

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.122.12638

KAZIM ALI'S POETRY: SKY WARD NEGOTIATING POSTMODERN IDENTITY

Nehal Ali¹, Mohsen Abbas²

¹Faculty of Language Studies, Arab Open University, KSA. Email: n.ghaffar@arabou.edu.sa

²Faculty of Language Studies, Arab Open University, KSA. Email: m.kabbas@arabou.edu.sa

Received: 01/12/2025

Accepted: 02/01/2026

ABSTRACT

The postmodern belief is more mental structures in response to rapid changes in thinking, creativity, awareness, conduct, and authority. Changes in thoughts and visions caused a huge impairment in creative structures, resulting in artists of this period with a diversity of modifications and distinctions and separated from old logical patterns and modern upkeep. Kazim Ali is a contemporary poet inspired by technology. Sky Ward, his poetry book, examines how technology affects relationships and creativity. In this research, postmodernist features in Kazim Ali's poetry are analyzed, along with how he metaphorically reflects his native North America and his ancestors' homelands in his writing. This study takes a multifaceted look at the poetics of diaspora, with a particular focus on the diasporic identities of those who are of the second generation of immigrant families. This study also investigates the ways in which second-generation immigrants construct metaphorical homelands via the use of familial narrative and early recollections of their ancestors. In addition to this, it investigates the ways in which loss expresses itself for authors who live in liminality, as well as the ways in which contradicting experiences or plurality are depicted by gaps in both the formal structure of a poem and its intellectual landscape.

KEYWORDS: Postmodernist Features, Kazim Ali's Poetry, Technology, Technological Advancements.

1. INTRODUCTION

The postmodern poem has been studied throughout the 1960s and is distinguished by certain artistic and subject characteristics. This type of poetry is frequently composed in an informal structure, with the intention of reflecting the process of thinking or organic speech via a flow of awareness manner. These verses may be hard to comprehend and read, which is frequently done on goal to mirror the poetry back to the reader. Postmodern poetry typically expresses a spiritual point of view and addresses topics of futility or absence of reality. Intellectuals are sometimes perplexed by the phrase "postmodern poetry," despite the fact that the principles underlying such poems are pretty simple.

The term "postmodern" merely refers to a manner that follows the "modern" trend in art and literature, which is commonly defined as work created during and immediately after the two World Wars of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, in the 1960s, the counterculture's rise that swept much of the United States led to novel forms of creative engagement. Postmodern poetry sometimes involves topics of restlessness and usually is composed in a loose fashion. Breaks in lines and patterns might be disorganized or appear to be useless, yet the unexpected breaks typically have a function. While traditional types of poetry frequently conveyed concepts via the division of lines and punctuation, postmodern poem employs unpredictable line breaks to represent the globe's chaotic governance. The structure of the poem reinforces the concept that patterns are useless and that intent cannot be forced on the work.

Creating the postmodern belief is more mental structures in response to broad rapid changes in which we went from constrained to unrestrained in the fields of thinking, creativity, awareness, conduct, and authority. Following that, it resulted in shifts in thoughts and visions, resulting in a massive impairment in creative structures, with the artist of this age augmented with a range of modifications and distinctions, and disconnected from the previous logical patterns, and modern upkeep (Hammadi and Khudair, 2021).

Kazim Ali is a modern poet whose work is heavily influenced by technology. His poetry collection, *Sky Ward*, explores the effects of technology on communication and relationships, as well as its potential for creative expression. He also uses digital media and new technologies to create multimedia works. Kazim Ali's poetry is seen to be influenced by intertextuality, which is the practice of using references to other texts in one's own work. Ali often

draws upon the works of other authors, such as Rumi, Hafiz, and Walt Whitman, to form his own unique poetic voice. He also makes references from the Holy Qur'an, Islamic mysticism, and Sufi poetry, as well as his own personal experiences and observations. Ali's intertextuality allows him to create a dialogue between his own work and the works of other authors, creating a rich and layered poetic landscape (Greenberg 2014).

