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Literary Representation of Muslim Immigrants and Refugees 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. Present paper is the epochal connotations of post-9/11 literature by examining how novels written during this period by Nadeem Aslam, Mohsin Hamid, H. M. Naqvi, foreground the consequences, historical roots, and imperialist dimensions of the War on Terror, consequences of Immigrants and refugees during that time. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, many influences, including media, politics, and literary texts, contributed to molding discourse. As a result, topics like religion, particularly Islam, and Muslims as terrorists have become serious threats to those in power and the general public. This paper will investigate how this new other is represented in four post-9/11 novels, Mohsin Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *Exit West*, (2011), and H. M. Naqvi’s *Home Boy* (2010). Nadeem Aslam’s *The Blind Man’s Garden*, This paper 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 9/11 terrorist attacks on the US and the “War on Terror” issued in a new era of political violence that has had an enduring influence on power constructions between East and West in the twenty-first century. Writers have reflected on these events and explored the complexities of terrorism, producing literary fiction which not only tackles 9/11 and related events, but which some have also conceived of as a new and emerging genre.

Keywords: Literature, Post-9/11, war on terror, imperialism, state violence rambling discourse, trauma fiction, representation of Muslim characters

Introduction

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. Present paper is the epochal connotations of post-9/11 literature by examining how novels written during this period by Nadeem Aslam, Mohsin Hamid, H. M. Naqvi, foreground the consequences, historical roots, and imperialist dimensions of the War on Terror, consequences of Immigrants and refugees during that time. This paper will investigate how this new other is represented in four post-9/11 novels, Mohsin Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *Exit West*, (2011), and H. M. Naqvi’s *Home Boy* (2010) ^[13]. Nadeem Aslam’s *The Blind Man’s Garden*. With the fall of the Twin Towers on 9/11, it was not merely the geo-political infrastructure of the world that underwent a deliquescence; the idea of the self, when placed in a world of massive unpredictability and inveterate fear, underwent a drastic alteration. Ethnicity and religious identity came under the microscope as people were labeled “terrorists” on the basis of racial and religious affiliations.

Literature could not remain immune to these changes and express their visions. Since 9/11, it has been conventional for Western popular writers to portray Muslims in general in an unflattering light as "terrorists" or supporters of terrorism in the West. Basing their theories on the events and agents that shaped the 9/11 cataclysm, the Western literati and the masses formed stereotypical assumptions about Islam as creed that harbors and nurtures terrorism. This prejudicial treatment has led to a sense of insecurity amongst the Muslims, particularly in the United States of America.

September 11, 2001 started a new period in literature and history: even current events have a tendency to be viewed through the prism of 9/11. The trauma that the United States of America experienced on September the 11th, 2001 made a strong impact on the world community. The tragic events of this day and difficult aftermath have altered almost all the spheres of life, making everyone divide their lives into BEFORE and AFTER. People wanted to find coherent explanation of the catastrophe in trauma narratives, which, according to Jeremy Green, resulted in "tragic realism" (Green 2005: 94). The world entered the era of moral and/or physical executions: designs for punishing the evil forces have been continuously elaborated, elements of binary opposition and segregation appeared in many societies, and instead of demonstrating attempts to understand, discuss or explain, the extremism of Islamic fundamentalists was echoed in the form of the so-called "western extremism" – demonizing Islam and Muslim traditions. September 11, 2001, a "universally shared [traumatic] event" inspired writers to "express their feelings about what had occurred", so that readers could relate to the books "on a highly personal level" and find answers to the most disturbing questions. Many contemporary authors have chosen this issue as a challenge: some tended to politicize their novels, while others expressed their wish to personalize the tragic event by placing the tragedy of the country within the boundaries of a single social unit, the family, and the microcosm of each person. The theme of self-destruction often dominates in the 9/11 novels: confusion, felt in the society, is transferred into the novel. The main character is sad, confused, disappointed in the society and its moral values. Often the main hero is lonely, misunderstood, seeking to find answers to existential questions; s/he is different from the rest of society. Consequently, the inner conflict leads to self-destruction, which happens in various forms.

