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Master

Muslim *Otherness* in Post-9/11 Novels

A postcolonial outlook on the fictional representation of Muslim *otherness* in post 9/11 novels.

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Abstract

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, led many Americans to vilify Muslims and Islam. Indeed, 9/11 bequeathed to the U.S. a new category of evil *other*, a decade and more after the "evil empire" of the USSR had been vanquished, and the cold war concluded. This thesis will investigate how this new *other* is represented in three post-9/11 novels, Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), Amy Waldman's *The Submission* (2011), and H. M. Naqvi's *Home Boy* (2010). These novels will be examined partly through the lens of postcolonial theory, as represented by Edward Said, Mohammad Samiei, and Robert Young. This thesis will demonstrate how the selected novels use point of view to examine difficult questions about the relation between communal identity and national belonging on the one hand, and durable forms of chauvinism and prejudice on the other. The study suggests that postcolonial theory and fiction are natural allies in their mutual emphases on the supreme importance of perspective. They both recommend that *where* one sees from will help to determine *how* one sees and *what* one sees.

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Introduction

When we read, we feel for others. We cannot help but put ourselves into the position of the protagonists, and from here, see the world from their perspective. In this way, reading literature makes us more human, and compels us to ask bigger questions about our lives. The novel remarks upon the question of how our identities are shaped and formed, both individually and collectively. These traits clearly encapsulated in novels addressing the events of the terrorist attacks in New York in September of 2001. The novels written during or after 9/11 register how the shocking events of this day changed the world, but they also register the way we understand each other.

Tim Gauthier argued in *9/11 Fiction, Empathy and Otherness* (2015) that, for a time, "all fiction written during or after September 11th, 2001, was, in some form or another, post 9/11 fiction" (16). Gauthier not only points out the importance of 9/11 in, and for, history itself. He argues that the event was, and still is profoundly important for literature, and fictional representation. His argument deals with an implicit question: Why was this event so important for literature? This year, teenagers who turn 19 years old will be close to have lived their whole life in a post-9/11 world. What does it mean to live in the aftermath of an event that shook the whole world? How can reading literature, and more especially, the novel, help people make sense of something so big as 9/11? The literature written after 9/11 attempts to address critical issues, and no matter how one looks at it, they will be read in a post-9/11 world different from the world before the attacks. 9/11 changed us as people in some way or another, and the novel can help us understand how and why, by investigating who we are as individuals and groups.

Why do we turn to fiction in times of crisis? Richard Gray, in his work, *After the Fall: American Literature Since 9/11* (2011), talks of a new chapter in the "continuing tale" of what happens in a post-9/11 America. He argues that it boils down to what he calls the "particular nature of the crisis", and last but not least, "the specific terms in which writers have reacted to it" (4). Protagonists in fiction novels often situate themselves in a context of crisis, not so different from what we witness in real life. In a world of differences, we depend upon what Gauthier calls "our abilities to understand the other" when we know that "the otherness of the other remains beyond our grasp, and that the best we can do is imagine some version of it" (2). This is where the novel takes up an important role. Novels, as Gauthier explains, "afford us the means of examining the complex dynamics involved in any exhibition of fellow-feeling for the other, and the ever-present potential failure of that engagement" (2). *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), *The Submission* (2011), and *Home Boy* (2009), all contribute to valuable insights into their protagonists' life experience as an *other*. With help from

postcolonial theory, I examine how the texts confront and explore issues surrounding tolerance and difference in a post-9/11 world.

The literary criticism concerning the novels examined in this thesis makes claims that deal with concepts such as identity, *otherness,* stereotypes, the Western gaze upon the East, and more. All three novels depict the lives of Muslim characters in post-9/11 America. The interest in exploring the selected novels arises from how each of them comments on the individual protagonists' experiences of being seen as *others*. In Amy Waldman's debut novel, *The Submission,* the literary characters must confront their prejudices and examine their fears in a post 9-11 world. They face the consequences of their intolerance towards those they fear as the result of increasing Islamophobia, a term used to describe the unreasonable fear and prejudice against Muslims or Islam ("Islamophobia"). Waldman's novel offers multiple perspectives of characters representing different groups in a polarized, American society. Each of them are focalized through an omniscient, third-person narrator which makes it possible for us to slip into their mind and listen to their story. Through a monologue set in Pakistan, we learn in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist,* about Changez's perspective on how it is to live in America as a non-westerner. Changez delivers his monologue to an unidentified American visitor, yet it does not take long before we understand that it is addressed to its bigger, more implicit audience, namely the West. In H. M Naqvi's debut novel, *Home Boy*, we meet three young Pakistani protagonists, who get falsely accused of being charged with links to terrorism in a post-9/11 New York. Similar to *The Submission* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist, Home Boy* likewise deals with issues of prejudices and discrimination against Muslims. Nevertheless, in this thesis, I argue that *Home Boy* acts as a possible counterpoint in its use of comedy and satire.

All three novels investigate the experiences of the *other* in a post-9/11 America where fears of Islamic terrorism were bound together with racist fears. Dr. Chris Allen, in his essay entitled "Contemporary Islamophobia Before 9/11" (2010), argues that 9/11 "influenced, and to some degree, fed the growing specter of Islamophobia and with it, the rising incidence and proliferation of anti-Muslim hate crimes" (14). With Gauthier's statement as a departure point, this study will investigate *The Submission*, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, and *Home Boy* through a postcolonial lens to show how post-9/11 fiction, as a response to the events in 2001, seeks to explore different principles of tolerance. Each novel asks the reader to consider the fundamental ethics of postcolonial theory as they offer perspectives of those considered *others*.

The issues presented will be examined within a postcolonial theoretical framework as established by Edward Said and as expanded by works of Mohammad Samiei, Pramod K.

Nayar, and Robert Young. Said's work, *Orientalism* (1978) explores the constitution of the West's knowledge of the "orient" over the late modern period, and how this knowledge, built up with words invested with high authority, managed to pass itself off as reality. This "knowledge" has according to Said become agreed upon as the truth among the Western general public, as people with authority have condoned it. With a constructed reality, I refer to a world of power relations where marginalized groups have a long history of being mistreated by the dominant culture. Said's work is central in the attempt to understand the exploitation of the Muslim *other*, seen from the dangerous and hurtful representation of them. In a 2010 issue of *Arches Quarterly*, Abdullah Faliq illustrates this further through the following examples: In France, "a Muslim is said to be aggressed every three days whilst every three weeks, a mosque is profaned or vandalized." Whereas in Britain, a Muslim woman was "punched and called a 'terrorist' in front of her petrified daughter" (6). Faliq's examples show existing prejudice and animosity directed at Muslims in a post 9/11 world. With this in mind, this thesis examines three post-9/11 novels in the postcolonial context with an eye toward developing responses to the following research question: How do we understand the unfamiliar, and eventually, how do we see those who are different from us? Considering this, I seek to investigate how the selected novels can help us understand the intricate inner workings of the human mind, which essentially make up who we are as individuals and groups.

The selection of novels written in a post-9/11 world cannot help but deal with complicated ideas. Among these, we find the concept of representation. How these different novels take up the critical issues in play, and how they pursue them is relevant for this thesis' examination. For instance, Geoffrey Nash argues in *Writing Muslim Identity* (2012) that *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* offers what other post-9/11 novels such as DeLillo's *Falling Man*, lacks. These elements include, for instance, the "non-western migrant's view of what it is like to live in the West; a Third World's perspective on America's global activities; and an insider's view of how it feels to belong to a Muslim nation" (108).

Before investigating this more closely, the following paragraph will explore the work of Said's *Orientalism*, and subsequently provide clarification of postcolonialism in general. Subsequently, the following sections provide an explanation of this study's interest in postcolonial theory as a theoretical lens throughout this thesis. Further, this study explores how the ethical concerns of postcolonialism, such as recognizing the *other's* perspective, are valuable in the attempt to understand the novels included in this study. It remarks upon the way postcolonial theory can help us understand who we are and how we see others when we read novels. There are no simple answers to the complex questions this thesis investigates. However,

in the process of this examination, this study reaches the following conclusion: All three novels offer insights into the perspective of the Muslim *other* in post-9/11 America. Each of them acts as novels with postcolonial qualities in the way they interrogate issues concerning discrimination and prejudices against Muslims. By analyzing the different novels included, this research shows how the novels, in their individual ways, promote the principle of tolerance.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework - Postcolonialism in Depth

The following section helps clarify, in a concise way, the historical development of postcolonialism, from the work of Said to more recent postcolonial critics such as Robert Young and Pramod Nayar. This thesis argues that literature and, more specifically, the novel acts as a laboratory in ethics. The study suggests that the novel provides an ethical reflection concerning who "I am" as an individual, who "we are" as a group, and eventually how we get along with each other. The thesis' interest in postcolonial theory arises from its way of dealing with many of the same issues found in the selection of novels included in this thesis. Postcolonial theory provides its own insights into the long and intertwined history of racial oppression and colonial injustice. It offers its own perspective on the fallout from colonial and imperial practices where a made-up image of the *other* has embedded itself into Western civilization.

Theorist Pramod K. Nayar, in his work *Postcolonialism: A Guide for the Perplexed* (2010), refers to postcolonial theory as a "complex, analytical strategy" that focuses on "*racial difference* in the relationship - political, social, economic and cultural - between First/Western and Third/Eastern worlds (4). If we understand postcolonialism as the time following colonialism, it is necessary explain the latter briefly. Nayar explains colonialism as "the process of settlement by Europeans in Asian, African, South American, Canadian and Australian spaces" (1). As he goes on to argue, it was a "violent appropriation and sustained exploitation of native races and spaces by European cultures (1). Colonial discourse has, as this thesis will illustrate through the discussion of Said's *Orientalism*, constructed the native, and what this study will refer to as the *other*, to what Nayar calls "primitive, depraved, pagan, criminal, immoral … and vulnerable" (2).

Some academics, such as Jane Hiddleston in her *Understanding Postcolonialism* (2009), has pointed out that postcolonialism serves as a "highly ambiguous" term … "somewhat broad and sprawling in scope" (1). It does not "offer a solution," Hiddleston argues, but "challenges the legacy of colonialism, but not as a form of resistance" (1). Precisely because of this, the term remains a bit vague and "panoptic" (1). Despite this, the recognition of postcolonial theory remains. Understood as the "theoretical and intellectual arm of the postcolonial condition" (4), Nayar explains that postcolonialism seeks to explore the ideas of "social justice, emancipation, and democracy in order to oppose oppressive structures of racism, discrimination, and exploitation" (4). As a response to the criticism on postcolonialism, Young has pointed out in his essay "Postcolonial Remains" (2012), that "its presence continues to disturb and provoke anxiety," (19) and that this, consequently, only proves that "the real problem lies in the fact that postcolonial remains" (19). Postcolonial theory is useful as a method of "interpreting, reading

and critiquing the cultural practices of colonialism" (Nayar, 25) and, more importantly, "it proposes that the exercise of colonial power is also the exercise of racially determined powers of representation" (25). In *The Submission*, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *Home Boy,* we meet characters who become victims of the powers of representation as they, in some way or another, experience mistreatments as a result of their marginalized status.

Although some critics would argue that postcolonial theory is irrelevant, I argue that postcolonial theory can help make sense of the response to the event of 9/11, as expressed through literature. It offers its own insights into the way we see the world and how we make sense of history and the current. The way we understand these issues depends highly on where we see them from, as we observe the world from the perspective of our social class, race, sex, beliefs, and ethnicity too. The historical development of postcolonialism affects how we read and interpret the literature of the *other*, a term usually used to describe someone different or separated from "us". Both postcolonialism and the selection of novels in this study seek to investigate questions concerning the mistreatment of marginalized groups, and they both perform their own practical theory concerning how we shape our identities as individuals and collective groups.

