and various aspects of life beyond material ends. Thus, commodification in consumerist society is seen in every aspect of social life, resulting in the perversion of human values, mechanisation of human relations, and the quantification and dehumanisation of social structure. *Trespassing* and *The Geometry of God* show a deep concern for the devastating effects of consumerism, representing Pakistani society as a consumerist society in which human beings are objectified and transformed into, as Lukás states, “human subjects” (Eagleton, 1991, p. 222). The novels criticise and question the logic of consumerism, which according to Yaqoob (2010) “insists that nothing matters beyond money, capital, and commodities” (p. 97). Khan highlights the objectification of human relationships based solely on money, artificial and superficial concerns, and which thereby transform human beings into reified subjects. The novel presents urban settings in contemporary Pakistan as dehumanised spaces where people seek momentary physical and material pleasures and are so completely unaware of their pathological state; they do not realize that relationships have been perverted. For Khan, this dehumanisation in itself is a form of culture in a consumerist society, advocated through various tools of the culture industry, including TV, film, radio, advertisements, magazines and newspapers as a modernist way of living. Characters in both novels are lost in a mass culture of chaos, false identity and split relationships. The authors use the character of Salaamat in *Trespassing* as the instrument to illustrate the decadent consumer culture of the city. Salaamat, migrates from his village to the city of Karachi in search of employment and a better lifestyle. This gives space to the author to narrate the city through the eyes of Salaamat, for whom the city is a place devoid of ethics and morality—a place made of wheels, cars, motorbikes, guns, fake relationships and violence. His journey from village to city becomes a journey away from basic human values to the dark and intricate alleys of material power and corruption. His exposure to the city and products of the culture industry, in

particular, TV, transforms his mind and character to match the materialist standards of city life where human identities are formed not on

the basis of moral standards but of possessions. The author reveals how an individual like Salaamat, with no access to material luxuries but continuously exposed to media and advertisement, can lose control of his mind and live in an escapist imagination filled with erotic fantasies; can also become a victim of frustration and turn to crime. The novel informs us that whenever Salaamat is emotionally disturbed, he takes out a cigarette and remembers an advertisement in which “even on top of the Himalayas, the wind could not touch it” (p. 232). He imagines Dia in an erotic state of mind, and Khan writes he “licked his lips. An unwanted pleasure pressed the pit of his stomach, sweeping down to his groin. He imagined his own hand in the dip above Dia’s wet behind” (p. 233) and he goes into a state of joy and euphoria. For the author Salaamat, like many other young people, is a victim of the culture industry which promotes “pleasure, instant joy, relaxing and letting go” (Ci, 1999, p. 314) through its products and advertisements. The novel suggests that people like Salaamat who are poor, dispossessed, and displaced have no relationships and identities in alien urban spaces, and take refuge in the fantasy world created by TV and other instruments of culture industry to soothe and pacify their agonized lives. Salaamat knows that being poor he cannot make any meaningful human relationship with his boss, Dia; moreover, he has lost all his relationships since migrating from his village and is an alien in the city, so he lives in fantasies and imagines sensuous pleasures, falling into a psycho-pathetic state. The story informs that Salaamat is allured not by a real human being but by a picture of a woman at the back of a bus. He spends hours gazing at the colours and images painted on the bus to beautify the picture of the woman, whom they call Rani. He transports himself through erotic fantasy and often becomes “spellbound”: “the harder he stared the more certain he felt that she blinked, then blinked again. Her lips twitched in a smile she attempted to restrain, but failing that, she covered more of her face with the transparent dupatta . . . he could hear Rani wince” (p. 130). Khan (2006) devotes two chapters of the novel: “Look, But with Love” and “The Ajnabi” (pp. 131-136) to explain the pathological psychic state of Salaamat within the metropolitan city of Karachi. The city is socially and economically structured through corporate material culture and denies him any meaningful human identity or placement. Salaamat is driven to fill the empty space with easily accessible but meaningless entertainment produced by consumer culture. “Over the weeks”, Khan informs her readers, “his encounters with Rani grew increasingly fierce. At first he only lay with her in his arms . . . Then he began rubbing her tunic. Then he got impatient. So did she. One day Rani brushed up against him and moaned, ‘Hurry!’ He clicked his tongue, clutched her two henna-doused hands roughly on one of his own and smacked them” (p. 132). He fails to find and establish any authentic human relations and lives in a fantasy world where emotions are merely the satisfaction of physical and sexual desires. The ‘unreal’ human, Rani, indulges him into daydreaming and sexual fantasies.