However, the main character is usually described as having strong personal beliefs, and may be even described not as a victim but as a real hero. 9/11 literature often includes criticism of the consumerist society and the overpowering role of the mass media. Novelists discuss social inequality, the lack of morality and harsh real-life situations, revealing the tragedy both of a single person and the society. The absence of the Twin Towers was replaced, as E. Ann Kaplan states, by "other images – of burning people jumping out of the Towers, of firemen rushing to rescue people [...] of the huge cloud of smoke" (Kaplan 2005: 13). These images are depicted through the recollection of witnesses and the relatives of the victims, who died during the attacks. Direct representations of the 9/11 attacks often appear in the novels; these representations echo the TV reports and documentaries. The petrification watching the latest news is a frequent feature of 9/11 literature. The personalization of 9/11 events adds the sense of truthfulness and reliability: readers encounter narratives about losses and tragedies, very similar to their

own. Alienation, doubtfulness and estrangement in relations of family, community and society are significant features of 9/11 literature. Different literary interpretations of 9/11 and its aftermath demonstrate the scope of the impact of this period on the development of the novel.

Mohsin Hamid belongs to a rather small group of the Arab-born authors (writing in English) who have ventured to speak on behalf of the Arab communities and to disclose the society's immediate post 9/11 reaction towards Muslims, their shattered lives and ideals and personality crisis caused by the events, which have put many countries on the devastating road of estrangement. The main character in Hamid's novel, a Pakistani man, Changez, ardently confesses his immediate reaction to the events and analyzes the outcomes of the "borrowed identity": he ponders on the duality of his identity during the aftermath of 9/11 and tries to find the answers to selfposed existential questions. With an unusual (for a novel) device of a dramatic monologue, Hamid explores the deterioration of the American Dream, fight against American idols, discusses strained relationship between East and West, discloses prejudices that rule the American society, speaks of inward transformation and, finally, questions the reversed form of real fundamentalism. Mohsin Hamid's novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* in its theme and structure belongs to 9/11 fiction. The trauma that the United States of America experienced on September the 11th, 2001 made a strong impact on the development of American literature. The United States of America and the world entered the era of binary opposition: Us and the Other. Before September the 11th attacks, being the believer of Islam meant something new, unknown or extraordinary; however, during the immediate aftermath, Muslims were often treated as enemies, murders and terrorists. This situation has resulted in the seclusion of ethnic communities and, especially, isolation of Muslim communities or even inter-ethnic violence. The American society was confused and bewildered, which was the consequence of the lack of information. Despite the fact that mass media provided wide-ranging discussions about the tragic events, the society could not comprehend the catastrophe. Moreover, the trauma of the country has become the trauma of the whole world, becoming the ever-lasting stigmatic phenomenon. Thus, the position of the Arab-born Muslim writers is most important for a better understanding of the aftermath.

According to Akbar S Ahmed (2007: 142), hysterical attacks on the Arab community during the immediate aftermath reinforced "already existing stereotypes of Muslims" because "to many Americans the religion of Islam simply meant terrorism or extremism". Soon the world entered the period of Islamophobia and binary thinking. A term "Islamophobia" had existed in different societies for several decades; however after the 9/11 attacks it resulted in the forms of stereotypes and prejudices describes this reaction as "a malaise" of the contemporary times, pointing out the dangers of fundamentalism, which "banishes reason from religion and compassion from faith". As the country started quickly rolling down the road of "Islamophobia", "the sense of frustration that Muslims felt in seeing themselves portrayed negatively" rose points out the fact that "this problem has become even more acute after September 11", continuing "to cause misunderstandings on both sides", and raises the question of building mutual understanding between the West and Islam, explaining the necessity of "the intellectual discourse [which had been earlier] framed in the context of

