Reincarnations of Neo-Orientalism: Islam and its Representations in Post-9/11 Literature

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ABSTRACT

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Reincarnations of Orientalism: Islam and its Representations in Post-9/11 Literature

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This dissertation analyzes the responses to the clash of civilizations between Islam and the West through literary narratives. Using texts that discuss "strangers" and "natives" in post-9/11 literature, it critiques, while adding new insights, to the debate of the paradigmatic concept of Neo- Orientalism. Neo-Orientalism, a derogatory way of describing incarnations to Orientalist thinking after 9/11, reinforces Islam as a subculture in modern societies. In the war of ideas between the putative East and the so- called West, Neo-Orientalism revives the legacy of American and European colonialism on Asian and African countries through relentless attacks on Islamic identity and integrity. It shows how xenophobia, racial discrimination, and violence against Muslims is rationalized in Western societies. In my research, I discuss how post-9/11 narratives on Islam are addressing the estrangement of the Muslim world by either reiterating Oriental representations of Islam as a demonic culture or by adapting to the demands of Neo-Orientalism by embracing Islam in an Islamophobic world. Building on critical texts such as Sara Ahmed's *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*, Hannah Arendt's *On Revolution*, and Arjun Appadurai's *Fear of Small Numbers*, I argue that global literatures with Muslim protagonists are not only reinforcing the need for Western hegemony on the Muslim world, but also, at times, reliving Oriental descriptions of the Muslim Other as perpetrators of terror and fear. In my research, I read and critically

engage with writers Michel Houellebecq, *Submission* (2015); Mohsin Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2013); Leila Aboulela, *Minaret* (2004), and Karan Mahajan, *The Association of Small Bombs* (2016). Based on my research and analysis I conclude with the suggestion that despite the continuous protests against of Muslim protagonists against ethnic profiling in immigrant literature, they are trapped in the binary of Islam and the West with miniscule or no possibility of a peaceful existence.

DEDICATION

To my parents, Rita Gupta and Ranjit Gupta—you never differentiated between a boy and a girl. You inspire me.

To my friends, Neha Dalania and Mithila Tiwari—you remind me life can always take new directions.

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INTRODUCTION: THE STRANGER AND THE ESTRANGEMENT OF ISLAM AFTER 9/11

"Islam is a dangerous religion"

-Michel Houellebecq

I got interested in the theme of Islam and Western representations of the East only when I came to the United States. As a graduate student at Ohio University, I had the opportunity to take several classes during my graduate coursework that discussed the relationship between "otherness"[1] and immigration. I also read how Muslim immigrants had ambiguous relations with the Western countries they lived in—on one hand the literary narratives on Muslim immigrants emphasized the West's need of Muslim representation in its social, economic, and political demography and on the other hand, the literary narratives depicted the marginalization and victimization of Muslims in Western societies. In all of these literary narratives, Muslim immigrants believed that compared to their home countries in the Middle East and Asia, living in the West offered them the freedom, liberty, and equality. But contrary to those beliefs, they faced ethnic hostilities and racial profilings while struggling to cope with existential crises during their stay in Western nations.

The depiction of Muslim immigrants living in Western locations after 9/11 seemed repetitive to me. I found such victimized representations of Muslim minorities problematic, since such narratives do not create spaces of empowerment for Muslims, but

[1] After my engagement with postcolonial literature in India, in the United States I became familiar with the concept of otherness through Sara Ahmed's *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*. She discusses otherness as a cultural, social, political, and ethnic discourse that creates binaries of I/not-I, West/East, self/other, and native/stranger in literary and political circles.

rather rewrite discourses of trauma, trepidation, and distress. Furthermore, in post-9/11 literature, the depiction of Islam was synonymous to Islamic fundamentalism and the generalized notion that Islam is a monolithic religion seemed to lack alternative stories and voices. In these textual interpretations, the politics of Islam and its interactions with immigration, and with Western nationalism are mostly defined by the West. While reading such books, I felt a sense of uncertainty, since most of these characters are not offered a chance to rise from their current liminalized spaces. The more I read such narratives, the more I realized that the ethics of integrating Muslims into Western communities is fluid and contingent upon the West's convenience. In these novels, the Western nations dictate frames of representation and define the rules of immigrant acceptability for Muslim foreign nationals. I realized that the struggle, then, is no longer limited between the West and Islam but the struggle depicts a one-sided emphasis on multiculturalism, where Islam is pitted against all the ethnic groups in Western societies.

Apart from objecting to a racist view of multiculturalism, I struggled with the homogenizing tendencies of English literature. I found that English literature often treats minority literature as the other. As I dug deeper into literary materials in my graduate coursework, by writing comprehensive exams, and reading scholarship before writing my dissertation, I was overwhelmed by the literary representations of Muslim characters in the West as they seemed derived, repetitive, and recycled. I felt that such minority literature rebranded itself as multiethnic literature, but served nothing more than securing a small diversity quota in Western scholarship. Western literature is not secular enough to dignify minority literature as an equal to mainstream literature. As a foreign graduate

student in a Western country, I understood the relationship between Western literature and immigrant literature. As a woman of color, and a foreign national on American soil, I empathized with Muslim minorities in the United States; and, through a personal lens, I tried to critically understand the complications that Muslim characters face while belonging to Western societies[2]. I often *contemplated*, and at times looked for answers by *understanding* the politics behind the literary narratives of power that described the relation between Islam and the West. I realized that such narratives depicted more than just antagonism between Islam and the West; these narratives depicted Islam as a strange culture— a personification of the Other which was incompatible with the values of Western communities