Kazim Ali's 2013 poetry collection "Sky Ward" represents a significant intervention in contemporary American poetry, although the way literary critics interpret it requires an extensive revision. While the collection does indeed explore themes of spirituality, identity, and loss through fragmented and intertextual approaches, the commonly cited interpretation of the title as referring to a mental hospital ward is fundamentally misguided. The title evokes both directional movement ("skyward") and vigilance ("ward" as protection or watchfulness), creating a semantic tension that mirrors the collection's larger concerns with ascension. The collection's fragmented structure serves multiple functions beyond mere formal experimentation. Through carefully composed discontinuities, Ali constructs poetics reflecting the fractured nature of contemporary experience while simultaneously gesturing toward possibilities of perfection. The poems resist linear narrative progression not to disorient readers, but to create new pathways of meaning-making that challenge forming a conventional Western literary paradigm.

Kazim Ali's poetry has, in common with that of many poets working today, been affected by the whirlwind of technological change of the past few decades. Especially digital media and the internet have influenced the poetics of his poetry. One aspect of the material and formal influence of technology on Ali's poetry is the effect of digital tools and platforms on its making and circulation. So, for instance, Ali has experimented with some poems which are written on social media, for maybe Twitter, just writing little compressed poems that fit within this 280-character window that Twitter allows. Ali has also made his poetry collections more suitable for multimedia with the addition of photographs and drawings to suit his poems, as well as including audio and video recordings of his readings in the book. This reflects the increasingly multimedia nature of contemporary communication and the desire to engage readers through multiple senses.

His poetry book, *Sky Ward*, raises the issue of the effects of technology on communication and interaction, and the potential of technology to enable

creative expression. He also employs digital media and emergent technologies most frequently to create multimedia works. Kazim Ali's writing is highly dependent on intertextuality, or employing allusions to other texts within one's own writing. Ali makes common reference to other authors, i.e., Rumi, Hafiz, and Walt Whitman, as a means to attain his individual poetic voice. Ali uses the Qur'an, Sufi poetry, Islamic mysticism, and what he observes as well as has done, for drawing inspiration. Intertextuality by Ali is the reason behind the introduction of conversation between his text and writings from other writers for creating a multiple-dimensional world of poetry (Greenberg, 2014).

Kazim Ali's 2013 book "Sky Ward" is a significant intervention into contemporary American poetry, though its critical reception needs to be rewritten. While the book does, as many have argued, pursue explorations of spirituality, self, and loss through intertextual and fragmented means, the conventional proposed reading of the title as referring to a psychiatric hospital ward is really mistaken. Instead, the title creates a tension between movement in a direction ("skyward") and caution about ("ward" as defense or awareness), one which connects with the broader obsessions of the collection with ascension. The broken structure of the collection serves a number of purposes in this regard beyond mere formal experimentation. Through strictly controlled breaks, Ali constructs a type of poetics that arrests the broken nature of modern experience while also throwing into relief possibilities of transcendence. The poems avoid linear narrative progression not to confuse readers, but to create new paths of meaning-making that disrupt traditional Western literary conventions.

The poetry of Kazim Ali, like that of much contemporary poetry, has been influenced by the rapid technological advancements of the past decades. Digital technologies and the web have deeply affected the form and content of his poetry. Technology has impacted the form of Ali's poetry one way by employing digital machinery and media to create and disseminate his writing. For example, Ali has experimented with social media sites such as Twitter as a platform to write and upload short, abridged poems that are tailored to fit the site's size constraint. In addition, Ali has incorporated multimedia elements into some of his poetry books as well, such as including pictures and drawings along with his poems or including audio and video tapes of his readings inside the book.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Poetry is in a very special situation to take into consideration not just for the past, but also for the present and even the future of a topic that has a diasporic history. As an illustration, many facets may be compared to one another using metaphor. For instance, the past and the present can co-exist inside a single case, as can two different physical places. This approach dismantles portrayals of diaspora as a geographically constrained construct that is dependent on a place in the past. As a result, we are able to see diaspora for what it really is: a continually evolving and redefining condition that is unrestricted by the boundaries of physical geography. Poetry, on the other hand, has the ability to modify what is there while at the same time subtly (and at times, blatantly) alluding to what is not there.