the ‘war on terrorism’. This must be the main reason why some authors have chosen the topic of explaining the causes and outcomes of terrorism to the readers, aiding the audience in crossing the bridge between the two opposed camps as well as helping the opposites to communicate. Thus, in the form of personal confession, Mohsin Hamid’s novel discloses both the personal trauma and the social one. The aim of this article is to analyze Mohsin Hamid’s novel from the aspect of traumatic confession and to disclose the features of the trauma novel that are present in Mohsin Hamid’s text. First, features of trauma novel will be briefly discussed, with an emphasis on 9/11 fiction; then these features will be traced in Hamid’s novel, focusing on the effect of the traumatic confessional narrative. Written in the monologue form, Mohsin Hamid’s novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* discusses the personal trauma, caused by the aftermath and self-inflicted confusion. The protagonist, a Pakistani man, Changez, tells his life story to an American stranger in a café in Lahore, where the protagonist has returned after the events of September 11.

The personalization of 9/11 events – the emotional/empathic approach undertaken by the author – contributes to the sense of reliability. Alienation, doubt and estrangement in relations of family, community and society are significant features of 9/11 literature. Alongside the themes of terrorism or the irreversible processes in the American society, the authors of the 9/11 novels often choose both an informational approach and the emphatic one. By constructing different plot lines, characters and their identities, raising different issues and trying to solve urgent problems, some contemporary authors do not depart from the stereotypical recounts of the events or clichés of both victims and the representatives of the “Others”, which may be the result of meeting the reading audience’s expectations and complying with the readers’ demands. However, the attempts to solve seemingly still-unsolvable questions, emphasizing social, psychological and religious paradigms contribute to the long-lasting process of coping with the universal trauma. The personal dimension of the aftermath includes the ever-lasting search for one’s identity and the meaning of life. Nonlinear and fragmented plot and, sometimes, rambling discourse of the 9/11 novels echo the fragmented flashbulb memories and emotions, and describe the present state of the country and the world, where binary thinking and estrangement still remain the major forces that determine social and cross-cultural communication.

Mohsin Hamid’s latest novel *Exit West*.⁴⁵⁷ The novel depicts the lives of citizens of a country that falls into chaos and violence and in which the citizens seek an exit that transforms them into the status of refugees. The narrative of the novel problematizes the plight of refugees and the West’s response to this plight. *Exit West* is written in an era of mounting tension in the West towards non-western migration, and in which instability, dreadful circumstances and violence force millions to leave their countries and come to the West. While the start of the twenty-first century is marked by the migration-crises and the politics of pro-migrants and its antithesis, it is also characterised by the “individual plight of millions of displaced peoples”.⁴⁵⁸ On this issue, Robert Young argues that “fear of migrants and illegal immigration has turned out to be one of the most consistent terror effects of all”.⁴⁵⁹ In nationalist and far-right political spheres the notion that the West is under threat by such migration has been a vital component of anti-migration