The text also informs us that Salaamat’s strong, but perverted

imagination is nourished by his easy and unrestricted exposure to the erotic movies, pictures and songs he enjoys in his leisure time. One time, while

rummaging through a pile of trash, he finds a picture of a woman in skin-tight sleeveless shirt. He is enticed and imagines her to be prancing and singing for him, much like a luscious woman in the movie snippets he has seen in the video shop. His imagination, the author emphasizes, becomes so contaminated that when he sees his sister, Sumbal, at the farm, he gazes at her body and recalls the image of Fanta. Fanta bottle caps appear to him like Sumbal's breasts (pp. 256, 384, 392). Similarly, songs from popular films instil thrill and physical pleasures and drive him to seek satisfaction in fake, artificial, illegal and unreal relationships. This all, the author seems to suggest, are signs and manifestations of the behaviour which consumer society desires to inculcate, transforming individuals from human subjects to pleasure-seeking consumers.

The character of Noman in *The Geometry of God*, like Salaamat in *Trespassing*, is also interpellated through the culture industry. The mass media, as one of the Frankfurt School's theorists, Marcuse (1964/2006), postulates, are not only used for infotainment but also work as "agents of manipulation and indoctrination" (p. 11). Noman, Khan tells us, is attracted to Mehwish, but cannot resist gazing at women "slinking along in short skirts" and feels "blessed" to see women drying themselves at the beach (p. 104). He enjoys their "voluptuousness" and "creamy skin" because they remind him the images of Hollywood and Bollywood heroines, like Salma Hayek and Monisha Koirala, who flash up in his mind as he watches. He enjoys watching Unsa "hugging a bunch of loquats to her breasts"; he imagines her in an erotic way and doesn't approach since he knows she would run away, and so from a distance he watches her "kiss five strawberries in fifteen minutes, and quietly moan" (p. 323). He also "longed to play hero" (p. 115) and lives in the false 'reality' constructed by entertainment consumer industry. *The Geometry of God* like *Trespassing* argues that it is Noman's unrestricted, ceaseless and easy exposure to erotic films and advertisements that brings erotic images to his mind upon seeing women around him. The text depicts him as a victim of culture industry and consumer culture, suffering from a pathological psychic state. Noman, unlike Salaamat, is an educated urban youth, and through his character Khan argues that educated and economically privileged class youth are likewise infected by the consumer culture and its false reality.

Therefore, both *The Geometry of God* and *Trespassing* also explore the impact of consumer culture on the lives of the economically privileged class of contemporary Pakistan. The rich have plenty of material resources and have accumulated expensive technological products to add luxuries to their lives. They have, as the texts inform, built their relationships with gadgets rather than with other humans. For Jiwei Ci (1999) in his article "Disenchantment, Desublimation, and Demoralization: Some Cultural Conjunctions of Capitalism" the intervention of material culture in the social relations results in the "compartmentalisation" (p. 303) of society. In *Trespassing*, Dia's

brothers do not live with her and her mother because one lives in London and the other with computers (pp. 13-14). The one living with

computers has compartmentalised himself into the world of machines, unaware of any responsibility to comfort his mother and sister. The novel tells us he has no time to sit and talk, even to meet his mother and sister; his consciousness has become programmed to find satisfaction in traveling in abstract cyber space. Through this character the novel illustrates the pervasive influence of consumer industry spread through digital technology, whereby virtual bonds are stronger than human relationships. Human beings in commodity culture, as depicted in the text, are either glued to TV screens or busy with computers and phones. They are isolated, engaged in materialistic and mechanistic human associations. As a result of this commodification of time, life and people, the novel depicts the value system of society as collapsed, social fabric weakened and human relationships as fragile and meaningless. Similarly, *Trespassing* unfolds the story of Shafqat, whose passion is to collect precious stones from all over the world. Shafqat gives these stones as presents to his friends in a ceremonial way, not only to show his love for those people but also to display his pride, power of purchase and 'taste' and to receive applause from the audience at parties. On one occasion he presents pearls hidden in the stuffed shellfish to his wife Anu. Anu breaks the cheese crust with the end of a spoon, and notices pearls in fish's belly. At this sight, as Khan writes: "The crowd gasped: she held a string of gray pearls. He helped her wipe them, then fell into a lengthy description of the rarity and size of Tahitian pearls Uproar. Applause" (p. 73).