Said and Orientalism

The following section will clarify the groundbreaking work on postcolonialism. Theorists such as Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak, among others, have contributed importantly to the field of postcolonial studies. Even though it will be too simplistic to claim that one single theorist makes up the whole field alone, this study focuses on the work of Edward Said's *Orientalism*. Said introduced what has become one of the most influential works on the Western discourse about the East and the people living there. *Orientalism* explores how the *other* has been created and controlled by the dominant culture for a long time.

In a 2019 analysis of Said's *Orientalism*, Adam Shatz describes orientalism as "a system of representations" where the aim was "to produce an Other, the better to secure the stability and supremacy of the Western self" (2). This genuine accepted "knowledge" of the *other* has led to a fictional way of looking at cultural differences. For example, America's vaunted ideals, traditionally associated with values such as openness and tolerance, were challenged as a consequence of the 9/11 attacks in 2001. In her work, "Impact of September 11 on Traditional Openness to Immigrants and Non-Immigrants: An Arab-American Community Perspective" (2001), Carol Khawly discusses this further as she illustrates the mistreatments of Muslims after 9/11 seen through "hate crimes, discrimination and various civil liberties violations" (41).

Khawly points out that "the number of discrimination complaints in the workplace, public accommodations, and at airports received by the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) increased tremendously following the events of September 11th" (42). In the novels examined in this thesis, different protagonists experience situations that reflect these examples. Further, the novels offer deeper insights into the personal experiences behind what Khawly demonstrates.

In his work, "Neo-Orientalism?, The Relationship between the West and Islam in our Globalised World" (2010) Mohammad Samiei explains that the *orient*, would in the West during the 19th century refer to the "alien" part of the world, which in general meant "land East of Europe" (1145). Roger Joseph argues that Said's work examines what "the tradition of a group of scholars […] have 'created' [as] a discipline for Muslim studies" (948). *Orientalism* challenges these scholars when arguing that the structure of "knowledge" around the orient in most cases favored the West and its "personality." *Orientalism* is then, as Joseph goes on to argue, a mirror, not on the East, but ultimately on the West itself (948). Young explains in his work, *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction* (2003) that the colonial and imperial rule was justified by anthropological scholars that "portrayed the people of the colonized world as inferior, childlike or feminine, incapable of looking after themselves" (2). When the West made the orient seem strange, foreign, and exotic, the West appeared as civilized, developed, and superior. The fiction this thesis means to examine reveals these ideas. The selected novels advance on these theoretical ideas as they provide deeper insights into the work of Said and Young.

Beyond Orientalism

It is a long time since *Orientalism* first got published in 1978. Since that time, it has been highly acknowledged, as well as criticized. Samiei points out that *Orientalism* is reconstructed in the way its ideas merely have been "refashioned." He does, for instance, point out the example of the "growing presence of Muslims in Western universities [which] has effectively changed the way Islam is being understood, portrayed and analysed (1150). Furthermore, Samiei exemplifies how the "election of Barack Hussein Obama as the president of the US" in many ways "could change many conditions which were responsible for the reinforcement of the West-and-Islam dualism after September 11 (1152). While it is important to recognize such developments in history, Samiei still argues that it would be naïve to think that the constructed knowledge about the East and the *other*, made by "old patterns of human history," no longer exists (1148). For instance, Said accused Western scholars of expressing ideas about the Orient

[with] men and women out of old-fashioned narratives, archaic, primitive classical institutions and into modernity" (*Orientalism*, 263). Samiei argues that the dualism between the East and the West exists, only now "reconstituted, redeployed, redistributed in a globalised framework" and that it has "… shaped a new paradigm that can be called 'neo-Orientalism' (1148).

Said's insights are no longer cutting edge. However, his thoughts remain relevant and important. *Orientalism* has, as Shatz puts it, "become one of those words that shuts down conversation on liberal campuses, where no one wants to be accused of being 'Orientalist' any more than they want to be called racist, sexist, homophobic, or transphobic". The "Said-ian" and postcolonial insight about how representations shape our understanding of the world and others are consequently products of different power relations. In literature, we have thus witnessed an ongoing, Western portrayal of the *other*. Said was right in this respect, talking about the power to define others. Today, we often see this as *fear* of the *other* born out of ignorance and prejudices. Postcolonial theory investigates these matters as it turns what has been the dominant, Western worldview, up-side-down. Postcolonial theory confronts this reality, and the novels included in this thesis attempt to break away from the Western constructed narrative.

The selected novels present protagonists who, in some way or another, belong on the outside of Western society. As individuals, they also, despite their different backgrounds and history, represent Muslims and Islam in post-9/11 America. The novels invite us to listen to the voice of the marginalized characters when they speak up:

> If you are someone who does not identify yourself as western, or as somehow not completely western even though you may live in a western country, or someone who is part of a culture and yet excluded by its dominant voices, inside yet outside, a marginalised minority, then postcolonialism offers you a way of seeing things differently, a language and a politics in which your interests come first, not last.
>
> (Young, "What", 16)

The Muslim characters we meet in the individual novels included in this study are the people Young seeks to address his words to. When we read about these characters, we are allowed to think about what they are going through, and we carefully recognize their experience from a distance. The idea of developing empathy for others through reading is not a new one, and it is highly debatable. "Instead of rejecting the meaning that they give their experiences as simplistic or ideological … [we seek to] … learn from them, from their native intelligence, and from the language in which they speak" (Young, "What," 17). Novels like *The Submission, The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *Home Boy* invite us to do precisely this, as they give the

individual characters a voice. It is important to note, however, that when empathy is discussed, participants might come from a place of unrecognized privilege and should be taken into consideration. The novel can help us understand the world and how to relate to people, yet it is important to be conscious of the fact that we do this from our own position.

Understanding the fundamentals of postcolonial theory, as defined by Said, leads to continued discussion and expansion of the theory by others, and leads further into Young's refinement. Young introduces the concept of postcolonialism as "turning the world upside down … [and] looking from the other side…" (*Postcolonialism*, 2). Postcolonial writing offers what Young calls an attempt to "shift the dominant ways in which the relations between western and non-western people and their worlds are viewed" (2). With this in mind, this thesis demonstrates how postcolonial theory shares some of the same qualities as the novels examined, as they both offer alternative perspectives to how the world is experienced in various ways.

Power Relations and Ethics

The following paragraph illustrates how power relations and ethics exist as ongoing themes in the novels examined. In a democratic society, we ought to be concerned about how power is wielded, and how mistreatments of the marginalized groups are maintained. These issues connect up with the matter of ethics explored in *The Submission, The Reluctant Fundamentalist,* and *Home Boy*. The way the novels seek to investigate the principle of tolerance could be seen as a product of the theoretical insight about representations and their relation to power. The production and continuing spreading of hurtful and dangerous representations of Islam and Muslims come back to the asymmetrical power relations between dominant group and the marginalized one.

In all three novels, there are examples of violation and injustice towards Muslim individuals. Both Mo in *The Submission* and Changez in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* are singled out at airports and interrogated by security guards. In a 2002 article from *Washington Post*, Dan Eggen writes that around 725 people, mostly Middle Eastern, were detained on immigration violations since September 11th, 2001, and charged within several days of their arrest. One example illustrates how two Pakistani immigrants were arrested, however not charged with overstaying their visas until 49 days later (1). The connection between Islam and terrorism in the aftermath of 9/11 has made a considerable impact on the Western discourse on Islam and Muslims.

This continuing interest in ethics throughout this study reflects a particular awareness of the principle of tolerance explored in the novels I investigate. In the opening pages to *A Companion*

to Ethics from 1991, Peter Singer provides a brief, yet a straightforward explanation of the concept: "Ethics deals with values, with good and bad, right and wrong … Anyone who thinks about what he or she ought to do is, consciously or unconsciously, involved in ethics". In her "Teaching Tolerance through Literature" (1946), Ruth Mary Weeks argues that literature plays an important part in teaching students about tolerance. "It is not enough," Weeks says, "to show students examples of intolerance … [w]e must define intolerance so clearly that our students can have a yardstick to apply to their own thinking as well as to the actions of others" (431). This study remarks upon this idea when exploring the individual novels examined.

The Power of a Collective Imagination

In his essay, "Terrorism and Cultural Theory: The Singularity of 9/11" (2008), Robert Doran points out that "The idea that conflict should spark interest in the culture of one's supposed enemy is certainly not a new one" (4). After a long-lived history of seeing the Muslim principally "in terms of exoticism", Doran goes on to asks, "are we now on the threshold of a new understanding?" (4). Five days after the attacks, on September 16th, 2001, Said wrote the following in *The Guardian*: "This is a war against terrorism, everyone says, but where, on what fronts, for what concrete ends?" ("Inadequate"). There is no answer to this complex question, Said points out, "except the vague suggestion that the Middle East and Islam are what 'we' are against, and that terrorism must be destroyed." The face of the supposed terrorist became what Said calls "symbols of everything loathsome and hateful to the collective imagination." This constructed picture had, as Doran points out, a "cultural and psychological impact that goes far beyond the superficial media representations…" (4). Said's work was once again up for debate, nevertheless, with a different point of departure. The events of 9/11 awakened a "War of Terror", where scapegoating of Muslims had become, and still is a reality. "[S]ince very few non-Muslims in the West, and in the US in particular, have any knowledge of Islam" Doran argues, "it is thus difficult, except in the most obvious cases, to separate 'authentic' representations of Islam from misguided or extreme ones" (13). A desire for vengeance along with the lack of understanding those who are different from us, has led to an increased fear of the Muslim *other*, painted as the invented enemy.

Literary Analysis: The Novels

The succeeding paragraph introduces the selection of novels included in this thesis. In *The Submission, The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *Home Boy*, we meet protagonists who are given a chance to speak up about their individual experiences of being marginalized in a Western-dominated world. Some of these novels, such as *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, is told through the non-western perspective of Changez. As the voice behind the monologue, Changez says at one point: "But I worried. I felt powerless; I was angry at our weakness, at our vulnerability to intimidation of this sort from our – admittedly much larger – neighbor to the east" (145). Further, when a Muslim architect in *The Submission*, anonymously submits a proposal to a design contest for the 9/11 memorial and wins, the novel's point of view shifts to multiple third person and a variety of responses are presented through the voices of different characters. Where some of these characters see prejudice, others see righteousness. In Naqvi's debut novel, *Home Boy*, we follow the lives of three Pakistani characters who make up an inseparable and at times, hilarious trio in post-9/11 New York. The three friends, AC, Chuck, and Jimbo, feel like the world is their oyster when living their best lives as real cosmopolitans. Nevertheless, in the aftermath of the attacks, they find themselves in a different America where being identified as Muslims becomes a problem, echoing Doran's argument of not being able to separate the "'authentic' representations of Islam from misguided or extreme ones" (13). This thesis compares and contrasts how these novels seek to explore issues related to the *otherness* of Muslims and Islam in the name of tolerance.

Chapter 2: Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

"Excuse me, sir, but may I be of assistance? Ah, I see I have alarmed you. Do not be frightened by my beard: I am a lover of America" (1), is coming from Changez, the Pakistani protagonist in Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Hamid's novel, situated a few years post-9/11 in Lahore, Pakistan, depicts Changez' gripping monologue, addressed to an unnamed, visiting American. Changez tells his anonymous encounter that "… we have not met before, and yet you seem to know at least something about me. Perhaps you have drawn certain conclusions from my appearance, my lustrous beard; perhaps you have merely followed the arc of my tale with the uncanny skill of a skeet shooter" (87). Throughout this short novel, Changez gives the impression of being an elegant storyteller as he speaks up about his experience from living in America.

Nevertheless, Changez does, at times, appear mysterious and not always as a reliable narrator as we might think, or want to think. From the onset, the reader gets the impression that the person whom Changez talks to, somehow, is troubled or frightened by Changez's appearance, a suspicion seen throughout the novel. Towards the end of their meeting, Changez notices how the American "constantly [is] looking over [his] shoulder" (208). The American's suspicious gaze upon Changez echoes Said's argument of whom the face of the terrorist had become to the collective imagination post 9/11. With this introduction, it does not take long to understand that *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* addresses issues such as fear and prejudice in a post-9/11 world where the binaries between "us" and "them" are "continually being challenged, dissolved and reconfigured" (Gray, 32). Hamid paints a picture from a perspective located outside of US borders as he, as Gray puts it, is "facing the other, in all its difference and danger" (32), by telling the story from the perspective *of* the *other*. It does, as Young points out, portray the human experience of those not typically registered. In many ways, this is what we see in Changez's story. This idea will be discussed further in what follows.