rhetoric. Where politics has the power to shape the present and the future in relation to migration, Hamid believes that “novels and the arts more generally, in looking at what may come, are also shaping what may come. It isn’t an entirely passive position”.⁴⁶⁰ *Exit West*’s depiction of the future of migration, from less-privileged countries to the West, is an attempt to take a more active position. Hamid reflects on the dynamics of this encounter, the challenges, hopes and aspirations from a global perspective which problematizes narratives of xenophobia and fear. *Exit West*, which was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize, Hamid tackles timely issues around globalization, immigration and the ramifications of terrorism and counter-terrorism on individuals and nations. *Exit West* captures the experiences of people before and after becoming refugees at a time of increased mass migration and the impact of this on individuals and nations between East and West. Hamid attempts to reconstruct the plight of refugees, the harsh circumstances that they experience and the psychological aftermath of leaving one’s own country and loved ones behind to face violence and hostility. At the same time, the author attempts to depict the locals’ acts of empathy toward refugees, highlighting that refugees and residents of host countries are all citizens of this world and, no matter how different, they are connected through humanity. *Exit West* promotes the notion of ethnic equality through subverting the “faceless” or the “evil face” of the Other.⁴⁶³ As the novel challenges narratives of exclusion, hatred and fear in a post-9/11 era, it also problematizes various forms of terror and slowly undermines stereotypical representations of the Other between East and West. approach to post-9/11 violence, narratives that seek to “humanise” the victims of political violence are essential to establishing people’s capacity to identify with the “human vulnerability” of the Other,⁴⁶⁴ which is ultimately a shared ethical responsibility in countering terror and victimization. *Exit West* is a distinctive work within postcolonial and 9/11 fiction because of its disruption of representations that are associated, not only with a West’s Other, but more significantly with an East’s Other. There is an inevitable separation between the Self and the Other in terms of identity construction, which is influenced by various factors, such as location, culture, class, race, ethnicity, religion and gender. In *Exit West*, Hamid appears to disempower post-9/11 discourse by omitting its most hegemonic and problematic terms. In doing so, Hamid’s novel resists both: western stereotypes and the ‘War on Terror’ discourse. *Exit West* captures what it is like to be a migrant once you cross through one of the doors and the challenges migrants face in relation to survival and dealing with what Young calls the “fear of migrants”. This ‘fear’ is manufactured by a mixture of the state, media and the residents who are influenced by this xenophobic imaginary about the newcomers. *Exit West* also articulates how people reject terror and the effects of terror. This novel is compelling because unlike many postcolonial novels it does not only counter-narrate stereotypes about Arabs, Muslims, or the western Other, it also attempts to provide a realistic depiction of these communities as well as the western communities.

H. M. Naqvi’s *Home Boy* as counter-narrative to Orientalism in Western discourse that writes back to the American Empire apropos September 11 and terrorism. Naqvi tries to analyze, describe, problematize and destabilize Orientalist discourse of “othering” a and “stereotyping” The narrative protests against American imperialism—its belligerent foreign

policy, its suppression and exploitation of third world countries, interference in other countries, and occupation and invasion of foreign lands. The narrative starts as a typical immigrant narrative in which the protagonist comes to the United States in pursuit of the American dream of prosperity, happiness and freedoms. Initially, the protagonist has assimilative and accommodative tendencies in the hopes of partaking in the economic and social privileges bestowed by a prestigious American education and lucrative employment in big financial institutions in the metropolis. However, the events of September 11 exacerbate an already precarious atmosphere of discrimination that exists in the novel in which their protagonist is treated as an outsider and enemy. *Home Boy* adopts very different strategies to address the challenges of representing post-9/11 Pakistani experiences and perspectives especially for potentially wary or hostile American or European readers. To begin with, Naqvi sets up his narrator very differently. Unlike Hamid, who creates a narrative frame that itself frames or casts suspicion on the narrator (why does Changez accost the unknown, unnamed American, and why is he telling this story, at this moment, to this particular listener), Naqvi's novel simply plunges into the first-person autobiographical narrative, recognizable as belonging in a convention that dispels suspicion instead of prompting it. Naqvi, in contrast to Hamid, clearly challenges the framework of suspicion of Muslims as he reframes the experience of 9/11 for Muslims in New York City. His narrative presents 9/11 as the structural but silent center of Chuck's narrative, a site of trauma such that it cannot be addressed until it is reawakened by a subsequent trigger. *Home Boy* offers these internationalized and worldlier narratives of protest against the continuities of Orientalism and exploitation. This resistance narrative by a third world writer against Orientalism and imperialism appropriate the novel form to provide "a more developed historical analysis of the circumstances of economic, political, and cultural domination and repression," and to challenge the "historical and historicizing presuppositions" in western literary discourse, whose ideological paradigms put people in plots with predetermined endings of a master-slave narrative (Harlow, 1987, p. 78). The weaker and oppressed are blamed as responsible for the unequal power-relationship that justifies their need to resort to violence. The writer of this novel arrives at different and opposite conclusions by making America equally responsible for resorting and contributing to violence. The burden of historical knowledge, "historical referencing" (Harlow, 1987, p. 80) is on the reader, as the novel tries to give new historical facts hitherto unknown to the readers. Pakistanis and readers in the third world might get exposed to some new facts about America, its efficient economic and educational systems, the kindness and humanity of its individuals, which might be different from the all-evil America they know. Similarly, Western readers might get exposed to facts unlike the official ones, which always blame Islam and Muslims for violence. *Home Boy* resists and moves away from America. This is an immigrant tale in reverse. Typically, immigrant tales concerned with coming to America, narrate the ordeals, hopes and disappointments of people who want to be enriched from an immersion in American society. This narrative is different though because it not only explains why he came to America, but also elaborate as to why he left it (Medovoi, 2011, p. 644). This is quite contrary to what Gray requires the September 11 novel to achieve. He wants the September 11 novel to engage