Homi Bhabha's theoretical framework provides crucial insights into the spatial dynamics of diasporic literature, particularly through his conceptualization of gaps and intersecting spaces. In "Interrogating Identity," Bhabha identified "the gap between a spectrum of conflicting positions that coexist", suggesting that these interstices create new possibilities for cultural understanding and expression. In this theoretical map, the author explains how a new 'space,' created within and across marked places, comes into 'being'. This emergent space therefore is a necessity in the metaphorical homeland realization; it is an effect of paradigmatic hybridization and born from the tensions within the concept and gestures towards an immeasurable time. This theoretical construct may be observed in practice in the poetic texts of the second-generation immigrant poets of the contemporary epoch. Fatimah Asghar, Tarfia Faizullah, and Kazim Ali construct imaginary homelands which contain necessarily erratic spaces and phases which can yet be but still remain out of reach. (Bhabha 2020: 68)

The paper is thus positing that diasporic experience and poetic expression are inextricably mediated by questions of access and absence, specifically as concerns inherited memory and racialized identity. These limitations manifest in two distinct but interconnected ways: by limiting the poet's access to areas where she/he is 'others' and racialized, and by the methodological problematics of memory, particularly intergenerational memory (Ahmed 2000). This idea of double Otherness emerges in poetry as the literal gaps – as the things that are absent yet are given voice due to that absence. The notion of figurative homelands poses a challenge in this sense in that it is required to address these absences as it seeks to map the figuration of the hybrid subject. Those representations remain

incomplete and cannot adequately make up for the something which second generation diasporic individuals have never known or have had taken from them.

Ahmed's (2000) analysis of Audre Lorde's early encounters with racism, as documented in "Sister Outsider," provides a compelling framework for understanding how memory transcends temporal boundaries. As Ahmed notes, "We must remind ourselves as readers, that the recalled encounter between herself and an-other is written, and that it functions as an aspect of an argument within a text that shifts between academic, personal and political modes of address" (p. 40). She further elaborates that "The encounter is lived and written, but it fails to be an event, or even a text, that is simply in the present. The encounter is already recalled and relived in the metonymic slide between different encounters" (Ahmed 40).

Postmodernism emerged as a response to the deterministic and systematic philosophies of modernity, after the trauma of Second World War. The essential feature referring to postmodernism is the contradiction with the modernist belief in unity, order and great and coherent narratives. Literature under this movement tries to reject authority, objectivity, and history and skepticism about the traditional historical novel breaks down structures of storytelling such as time, space, realistic representation of characters and events, and the narrative voice is consciously self-questioning and metafictional, and close to irony.

In poetry, postmodernism marks a break from rigid poetics, formalism, and traditionally focused elements, including free verse, fragmented stories, and indeterminacy in language and meaning. The writers of this stream of modernist poetry ask us to consider the bric-a-brac and the meanings of the signifier vis-a-vis the signified, and the audience is made to realize that, contrary to what was assumed, meaning is not absolute, but relativistic. These ideas force readers to co-construct messages instead of being mere recipients of a specific message which is exogenous to them.

Many critics have analyzed the postmodern features in the poetry of the contemporary writer, Kazim Ali and his book 'Sky Ward'; more intense focus has been given on fragmentation, intertextuality, and anti-narrativization in the writing. Wang (2013) states that there is a rich understanding of Ali's poems in terms of special poetic features making it clear that they are filled with unexpected connections and disconnections together with several juxtapositions that create brand

new fields of thinking. Wang's commentary goes further than such structural analysis to explore the political dimensions of Ali's project, asserting that "Ali's poetry is subversive of mainstream cultural discourses and power regime" (p. 47).

On this basis, Waldmeir, (2018) offers an extensive analysis of intertextuality in the "Sky Ward" while pointing out the linkage of this novel to the postmodern literary theory. Another interesting point of view closer to the concept complementing the intertextual analysis was seen in Sullivan's (2018), who stated that Ali's poems showed that literary works are interrelated and are not separate entities.

Thus, in addition to summarizing the previous literature, Sankar and Changmai (2019) present new analysis of the collection's postmodern features. Their analysis focuses on how Ali 'interrupts progression of events by developing a seeming gap within a poem', (p. 156). Moreover, they point out that with intertextuality trick is even more complex and the authors state that 'overall composition produced by the employment of intertextual references can be seen as a pattern woven into a vast cultural fabric that questions hegemonic paradigms and enriches the reader's perceiving of reality' (p. 158).