Born and raised in Lahore, Changez moves to America at the age of eighteen to study at Princeton University. Early on, we learn that a successful consultancy firm named Underwood Sampson offers Changez a job, and from here, it seems like Changez is telling the story of his life. Through his monologue told in a café in present-day Lahore, Changez presents his story, and ultimately, his experience from a "Third World" perspective as he recalls the years living as a foreigner in America. Hamid's novel is unique in that sense, as it captures the story of the *other*, told from a place outside the West. For this reason, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* acts as a novel with postcolonial qualities. Hamid captures the mutual suspicion between the West and the East, and its complex gaze upon each other. The visiting, unidentified American whom

Changez talks to, appears nervous and frightened by Changez, and to their surroundings at the local café in which they meet (1). For instance, when the light goes off in the café where the two meet, Changez tells his encounter that there is no need to overact and be frightened: “And you – to jump as though you were a mouse suddenly under the shadow of a hawk!” (69). The tension between the two of them remains throughout the novel.

Similarly, Changez warns the American visitor about the food they are being served: “For your own safety, I would suggest that you avoid this yogurt and those chopped vegetables. What? No. no, I meant nothing sinister; your stomach might be upset by uncooked foods, that is all” (139). The anonymous American keeps his suspicious gaze upon Changez. In contrast, Changez himself appears polite towards his country’s guest: “If you insist, I will go so far as to sample each of these plates myself first, to reassure you that there is nothing to fear” (139). The idea of food as something personal creates tension between Changez and the American as it mirrors fears about the unknown *other*. How can the American trust the food he is being served, if he does not even trust Changez? In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, the American never speaks or does anything directly. He is simply painted through Changez’s reactions and responses to what happens between the two of them during the time they spend together in the café. We get very little information about the unnamed American, in contrast to Changez, who shares his entire life through a monologue. Correspondingly, readers are asked to trust Changez.

The Reluctant Fundamentalist offers an alternative perspective to the dominating western perspective as we follow Changez’s transformation. It argues for the fact that it is important to think of other ways to see the world. For this reason, Hamid’s novel acts as a novel with postcolonial qualities. Postcolonial theory, as Young points out, “is concerned about what happened and still happens to people in the aftermath of colonization, and that it offers “a language of and for those who have no place, who seem not to belong, of those whose knowledges and histories are not allowed to count” (“What”, 14). The novel invites us to view the world from the perspective of a character who struggles with knowing who he is or where he belongs. Karen Olsson writes that: “[a] less sophisticated author [than Hamid] might have told a one-note story in which an immigrant’s experiences of discrimination and ignorance cause his alienation.” Olsson argues that although we find this issue in Hamid’s novel, it focuses on the protagonist, Changez’s “aspirations and inner struggle” which partly has to do with his “self-loathing directed at the American he’d been on his way to becoming” (1). With this in mind, it is reasonable to look further into Changez’s transformation in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*.

Gray argues that Changez "[refashion] himself" in the same way as James Gatz's character reinvents himself into Jay Gatsby in Fitzgerald's well known *The Great Gatsby* (59). This is an interesting parallel as Gatsby is seen as the symbol of the American Dream, where you can become anyone you want if you just work hard enough. When Changez's true feelings about America are revealed, it also shows how he has changed from being what Valerie Kennedy calls "a capitalist, pro-US-American fundamentalist" to an "ethical, secular humanist, activist, and critic of US-American foreign policy and of global capitalism." At the beginning of the novel, Changez seems to agree with the orientalist idea of the West as progressive and liberal, in contrast to the East, seen as static and primitive. Hamid himself argues that Changez's character is "an individual example of failed integration despite the goodwill to integrate" (qtd. in Kramatchek). The events of 9/11 change everything for Changez, as people around him, including himself, begin to doubt who he is and where he belongs. When Changez, on a business trip to Manila, learns about what has happened in New York, his immediate reaction is to smile:

> I turned on the television and saw what I first took to be a film. But as I continued to watch, I realized that it was not fiction but news. I stared as one – and then the other – of the twin towers of New York's World Trade Center collapsed. And then I smiled. Yes, despicable as it may sound, my initial reaction was to be remarkably pleased.
>
> (Hamid, 82)

Changez's reaction possibly serves as the most shocking passage in the novel, as it paints him in a new light, which, in many ways, gives fuel to stereotypes concerning the supposed Muslim enemy, echoing Doran's argument. Gray argues that "... both the silent American and we the equally silent but necessary active readers might respond that, up until this point, Changez has kept remarkably quiet about this resentment" (60-61). The fact that Changez feels some pleasure in seeing the planes hit the twin towers creates a situation that challenges the principle of tolerance and the reader's own feelings about it. The *Reluctant Fundamentalist* creates a space for the silent reader to have feelings usually not accepted or seen as tolerant ones. With this in mind, Hamid's novel acts as a novel with interest in exploring the principle of tolerance.

It is soon after the events of 9/11 that Changez's relationship to America, and himself, start to transform. When he understands what has happened in New York, Changez begins to contemplate "the symbolism of it all" as "the fact [was] that someone had visibly brought America to her knees" (83). He admits that despite being a "product of an American university," earning an "American salary," and being with "an American woman," he still has a "desire to

see America harmed" (84). The moment Changez finds out about what has happened in New York, the novel takes a sharp turn. From this point forward, he begins to feel out of place. In "'The rules of the game have changed': Mohsin Hamid's The Reluctant Fundamentalist and post-9/11 fiction" (2011), Peter Morey argues that Changez "[p]erpetually [is] seen as an exotic acquaintance by his US friends" and that "he lives with the knowledge that his identity is constructed in the gaze of others" (144). Before this moment, it was easier for the reader to defend Changez's innocence and protect him against the bigotry from society. Gray explains how Hamid's novel acts as a "culturally hybrid [space] where engagements between different cultures … are performative and identity is open to constant negotiation and renegotiation" (65). Changez's reaction to 9/11 is meant to be provocative and unacceptable, and it is precisely for this reason that *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* makes us accept that we, as silent and active readers of the novel, have offensive thoughts and feelings about Changez ourselves.

Changez, a Fundamentalist or Not?

Hamid named the novel, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, a title fraught with ambiguity. What does it mean to be a fundamentalist, and who decides if Changez is one or not? The term fundamentalism is described in *Cobuild Advanced Learner's Dictionary* as "the belief in the original form of a religion or theory, without accepting any later ideas." If Changez is a fundamentalist, it is, as Hamid argues, because his post-9/11 environment views him as one (qtd. in Kramatschek). In an orientalist manner, Changez becomes what Kramatschek calls, "alienated from the promise of the West" as it is his Muslim identity, "which has made him into an enemy." Despite how Changez symbolizes a well-integrated American, everything changes after 9/11 when the gap between "us" and "them" widens. After the attacks, he finds himself out of place in America, and ultimately with "a foot in both camps." In a post-9/11 world, the word "fundamentalist" often gets connected to Islam or Islamic terrorists, confirming the very much alive prejudice against Muslims. In the recognized work of Judith Butler's *Precarious Life* from 2004, she explains this connection more in detail: "Our general response [after 9/11] is anxiety, rage; a radical desire for security, a shoring up of the borders against what is perceived as alien" (39). This response has led to what Butler calls "heightened surveillance of Arab peoples and anyone who looks vaguely Arab in the dominant racial imaginary" (39). The made-up picture of how the dangerous enemy looks like has ultimately been linked to the exotic and foreign *other*, often seen as Islamic fundamentalists.

Hamid, nevertheless gives the name fundamentalist a more ironic meaning, as Changez never shows any real examples of why he might be a religious fundamentalist. The only time

we witness Changez expressing his religious faith is when he screams out, "Thank you God" (Hamid, 16), after receiving a job offer at Underwood and Samson. Changez's use of expression does, in most cases, not reflect religious meaning but a way to express emotions such as excitement, happiness, or anger. At the beginning of Changez's story, we also get a glimpse of how Changez himself jokes about stereotypes linked to his own identity: When traveling to Greece with his fellow Princeton students, everyone is asked to share their future dreams and ambitions. When it is Changez's turn to answer, he expresses his hope of "one day be the dictator of an Islamic republic with nuclear capability" (33). It is interesting to question Changez's behavior in this situation, which he calls a "sense of humor" (33). He makes an unexpected and odd joke, which is considered provoking and scary for his American audience. In this example, Changez demonstrates an awareness of how he might be the "odd one out" and essentially the *other* among the group. Morey explains this behavior further when he argues that Changez is seen as "an exotic acquaintance by his US friends" and therefore "… lives with the knowledge that his identity is constructed in the gaze of others" (144). Changez's way of joking reinforces the identity he is given by the people around him, echoing Samiei's "neo-Orientalism." This behavior is seen in all three novels examined in this thesis: In Waldman's *The Submission*, Mo, the Muslim protagonist, likewise makes a similar joke: "Whatever would make Americans not worry that he placed a bomb under their pillow" (99). Similarly, when Chuck, one of the Muslim protagonists in *Home Boy*, is released from "days, maybe weeks" in jail (118), he makes a seemingly ironic and dangerous point addressed to the police officer: "You're sure I'm not a terrorist?" (119). There appears to be an ongoing issue in all three novels, that the Muslim protagonists express, through jokes, their own awareness of being seen as the *other*.

Hamid points out in "Islam is not a Monolith" (2013) that Changez "somehow, and seemingly quite naturally, [is] read by many people as a character who is an Islamic fundamentalist." The novel's title includes the word "reluctant," which can be explained as "being unwilling to do something, and hesitate before doing it" ("Reluctant"). Hence, the title can be read as describing a person, most apparently Changez, as being unsettled, or not sure about his own principles. Society puts a mark on Changez, which, in the end, contributes to his transformation. Being a "reluctant fundamentalist" is then, as this analysis demonstrates, a type of oxymoron, as being a fundamentalist means being strict and truthful to one's own belief system. The title can also be read as signaling that Changez is reluctant to be or become a fundamentalist. He thinks the West has a lot to answer for, yet he is reluctant to assume this role, or this position, of "fundamentalist." Hamid explains the ambiguity in the novel's title:

> [Changez] is a reluctant fundamentalist because his environment sees him as a religious fundamentalist, though he isn't one. He, on the other hand, rejects the economic fundamentalism of the business world to which he belongs – a world oriented solely around gains and losses. For me, this is what fundamentalism is: looking at the world from a single perspective, thereby excluding all other perspectives.
>
> (qtd. in Kramatschek)

The sentiment expressed above points out how fundamentalism is the West in its supposition that life boils down to money and acquisitiveness. However, Changez does not wish to be that kind of fundamentalist either. So what is it that Changez believes? He appears to be a strong advocate for capitalism and the world of business, yet, his transformation shows that he ends up feeling otherwise. In light of this, Changez's perspective reflects the postcolonial idea of recognizing an alternative perspective to the Western narrative. Kennedy has pointed out that Changez's transformation takes him from being a believer in "financial fundamentals – to believing in values which run counter to it." Subsequently, Hamid points out that his novel attempts to show that "fundamentalism is not just what we imagine it is," as it most often gets related to a religious matter. He explains further that fundamentalism not necessarily needs to be about picking one side to something; nevertheless, it is about feeling torn between these sides. When one person manages to accept his "torn state," another will insist upon which side is the right one to which they belong, and say "[t]his is everything I am" (qtd. in Kramatschek). On a business trip to Chile, Changez and his co-workers arrive in Valparaiso to value a publishing company driven by a man named Juan-Bautista. Bautista, who is quite clear that he is not pleased with his visitors, gets into a conversation with Changez one on one, and asks him: "Does it trouble you ... to make your living by distributing the lives of others?" (Hamid, 171). Bautista tells Changez about the history of the "janissaries," a story that will make a significant impact on Changez later: Bautista explains:

> They were Christian boys ... captured by the Ottomans and trained to be soldiers in a Muslim army, at that time the greatest army in the world … [T]hey were ferocious and utterly loyal" and they "fought to erase their own civilizations, so they had nothing else to turn to.
>
> (Hamid, 172)

The story bothers Changez, and after his encounter with Bautista, he begins to reflect upon who he is and whom he has become. Changez becomes convinced that Bautista's words are real, and that he is what Changez calls "a modern-day janissary." He sees himself from an outside perspective, as he had become "a servant of the American empire at a time when it was invading a country with kinship to mine and was perhaps even colluding to ensure that my own

country faced the threat of war" (173). It is at this moment that Changez's transformation gradually begins to take place. He becomes more aware of his own identity and sense of belonging. At the same time, we do, as active readers and silent bystanders, find ourselves confused about our own feelings about Changez. For this reason, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* continues in the vein of postcolonial theoretical outlook as it invites us to experience the world from Changez's perspective.

