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RESEARCH PAPER

Immigrant Muslims Before and After 9/11: An Analysis of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *Home Boy*

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PAPER INFO	ABSTRACT
Received:	That the fall of twin towers in America would drastically change
October 23, 2021	the entire global village into friends and foes, civilized and
Accepted:	uncivilized and 'us' and 'them', was not a fancy but an
December 28, 2021	undeniable reality. It happened and happened bitterly. Things
Online: December 31, 2021	dramatically changed overnight in the winking of an eye. Once
Keywords:	the world witnessed beautiful buildings dashing down to earth,
Home Boy	everybody was on the bandwagon. There were theories,
Immigrants,	speculations, discussions, reflections, fears and nightmares.
Muslims, Us,	Literature worldwide too opened itself to 9/11. From Pakistan
The Reluctant	it was Mohsin Hamid and H. M. Naqvi who documented the
Fundamentalist,	mighty event which was enough to jolt Muslims throughout the
They,	globe. This research too is an investigation of the division of the
*Corresponding	world into 'we' and 'they.' Muslims before 9/11 on American
Author	land were like 'we' but 9/11 pushed them into 'they' who were
	hated, abused, harassed, marginalized and declared as
1, 1 :(🖨	uncivilized. As a consequence, the dreams of assimilation into
sultanulaarifeen@g mail.com	American society turned into nightmares and Changez and
IIIaII.COIII	Chuck had to opt for retreatism.

Introduction

At the dawn of the twenty first century billions of people witnessed an event, famously known worldwide as 9 / 11, that immediately changed and divided the global village into the categories of friends and foes, civilized and uncivilized, 'us' and 'them.' Huntington (1997: 20) asserts "For people seeking identity and reinventing ethnicity, enemies are essential, and the potentially most dangerous enemies occur across the fault lines between the world's major civilizations." This essential presence of enemies for Huntington (2005: 24) is required historically for defining oneself as he says "To define themselves, people need another." Ray (2005: 576) too talks about the difference between 'us' and 'them' in the wake of 9/11 because "9 / 11 is the date when the nation must gather for an unqualified reflection on the "us and them" divide" US as a nation gathered and stood as an 'us' against 'them' - the perpetrators of the cataclysmic attacks, and succeeded in convincing the world nations to stand with 'us' as friends against the foes - the 'them' and the nations immediately rallied to the clarion call of the United States so that the friends - the 'us' could together, in the words of DeLillo (2001: 5), "Kill the enemy and pluck out his heart," the enemy being 'them.' It is, however, of overriding importance to know that the enemy declared is although the enemy seen, yet the story does not end here as it is the response that advances the animosity and creates and widens further differences which solidify over a period of time. In this respect, Abel (2003: 1238) contends that "Seeing, in other words, is less a matter of (in) correct perception than a question of how subjects can respond to events." But seeing and responding depend upon the division between 'us' and 'them' and their perceptions too, about each other. So, both are a matter of (in) correct perceptions. What counts, however, is the perception; whether imaginary or real, of the mighty against the weak as the mighty are terribly privileged in almost every respect to keep the weak subordinated and eclipse their perception and make it appear as imaginary, if it be real. And this subordination; the opposite and the advantageous point for domination, was made further possible when 9 / 11 occurred. It is thus the narrative of the dominant, and the way it is imposed, that counts and perhaps this is what Hamid (2010: 71) tries to convey while talking to American " . . . as I suspect you - an American - will agree, it is the thrust of one's narrative that counts, not the accuracy of one's details." This thrust has since then been continually counting as Muslims worldwide are declared terrorists, uncivilized, barbarians with many other demonizing names. The thrust of the narrative in the shape of 9 / 11 has, however, been challenged by many people across the world and its veracity is still being challenged. Hence, when one studies The Reluctant Fundamentalist by Mohsin Hamid and Home Boy by H. M. Naqvi, one realizes and experiences the constructs of 'Othering' prevailing in the novels in abundance. Before 9 / 11 such a construction, perhaps, laid inert, in America and rest of the world, but it welled up immediately after the event and took the 'other' by surprise like a tsunami.