These analyses' scholarly consensus is to stress novelty as a property of "Sky Ward" coupled with its importance to present-day poetry. Interim, skeptics make it clear to people how intertextual and fragmented poetics combined with the refusal of great metanarratives establish the contestation of the modernist model of poetry at the hands of Ali while exercising over serious social and political issues. Taken together, these works make it quite clear that what we are seeing here is not just the playful subversion of conventional avant-garde compositional processes but a necessary and conscious subversion of residual elite anthropological worldview as well as the poetic conventionalities in contemporary postmodernist poetic aesthetics as embodied by Ali's work.

3. ANALYSIS

The poem Sky Ward by Kazim Ali, published in 2013 pays homage to postmodernism principles. His poetry is autobiographical and/or transcendental while at the same time disrupting the very construct of the poetry. This is because like postmodernism the poems are open and do not give clear cut conclusions to issues which are unrestrictedly many-sided. On the same note, Ali's work is a conversation with cultures and religious traditions and proceeds to synthesize religious scriptures, philosophers,

counseling sessions and real life to come up with a multilayered text.

In this analysis, key postmodern traits of Sky Ward will be discussed through the close analysis of fragmentation, intertextuality, ambiguity, and the quivering identity while including close reading of several poems from the collection.

3.1. Fragmentation

Postmodern literature is characterized by a number of features and Fragmentation is one of the prominent features of Postmodern literature. Fragmentation is an important aspect of Postmodernism (Sunayna, 2024). The fragmentation of the text is perhaps one of the most evident thematic trends in Sky Ward and is observable at two levels; the poem form and language used by Ali. This technique averts the postmodern notion of reality as fragmented in the text by reflecting it, and at the same time disrupts the reader's way of perceiving meaning and construction of meaning.

1. Lake House

*"Now to praise utterly unceasing now to shadow and learn
Flickering pulse last chapter sent Never to touch be shorn
Full hour spent spelling my house by web to thread air blue
By cover of night tree to tree strung any place through
Seen clear sun cold lake soul found any place home
Now done under woven to spill
Blue night lake foal."*

In *Lake House*, fragmentation is evident through both its structure and imagery. The poem offers brief, disconnected glimpses of nature, home, and personal reflection, rather than following a continuous, linear narrative. Images such as "Flickering pulse," "tree to tree strung any place through," and "Blue night lake foal" create a disjointed sensory experience. These fragmented snapshots reflect the nature of memory and identity, where understanding is often repaired from isolated impressions.

The language itself is also fragmented, with each line standing as an independent moment of perception. This reflects the postmodern rejection of traditional, unified meaning, instead presenting an unstable, fluctuating sense of reality. The reader is left to construct meaning from the fragmented scenes, emphasizing the postmodern belief that life and understanding are inherently fragmented.

2. Fairy Tale

*"The amnesiac prince woke up in a garden
Where no inscription would bear his name.
He wandered into the cemetery,
The hollow words turned in his mouth like stones*

At the shore, he thought he could read again."

We can observe the fragmentation in "Fairy Tale" in the story of the "amnesiac prince" exiting in the city Fairy Tale through disconnected scenes like: a garden, a cemetery or a shore. These transitions are abrupt and do not have a coherent logical order. Accordingly, the reader would need to grab images and assume that they are related to each other. Moreover, "the inability" of the prince to read inscriptions and his empty, stone like speech, contribute to the alienation as he tries to make sense of the world and himself.

The disjointed narrative form of the poem mirrors the postmodern concept of the self as shattered and disoriented. The prince, wanders away with absolutely no purpose, represents the disjunct person typical of postmodern literature, where identity and reality come into conflict and are fluid and unstable. Language, memory and dislocation are recurring themes that strengthen the fragmented perspective of the poem, where bits of narrative are given, rather than a full narrative.

3. High Stakes Game

*"I come by holding dark felt aloft
Raise me felt and snow Invisible water, the final blue scene
of winter."*

In *High Stakes Game*, fragmentation is conveyed through disjointed language and imagery. Lines like "I come by holding dark felt aloft" and "Raise me felt and snow" create a sense of disconnection between the speaker and the world. The imagery, which includes "invisible water" and "the final blue scene of winter," presents a fragmented reality where boundaries between elements like water, snow, and darkness blur.