imaginatively with the new crisis in the form of a narrative to deal successfully with strangeness or newness and to engage the "other". Gray considers novels like Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* (1989) and Christina Garcia's *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992) as successful attempts to engage with this newness. According to him, these immigrant novels succeed, as their immigrant characters make up new identities in "their liminal conditions, their position between historical borders and cultures" (Gray, 2011, p. 88) ^[6]. Michael Rothberg supplements this "deterritorialized" (Gray, 2011, p. 71) ^[6] America, which he thinks is centripetal, with a centrifugal one (153). In other words, Gray's model is based on America becoming a universal nation, whereas Rothberg believes in the outward universalization of America. *Home Boy* partially follows Gray's model but then switches towards Rothberg's model to show the outward movement and impact of "America's global reach" to reveal "the cracks in its necessarily incomplete hegemony" (Rothberg, 2009, p. 158). The novel concerns the immigrant protagonist who initially is passionate about education, work and life in America. However, the American dream of happiness and freedom is shattered by circumstances following the September 11 attacks, which necessitates a re-evaluation of his previous assessment of America. The protagonist decides to return home. In these voyages out, *Home Boy* is pessimistic, as it fails in its hopes concerning a peaceful co-existence in a post-September 11 America.

Aslam's novel *The Blind Man's Garden* takes place in Pakistan and Afghanistan in the direct aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, when the United States government had pledged to eradicate terrorism and take revenge on al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. The real historical events which mark the start of new military conquests in the region are represented through Rohan's family, who reside in the fictional city of Heer. The narrative depicts the lives of ordinary people from a small city in Pakistan and the effect of war and extreme religious radicalization on their society. Through a love triangle where two brothers, Joe (Rohan's biological son) and Mikal (the adopted son), are in love with the same woman, Naheed, the novel follows Mikal's journey to return to his beloved after war tears them apart and causes the death of his brother. Written from the perspective of an omniscient narrator who knows the thoughts and feelings of the characters, the narrative moves between the characters to engage the reader with intimate feelings about the Self and the Other. Though there are some moments in the narrative that appear to be "overmediated"²⁵³ (such as the story of horses that belong to Rohan's grandfather), which "interrupt" the narrator's present tense, Aslam's writing techniques are exceptionally powerful, immersing the reader within the events of the novel in a way that focuses on the dilemmas of the individual characters and then zooming out to reflect on the broader situation in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The novel starts with Rohan's thoughts on the US war in the neighboring country of Afghanistan: "The logic is that there are no innocent people in a guilty nation".²⁵⁴ This refers to the rationale behind military operations that target terrorists, during which the death of innocent people are perceived as collateral damage. The question Rohan raises, however, is how innocent are they, and who has the right to declare their innocence? Throughout the narrative, the innocence of the people is problematised. The symbolism of the story told by the bird pardoner, who puts bird snares in Rohan's garden, revolves around the concept of innocence and guilt.