Pre - 9/11: The Peaceful Times

A minute study of The Reluctant Fundamentalist reveals that its characters were living a happy and peaceful life before the fall of the twin towers of WTC and had nothing on their minds which would render their nights sleepless, and their days steeped in melancholy and gloom. Similarly, one cannot discern any concern for the future in the discourse of any of the characters of the novel. But one can observe a seismic shift in the circumstances and attitudes of the characters of the novel in the wake of September 11. As the novel opens, we find that the protagonist - Changez, loves America and is an intelligent Princeton graduate, who like any other immigrant student has a desire to live up to the American dream and it is Princeton where his this "dream come true" (TRF, 2). And this is why perhaps Changez says that the very thought of "Princeton inspired in me the feeling that my life was a film in which I was the star and everything was possible" (TRF, 2). Speaking high of himself, he further says that he was "a perfect breast" and "confident of getting any job" he "wanted" (TRF, 3), as every fall Princeton welcomed the corporate recruiters onto the campus. On one such occasion of corporate recruiting he finds himself lucky to be hired, by the Underwood Samson & Company, after a tough competition between international students. And when Jim - the in charge of analyst recruiting for Underwood Samson & Company, extending his hand tells Chuck that he has an offer, the protagonist hardly believes this and feels something welling up inside him with "a sense of pride so strong that it made me lift my head and yell . . . 'Thank you, God!" (TRF, 9). Another happy moment in Changez's life comes before the fall of the twin towers when he describes falling in love with Erica "I could not prevent myself offering to carry her backpack - so stunningly Regal she was" (TRF, 10) and so an intimacy starts developing between the two. Because of newly found job and love we find Changez declaring himself to be "a New Yorker" (TRF, 20) in a happy tone. Another happy occasion for Changez in America, before 9 / 11, comes at the end of the analyst training program when Jim tells him that doing fairly well, he is number one in his class. Changez recalls that moment in these words "I felt bathed in a warm sense of accomplishment. Nothing troubled me; I was a young New Yorker with the city at my feet" (*TRF*, 27). In chapter four, one finds Changez in happiness as Erica invites him to visit her home where he is a welcome guest. We also see that Changez starts enjoying the kisses of Erica during their outings.

On the other hand, the first two chapters of H.M.Naqvi's *Home Boy* also reveal that all the characters of the novel were living a peaceful life before what happened to WTC, yet there are indirect references to the event that do not immediately give one the impression that they refer to 9 / 11 until one reaches at page twenty two of the novel where there is the first direct reference to the historic event. First chapter of the novel gives one an insight into the busy but happy life at New York wherein the immigrants enjoy newspapers, TV, music, dance, bars, wine and the cozy company of friends. It appears as if there is no worry that these characters know or would know. AC, Jimbo and Chuck are three Muslim fellows who enjoy American life to its extreme.

Of these three friends, AC - Ali Chaudhry is a permanent immigrant; his sister Mini Auntie had sponsored his green card. Jimbo - Jamshed Khan is a bonafide American, and Chuck - Shehzad has four years earlier come from Karachi to New York to attend college. Chuck says that "The turn of the century had been epic, and we were easy then, and on every other Monday night you'd see us at Tja! . . . " (HB, 3). There is yet another character we are introduced to in this chapter and she is known as Duck, Jimbo's girlfriend. Chuck - the protagonist of the novel tells us that they "all loved her and called her Duck" (HB, 5). We are further told in the novel by Chuck that they "were content in celebrating" themselves and their "city with libation" (HB, 6). The three friends had, hence, assimilated themselves into the American life to the extent of making themselves purely Westernized. There they did all that which they could have hardly imagined doing in Pakistan with such an ease. Chuck describes falling in love routinely in America. In chapter two of the novel, one finds America being described in an elegant manner as the characters had almost acculturated them with this country. Chuck narrates "after spending ten months in New York, you were a New Yorker, an original settler . . . (HB, 15). During the peaceful days Chuck would frequently visit Mini Auntie's place where he would enjoy Pakistani and American food. But 9 / 11 put a dreadful stop to these peaceful and innocent pleasures on American soil. Pre and post 9/11 life of Naqvi's characters could be compared with pre and post 0/11 life of Al - Jazeera TV. Ali (2003: xviii) highlights the double standards of the West which it manifested against al - Jazeera "During its early years, al - jazeera was warmly welcomed in Washington" but "9 / 11 put a stop to these eulogies"

Post - 9/11: The Troubled Times

Ray (2005: 575-76) opines "9 / 11 is the day that reinforces forcefully the idea of a new form of Manifest Destiny as a legitimate ideal for US domination globally. . The invasion of Iraq appears to be propelled by Manifest Destiny" This American Manifest Destiny manifesto, after 9 / 11, by dividing the global village, using the words of Huntington (1997: 32), into " $Two\ Worlds$: $Us\ and\ Them$ " has deprived the world, especially the Muslim world, of its peace to the extent of dislocating its people from their adopted and original cultural habitat so much so that they have started feeling alienated. Jensen (2004: 123) being one of the citizens of the American empire asserts "After 9 / 11 – as my home has become homeland – the alienation has

peaked." Similarly, Said (1994: xviii) writes "We Westerners will decide who is a good native or a bad, because all natives have sufficient existence by virtue of our recognition..." Jensen (2004: 124) asserts "We citizens of the United States are citizens of the empire."