This public display of affection is artificial, as the narrative reveals, since he fails to develop intimacy with his wife or receive love from her. Anu accepts the pearl with heavy heart to preserve his honour in public. Yet "[e]ven when dessert arrived no one noticed she had not eaten a thing, though her neck was the object of the ladies' minute, chilling study, and the doctor of their coquetry and awe" (p. 73). Anu has never been happy with Shafqat as he has never loved her. He makes her understand that he prefers his son Daanish over her and takes Anu with him in parties only to fulfil social requirements and display his 'happy' married life.

The episode on marriage settlement between Daanish and Nini in the novel is a good example of socially approved commodified and materialised relationships of individuals. Dia informs her mother Riffat about her friend's upcoming wedding that "Nini would go on display" (p. 199) like a commodity when Anu would go to see her for her son Daanish. Later, the narrative informs us that along with Nini her mother was also "dressed in a designer shalwar kameez . . . Around her neck were three gold strings and on her left arm clinked six slim gold bangles" (p. 217). The family strives to appear rich and thereby increases their chance of meeting the approval of the visiting family. The marriage settlement episode in this novel highlights the corrosive influence of commodified urban life on people's personal life, identity and their social relationships. Tasleem, Nini's mother makes sure to settle her daughter's

life on the basis of economic prospects instead of a meaningful human relationship. She measures the worth of people through

their material status and possessions and evaluates relationships on the basis of their financial position. This episode also illustrates how consumerism drives Tasleem and Nini to indulge in high-class fashion to attract men and wealthy families. Men like Daanish are also interpellated by advertising corporations and persuaded to seek relationships with women who are modern, beautiful, and able to move in society by following the latest fashion trends. There are numerous references to TV advertisements for skin-whitening cream (p. 91), milk brands (p. 94) and popular detergents (p. 207), each seeking to convince people how important these brands are in enhancing their social positioning and improving their personal life style. Characters like Tasleem, Nini and Daanish are programmed with reified consciousness and appear to have lost their abilities to think rationally and make rational choices.

The character of Daanish offers an interesting study of the impact of consumer culture on the human mind and lifestyle. Daanish develops an intimate physical relationship with Dia, but when it comes to his life-long relationship and companionship in the form of marriage, he chooses Nini as his wife rather than Dia. The text exposes the reason for his inability to establish a meaningful relationship with Dia beyond physical pleasures in sensuous media productions such as popular music numbers (pp. 22-25), films (p. 27) and the advertisements he watches during cricket matches (pp. 337-338). It is through the impact of sensuous films and other media products that he views Dia, merely as a commodity, much like Becky in America, with whom he had a temporary relationship (p. 343). The narrative shows that Daanish continues to suffer from confusion and fails to develop a stable personality and relationships.

Similarly, *The Geometry of God* also provides a detailed representation of the commodification of social relations in metropolitan cities like Lahore and Islamabad. Human identities are formed, and relationships are built on the basis of material and financial positioning and possession of wealth and brands. Amal's friends are a group of elite-class Pakistanis who "boast how much pai they eat, how many four-wheel drives they own, how many girls they deflower. Strut to Hira Mandi" (p. 186). Khan argues that the food they can afford and expensive cars they possess are symbols of their power in the society and the basis of their attachment to one another. Their conversation revolves solely around the brands they possess, the popular tastes they share, and the shallow physical pleasures they enjoy; and this illustrates that they are engulfed in a materialised world of consumer society and cannot think beyond physical pleasures and material possessions. For Tyson (2006), such artificial gratification transforms into a competition that intensifies consumerist ideology and promotes individualisation, which makes human beings alienated from others. The desire to have more and more for the gratification of one's self is created through capitalist promotion of "personal insecurities" which stimulate individuals to respond to consumerism. Such insecurities are created as

a result of comparison between individuals, which further promotes a desire

for “competition” not only between companies but also between people “who feel they must ‘sell’ themselves in order to be popular or successful” (p. 63). As a result of selling one’s self to consumerism, human beings either become alienated from one another or develop materialistic relationships with each other. The characters’ gossips revolve around accessories from “Milan” and “Armani” (Khan, 2008, p. 132), erotic books, popular tunes, dance lessons and sex (pp. 43, 266). People in contemporary societies like Amal’s friends, being constructed through a consumer culture, are fragmented individuals who lack clear focus and direction towards a meaningful life, and hence, seek pleasure and comfort in momentary and illusorily commodified forms of life.