Rohan's questions are rhetorical: those involved in the entrapment of these birds are not innocent. Even the people who free them bear guilt because they ultimately contribute to the whole process of birds' captivity. If no one buys them, the bird pardoner no longer has a reason to capture the birds. This may apply to all sorts of unjust treatment, where suffering, torture and the imprisonment of the innocent is essentially flawed and cannot be justified. At the same time, the bird pardoner makes a living out of this, a fact which conveys the level of poverty that he must endure to seek such a business. The novel reveals that his son, a "fourteen-years-old boy [who] had run away to fight in Afghanistan", is captured and tortured by an Afghani warlord.²⁵⁷ This forces the bird pardoner to set more snares to earn more money in an attempt to free his son. In this way, the circle of terror and victimhood is endless. In order to free one from captivity, one must torture and victimise others. The captured and tormented birds are in the heart of the novel and through this Aslam represents the complexity of innocence, guilt, and most importantly the moral dynamics of the 'War on Terror'. Though these stories are dominated by symbolism, the unreal might seem real for readers who do not belong to the culture. Magical realism is often used by postcolonial writers to present narratives from a less western perspective. However, the intersection between history and contemporary politics with magical realism creates a narrative where the magical element seems to be true, confirming the strangeness of the Orient and Oriental. In Aslam's novel, political violence is problematised at the points where right and wrong and the victim and the victimiser intersect. When Rohan's son Joe decides to travel to Afghanistan with his foster brother Mikal to help the wounded, Rohan, a religious and educated man, states that if he were in the US during 9/11 "he would have done all he could to save the blameless from dying".²⁵⁸ Yet if he were younger, he would not resist going to Afghanistan and "he would have fought and defended with his arms".²⁵⁹ The narrator in this instance problematises political violence, demonstrating that one cannot justify and explain terrorism and counterterrorism using a black-and-white lens. Rohan's view represents the ethics that surround violence which state that civilians, despite their nationality and affiliation, should not be targeted. Hence, both acts are essentially corrupt: the attacks of 9/11 and the attacks on Afghanistan. What remains is the suffering of the masses, the poor and the unprivileged. In the words of the bird pardoner grieving the imprisonment of his son following the 9/11 attacks: "I am sorry that they happened in my lifetime. They have destroyed me. And I live far from where they took place. What does Heer know about New York, or New York about Heer?"²⁶⁰ This contemplation represents the devastating aftermath of 9/11, the effect of patriotism and radicalism on the young, and how a person who lives in a tiny village can suffer the consequences of something that takes place in a different continent. The bird pardoner's presence as a representative of the impact of war on less privileged people, including the victimization of his own family and the plight of the birds he sets traps for, is highly symbolic because it gives a voice to the voiceless. In this way, Aslam's novel represents the uniqueness of 9/11 fiction by means of "the profoundly ethical anxiety it communicates" and "in questioning established opposites and newer dichotomies".²⁶¹ The problematisation of clear-cut dichotomies related to the Orient is therefore constantly evoked in *The Blind Man's Garden*.