The protagonists of Hamid and Naqvi along with other characters find themselves in a totally changed and charged America. For example in Hamid's The Reluctant Fundamentalist, Changez, to his dismay, overnight becomes the worst sufferer at the hands of the dreadful events of September the 11th as this fateful day suddenly lands him and his dreams into a trouble he would hardly come out from. Changez's initial response to the attacks is that of pleasure but not on the deaths of thousands of people. It is, on the other hand for he ". . . was caught up in the symbolism of it all, the fact that someone had so visibly brought America to her knees" (TRF, 43). After being stranded in Manila for several days because of no air traffic one eventful day Changez finds himself bound for airport as the flights resume and it is here that he becomes an 'Other' and his Pakistaniness becomes visible which he first falsely assumed was not visible. Changez's sufferings start "At the air port I was escorted by the armed guards into a room where I was made to strip down to my boxers (TRF, 44)." This attitude of the airport authorities with the team of the Underwood Samson is strikingly discriminating as the Americans are allowed to board the plane while the only non-American - the protagonist is humiliatingly and thoroughly frisked before getting on the plane for departure to America. One would agree with the words of Aladaylah (2010: 3) "the relationship between the Occident and the Orient is based on binary oppositions" It further shows the importance of color which according to Said (1994: 134) shows the absolute division between the white and the non-white and, therefore, the difference between the Americans - the whites and the non-whites remains as, in the words of Said (1994: 135) "a Sahib is a Sahib, and no amount of friendship or camaraderie can change the rudiments of racial difference."

Similarly, Changez's self – alienation is evident from the fact that when he finds that "New York was in mourning after the destruction of the World Trade Center . . . photos, bouquets, words of condolence – nestled into street corners. . . " and "They reminded me of my own uncharitable – indeed, inhumane – response to the tragedy, and I felt from them a constant murmur of reproach" (*TRF*, 47). Uncharitable and inhumane as was his response to the tragedy, quite equally uncharitable and inhumane was the response of the people, in the corridors of power, in offices and in streets, for people like Changez who were suffering from the sins they had not committed at all.

After his inhumane experiences at Manila, Changez at his return to New York comes closer to Erica and although she has become pale in his absence yet she needs a compassionate soul as does Changez. We, therefore, see that both become necessary for each other and together they go "to fundraisers for the victims of the World Trade Center . . ." till the protagonist becomes ". . . in effect, her official escort at the events of New York society" (*TRF*, 50). Thus the company of Erica helps him penetrate deep into the New York's elite class but she alone could not be sufficient to welcome his entry into the dominant class of America if he had not got some valuable credentials like his Princeton degree and Underwood Samson business card which earned him " . . . a respectful nod of approval," and besides when his this status gives him the feeling as if he is " . . . entering in New York" (*TRF*, 51).

So, after 9/11, things worsened for immigrants. Awan (2010: 3) perhaps alludes to this situation when he writes". . . the immigrants' previous whole, identifiable selves are shaken and split." Changez's self, similarly, also appears to have been split into two; the one " . . . the crumbling of the world around" him and the other, "the impending destruction of" his "personal American dream," (*TRF*, 56) but he wants not to believe in either possibly because of the feeling that with this fear he, Like Erica " . . . might slip into" his "own depths, where" he " would be trapped, unable to breath," (*TRF*, 51). The rise of such a fear alone in Changez's heart bespeaks of a sense of self-alienation which he knows, perhaps, that it can be devastating. This is why he is not willing to believe into any split theory of his self. Besides, "America was gripped by a growing and self – righteous rage in those weeks of Sep . . ." and Changez's "mother was frightened . . . brother was angry . . . father was stoical," (*TRF*, 56) thus, in such a backdrop he could not afford any rupture or split in his self.

The destruction and rubble of WTS is infact the destruction of the 'Other' to turn him into rubble unrecognizable. DeLillo (2010: 2) while writing about the event of 9 / 11 and condemning Muslims, says that "The narrative ends in the rubble and it is left to us to create the counter narrative." And the counter narrative was indeed created when we read that "Pakistani cab drivers were being beaten to within an inch of their lives; the FBI was raiding mosques, shops, and even people's houses; Muslim men were disappearing, perhaps into shadowy detention centers for questioning or worse" (TRF, 56). But despite all these bitter facts Changez still seems to be "clad in" his "armor of denial" (TRF, 57). In the face of all the difficulties that Changez faces and goes through in the wake of September the 11th, his utmost effort is to reassimilate him in the city which alludes implicitly, in the words of Fanon (1986: 63), of his wish ". . . to be acknowledged not as a black but as a white." But his efforts do not fructify as he experiences labeling in a parking lot of a cable company when he is approached by a man who makes a series of unintelligible noises and he avoids all this shit but the man calls him "Fucking Arab" (TRF, 70). He is roused at this and is even ready for a scuffle but his antagonist departs "muttering a string of obscenities" (TRF, 71).