The poem lacks a straightforward narrative or resolution, offering instead a collection of fragmented observations and emotions. This absence of coherence reflects the postmodern rejection of grand narratives, presenting life as a series of disconnected moments and perceptions. The fragmented structure challenges the reader to construct meaning from the disorder, underscoring the postmodern belief that meaning is subjective and elusive.

3.2. Analysis Of Fragmentation

In these poems, fragmentation serves on both levels, thematic and structural levels, contradicting traditional storytelling and offering a broken view of reality. The fragmented language and imagery exemplify the postmodern notion that life is inherently fragmented and that meaning is

subjective, patched together from fragments of experience, memory, and perception. Each poem presents incomplete images and thoughts, requiring the reader to be engaged in constructing meaning. This reflects the postmodern perspective that truth and identity are fluid, changeable, and that reality is experienced in fragments rather than in a unified whole. By employing fragmentation, Ali's poetry imitates the complexity of human experience in the postmodern world, where traditional forms of constructing a certain meaning or concept are no longer reliable.

Fragmentation is a thematic and structural device in these poems that introduces a broken reality and disrupts traditional narrative. The postmodern assumption that existence is discontinuous and meaning subjective, created from pieces of experience, memory, and perception, is embodied by fragmented language and imagery. The reader is like obliged to actively construct meaning because each poem presents partial images and ideas. This is reminiscent of the postmodern position that reality is experienced in bits and pieces rather than as a whole and that truth and identity are fluid rather than fixed. Ali's poetry uses fragmentation to convey the messiness of the human condition in a postmodern society where traditional methods of meaning-making are no longer effective.

3.3. Intertextuality

Intertextuality plays a crucial role in postmodern literature. By referencing and incorporating elements from previous texts, writers create new meanings and depths in their own works. Intertextuality allows for a dialogue between texts and different cultural traditions, expanding readers' knowledge and understanding of various disciplines and perspectives. This integrative and collaborative approach enhances creativity, analytical skills, and critical thinking, enabling individuals to engage with complex issues and cultural differences (Al Faqih et al., 2023).

Interrextuality is another post-modernity factor in Sky Ward where Ali quotes a number of literary and cultural texts from western and eastern registers. Besides, this technique also expands his work and reveals how one text is linked to another and how there are no singular ideas. Intertextuality in Kazim Ali's Poems

High Stakes Game

*"I come by holding dark felt aloft
Raise me felt and snow
Invisible water, the final blue scene of winter."*

In High Stakes Game, intertextuality is present through its mythological and literary references. The winter imagery and lines like "invisible water" and "Raise me felt and snow" suggest a connection to Western mythologies, particularly Norse and Greek myths where winter symbolizes cycles of death and renewal. The reference to "invisible water" evokes divine intervention or unseen forces, common themes in classical literature. This allusion infuses the poem with mythic resonance, hinting at life's transitory nature and the eternal search for meaning.

Additionally, the poem draws on modern literary traditions, engaging with the works of poets such as Wallace Stevens, whose explorations of nature and perception similarly blur the boundary between the imagined and the real. The intertextual references enhance the poem's thematic complexity, blending classical and modern traditions.

Freeze Tag

*"Frozen at the touch,
Released from stillness by a single hand –
The awful treaty of touch-and-go,
Fingers reach to save all the others."*

In Freeze Tag, intertextuality emerges through the interplay of childhood games and mythological undertones. The idea of being "released from stillness by a single touch" echoes the story of Medusa from Greek mythology, where her gaze could turn people to stone. Furthermore, the lines about fingers reaching "to save all the others" recall Orpheus's failed attempt to rescue Eurydice from the underworld.

This blending of a simple children's game with profound mythological references links the poem to broader themes of transformation and the fragile boundary between life and death. The intertextuality here underscores the poem's postmodern technique of merging high culture (mythology) with low culture (childhood games), complicating the reader's perception of meaning.