Changez experiences a type of identity transformation more than once in the novel. First, as Olsson points out, the question of whether or not Changez realizes that he has "sacrificed his identity in pursuit of status" in America. Changez seems ashamed of who he is and where he comes from when he enters the social elite in New York. At one point in his monologue, Changez looks back at the time in New York and reflects upon how he "felt [he] was entering in New York the very same social class that [his] family was falling out of in Lahore" (Hamid, 97). When he visits his family in Lahore and this environment becomes familiar to him once again, he understands that it is he who has changed, and not the place where he grew up: "I was looking about me with the eyes of a foreigner, and not just any foreigner, but that particular type of entitled and unsympathic American who so annoyed me when I encountered him in the classrooms and workplaces of your country's elite" (141). At this point, Changez talks from the point of view, which supports the binary opposition of "us" and "them." He tells the American about the "adjustments [that] one must make if one comes here from America [where] a different way of observing is required." Changez, as he goes on, expresses how his own American gaze has made him see his old surroundings in Lahore as "shabby" and "in such a state" that he became humiliated and embarrassed (140). Through Changez's perspective, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* seeks to explore social justice through a postcolonial tenor, in order to oppose structures of discrimination and prejudices.

Changez's successful integration into New York's social elite has given him an American identity he seems to enjoy having before 9/11. Kennedy argues that Changez's life is "transformed … when the security of his cosmopolitan identity as 'a young New Yorker' is destroyed as he becomes aware of 'the growing importance of tribe' in post 9/11 America". In a globalized world, and especially in a post-9/11 America where people feel scared and vulnerable, the sense of (national) pride becomes vital. In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, Changez experiences a growing feeling of pride from two sides, as America's gaze, on the one hand, quickly view him as being an outcast and a threat to their nation after the terror events, simply because of his mark as a Muslim. On the other hand, Changez experiences pride in having to do with his relationship to Lahore. "Pride," as Hamid argues, "is important because

in a globalized world many different histories become intertwined. And some of these are presented as the history of the victors" (qtd. in Kramatschek). There are specific ways in which Changez is depicted as the *other* in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist.* For instance, we learn that his appearance change after his return from Lahore, as he, despite his mother's wish, starts to grow a beard. "Do not forget to shave before you go," he is told, and when he asks her why she replies, "they have beards," referring to the terrorists behind the attacks (Hamid, 146). When growing a beard despite society's discriminating viewpoints on this matter, Changez puts himself in the position of being labeled as a "dangerous terrorist," echoing Said's argument of the collective made-up "face of the terrorist." Changez explains the beard further to the anonymous American: "It was perhaps a form of protest on my part, a symbol of my identity, or perhaps I sought to remind myself of the reality I had just left behind [in Lahore]; I do not now recall my precise motivations" (148). Changez, in this way, exposes himself as more mysterious and less reliable to his unidentified encounter, and therefore likewise to the reader. He gives the impression of wanting to leave some assumptions to his (Western) audience as to why he grows a beard in the circumstances of post-9/11. *Home Boy* ultimately asks the reader to trust Changez.

Hamid is not the only author who uses "the beard" as a highly charged symbol in portraying Muslim characters. In DeLillo's *Falling Man*, the beard serves a vital ingredient to the making of the fictional "typical terrorist." Hammad (one of the terrorists), often talks about how "[t]hey were all growing beards" (79), referring to the group of fictional terrorists behind the 9/11 attacks in the novel. Waldman similarly gives Mo a beard in *The Submission*. By the same token as Changez, Mo decides to grow a beard after a business trip to Afghanistan: "He had grown a beard on his return from Kabul merely to assert his right to wear a beard (146), and to "play with the perceptions and misconceptions, to argue against the attempt to define him" (272). Laila Fathi, Mo's lawyer, expresses to Mo, "[n]ext you'll shave for them" (226). Mo knows that his beard is charged with symbolism as it connects him to someone he is trying to prove that he is not. Although Mo ends up shaving, he is still criticized by the Muslim population for not having a beard. For instance, after a public hearing where Mo has spoken, he is accused of being a "beardless blasphemer" (308). Mo's response, "[m]aybe I should have shaved half my face," shows that it is seemingly impossible to please anyone. The fear of being labeled as a dangerous and foreign terrorist is significantly present in all three novels.

Dehumanization of Changez

Olsson argues that Changez serves as an example of "[a]n immigrant's experience of discrimination and ignorance [which] cause his alienation." Changez says, "More than once, traveling on the subway – where I had always had the feeling of blending in – I was subjected to verbal abuse by complete strangers" (Hamid, 148). The everyday routines of Changez become problematic for him after 9/11. For this reason, Changez's experience mirrors the increasing number of discriminations against Muslims after the attacks, as demonstrated by Khawly. In the same manner, Changez becomes a victim of islamophobia when two strangers in a parking lot call him "[f]ucking Arab" (134). The example embodies how Changez becomes a victim of dehumanization after 9/11. "Despite coming from a character we have perhaps grown to distrust," Morey argues, "these reflections effectively reinforce the novel's concern with the reverberations from the response to 9/11 that have been just as cataclysmic as the initial atrocity itself" (144). As people mark him as "one of them," and consequently, as not as part of "us," Changez suffers from the damaging stereotyping having to do with his Muslim identity and is ultimately dehumanized. Hamid explains this further:

> There are more than a billion variations of lived belief among people who define themselves as Muslim … Islamophobia represents a refusal to acknowledge these variations, to acknowledge individual humanities, a desire to paint members of a perceived group with the same brush. In that sense, it is indeed like racism. It simultaneously credits Muslims with too much and too little agency: too much agency in choosing their religion, and too little in choosing what to make of it.
>
> (Hamid, "Islam")

This hurtful way of "labeling" Muslims gives them little or no agency over themselves. Changez's monologue depicts the hurtful way Muslims are represented, indicating that they, in some way or another, belong to the side of the enemy in a post-9/11 America. One of the most "representative" situations where this type of prejudice is shown, is found in various airports after the attacks. These examples illustrate "the strong and unreasonable fear of people from other countries," also known as Xenophobia ("Xenophobia"). On his return from Manilla, Changez gets singled out and "escorted by armed guards into a room" where he is "made to strip down to [his] boxer shorts" (Hamid, 85). Consequently, he becomes the last person to board the aircraft, which also creates an uncomfortable situation as all eyes are upon him. Changez has the feeling of being "under suspicion" and needs to act "as nonchalant as possible" as he feels guilty and "uncomfortable in [his] own face" (85). In this way, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* shares some of the same qualities as postcolonialism, as it offers an awareness

of the human experience not typically registered or represented, echoing Young. Subsequently, Changez is likewise separated from his team at the airport in New York when asked about his trip to the United States. Similar to Mo's experience in *The Submission,* the security guards indicate that they do not believe either of them when they explain their purpose of entering the US (29).

How do other characters see Changez? Jim, Changez's boss, compares himself to Changez when he says, "I never let on that I felt like I didn't belong to this world. Just like you" (Hamid, 80). Jim opens up to Changez about his upbringing as poor and eventually compares himself to Changez when he says, "I grew up on the other side" (80). Readers learn from Changez's monologue that he agrees with Jim's words: "… Jim and I were indeed similar: he had grown up outside the candy store, and I had grown up on its threshold as its door was being shut" (81). Jim's reflections act as a metaphor for the division between being poor and not poor. In this case, as a majority person in power, Jim attempts to place his own experience from growing up poor, within the context of Changez's *otherness*.

Changez experiences a similar situation when he meets the parents of his girlfriend, Erica, for the first time. Erica's father expresses how he once "had a Pakistani working for [him]" and "[h]e never drank" (61). The comment signals the hurtful way Muslims have been represented even before the attacks. Erica's father insinuates that no one from Pakistan drinks alcohol, based on his one-time experience of knowing a Pakistani who never had a drink in his presence. Despite how Erica's father attempts to be friendly, or "Muslim-positive," the joke he makes seems to be on him, and not the Pakistani, he once knew who never drank. The whole situation reflects what Samiei explains as "neo-Orientalism" as Erica's father, in an ignorant way, acts as an expert on Muslims, and more especially, on Pakistanis in general. He explains further that the "[e]conomy's falling apart though, no? Corruption, dictatorship, the rich living like princes while everyone else suffers" (63). Kennedy points out that Erica's father assumes "in typical Orientalist fashion that he knows all about Pakistan from what he has read in newspapers like *The Wall Street Journal.*" He continues to make the assumption that "… the elite has raped that place well and good, right? And fundamentalism. You guys have got some serious problems with fundamentalism" (Hamid, 63), ultimately drawing a connection to the bigoted thought of all Muslims as linked to Islamic fundamentalism.

After the attacks, Changez begins to reflect upon his relationship to America, and its treasured values, which he used to think of as genuine. He tries to make sense of the nation's way of dealing with what has happened, and criticizes its way of doing so:

> [It] seemed to me that America, too, was increasingly giving itself over to a dangerous nostalgia at that time. There was something undeniably retro about the flags and uniforms, about generals addressing cameras in war rooms and newspapers headlines featuring such words as duty and honor. I had always thought of America as a nation that looked forward; for the first time I was struck by its determination to look back.
>
> (Hamid, 130)

Changez's reflections here speak to American hypocrisy and self-righteousness, and as readers, we do the same. Taking this into account, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* affects the reader to think about the same ethical concerns as Changez. In *The Submission,* the reader is similarly asked to do the same, when Paul Rubin, the jury's chairperson in deciding on the 9/11 memorial design, talks to his wife Edith about their son. Edith expresses how she wants Paul to be more "open-minded" about their son being gay (174). However, Paul's primary concern is finding a way to get Mo to withdraw from the memorial competition as it is revealed that Mo is connected to Islam (however little degree), and this creates nationwide chaos. Edith's wish, which at first glance seems more natural to link to Mo and the way he is mistreated, is nonetheless said about their son's sexual identity. This example points out in an ironic way, how Paul's narrow-minded and bigoted thoughts are linked to homophobia, not Islamophobia, and prejudice towards Muslims. It serves, in some ways, as a parallel between Paul's two discriminating standpoints.