Home Boy on the other hand depicts more sorrowful tales of self-alienation that its characters experience in the wake of 11th of September 2001. Almost integrated into the American culture, the Muslim characters of the Home Boy in the words of Chuck – the protagonist of the novel, fancied themselves as ". . . boulevardiers, raconteurs, renaissance men . . . self-invented, self-made . . . fingers on the pulse of the great global dialectic" (HB, 1). But 9 / 11 fatally breaks this fancy and the characters in the words of Chuck ". . . become Japs, Jews, Niggers", they "weren't before" (HB, 1). One sad and bad incident in the words of Khan (n d: 16) made all Muslims and Islam as "Islamic extremists", "Islamic militants", "Islamic fundamentalism", "Islamic terrorism", "fundamentalist guerrillas", "Islamic guerrillas", "Islamic radicals . . . "

One finds that Naqvi's character AC, along with his friends, in *Home Boy* has such a deep love for America and his reaction at the tragedy of 9 / 11 is naturally like that of a native. In Jake's bar, in the company of his friends, his immediate reaction at the events is naturally that of care, concern and anger at the lot of city and missing friends. He says: "I DON'T CARE ABOUT THE FUCKING COLOR SPECTRUM, CHUM! I care about the Shaman! I care about this city . . . 'Those bastards,' he continued, 'they've fucked up *my* city! THEY'VE FUCKED UP EVERYTHING!" (*HB*, 23). AC may not have 'any care about the fucking color spectrum' but the whites do

care about that and this is what AC and his friends shortly realize and experience at the bar when two strongly built men "Tense and unsteady at their feet . . . lumbered toward" them "like two big bags, provoked . . . 'Watchugonnafuckup?' . . . " (HB, 23). Taken aback at this attitude AC musters courage and talks to them " . . . ' I think you misunderstood chum' . . ." but the reply is disgustingly humiliating like "Misunderstood my ass,' . . . " and "Brawler No. 1 hissed, 'A-rabs'" (HB, 23). This vilification of the 'Other' is pinching and Chuck feels its pangs when the word "Arabs" resonates in his head and he says "... 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 this had happened to us at all" (HB, 24). We, therefore, see that Jimbo's response involves shock, disbelief, protest, and justification when he replies protesting "We're not the same . . . " (*HB*, 24). But their level of expectancy for justice, freedom and equality has to be broken as immediately after 9 /11, to use the words of DeLillo (2001: 2) the characters seem to be pronouncing painfully "The sense of disarticulation" that "we hear in the term "Us and Them" has never been so striking at either end." One, therefore, realizes that this whole dirty process of 'Othering' is alienating to the extreme. About this construction, Aladaylah (2010: 1) writes "Constructs of Othering, is a construct of Western colonialism discourse constituting the ideologies of imperialism and the motivations to "civilize" the East . . . "

Given these demonizing words like 'A-rabs, Moslems, Mo-hicans' and dehumanizing attitude of the Americans against the Muslims when one knows the fact that almost all the characters of the novel had their "fingers on the pulse of the great global dialectic" (HB, 1) as they were the readers of the leading papers of America and would watch TV for keeping them abreast of the 'global dialectic,' one, therefore, feels deeply alienated to know that all the tall claims of America, for its being the most civilized nation on earth, dash down to earth immediately after 9 / 11. One such tall claim is made by the American President, G. W. Bush which Jensen (2004: 9) records "For all its flaws, I believe our nation is chosen by God and commissioned by history to be the model to the world of justice and inclusion and diversity without division." Similarly, Huntington (2005: 48) believes "America is said to be more liberal, more principled, more civilized than those tribally defined societies." But a nation 'exceptional, universal, and chosen by God,' as Bush declares, could not adhere to its claims of 'diversity without division' in the wake of 11th September. Jensen (2004: 9) maintains "Historically, empires are never benevolent, and nothing in history has changed that should lead to the conclusion that the United States will be the first benevolent empire." Likewise, Huntington (2005: 49) shows us another facet of America as in his words: "For much of their history, Americans enslaved and then segregated blacks, massacred and marginalized Indians, excluded Asians, discriminated against Catholics, and obstructed immigration by people from outside northwestern Europe." So, where the fatal incident of 9 / 11 create acute selfalienation in the characters of the novels, it also creates a sense of humanism in them although this humanism proves one sided as the main characters are thrown into prison and maltreated on false charges of terrorism which results in self-alienation. In Jake's bar AC emphasizes it upon his friends "You have to remember, we have responsibilities to each other, as friends, and more importantly as, ah, human beings" (HB, 20).