The discussion on the club culture in *The Geometry of God* highlights an obsession with imported brands, commodities and lifestyles. Club culture in cities is presented as a powerful instrument of consumer culture because it serves as to provide instant gratification of physical pleasures and forms relationships on an hour-to-hour basis. The novel mentions the debasement of human relationships seen in club parties, which enable people to display their branded identities and form social ties based on them. The text informs that people like Zara, who suffer from reified consciousness and are obsessed with brands and other consumerist trends, do not enjoy genuine relationships and real happiness. Melita Schaum (1999/2000) in her article points out the deteriorating values of life in a consumerist society and argues that individual experiences of the distortion of values result in a lack of unity of meanings in life, as lines between real and fake are blurred. She further explains that in such societies the entire social existence of an individual, including his sexual, emotional and physical potential, becomes victim to a kind of a conflict, leading to the deterioration and degradation of society (p. 4). This degeneration is depicted by Jameson (1997) as a kind of “flatness”, “depthlessness” and “superficiality” in a materialistic consumerist society (p. 8). Khan informs that “Zara is only interested in parties and boys” (p. 56). Zara seeks pleasure in dancing, drinking wine and other such activities as she is unable to form true emotional bonds (p. 130). She constantly changes her boyfriends, enjoys illicit relationships with her elite-class friends and happily discusses the details with Amal (pp. 186-187). She is known for “her parties till dawn in rivers of alcohol” (p. 180). Human relationships are fun and a time-passing activity for her, and she thinks “*This is life*” (p. 131).

Similarly Noman’s fragmented self is highlighted as Khan informs that he plans night events by “swinging from one drink to the next. Spend under a minute on each. Complete no sentence. Smoke a lot” (p. 126). In the novel he is a representative of a religious party, and works under his father; however, these examples show that he maintains double standards as his religious affiliation is in total contrast with his personal interests. He finds “inner peace” when he smokes “first-class hashish” (p. 68). He enjoys the company of women, movies and parties, which is against the ideology of the religious party for which he works.

Noman's enjoyment of moving through the streets of Lahore involves sensuousness as he examines women's garments and feels excited (pp. 63-64, 67). Through his character, the text

presents Pakistan as a commodified society where religious practices too have lost their spirit and become a commodified activity associated with materialism and status. Noman's and Amal's fathers in the text are associated with a religious political party whose aim is to implement Islamic law to make Pakistanis good and true Muslims. Nonetheless, their double standards are exposed in the form of discrepancies between their behaviours inside and outside of their homes and between their personal interests and preaching. They use religion as a brand—a commodity to sell and control the masses. Noman's father thinks of modern culture as "Everywhere you look pornography, obscenity, women in sports and advertising boys and girls together!" (p. 23), and remarks: "The young Pakistani is a cultural freak! His religion is whimsy! We will save him from foreign influences—like science! Like films!" Weber, in his book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1958) discusses economic conditions and material culture in many other forms of social practice, including religion and hence, the above-mentioned examples reflect how religion can be used as commodity, and religious identity can be adopted to maintain dominance in a society. This is revealed in the fake attachment and feelings of Noman's father towards his countrymen. The text highlights the hypocrisy and fraudulence of individuals who promote religious reforms and justice and profess to lead people to forgotten values but prefer to stay in luxurious hotels where "Everything's imported, the labourers and the food, wheels and tarmac" (p. 100) during their tours. Khan shows that people in the novel who are engaged in an effort to moralise society, actually have a sheer utilitarian approach designed to perpetuate their own authority. Their mission to reform the society on the basis of religion, as shown in the novel, is a commodified exchange for personal benefits and pleasures. Similarly, in *Trespassing*, Khan illustrates that rituals such as *Quran Khwani*, *qul*, *dars* have become a significant part of our domestic environments, designed to display wealth and possession of material products and to establish material relationships. Dia seems annoyed because her friend Nini wants her to "accompany her to a Quran Khawni" because she wants "to look at the dead man's son" who is known to be good-looking and has recently returned from America (p. 14). This incident in the novel is reflective of the fact that human relations, in a desire-oriented society such as contemporary urban Pakistan, are commodified relationships built on material foundations.