From a western perspective, Changez ultimately tells a story from a postcolonial tenor where the world turns upside-down, and the voice of the *other* is heard. Changez does, for instance, tell his anonymous, American encounter, that he "should not imagine that … Pakistanis are all potential terrorists, just as we should not imagine that all you Americans are all undercover assassins" (Hamid, 209). Likewise, at one point in Naqvi's *Home Boy,* one of the three Pakistani protagonists, "Chuck," feels the need to explain himself to his employer at the end of the novel when he expresses: "I'm not a terrorist" (186). Further, the following section examines Waldman's *The Submission.*

Chapter 3: Amy Waldman's *The Submission*

In Amy Waldman's 2011 novel, *The Submission*, we meet the successful and ambitious architect, Mohammad Khan ("Mo"), two years after the attacks of September 11th, 2001. It opens up *in medias res*, when a hand-picked jury committee, argues over the two final contestants in an anonymous architectural contest to build the September 11th memorial in New York. When the jury committee finally agrees upon the winner design, named "The Garden," the unknown architect behind it, is identified as Mohammad Khan. When Mo later reflects upon the democratic process in which he was selected, he thinks to himself: "[b]ut in such an odd way. It was like being at a cocktail party where nobody acknowledges a nuclear bomb just detonated" (145). This event becomes the catalyst of the novel, as what started as a democratic and fair selection process boils down to quite the opposite when it is revealed that the winner has a Muslim name. When the envelope containing the winner's name gets passed around in the room to each of the jurors, the governor expresses: "Jesus fucking Christ! It's a goddamn Muslim!" (19). "Reading the name brought no pleasure, only painful tightening in [Paul's] jaw" (16). The situation becomes heated, and another member suggests that "we need to assume the worst - I mean, that he's a Muslim ... [n]ot that that's the worst" (20). Bob, a character who voted for "The Garden" design, changes his mind after identifying Mo as the architect. He says: "I'm not sure I want it with the name Mohammad attached to it. It doesn't matter who he is. They'll feel like they've won. All over the Muslim world they'll be jumping up and down at our stupidity, our stupid tolerance" (22). Along these lines, Waldman depicts the split responses to what becomes national chaos in *The Submission.*

The Submission is focalized through different characters that represent a polarized America after the events of 9/11. One of these voices belongs to Claire Burwell, a 9/11 widow, who ends up being "The Garden," and Mo's most forceful advocate. Claire belongs to New York's "brighter" upper-class, and her role in the jury is to represent families who lost relatives during the day of the attacks. One of the ways Waldman attempts to create different aspects of the critical issues in play is to include voices from each side of the political specter. Sean Gallagher is likewise a character who represents the families of 9/11 victims, yet with a different political standpoint than Claire. Gauthier points out that "the construction of a memorial whose design is Muslim in origin" would, for many characters in *The Submission*, be the "equivalent of creating a 'victory garden' for the jihadist" (199). Sean acts as a front person here and fights for the right to not agree to a Muslim designing their memorial. "Is it not enough," he says, "that they kill us, they have to humiliate us, too" (150). With this idea, Sean ultimately refers

to all Muslims as being the same, reflecting Young's argument about giving Muslims little or no agency in choosing who they are.

When it is known that Mo is the architect behind the winning design, a request is made for his background to be inspected thoroughly. Mohammed Khan, as the detailed report reveals, shows that Mo was born and raised in Virginia, educated at an American university and, "had won enough acclaim for Paul to know about it" (Waldman, 60). The report shows no sign of any criminal record or lawsuits. Not even a single tax lien could be held against him. Besides, the report shows that Mo currently lives in Chinatown. For Paul, it seems odd for an "Indian-American" man to live in this area (60). Paul's reaction to Mo's residency in Chinatown mirror the awareness of how certain areas belong to certain ethnicities. It also reflects the idea of people belonging to specific categories and that a sense of belonging is closely related to one's ethnicity. Similar to *The Reluctant Fundamentalist, The Submission* explores fundamental ethical concerns in this way.

The Submission explores the principle of tolerance through the awareness of oneself as an *other*, and more prominently, an awareness of someone else's *other*. For example, during Paul's first encounter with Mo, he tries to convince Mo to withdraw his submission. Paul opens up the conversation between the two of them with: "Look, we are living in difficult times, strange times" (79). The dialog between them continues as followed: When Paul asks Mo about the reason why he decided to enter the competition, Mo simply answers "[b]ecause I could" (79). Paul attempts to manipulate Mo into feeling guilty, accuses him of thinking of the whole situation as "a game" (82). Mo, in response, expresses how he has done "nothing but design a garden", and that, indeed, it is in fact a game, "[o]ne for which you made the rules. And now you are trying to change them" (82). Mo, in a postcolonial tenor, confronts the constructed reality with rules that favors the West and excludes himself. For this reason, *The Submission* challenges the made-up image of the *other*, which has embedded itself into Western civilization, echoing Said's *Orientalism*. The sharp and emotionally charged conversation between Paul and Mo presents aspects to the polarized sides to these issues. Mo stands his ground and fights for his justice, while Paul tries to make him feel guilty for not withdrawing his submission. Paul claims that Mo's Muslim identity acts as a threat to the public when he says: "I don't know why anyone who loves America, wants it to heal, would subject it to the kind of battle the selection of a Muslim would cause" (82). Paul, for this reason, paints Mo as an *other* in the way he purposely excludes him from the Western "democratic" rules. This type of exclusion implies how characters such as Paul, think of Mo as an outcast to Western society as a result of his Muslim identity.

Earlier in the novel, Paul agrees with the fact that it is “unconscionable to even think of stripping [Mo] of his victory” (25). However, he stresses the argument that “people are afraid … [and] we still don’t know whether we’re up against a handful of zealots who got lucky, or a global conspiracy of a billion Muslims who hate the West, even if they live in it....” (25). The fact that Mo never seems to be the “right Muslim” haunts him throughout the novel. First, the jury sees him as not Muslim enough, as he lacks the scary and dangerous characteristics that some of them prefer him to have in order to withdraw his submission. Beyond the hate crimes and animosity performed by people of the non-Muslim crowd, Mo experiences hate from the other side as well, as the Muslim population accuses him of not being the right kind of Muslim (309). Nevertheless, we learn that Sean Gallagher later mistakes Mo for being another man with “slick affect and Middle Eastern complexion” (Waldman, 211). From the above analysis, we learn that Mo suffers from conflicted social powers around him, which expect him to be fit a particular identity.

“*An Architect, Not a Terrorist*”

The use of media in *The Submission* plays an important role, and much of the compelling work of journalism that we witness throughout the novel is owed to Waldman’s background as a journalist. One of the central characters we meet in *The Submission* is Alyssa Spier, a journalist who gets a “thrill every time she unearthed a scrap of news and held it up for the public’s inspection” (76). Spier is the reporter who first leaks the news that the winner of the memorial competition has a “Muslim name.” In one of Spier’s online columns, she argues that “[t]he problem with Islam is Islam” (139). She goes on to say that “the religion’s violent propensities, its oppression of women, its incompatibility with democracy and the American way of life” (139). Spier’s agenda for making it as a successful journalist makes her look away from any ethical issues that would stand in the middle of her and triumph. Next to being in the position of having power through being a reporter, her pomposity makes Alyssa Spier’s character significant for the sake of what this study investigates.

Gauthier asks the question of “how the public is supposed to get a solid grasp of that unknown, distant other when forces strive to (mis)inform for their own political, if not nefarious purpose?” (200). Spier’s ignorant portrayal of Mo goes nationwide and leads to a further lack of understanding of who Mo is. When Said argued that the West has the power to construct knowledge about the East and people living there, this is essentially what the media does to Mo in *The Submission*. Evidence in support of this can be seen when Spier is interviewing Mo’s best friend, Thomas Kroll. One of the questions which Kroll has to answer is whether or not

Mo is religious. When explaining to Spier that Mo hardly is religious at all and that he is "way more decadent than I am" (123), Spier's twist his words into further questions, which makes Mo appear as a dangerous terrorist. *The Submission* invites us to slip into the minds of different characters, and through insensitive media coverage that paints Mo into someone, he does not recognize himself. In the novel, an article from *The New Yorker* argues that Mo's enemies judge him based on his "fellow Muslims." The article writes the following:

> We should judge him only by his design. But this is where matters get tricky. In venturing into public space, the private imagination contracts to serve the nation and should necessarily abandon its own ideologies and beliefs. This memorial is not an exercise in self-expression, nor should it be a display of religious symbolism, however benign… Khan has refused to say, on the grounds that such a question would never be asked of a non-Muslim, whether he has created a martyr's paradise… But doesn't Mohammad Khan see that by refusing to discuss the possible meanings of his memorial, he fuels those stereotypes.
>
> (Waldman, 159-160)

The article asks questions which affect the reader to reflect upon the same matters carefully. Chaz, the editor of *The New York Post*, expresses to Spier that "[p]eople want to be told what to think… [o]r they want to be told what they already think is right" (134-135). Despite how the article seems to be open-minded at first, it does, include the question of whether or not Mo's design is linked to what they believe is a martyr's paradise. It ultimately draws connections to Islamic fundamentalism and the terrorists behind the attacks.

The media reinvents Mo's identity by its way of exposing him to the public eye. Amir Khadem points out in *Representing 9/11: Trauma, Ideology, and Nationalism in Literature, Film, and Television* (2015), that Mo "has to struggle not only with the outside forces of dogmatism and hatred but also with the self-representation that he uncomfortably creates" (69). Mo remarks upon how "[f]acts were not found to be made, and once made, alive, defying anyone to tell them from truth" (161). Consequently, Mo separates himself from the Mohammad Khan that the media creates. Some days, the media paints him as a Muslim who obeys strict rules of no dating, while other days he seems to be someone who dates everyone all the time. "Strangers analyzed, judged and invented him" (161). Stories about him reveal that his father had run "a shady Islamic charity," and that his brother, which he never had, but wished for as a young boy, "had started a radical Muslim student's association" (161). From this point of view, the media invents a "new" Mo, mirroring Said's argument of the *orient* as a Western creation.

In the attempt to make Mo seem more American and "safe," the Muslim American Coordinating Council (MACC) tries to paint him as an ordinary, hard-working American with American values. In the attempt, a tagline about Mo reads, "An Architect, Not a Terrorist," and "Muslims like Mohammad Khan are proud to be American'"(Waldman, 220). In the effort to defend Mo in this way, MACC tries to humanize him by placing him in a campaign where Mo feels like "a new product"…that is… "being rolled out on the market" (220). Mo's lack of agency concerning his identity is replaced by what seems like an object to be sold to the public. Mo eventually separates himself from MACC and their campaign and decides to pay for a "droll, professional and expensive" lawyer, named Scott Reiss. In the time following this, Reiss tries to make Mo seem more American. "We need you holding up pictures of your children," Reiss expresses, and when Mo reminds him that he has none, Reiss tells him to "[b]orrow some. We've got to humanize you. No, Americanize you" (267). This passage is compelling in that it suggests that Mo, on his own, cannot represent the average and reliable human. It proposes that the only way to appear safe and dependable in public, American eye, is by changing oneself into a more western-looking person with western, promoted values.

Mystery Muslim

Both *The Submission* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* illustrate a reinvention of the Muslim character. Changez goes through a transformation as he refashions himself into a modern-day Gatsby, echoing Gray's argument. In Mo's case, it is the media's power to construct reality and not, forcing him to reinvent himself in parts of the novel. Before Mo's name is identified for the public, he is referred to by Spier (the journalist), as the "Mystery Muslim" (73). This slogan serves several meanings: At this point, Mo's identity as the winner of the competition is mysterious. Second, it serves a meaning which could be linked more explicitly to Said. Mo, when being entitled as the "Mystery Muslim," is ultimately being painted as the mysterious and strange *other*. This example reinforces the stereotypes in which Mo is being marked as the *other*. He is mysterious, not only as an unidentified winner but as an unidentified, foreign *other*, who appears different from the dominant group of "us." Similar to *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, *The Submission* demonstrates a way of putting the reader to the "test" in which they are asked to trust the protagonist or not. We see this in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* when Changez reacts to 9/11 (Hamid, 82), as well as in *Home Boy* when we later question the trio's friend, the Shaman, and his motives of disappearing after 9/11.