Conclusion

The terrorist attack on the US mainland on 11 September 2001 created a watershed moment in twenty-first century history. As artists and writers attempted to interpret and reflect on this major terrorist attack, the 9/11 novel surfaced as a significant space for reflection.⁵⁹⁹ This form of narrative fiction plays an essential role in complicating, reimagining, and representing the 9/11 event and its aftermath. The five novels analysed in this study destabilise dominant perceptions and misconceptions that were generated after 9/11. These literary texts are written by authors of various backgrounds and that each text depicts political violence that unfolds in different parts of the world. Hence, when put together in the same study, the novels explore how the 9/11 novel has become a nexus for representing and problematising images of terrorism, terrorists, and various forms of political violence. The scholarship on 9/11 fiction interrogates various themes related to the 9/11 moment and beyond, such as trauma, victimhood, survival, healing and humanity. The association between Muslim men's masculinity, violence and sexuality are reflected within the 9/11 narratives via an Orientalist discourse about Muslims' manhood and their relationship with women. Looking at the mainstream western rhetoric that emerged in the aftermath of 9/11, narratives of polarity and framing of Muslims as the Other as well as the source of terror gained great momentum. The event of September 11 and terrorism transformed the world. Relationships among nations generally and between the West and third world countries specifically became strained. In *Orientalism*, Said focuses on the Western side of the conflict between the West and East. He suspected that there was a lack of continuity of the prejudicial Orientalist discourse, and even its exacerbation, after September 11. In "Islam and the West are Inadequate Banners", Said argues, everyone in America after September 11 incited an ambiguous "war against terrorism" without answering multiple questions about the means and ends of such a war, the enemy, and America's controversial role in the world. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said explains the ever present resistance that takes place in the "interacting" experience that "links imperializer with the imperialized" (1994, p. 194). Said writes that there was always a resistance, "the assertion of nationalist identities" and along with colonialism "there was *always* some form of active resistance" (1994, p. xii). Criticism of September 11 novel mostly deplores the limiting aspects of the evolving trends-the typically Western and more specifically American interpretation and response to the September 11 event, an unimaginative response to the conflict, and more importantly, the "War on Terror," rhetoric. Most third World countries, especially Islamic countries, believe "War on Terror" to be an excuse against weaker nations in order to further the imperialist goals of the American empire. Instead of taking a balanced view, American authors have taken an Orientalist approach, which hampers any meaningful understanding of the other, the conflict or terrorism or the event of September 11. Gray finds September 11 fiction unimaginative due to its "domestication" (2011, p. 51) of the crisis and its limited ability to "encounter strangeness" (2011, p. 32). Contrary to America's expanding empire and its involvement in world's affairs, authors go inside their national borders. Similarly, in comparison to Henry James and Joseph Conrad's successful engagement with "new, impersonal forces," Martin Randall believes that "contemporary American writers have been too

preoccupied with purely national, local and domestic concerns, and in doing so have ignored the importance of their relationship with global forces” (2011, p. 134). The novel worked in the paper depicts of terror in a post-9/11 era by representing various forms of terror that are linked, whether directly or indirectly, with political violence perpetrated by state-agents and/or non-state agents. The scope of interest of the paper falls within the scholarship of literary analysis of 9/11 fiction, focusing primarily on the novel. While acknowledging that many art forms responded to and represented the 9/11 moment authentically and creatively and continue to do so, the novel, as a central art form, can offer nuanced interpretations and representations of the repercussions of 9/11 from various points of views that reflect and are influenced and inspired by other art forms. This paper examines the lives of Muslims in the post-9/11 fiction with special reference to Mohsin Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *Exit West*, (2011), and H. M. Naqvi’s *Home Boy* (2010). Nadeem Aslam’s *The Blind Man’s Garden*, as they are placed in a “zone of indistinction” in the post 9/11 fiction. Each of these texts emphasizes the psychological issues of protagonists engrossed in the tales that comprised a blend of diaspora, marginalization, fundamentalism, and insider-outsider syndrome, where the protagonists are seen struggling between ‘us’ and ‘them’ dichotomy, while they equally struggle with yet another binary principle of ‘Self’ and ‘Other’. Each of these protagonists suffers only for being a Muslim or for resembling the Muslims. Employing the Reader Response Theory, besides socio-political approaches, the main purpose of this research is to explore and investigate the victimization of the Muslims as a reaction to post 9/11 attacks, portraying the event as a terrorist attack, abominably gigantic and hovering like a ghost on human consciousness. In the aftermath of the incident, the Muslims were falsely implicated, their image disfigured, their culture demonized giving rise to a kind of Islamophobia. Paper attempted to discover the hidden discursive mechanisms in these two texts, the victimization of Muslims, and how the portrayals of the narratives could act as reflections of false media portrayals and political and religious ideologies. The findings revealed that the sampled texts, along with other contemporary literary texts, have, to a remarkable extent, been able to instill positivism about the Muslims and also succeeded in framing a genuine public opinion about 9/11 in particular and the Muslim community, in general.

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