Baptism

*"The winged god flew from my throat –
Chained to these rocks, I ask for fire.
Reborn, but as a beast,
I tremble in the water."*

Baptism employs intertextuality through mythological and biblical references. The "winged god" escaping from the speaker's throat alludes to Prometheus from Greek mythology, who was punished by the gods for giving fire to humanity. The speaker's imagery of being "chained to these rocks" mirrors Prometheus's eternal torment, linking the

poem to themes of rebellion, punishment, and regeneration.

The title Baptism invokes Christian symbolism, suggesting rebirth and purification. By combining both religious and mythological references, the poem weaves a complex narrative of suffering, punishment, and transformation. The intertextuality enriches the poem, layering multiple systems of meaning from different traditions.

Frozen

*"Tattooed wrists say let-go, not-it
Nightly torn open by brute sky and eagle claw
A frozen man, touched by fire."*

Intertextuality is once more derived from classical mythology in "Frozen", particularly from the story of Prometheus. The phrase "eagle claw" refers to Prometheus's punishment, in which an eagle eats his liver every day. The "let-go" and "not-it" markings on the speaker's wrists represent the conflict between freedom and captivity, which is consistent with Prometheus's struggle. The contrast between "frozen" and "touched by fire" evokes the agony of Prometheus as well as the imagery of fire and ice serving as distinct forms of punishment in Dante's *Inferno*. The poem is made more complex by Ali's use of intertextuality, which turns the mythological allusions into a reflection on adversity, perseverance, and metamorphosis.

The poems of Kazim Ali are indeed intertextual, incorporating literary, religious, and mythological allusions to deepen their meanings. Through allusions to figures like Prometheus and Medusa, as well as Christian symbols like baptism, Ali's work engages in a dialogue between past and present, myth and modernity. The postmodern notion that texts are in continuous dialogue with other works and cultural traditions do not exist in a vacuum, is reflected in this intertextuality.

A deeper engagement with the text and the broader cultural frameworks it invokes is prompted by Ali's poems, which test the reader's ability to identify these allusions. The postmodern belief in fragmented, multi-layered narratives that reflect the complexity of human existence and identity is reinforced by the intertextual connections, which undermine singular meanings. Ali challenges established literary hierarchies through intertextuality, fusing everyday experiences with mythic grandeur to produce a complex examination of pain, change, and rebirth.

3.4. Hybridity

Multiplicity is another postmodern feature in Sky

Ward which is a result of Ap miracles and the fact that the poet has an Indian-Egyptian Muslim origin living in the United States. This is done through language or cultural and traditional mixtures to depict the dynamism of identity in the post-modern world milieu. The concept of hybridity is very important into the post-colonial discourse where it talks about an in-between culture. In the same way, cultural Hybridity denotes the mixing of two cultures and the birth of a new culture with the admixture of two (Pandey & Limba 2023).

Prayer Request Cards

*"I would like the church to pray for
a clear reckoning the core unearthed what's best born
skyward searched
who's most easily followed seared
who's most faithful beckoned to queer
I would like the church to pray
my psalm to unsettle the case
my askance umbilical lust to review and refute the evidence
to enter my gilt-edged tongue as final proof of innocence."*

In Prayer Request Cards, hybridity manifests through a blend of religious imagery and themes of queerness, creating a complex interplay between spiritual authority and modern identity. The speaker requests prayers for a "clear reckoning" and a "psalm to unsettle," suggesting a desire for both spiritual clarity and disruption. The phrase "beckoned to queer" introduces a tension between traditional religious values and contemporary queer identity. By merging these seemingly disparate worlds, Ali explores a hybrid identity where religious heritage and personal identity coexist, reflecting the multiplicity inherent in postmodern subjectivity.

The Good Brother

*"A penniless pot-maker I am always willing to condemn
or be sentenced.
Oh yes, as the fan turned in the hot afternoon I bore
witness to the sadness of our father, working his way
through blade and stone, hungry to guide his son.
I am the good brother, never to know more, never to look at
the far shore.
For a decade I made pilgrimage to the river, scoping out
the place I heard my brother fell.
Brother of the bird, I watched from a distance wondering if
I would have had the courage to listen to our father.
Still unbelieving, I remain in the lair of the beast; only half
a man, I declined the coat my brother wore, incandescent
aspect of both bird and angel."*

The Good Brother explores the hybridity of familial duty, myth, and personal identity. The speaker embarks on a pilgrimage to the river, invoking a spiritual journey while grappling with

familial obligations. The imagery of "incandescent aspect of both bird and angel" blends human and divine qualities, suggesting a hybrid identity shaped by both earthly and mythological forces. This merging of the familial with the mythological highlights the speaker's struggle with his in-between identity, reflecting the complex nature of self in a postmodern, multicultural context.