During a radio interview with the right-wing, anti-Muslim activist Lou Sarge, the radio host asks Mo how he felt after the 9/11 attacks. When he answers that he, like everyone else, felt

devastated, Sarge replies, “It must have been like finding out your brother is the Unabomber” (Waldman, 241). Khadem argues that *The Submission's* “polyphony,” acts as a “laborious product of cataloguing almost every political voice, from the far-right xenophobes to stark defenders of tolerance” and that these polarized perspectives are “visible in numerous fictional simulations of newspaper reports, radio and television show, op-ed pieces, and press conferences” (68). Mo explains numerous times that his design is “just a garden,” yet Sarge is quick to follow up with insinuations: is not The Garden actually “[a] martyr's paradise?” and “[a] jihadi playground? (241). It is not until Sarge insists that the garden is “[a] joke on the American people?” (241), that Mo reacts more and replies: “Excuse me? The American people include me” (241). Sarge acts, as Gauthier points out, in “faux empathy” when he pretends to “imagine himself as a Muslim” (204). This example mirrors the “faux empathy” in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, when Jim compares his upbringing as poor, as being the same as Changez's otherness. By pretending to know what it means to be a Muslim, Sarge's only motivation is to get Mo to admit that “anger and frustration were the principal motivators behind the development of his design” (204). Sarge, as a public figure, demonstrates his standpoint on Mo to the degree that Mo appears as a dangerous anti-American, extremist in the public eye.

Save America from Islam

Following the analysis above, it is reasonable to point out that *The Submission* continues in the vein of a postcolonial theoretical outlook as it keeps exploring the principle of tolerance through its multiple characters. Khadem argues that the novel's “polyphonic structure enables the narrative to expose the limits of current political discourses in dealing with the Muslim community” (68-69). One passage shows a *Times Art* review of “The Garden,” where, according to the critic, Mo's design parallels with gardens from the “Islamic world” (147). He goes on to say that “[s]ome might say that the designer [Mo] is mocking us, or playing with his religious heritage. Yet could he be trying to say something larger about the relationship between Islam and the West?” (Waldman, 148). Despite how the critic discriminates against all Muslims on behalf of Mo and his design, they raise important issues. The question asks whether or not the current situation would look the same if the winner did not happen to be a Muslim, or had a Muslim name (148). This question asks the reader to consider a fundamental ethical concern carefully.

Next to Sarge and Sean Gallagher, Save America from Islam (SAFI) and their leader, Debbie Dawson paint hurtful anti-Muslim viewpoints. The members refer to themselves as “SAFIs” and consist mostly of upper-class women with “[r]adical Islam [as] their freelance obsession”

(Waldman, 167). The SAFIs act as experts on Islam and Muslims and one of them argues that Mo's design is trying to "colonize" them, and that "[t]his is what they've done all over the world, all through history: they destroy something, then build an Islamic symbol of conquest in the same place" (167). When arguing with a MACC member, Sean expresses that Mo's design equals an "Islamic garden! .. a paradise for murderers. A way to take us over, to colonize us" (233). By referring to "radical Islam" as a freelance obsession, *The Submission* demonstrates examples of Samiei's neo-Orientalism. A similar example is seen in *The Submission* when a Fox News anchor introduces "a panel of experts on radical Islam" (149). During this passage, one of the "experts" argues that Mo is "trying to encourage new martyrs – see, here's a taste of where you'll get if you blow yourself up" (149). The perspectives of Sarge, Sean Gallagher, and the SAFI members represent anti-Muslim views demonstrating hostility, fear, and hatred towards Muslims and Islam in post-9/11 America. By including sharp conflicting views in her novel, Waldman creates literature which can be used as a "yardstick," in Weeks' term, where readers can apply their own thoughts "to the actions of others" (431) By reading *The Submission*, readers invest in the experience of the protagonists, and carefully recognize what Mo is going through, from a distance. By offering polarized viewpoints, there are parts of us that feel that Sarge, Gallagher, and the SAFIs are directing their hatred and discrimination towards us. Despite how several characters in *The Submission* make an effort to promote the principle of tolerance concerning Mo, they fail to do so. The following example demonstrates an example of this, as the governor expresses his concerns about Mo and his design:

> Even if Mr. Khan [Mo] is not a security threat - and there is no reason to think he is -his finding his way to victory in this anonymous competition reminds us that radical Islamists could use our democratic institutions and our openness to advance their own agenda.
>
> (Waldman, 130)

Sonia Baelo-Allué argues in her essay, **"**From the Traumatic to the Political: Cultural Trauma, 9/11 and Amy Waldman's 'The Submission'" that we are "invited to identify with every character, to get to know each perspective, simply in order to see things form a different one" (174). For this reason, *The Submission* acts as a novel with postcolonial qualities, as it contributes to valuable insights into Mo's life experience as an *other*.

Several characters in *The Submission,* such as the governor in the above example, attempts to say or do the right thing concerning Mo and his design. There is reason to think of Mo as dangerous; he indicates, while the reader implicitly understands that the governor finds the lack of evidence against Mo's threat, useless. It is, as the governor proposes, a possibility that people of Mo's "kind" only seeks to take advantage of America's vaunted ideals of openness and its

democratic institutions. Subsequently, Roi, Mo's boss, expresses to Mo that he is "not fond of all Muslims" and specifies that he means the ones who "won't assimilate" (Waldman, 139). Seen from yet a different perspective: Claire gives Mo the impression that he owes her gratitude for being supportive of him and his design when no one else is. Mo, nevertheless thinks that addressing a "thank you" to Claire, only would suggest that "she was doing something extraordinary," and he ultimately decides not to, since he will not "congratulate her for being decent" (142). Mo's reflections illustrate how *The Submission* acts as a novel with interests in promoting the principle of tolerance, as it remarks upon fundamental ethical concerns of Mo's experience as *other*.

Dehumanization of Asma

Asma is another central Muslim character in *The Submission*, whose husband, Inam, died in the 9/11 attacks when working as a janitor in one of the twin towers. Asma is important because she represents, in contrast to Mo, an illegal Muslim immigrant. The first time we meet Asma, she ponders: "[h]ow could you be dead if you did not exist?" (88). The implicit question signals how Inam never really lived in America because of his lack of documentation. It also suggests that his life, as Muslim *other*, never counted as much as others who died that day. Gauthier explains this further: "although they were thought, on the one hand, as 'non-American,' on the other they were killed while supporting the American way of life" (193). Although Inam worked under a fake name, Asma wishes for his name to be included in the new memorial to prove in some way that her husband was real, and loved. This, Asma contemplates, "would be the final repudiation of his existence – as he had only lived in her imagination" (92). Inam's name is not welcome in the memorial because of his illegal immigrant status, and more implicitly, because of his Muslim identity.

Further, Gauthier explains, "the not naming serves as a deliberate and exclusionary tactic" (214). Asma and Inam, along with the rest of the Muslim population, are consequently being dehumanized in the way the society forgets them. Butler explains this dehumanization further by asking the following question: "To what extent have Arab peoples, predominantly practitioners of Islam, fallen outside the "human" as it has been naturalized in its "Western" mold by the contemporary working of humanism?" (32). Asma is not given any rights as a 9/11 widow, and she has to be careful about going public because of her chance to get deported. Nevertheless, because she decides to stand up for Mo's design, and eventually her own rights, she is assassinated by what remains an anonymous killer only moments before she is about to get deported out of the US. Earlier in the novel, Asma reflects upon her concern over the "fear

and exposure, of violence" that she thinks is "too strong" at this time (218). Asma's character serves a valuable perspective on what is going on behind all the "fuzz" concerning the memorial chaos. Through Asma, *The Submission* offers an alternative perspective of a Muslim character. Her insight into what is going on is different from the one we get from Mo, yet it is valuable because it affects the reader to recognize her story from a distance as well.

Outsiders

Before the memorial chaos in New York, Mo travels to Afghanistan on behalf of his firm to compete in designing the new American embassy in Kabul. The informants notify that high security serves as the most crucial factor in the making of the new building. The security would make the embassy "forever closed to 'outsiders,'" referring to the local Afghans living outside of the American embassy (Waldman, 57). When Roi explains the importance of democracy and openness as embodied in the old embassy buildings, this serves as a metaphor for America itself. Mo, who believes those days to be over, is told that the need for security in the new embassy would make sure that it "didn't get blown up" (57). In another passage from Kabul, Mo, and the other architects gather for dinner in a restaurant that is "hidden behind high earthen walls" (59). The restaurant is described as luxurious and comfortable, and when one architect "[wonders] what the Afghans think of this," another one answers "[t]hey're not allowed in" (59). One of them even expresses "[h]ot chicks and fruit trees: they're missing their own paradise … I'm surprised they're not blowing themselves up to get in here" (59). Another one looks at Mo and says, "[s]ome of them didn't have to" (59). Khadem argues that Mo, during his trip to Kabul, ".. for the first time, sensed a segregation between himself and other American architects" (70). Mo is directly pointed to as the odd man out, and consequently gets placed in the same category as the people on the outside of the restaurant walls.

Moreover, on a guided tour of Kabul the next day, one of the architects points out to Mo: "[h]ow about a little team spirit?" (58). Mo, in this passage, marks himself as different or in opposition to the others in the group, going beyond the fact that they are competing for different firms. His response is quite clear: "We're not on the same team, remember?" (58). It is worth mentioning that it is after his trip to Kabul that Mo starts to grow a beard back in New York. Khadem points out that *The Submission* "makes it quite clear that Mo has almost no religious beliefs" and that this later "works against his possible solidarity with Muslim communities: thus this beard was originally an attestation of his individuality and not a sign of conformity to religious practices (69). In light of this, Mo consequently suffers from not being able to be the right Muslim nor the right American, not for anyone and not for himself.

The matter of side-picking is present throughout *The Submission.* During a Fox News debate on whether or not Muslims should be singled out for searches at airports, Mo gets into a heated discussion with his girlfriend, Yuki. Mo's reaction is surprising to us. Readers recall that Mo himself got singled out for a security-check in Los Angeles the first time we meet him in the novel: "His name was what got him pulled from a security line at LAX" (29). One of the security guards questions Mo's identity: "So you say you're an architect?" (29). When Mo confirms that he is an (American) architect, the guard's response is to ask for proof, implying how they do not believe his words. This, Gauthier argues, makes the security guards "incapable of seeing Khan [Mo] as anything but 'other' (203). One side of the Fox News debate is represented by right-wing activist Lou Sarge, who, in the months after 9/11, had included the phrase "I Slam Islam" as a part of his radio show. On the other side, Issam Malik, the front-runner for MACC, argues that "[t]he police used to stop African Americans solely for 'driving while black.' Now it's acceptable to single out for 'flying while Muslim'?" (51). The sentiment from Malik's rhetoric question reflects back to the postcolonial insights into the long and complicated history of racial oppression and colonial injustice. Malik's perspective is valuable in this way, as it offers an outlook on the fallout from these practices. How will it be possible to mark or identify Muslims as Muslims, Malik wonders, and addresses Sarge with the following: "Are you going to tattoo us"? (51). Malik's questions are important and critical: "Why should [Muslims] get singled out when [they] have done absolutely nothing wrong?" (51). Mo's opinion surprise us, as he comments on Sarge's argument: "He's right …"[w]e can't pretend that everyone's equally dangerous …I'm not going to pretend that all Muslims can be trusted. If Muslims are the reasons they're doing searches in the first place, why shouldn't Muslims be searched?" (51). Mo's surprising position in this passage makes the reader consider the fundamental ethics of the issues discussed in the debate.

The Submission depicts hurtful examples of animosity and discrimination against Muslims. In "The Rally to Protect Sacred Ground," signs from the gathered crowd state hateful and insensitive slogans read: "No tolerance for the intolerant," and "Islam kills" (191). Further, they express how, "[t]hey can have the first amendment, because we have the second" (192) and "[n]uke'em out and let Allah sort'em out" (191). The rally gets heated, and Sean Gallagher aggressively pulls off a Muslim woman's headscarf when he reacts to her sign: "We also are Americans and Islam is not a threat and Muslims died that day, too and bigots = idiots" (195). In *The Submission*, fourteen headscarves pulling's across the country happens as a domino effect after this passage. The crisis named the "Headscarf Crisis," becomes a symbol of the many hate crimes done to Muslims after 9/11. Roars from the crowd yell: "For generations

immigrants came to this country and assimilated, accepted American values. But Muslims want to change America – no they want to conquer it" (193). People who justify the "Headscarf Crisis," explain that women with headscarves are forced to wear them, and, by pulling them only symbols "an act of liberation" (217). By saying this, they claim that they know what is best for Muslims, and further act as experts on the topic in an orientalist manner.