'Kill the bastards, bomb them, American fury and ruthless indignation' are highly charged words that the 'civilized-Self' was emitting forcefully for harming the 'Other' and rendering 'Them' insecure, hopeless, frustrated and alienated. But the 'Other' in the shape of Old Man Khan asks "Is it right? . . . Can anybody tell me? . . .

Why bomb? Why break? Why destroy?" (HB, 57), as instead of being furious, it was the time when, in the words of Jensen (2004: 29) ". . . United States must treat other peoples with dignity and respect. We must recognize we are simply one nation among many." Fury but unfortunately prevails and is seen everywhere, and things are busted beyond repair.

Chuck and his friends were still to go through more harrowing experiences of their lives on American soil as the host country has been seething with anger and indiscriminately and kept pouring its wrath over the immigrants, most of them being Muslims. Moore (2004: 151) points to such bitter facts "In the days, weeks and months following the tragic events of September 11, 2001, hundreds of American immigrants were rounded up and detained, often under harsh or abusive conditions . . ."

Chuck, Jimbo and Ac, similarly, find themselves landing in jail when following AC's principle of having "... responsibilities to each other, as friends, and more importantly as, ah, human beings . . . Without bonds . . . we're . . . animals" (HB, 20) they go to Shaman's and FBI raids the house. But before they could be imprisoned they face humiliation at the hands of the police in the name of "public safety" (HB, 101). All this shows that things are not the same in America especially for the immigrant Muslims for whom, using the words of George W. Bush that Moore (2004: 52) records "The world has changed after September the 11th. It's changed because we are no longer safe." The world definitely changes but for the 'Other' and the relationship between the Occident and Orient is yet again determined in a traditional manner. Said (2003: 6) points to such a relationship that "The relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony . . . " And the dominant (Occident) after 9 / 11 becomes so blind in the Orient's animosity that it uses its own people humiliatingly. Congressman Jim McDermott, for example, describes this humiliation which Moore (2004: 52) quotes "It's like training a dog. You tell him, "Sit down," . . . dog doesn't know what to do. Well, the American people were being treated like that. . ." Chuck (HB, 120) narrates his ordeal after he is released from police custody "When a big white guy moves quickly, people laugh, but when a big black guy moves quickly, they take cover: mothers fear for their children." It reminds one of Fanon's (1986: 112) argument "In America, Negroes are segregated" and made slaves too, as Fanon (1986: 116) asserts "I am the slave not of the "idea" that others have of me but of my own appearance."

The whole post 9 / 11 scenario thus caters, unfortunately, to the production of such an impression of the 'Other' who is lowered not only in the public eyes but in his own eyes as well. Chuck, therefore, describes ". . . I threatened order, threatened civilization . . . had to adhere to an unwritten code" (HB, 121) and this all happen in America which Naqvi ironically describes "was a free country" (HB, 122). Larsen (2005: 45) describes "Colonizer and colonized, oppressor and oppressed, "man and ethnic (female) "other," rich and poor: these are, perhaps more than ever, the visible fissures in the "world" that encloses us." It is thus evident that 9 / 11 played a negative role in excommunicating the 'Other' from American society although the former against all odds was prepared to get himself settled in the host country.

Conclusion

The study of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *Home Boy* reveals that protagonists of both these novels left Pakistan in pursuit of peace and pleasure which for them was hidden in economic resources found in abundance in America. Initially, both Changez and Chuck had good times on American soil where America raised its

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skirt for them, and they felt as if American was their second home. Both enjoyed American liberties and praised and loved America. But things changed suddenly and dramatically on 9/11 when they sat glued to television screens and thought of difficult times ahead. Hamid's and Naqvi's protagonists slowly and gradually found themselves landing into one trouble after another. It started with suspicious glances of the people followed by abusive language and threats of different nature. They had to undergo ordeals of police investigations. As a consequence, their romance with America started waning and they were left with no other choice but to go back to their country of origin. Both the novelists thus show that living under American empire as peaceful citizens becomes impossible as the inhabitants of third world countries like Pakistan, especially Muslims, had to undergo worst type of sufferings.

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