Ticket

*"I dug graves in my pockets searching for the ticket out.
Intent on escape I never noticed there was no wall.
I lash myself daily describing fake bondage:
All the prisons and pockets, the graves in which I bury myself."*

In *Ticket*, Ali uses hybridity to juxtapose existential themes of imprisonment with metaphors of freedom. The phrase "graves in my pockets" and "searching for the ticket out" reflect a desire for both physical and metaphorical escape. By blending images of self-imposed imprisonment and longing for release, Ali captures the hybrid experience of navigating internal psychological struggles while grappling with external realities. This tension mirrors the diasporic condition of being caught between different cultural and existential spaces, emphasizing the complexity of identity in a postmodern world.

Swoon

*"Small sound pocket sky torn wound
down my body eight-limbed swoon
lunar starved catastrophe across the midline stranded
stranger street lantern leading to winter
time unwrought sore still who are you
nowhere ecstatic beside yourself now."*

Swoon blends bodily and celestial imagery, embodying hybridity through its juxtaposition of physical and metaphysical elements. The phrase "sky torn wound" merges earthly and cosmic imagery, while "eight-limbed swoon" invokes mythological references, suggesting a fragmented identity caught between multiple dimensions. Ali's use of hybrid language in this poem mirrors his own postmodern exploration of identity, where the tangible and intangible, the mythological and the personal, coexist and inform each other.

Lake House

*"Now to praise utterly unceasing now to shadow and learn
Flickering pulse last chapter sent Never to touch be shorn
Full hour spent spelling my house by web to thread air blue
By cover of night tree to tree strung any place through
Seen clear sun cold lake soul found any place home
Now done under woven to spill*

Blue night lake foal."

In *Lake House*, Ali merges natural and spiritual imagery to create a hybrid sense of place and self. The poem intertwines descriptions of the natural world, such as "tree to tree strung" and "blue night lake," with introspective reflections on belonging and identity. The fusion of physical landscapes with metaphysical contemplation highlights the speaker's fluid identity, where home is both a physical and spiritual concept. Ali's blending of the external and internal reflects the hybrid nature of diasporic existence, where multiple cultural, temporal, and spiritual influences shape one's sense of self.

3.5. Analysis Of Hybridity

Kazim Ali's work is rooted in hybridity, the intersection of language, culture, and identity. In poems such as *The Far Mosque* and *Port of Return*, Ali juxtaposes Eastern and Western elements of language and culture, undermining the notion of an essential, monolithic identity. His use of words from Urdu language in otherwise poetry in English, as in *The Far Mosque*, is a gesture of linguistic hybridity disrupting constructions of monolithic identity, one that follows postmodern resistance of monolithic verities. His blending in *Ghazal* and *Crossings* between traditional poetry genres like the ghazal with free verse found in contemporary literature creates a resistant hybrid genre to categorize. This syncretism of Eastern and Western literary traditions mirrors the multiplicity of his cultural influences, in which no single tradition dominates but instead exists in dynamic interdependence.

Ali also explores the hybridity of knowledge systems, as in *Pulse* and *Gravity*, where spiritual and scientific concepts meet. With both empirical and metaphysical perspectives combined, Ali hints at the multiplicity of how individuals construct meaning in a postmodern era. Hybridity in Ali's poetry then serves as a lens through which he examines modern personhood, highlighting the intersection of language, culture, and identity within a globalized, postmodern world. His poetry resists monolithic interpretation and acknowledges the fluidity and multiplicity that define contemporary life.