In light of this, *The Submission* puts America's promoted ideals of tolerance and openness to the test when dealing with issues of discrimination and animosity. The "Headscarf Crisis" is similar to parts of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, where Changez talks to Jim and Erica's father. Despite how all three examples illustrate hurtful anti-Muslim sentiment, the headscarf pulling and the overly racist signs from the rally appear somewhat different from Changez's experience. What Jim and Erica's father demonstrate in their talks to Changez, reflect the "West and Islam" dualism as redeployed in a globalized framework. Both of them talk from a "majority person" perspective where they believe they are "Muslim friendly" and sympathetic. Nevertheless, they practice lazy stereotypes and prejudicial behavior, reflecting Samiei's "neo-Orientalism."

Moreover, Sean Gallagher remarks upon his actions and decides to visit the woman he attacked at the rally. When Sean expects the woman to be alone, he is, however, met with a crowd of MACC members. The fear among the members arises when they observe a bag on Sean's shoulder. In this gripping situation, Sean finds himself to be the only white person in the room, and consequently, the odd man out in the room. When he opens the bag and reveals all his belongings, he says: "[a]nd you think I came in here with a bomb?"(230). One of the MACC members answers, "[a] gun ... I thought you might have a gun" (230). Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* illustrates a similar situation. When the encounter between Changez and the anonymous American comes to an end, the reader is left with certain suspense when Changez says, when trying to propose a hand shake: "But why are you reaching into your jacket, sir? I detect a glint of metal" (209). The novel ends, leaving the reader uncertain of whether or not the American held on to a gun, or "a business card." Both examples portray the suspicious fear of the West-East relations, seen from both sides.

The Submission and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* conclude similarly. Towards the end of Changez's monologue, we reach the present time and learn that he leaves America. His growing feeling of being out of place after 9/11 makes him quit his job and move back to Lahore. Morey argues that "[j]ust as Changez is thrown quite roughly from one world to another as a result of 9/11," readers are likewise being asked to "register the operation of neo-imperial power from the point of view of one of its victims" (145). Correspondingly towards the end of *The*

Submission, we realize that Mo's design never got built (in the US,) and that Mo leaves America behind to settle down in Mumbai. For this reason, we can see the different perspectives in *The Submission*, as well as Changez's personal, yet untraditional monologue as ways to recognize what Morey calls "the effects of 9/11 [that] are still very much being played out (145). Both Changez and Mo's journeys end with the two of them leaving this way, being labeled different, and further represented as other.

Chapter 4: H. M. Naqvi's *Home Boy*

"So lemme get this straight: you guys aren't Indian?" is coming from the Bombmaster, addressing the three Pakistani protagonists in H. M. Naqvi's debut novel *Home Boy.* Chuck, the narrator in the novel, replies: "We are too handsome, chum! You can call us Metrostanis!" (11). Chuck is a self-proclaimed citizen of the world, who, together with his two best friends, AC and Jimbo, make up an inseparable Pakistani trio in New York City. Chuck, or Shayzad Lala, which is his real Pakistani name, moves from Karachi, Pakistan, to New York City four years before the novel's plot takes place. After graduating from college, where he earns a NYU diploma in English literature, Chuck starts working as a banker at a job he hopes one day will sponsor his green card (28). When he is fired, or as his VIP says: "taking one for the team" (30), Chuck decides to become a "bonafide New York cabbie" (35). Ali Chaudhry (AC), is a "charming rogue, an intellectual dandy, a man of theatrical presence" (2). His sister, who had emigrated to the US as a part of the first "wave of Pakistani immigrants" (2), had sponsored AC's green card only a decade later. Third, we have Jimbo, formerly "Jamshed Khan," also described as "a bonafide American" (3). Jimbo is born and raised in New Jersey, a place his father, Old man Khan describes as "one of the largest American hubs of Arabs and Muslims" (45). The three of them make up what Chuck describes as a "Pakistani contingent" (3), and often they would be "told half-jokingly, *oh, all you Pakistanis are alike*" (2) … however, as Chuck points out early, "we weren't the same, AC, Jimbo and me" (2).

The following sections investigate *Home Boy* in light of the postcolonial theoretical frame, and the literary analysis of *The Submission* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. This chapter focuses on *Home Boy* as a possible counterpoint to the other two novels in the way it is designed in vein of comedy and satire. By investigating how *Home Boy,* at times, provides a humorous reflection on serious issues of Islamophobia, this study discovers that this cuts both ways: it illuminates the absurdity of the situation the three characters find themselves in, and it also comes with a risk of threatening to trivialize it.

In her work entitled "Representing diasporic masculinities in post-9/11 era: the tragedy versus the comedy" (2014), Umme Al-wazedi argues that the "[d]ominant discourse usually focuses on the depiction of the bad Muslim who is either an oppressive patriarch or a terrorist as portrayed in Hollywood movies" (535). In DeLillo's *Falling Man* we see this in the painting of Hammad and Amir as the dangerous terrorists behind the 9/11 attacks. Depicted as the homegrown enemy, DeLillo gives fuel to the ignorant and hurtful stereotypes often thought of when picturing the dangerous Muslim. Often, Al-wazedi argues, "there is no middle path or an alternative perspective presented on Muslims" (536). However, this analysis reflects upon a

particular part of Al-wazedi's analysis, where she examines Zarqa Nawaz's sitcom, *Little Mosque on the Prairie* (2006-2010), following a satirical view of a small Muslim community in Canada. The sentiment expressed in her understanding of Nawaz's work embodies much of my own understanding of *Home Boy* as a possible counterpoint to *The Submission* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist.*

In *Home Boy*, Chuck, AC, and Jimbo are, as a consequence of the changing world of post-9/11 America, forced to challenge their identities. Prior to the attacks, Chuck explains that "[t]he theoretical premise of America had more tangible implications. You did not, for instance, have to explain yourself" (15), and as a friend of him once told him: "it didn't matter, because 'it's not where you're from … it's where you're at'" (15). Before 9/11, the three boys seem to live their best lives in New York City, where "you felt you were no different from anybody else; you were your own man; you were free" (15). *Home Boy* explores what Leyla Sanai describes as an "account of what it's like to feel like a Westerner but not look like one" (2). The novel explores issues of identity and a sense of belonging for Muslim characters who want to fit in and be free. The three friends see themselves as a natural part of New York's diverse population, and they take great pride in their cosmopolitan identities. Early in the novel, AC gives Chuck a speech about the importance of commitments, as Chuck runs late to meet him and Jimbo at the bar after work:

> You have to remember, we have responsibilities to each other, as friends, and more importantly, as, ah, human beings. We cannot allow ourselves to be cauterized. We are the glue ... Keeping civilization together. Without bonds and good manners, without commitments, even small commitments, we're nothing, unconnected, uncivilized, animals! Do you follow?
>
> (Naqvi, 20)

In an essay titled "'We are the glue keeping civilization together': Post-Orientalism and Counter-Orientalism in Naqvi's *Home Boy,*" Birte Heidemann argues that AC expresses a type of "counter-Orientalist resistance" (297). AC's perspective is valuable in the way it affects the reader to think about the ethical concerns of what is going on for the three friends. Through AC's speech, *Home Boy* acts as a novel with interest in exploring the principle of tolerance as it affects the reader to carefully think about the social injustice AC and his friends' experience. The novel lends itself to a postcolonial critical framework, and in that respect, it is similar to *The Submission* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist.*

AC's concerns about how the three friends find themselves in the risk of being categorized within specific frames rarely appear this directly, yet so implicitly again in the novel. Through

breathtaking, and at times, very entertaining scenarios, the three friends express an awareness of reality as constructed upon categorizations and ignorance. For instance, Chuck discovers a *Times* food critic's review of a restaurant named "Kabab King" (182), where the review describes the kebab as "simple and primitive - as old as the day the first ancestral hominid stuck a piece of meat on a stick and held it over a fire" (182). Chuck rereads the *Times* column so many times that he finds himself able to "recite it at will" (182). What seems implicit is how the *Times* column seemingly paints a picture of Muslim people of the "kebab-land." Chuck reflects upon the words, and he admits that his anger and frustration from reading the column does not necessarily come from the "misconceived analogy," but, nevertheless "the whimsical, vaguely Orientalist characterization of the kebab" (182). The Kebab-passage's use of satire demonstrates a comical way of critiquing the same issues, as seen in *The Submission* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. This is further illustrated when Chuck expresses how the column, without doubt, must have been "penned by a white man," which he also refers to as "Sam Huntington of food criticism" (182), referring to Samuel Huntington's recognized work form 1996, entitled "Clash of Civilizations" (1996). The column goes on to describe how the "kebabs sizzles through life unappreciated, just as cars and buses rumble into the unconscious sonic background of city life" (182). The sentiment described above is important because it acts as a metaphor for what Said named the *orient*. However, *Home Boy's* attempts to act comical comes with a certain risk as it looks away from the insensitive part of it. It appears then that Naqvi focuses on the humoristic side of the *Times* column.

An Expression of Belonging

Home Boy's use of comedy and satire reflects an "act of 'laughing back," similar to 'writing back' in the postcolonial field" in Al-wazedi's term. (542). In a passage that takes place in their often-visited, local bar, the three friends get into a fight with two men described with "prominent chins, heavy shoulders, thick torsos, the waxen physiques of bawlers" (23). It all starts when one of the "Brawlers" murmurs the word "A-rabs" (24) directed to Chuck. Coming from Jimbo, he cries out in response: "[w]e're not the same," followed by "Brawler No. 2" expressing, "Moslems, Mo-hicans, whatever" (24). Next, Jimbo expresses, "I'm from Jersey dude!" (24), as well AC "pumping his fists in the night air" and singing "'Niggaz start to mumble/ They want to rumble / Mix'em and cook'em in a pot like gumbo …'" (25). Zayed argues that *Home Boy* narrates "in a language that is reminiscent of slam poetry" (70), a style similarly seen in the opening pages of the novel when Chuck explains how the trio had become "Japs, Jews, Niggers. We weren't before" (1). The use of rap becomes an expression of

belonging for the three friends in *Home Boy*. The "slam poetry" acts as a way for them to express their self-proclaimed identities, which at times already seems decided for them. In this passage, Zayed points out that Chuck expresses a "disappointment," and a "qualm" in this manner. This implies how Chuck seems to have accepted his indefinite place as *other* in America, and that this "cool" attitude towards it acts as a sort of coping mechanism to deal with the absurd and challenging situation they are in.

The Brawler passage seems to be the moment where Chuck understands that things are different for him and his friends: "Repeating the word, ["Arabs"], in my head, I realized it was the first time I'd heard it spoken that way, like a dagger thrust and turned, the first time anything like that had happened to us at all" (24). *Home Boy* makes it quite clear that the three boys experience discrimination and hurtful ignorance. When the boys get arrested later in the novel, we learn that Chuck is forced to undress while being called "sand nigger" (108). He expresses at a point in the novel, how "[i]n the latter half of 2001, however, my dreams had turned to shit" (142). Before this realization, Chuck reflects upon how the three of them once appeared oblivious to it all:

> At the time we didn't think that there was more to it than the mere sense of spectacle. We were content in celebrating ourselves and our city with libation. It was later that we realized that we'd been on common ground then … that we hadn't been putting on some sort of show for others, for somebody else. No, we were protagonists in a narrative that required coherence for our own selfish motivations and exigencies.
>
> (Naqvi, 6)

As he recalls in this passage, Chuck had only himself and his nonchalant life in the city to worry about. With their fingers on the "pulse of the great global dialectic" (1), life was great: They would keep up with the "mainstream discourse" including the readings of the *Times* and the *Post*, as well as enjoying the more eccentric readings of *Tight* or *Big But* (1). Nevertheless, they are "taken by the brash, boisterous voices of contemporary fiction" (1) and amused by the world of hip hop rap, as lines of "*[s]traight outta Compton, crazy motherfucker named Ice Cube/From a gang called Niggaz With Attitude*" (1) are continuously quoted throughout the novel. The three friends long for recognition, and they act as what Zayed points out as "global citizens with their deep root in cosmopolitan intellectual make up" (71). Naqvi's attempt to paint "hip" characters, does at times, resemble what we would witness in pop-cultural TV series and movies where the Muslim character serves a comic function. At times, *Home Boy* seems to include the Muslim character because it wants to entertain us with their stereotypical behavior, appearance, and speech. In *Home Boy*, the Pakistani friends are aware of this role, and the

comedy becomes a way to illuminate the absurd and challenging situation they find themselves in. In her analysis of *Little Mosque on the Prairie*, Al-wazedi argues what is found correspondingly evident in *Home Boy*, as Naqvi likewise presents "outlets for criticizing [his] own culture as well as protests against the generalization that Muslims are inferior or homogeneous" (543). Taking this into account, *Home Boy* is different from *The Submission* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* in the way it makes postcolonial critiques through comedy and satire. The following paragraph demonstrates this further.