## Conclusion

The two novels illustrate that contemporary Pakistani society is a consumerist society shaped by the material cultural industry where humans and their relationships are commodified. Study of the texts reveals that since the consumer culture is based on material values and artificiality, it grows and thrives by intensification of desires and instant gratification. In doing this, it fails to build a social structure or weave a social fabric based on genuine human relationships and human moral values. In the novels discussed in this paper, most of the characters are depicted with perverted emotions, pathological psychic states, and meaningless human

relationships, to argue that the effects of consumerism advanced by the culture industry

are detrimental. By giving examples of various forms of consumerist practices in contemporary Pakistani society, Khan highlights the decline of moral ethos and human values. The culture of market value, profit and commodity, the novels illustrate, has inculcated fake values from the commercial world and as a result individuals suffer from lack of orderliness of feelings and emotions and lack the power to make rational decisions. The characters are shown as market-oriented subjects with a consumerist approach, rendering them commodities to be used and exchanged rather than as human beings with refined emotions and rational thinking abilities. This also results in objectification of human relationships as they are based solely on artificially stimulated desires. Through *Trespassing* and *The Geometry of God*, Khan has given a realistic representation and powerful critique of contemporary consumerist Pakistani society, marked with loss of essential human values and relationships.

### References

- Althusser, L. (1971). *Ideology and Ideological State-Apparatuses: Notes Towards an Investigation*. *Lenin and philosophy and other essays*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Aronowitz, S. (1973). *False promises*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Baudrillard, J. (1998). *The consumer society*. (C. Turner. Trans.) London: Sage Publications.
- Bourdieu, P. (1998). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of the taste*. (R. Nice. Trans.) USA: The President and Fellows of Harvard College and Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.
- Buck-Morss, S. (1992). Aesthetics and anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin's artwork essay reconsidered. *October*, 62, 3-41.
- Ci, J. (1999). Disenchantment, desublimation, and demoralization: some cultural conjunctions of capitalism. *New Literary History*, 30(2), 295-324.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1984). *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd.
- Douglas, M., & Isherwood, W. (1979). *The world of goods: Towards an anthropology of consumption*. New York: Basic Books.
- Eagleton, T. (1991). *Ideology: An introduction*. London: Verso.
- Horkheimer, M., & Adorno, T. W. (2002). *Dialectic of enlightenment: philosophical fragments*. (E. Jephcott, Trans.). (G. S. Noerr. Ed.). California: Stanford University Press.
- Jameson, F. (1997). *POSTMODERNISM or, The cultural logic of late capitalism*. US: Duke University Press.
- Johnston, A. (2005). Consumption, addiction, vision, energy: Political economies and utopian visions in the writings of the beat generation. *College Literature*, 32(2), 103-126.
- Khan, U. A. (2006). *Trespassing*. Islamabad: Alhamra Publishing.
- Khan, U. A. (2008). *The geometry of God*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co.
- Lury, C. (2011). *Consumer culture* (2nd ed.). UK: Polity Press.
- Marcuse, H. (1964/2006). *One dimensional man*. London: Routledge.

- Marx K., & Engles, F. (2012). *The communist manifesto: A modern edition*. New York: Verso.
- Ritzer, G. (2011). *The McDonaldization of society* (6th ed.). Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press.
- Sassatelli, R. (2007). *Consumer culture: History, theory and politics*. London: Sage.
- Schaum, M. (1999/2000). 'Just Looking': Class, desire and the consuming vision in T.S. Eliot's 'In the Department Store'. *Journal of Modern Literature*, 23(2), 355-350.
- Schudson, M. (1984). *Advertising, the uneasy persuasion*. New York: Basic Books
- Slater, D. (1997). *Consumer culture and modernity*. UK: Polity Press.
- Tormey, S., & Townshend, J. (2006). *Key thinkers from critical theory to Post- Marxism*. California: Sage.
- Tyson, L. (2006). *Critical theory today*. New York: Routledge.
- Weber, M. (1958). *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism*. (T. Parsons. Trans.) New York: Scribner's.
- Yaqoob, M. (2010). Human perversion and environmental space: An ecocritical study of Mohsin Hamid's *Moth Smoke*. *International Research Journal of Arts & Humanities*, 38, 93-104.