3.6. Repercussions For Modern Poetry

The impact of the postmodern features such as fragmentation, intertextuality, and hybridity, which are present in Kazim Ali's *Sky Ward*, can be critical to modern poetry. These techniques posit an unspoken critique of more conventional forms of mimicry, as they extend the possibilities of what poetry might say about a postmodern life. Ali's

fragmentation is similar to the postmodern condition; he does not supply the reader with a unified story. Inter-Textuality relates his work to other works in a way of suggesting that texts are related and not compartmentalized; meaning therefore varies from one text to another. Last but not least, hybridity captures a postmodern subject in her multicultural and multilingual reality of the twenty-first-century subject. Thus, by using these postmodern approaches, Ali presents reader with an opportunity to read poetry in a very different way – in a way that do not deny plurality and Relativity of meaning. His work compels the reader to rise above the assumptions and think and listen to the exigencies of the post modernity.

4. CONCLUSION

Exploding Meaning and Form: Postmodern Characteristics of the Poem Kazim Ali's 'Sky Ward' The fragmentation of structures is evidence of the

impersonal nature of today's society, something understandably embraced by Ali, while the play with intertext creates a multi-layered text that welcomes the reader to interpret the work in a number of ways. The structure, the freedom, and lack of limits the author provides for the reader to interpret the poem are again characteristic of postmodernism in the sense of the reader's involvement in construction and taboo of formalization of meaning that those theories preach. Therefore, Sky Ward occupies a rather pivotal position in postmodern poetry and is well worth a closer scrutiny of presiding motifs and approaches. In this context, Ali plural and ambiguous text forces the readers to denounce the conventional scripts, and try, as a result, to grasp the postmodern world where stability is replaced by constant change. Thus it will become possibility to state that Sky Ward is not a simple poetry collection but it is an essay in understanding the postmodern world's manifold and ambiguous nature of life.

Acknowledgement: This research paper is funded by the Arab Open University, KSA

REFERENCES

- Ahmed, S. (2000). *Strange encounters: Embodied others in post-coloniality*. Routledge.
- Al Faqih, R., Thalia, P., Maghfiroh, I., & Arum, R. (2023, June). Literary Devices in Postmodern Literature: Exploring Fragmentation, Intertextuality, Metafiction, Irony, and Skepticism. In *English Language and Literature International Conference (ELLiC) Proceedings* (Vol. 6, pp. 49-54).
- Ali, Kazim and Domenica Ghanem. (2018). 'Split This Rock interview with Kazim Ali'. Blog This Rock. <http://blogthisrock.blogspot.com/2018/02/split-this-rock-interview-with-kazimali.html> (Accessed April 2020).
- Ali, Kazim and John Fry. (n.d.). 'A conversation with Kazim Ali'. Bright Felon Reader's Companion. <https://brightfelonreader.site.wesleyan.edu/interviews> (Accessed April 2020).
- Ali, Kazim. (2007). 'Faith and silence'. *American Poetry Review*, 36(6), 7-11.
- Ali, Kazim. (2009). *Bright Felon: Autobiographies and Cities*. Wesleyan University Press.
- Ali, Kazim. (2018). *Inquisition*. Wesleyan University Press.
- Bhabha, Homi K. (1994). 'Interrogating identity'. *The Location of Culture*, 57-94. London: Routledge.
- Bhabha, Homi K. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Greenberg, Arielle. (2014). 'That greeny power: Recent works of ecopoetics'. *The American Poetry Review*, 43(4), 27-29.
- Hammadi, Samar Muhammad Ali, and Ikhlās Yas Khudair. (2021). 'Intellectual transformations of postmodern arts and their representations in the products of the students of Arts Education Department'. *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology*, 18(3), 4693-4708.
- Sankar, Ramesh N., and D. Changmai. (2019). 'Word, image, and alienated literacies in the graphic novels of Orijit Sen'. *Word & Image*, 35(2), 112-125.
- Sunayna. (2024). Fragmentation in postmodern literature. *Migration Letters*, 21(S6), 293-295. <https://www.migrationletters.com>
- Waldmeir, J. C. (2018). 'Are you a Muslim or will you love? Dropping the veil in Kazim Ali's writing'. In D. Varisco (ed.), *In-Between Identities: Signs of Islam in Contemporary American Writing*, 67-89. Boston: Brill.
- Wang, Dorothy J. (2013). *Thinking Its Presence: Form, Race, and Subjectivity in Contemporary Asian American Poetry*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.