In a crucial part of the plot in *Home Boy*, named the "Shaman run," the three friends go looking for their mysterious friend, "The Shaman," who has gone missing after 9/11. The novel takes a sharp turn after this passage, as two FBI agents turn up and charge them with links to terrorism. In the hours before this occurs, the three friends have no idea of what is awaiting as they drive towards the Shaman's house in Connecticut. Described as an "American success story, a Pakistani Gatsby" (21), the Shaman never appears in the novel directly. The three friends jump into Chuck's cab and make their way to Connecticut, and while driving, they get pulled over by a couple of police officers on patrol. "The last thing they needed that night was a brush with the law" (75), Chuck ponders. He later remarks upon why the police officer pulled them over:

> I had no idea what triggered his concern - and frankly, I never may - but at the time the following thought hit me: *We're a bunch of brown men in a car, the night of heightened security in the city.* We looked appropriately unshaven, unkempt, possibly unwholesome. I could have been silly or paranoid, but it was the first time I had felt this way: uneasy, guilty, criminal.
>
> (Naqvi, 76)

By referring to themselves in this style, Naqvi puts the "hegemonic discourse" to the test, as he inevitably creates what Al-wazedi has called "tensions … [which] can hardly be held onto because of [the] skillful use of humour" (543). Naqvi points his finger to the existing prejudices at the same time as he plays with comedy and satire. *Home Boy* depicts how Chuck, AC, and Jimbo stand out as *others* in a dangerous time in America. The three friends stick out, and they are aware of it. Naqvi's attempt to comment on this matter in the vein of satire and comedy comes with a certain risk in this passage, as it makes light of the seriousness of the situation they are in.

Despite how *Home Boy* appears less politically sure-footed as *The Submission* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, the humor remains valuable for the sake of the postcolonial critique it wants to make. Noting the compelling nature of this idea, Naqvi's effort in criticizing the

hurtful dehumanization of Muslims derives from his humorous way of telling fascinating stories. The three friends manage to talk their way out of their first encounter with the police, and their search for the Shaman continues as they head for his mansion in Connecticut. When they arrive and understand that the house is vacant, the three friends break in and "crash" the place as they watch his porn (89) and eat his food (92). Shortly after this, the FBI shows up after receiving an anonymous tip about suspicious activity, and the boys are brought to the MDC and charged with links to terrorism.

As readers, we know that the Shaman is missing, and later we learn during the police interrogation of Chuck, that the cops had found "books in Arabic, and bomb-making manuals" at the Shaman's house (Naqvi, 108). This is where *Home Boy* makes us question the reliability of the Shaman. Similar to *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, *Home Boy* affects the readers to think about the ethical concerns of what is going on, and their feelings about certain characters are put to the test. As readers have faith in Chuck and his friends, they wish to have faith in their mysterious friend as well. Nevertheless, because of the "bomb-making manuals," we start to question the character's accountability. At this point, we do not know if this information is accurate, or if it is something the police officer lies about to make Chuck talk during the interrogation. Later, the novel reveals that "the bomb-making manuals and the sinister Arabic literature turned out to be *The Anarchist Cookbook* and Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah"*(193). The whole situation becomes seemingly both comical and disturbing. It is not until the end of the novel that we learn the real story of why the Shaman went missing. Chuck discovers by a coincidence when stumbling upon different obituaries in the paper that the Shaman attended a meeting in the World Trade Centers on the day of the attacks. The serious sentiment we get from the news can hardly be held on to for so long, as the Shaman's obituary reads: "No friend of fundamentalism" and "He worked hard, played hard" (213). *Home Boy* demonstrates that comedy and satire can be valuable in the attempt to tell horrible stories.

When the police find out that Chuck's visa is about to expire, they begin to make threats: "You'll be illegal in a week … [s]o you will cooperate with us, or we can lock you away for a long time … and if you're lucky, someday we'll put you on a plane – a one-way ticket back to Bumfuckingstan" (107). Naqvi's attempt to create comedy in this respect makes light of the fact that Chuck is discriminated against and threatened by the police officer. Further, during Chuck's second round of interrogations, the police officer named Grizzly, asks: "I'm trying to understand why Muslims terrorize" (115). Grizzly insinuates that all Muslims, as they appear to be the same kind, terrorize, as it serves as a hobby or way of living. Grizzly expects Chuck to have all the answers to what it is like to be a Muslim. His questions echo the same "lazy

stereotyping" seen in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* when Erica's father tells Changez about the Pakistani that "never drank." In a postcolonial tenor, Chuck reflects upon this: "As a Muslim, he figured I would have special insight into the phenomenon – knowledge of the relevant fatwa or some verse in the Koran" (115). Taking note of Chuck's reflections, *Home Boy* entertains its readers by Chuck's humorous way of dealing with the absurdity of the situation. *Home Boy* is different from *The Submission* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* in dealing with the issue of Islamophobia and discrimination against Muslims. It demonstrates that there are advantages of using comedy when telling challenging stories such as Chuck's.

Grizzly seeks to paint Chuck as an Islamic fundamentalist as he goes after him with the following questions: "You a terrorist?", "You read the Ko-Ran?" "You pray five times a day to Al-La?" "You keep the Ram-a-Dan?" and "D'you eat pork?" and "Drink?" (113). The dialog between them continues in the same uncommunicative and bigoted way. Grizzly gives Chuck little chance to answer anything except yes/no, replies to one of the questions: "No, sir. I pray several times a year, one special occasions like Eid" (113). Grizzly, who seems disappointed by Chuck's answers, points out: "Won't Al-La get mad?" (113). The asymmetrical power relations played out between the two of them are disturbing, and it mirrors Mo's conversation with the right-wing activist and radio host, Lou Sarge. The dialog depicts the narrow-minded representation of Muslims as the foreign and exotic *other*, in desperate need of help from the educated and democratic West. However, parts of us are possibly entertained by the interrogation, echoing Zayed's argument of *Home Boy's* use of language as similar to slam poetry. We see this in the way Grizzly asks his questions, suggesting that Chuck lacks skills in the English language. Meanwhile, the reader knows that Chuck, with his NYU diploma in English, perfectly understands what Grizzly is telling him. Naqvi's use of comedy becomes valuable for the sake of the critique he is trying to point out with Grizzly's childlike and discriminating behavior.

When *Home Boy* comes to an end, we learn that Chuck, similar to Changez and Mo, packs his belongings and leaves America behind. When Amo, the girl he is in love with, asks him about why he is leaving New York, Chuck's only answer is, "It's complicated" (211). In reality, all he wants is to tell her about the "fear, the paranoia, the profound loneliness", and the fact that he had "spilled [his] guts" (211). As the moment passes between them, Chuck pictures an alternative reality where he stays in America, marries Amo, and that their wedding would be "catered by Kebab King" and "Jimbo would deejay" (212). The following section will include a brief discussion of the literary analysis and conclude whether or not the novels promote the principle of tolerance when dealing with the critical issues in play.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been to investigate, through a postcolonial theoretical framework, how the Muslim *other* is represented in the three post-9/11 novels, *The Submission, The Reluctant Fundamentalist, and Home Boy.* Likewise, this study has explored whether or not the novels seek to promote the principle of tolerance in their attempt to interrogate the ethical concerns of the postcolonial critical framework.

There are several similarities, as well as differences between the three novels examined in this study. One example is the novels' shared interest in depicting the lives of Muslim characters in a dangerous and complicated time in America. All three novels comment on the experience of individual protagonists who stand out in a Western-dominated majority. As a result of the Muslim identity the protagonists carry with them, society perceives them as *others*. Each of the novels includes fictional stories that reflect the events of 9/11, 2001.

Additionally, all three novels lend themselves to a postcolonial critical framework in the way they interrogate issues concerning the discrimination and prejudices against Muslims. Each novel paints compelling situations exemplifying these matters. Subsequently, all three novels create a space for the reader to carefully recognize the individual protagonists' experiences from a distance. The postcolonial critical framework found in all three novels highlights the importance of this as they provide alternative perspectives.

The study of *The Submission* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* reveals the authors' underlying political and ideological framework that motivated them to create these particular novels. *The Submission* illustrates this through a polarized political specter in America, which Waldman creates with multiple points of view of different characters. For this reason, *The Submission* puts the reader to the test when offering a "yardstick" of various political viewpoints to the critical issues in play. In this way, we are as readers able to apply our own feelings to the feelings of others. It affects us to think about the right and wrong cautiously. The analysis, therefore, confirms that *The Submission* promotes the principle of tolerance.

The Reluctant Fundamentalist demonstrates many of the same ethical concerns, as Changez invites the reader to listen to his experience of the West, told from his dramatic monologue. In contrast to *The Submission*, the reader is, nevertheless, asked to trust the voice of one single character, and consequently also asked to consider Changez as a reliable character. For this reason, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* affects the reader to remark upon their thoughts and feelings about Changez's storytelling. The results therefore demonstrates that *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* too, promotes the principle of tolerance.

As this thesis has argued, *Home Boy* is different from *The Submission* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* as a result of its comic approach. Its use of satire and comedy comes with what this research has shown to be both advantages and dangerous risks. Humor becomes valuable in this novel for the sake of the postcolonial critique that it wants to make. For this reason, *Home Boy*, similar to the other two novels, becomes a novel with postcolonial qualities. Comedy and satire contribute as valuable tools to alternative ways of telling horrible and complicated stories.

Nevertheless, as the analysis illustrates, this way of telling stories comes with certain drawbacks too. *Home Boy* runs a risk by using comedy and satire to trivialize the complicated and hurtful experiences the protagonists go through. The research demonstrates that *Home Boy's* alternative way of telling stories, cuts both ways. It manages to illuminate the critical issues of prejudice and discrimination against Muslims, but it also makes light of it when seeking to be comical.

There are no simple answers to the complex questions this study has explored. However, in the process of getting there, this thesis has made valuable discoveries. This research shows that the selected post-9/11 novels have the power to affect readers in considering the fundamental ethics of postcolonial thinking. These novels afford us the means of examining "the complex dynamics involved in any exhibition of fellow-feeling for the *other,*" and they likewise demonstrate the "ever-present potential failure of that engagement," echoing Gauthier. By confronting the critical issues of prejudices and discrimination against Muslims, the individual novels help us make sense of who we are as people and how we see others who are different from us. These novels are brave in this way as they put the reader's ethical concerns to the test. The difference, then, is found the way the three novels go about this brave task, where *Home Boy* becomes a counterpoint with its use of comedy and satire.

Finally, I propose that this thesis contributes to prior research within this field in the way it has accomplished, if only just a little, a closer understanding of who we are as people, and how we understand those who are different from us. No matter how one looks at it, these novels will be read in a post-9/11 world different from the world before the attacks, and for this reason, they are valuable to us. As we move onwards into the future, we must keep recognizing the alternative perspectives that novels offer, and we must continue to keep "turning the world upside-down" for the sake of understanding each other.

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