My Personal Interactions with Otherness

My interactions with otherness started in India. As a teacher in India, I initially focused on otherness that came with the discourses of postcolonialism. In my postcolonial classes at Calcutta University, I was intrigued by how the other was depicted in Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing* and Joseph Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness*. The other in these books were dark in nature; they are exoticized, animalistic in nature, and uncivilized who need western aid to lead normal civilized lives. The fetishization of Eastern subjects seemed unsettling to me, because it made the other less human in nature. The further I read, I realized that in postcolonial studies, the other is always colonized, subdued, and victimized by the colonizer. I taught classes in India that discussed

[2] I certainly do not claim to have full ownership of the discriminatory experiences that Muslims around the globe, or Muslims-Americans faced when I read immigrant literature, but as a foreigner living in the American nation, I significantly resonated and empathized with their experiences of living in liminal spaces.

otherness from a postcolonial lens and read scholarship on how the fetishization of otherness is desirable and detestable in the eyes of the colonizer. I was part of many student groups, a part-time lecturer in a college, and tutored many students teaching British Literature as a main course of study. To read, understand, navigate, and produce scholarship about British authors was was never pleasurable to me. I could understand the issues, teach themed courses, but such readings would never quite resonate with my life in India. As a teacher in British literature, I struggled with teaching novels that had nothing to do with Indian culture. I always felt ambivalent about the texts that I was using: while I tried to feel equal to the British colonizers by showing my expertise on British culture and literature, at the same time I empathized with young minds that faced academic colonization because they had never learnt Indian literature and culture. I always felt othered by the Indian academic system's inclination to incorporate British literature as a primary course of study In my later goal to pursue the concept of otherness through post colonialism in the United States, I started to see that otherness can be analyzed beyond the postcolonial lens. Since I was clearly advocating for building a community that spoke for the rights of strangers in the post-colonial world, I found a desire to understand the different nuances of otherness.

Teaching Literature about the Other

I have taught narratives that dealt with the immigrant's desire to achieve the American Dream briefly in India and more substantially in the United States. The American Dream promises hope and security for immigrants. In these literary narratives, the United States is described as a center for global capitalism, a world for upward

mobility, a dangerous imperial power, and an object of romantic attachment. The more I read about immigrant narratives, the more I realized that the immigrants faced the antithesis of the American Dream when they came to the United States. Immigrants who ran from their politically unstable home countries found no comfort when they tried to search for a life in the United States. When I taught about the ambiguity of the American Dream, my role as a scholar in the West and a teacher of color became vulnerable in the classroom. I noticed that the farther I moved from the literature that discussed the hope and security of the American Dream, the more I created syllabuses for classrooms that discussed immigrant literatures of trauma and belonging.

While teaching a class on World Literature as a graduate student, I often faced difficulties when I saw my students struggling to assess the relationship between Islam and the United States. They were reluctant to address complications between Islam and the West; at the same time it seemed they felt morally obligated to speak against Muslim discrimination in the United States. Then, as a teacher, I questioned myself: 1) Why do discussions about Islam and the West become binary and almost mutually exclusive? 2) What would happen if war no longer defined the power relations between Muslim protagonists and their existence in the Western world? 3) In immigrant narratives what do my students consider precarious—being citizens of the country that is considered a neocolonial[3] power, or not being a part of the immigrant community at large? 4) Why has Islam become the other and branded to a religion of hostility?

[3] After World War I, Edward Said, Robert Young, and Kwame Nkrumah consider the United States as the neo-colonial power. Even though the United States doesn't geographically colonize countries in modern times, it still colonizes the Eastern countries through foreign policies, financial investments, and cultural capitalism.

A Reading of Said's *Orientalism* in Understanding Otherness

To answer these and related questions, I return to eminent postcolonial theorist Edward Said and his seminal work *Orientalism*, which discusses the complicated power structures between Islam and the West. As an answer to classical Orientalism, Said in Orientalism discusses how the West dehumanizes the East as an "other". Using the Occident and the Orient metaphorically as well as literally, Said argues that the Oriental knowledge from Western Orientalists represent Occident and the Orient as timeless representations of Eastern and Western communities. He states that the Occident represents, dominates, and stereotypes the Orient as incapable of autonomous representation (Said 265). He also notes that after World War II, the United States represented the Occident more distinctly than the other Western nations in its treatment of the Orient. He claims that European intellectuals, academics, scholars, and savants have stereotyped Muslims as exotic, barbaric, uncivilized, and miscreant and says that without Western dominance, Islamic countries will find it difficult to integrate into global communities (Said 287).

Said also argues that the depictions of the Orient and the Occident still operate within contemporary literary and political characters:

> A wide variety of hybrid representations of the Orient now roam the culture. Japan, Indochina, China, India, Pakistan: their representations have had, and continue to have, wide repercussions, and they have been discussed in many places for obvious reasons. Islam and Arabs have their own representations, too, and we shall treat them here as they occur in that fragmentary—yet powerfully

> and ideologically coherent—persistence, a far less frequent one, into which, in the United States, traditional European orientalism disbursed itself. (Said 285)

Hence, in a rather brief synopsis of Said's Orientalism, its premise rests on these key propositions:

- Orientalism emphasizes binary divisions; it creates Occident (West) and Orient (East). Mocking these binary divisions, Said says that the Europeans describe the Orient as uncivilized, barbaric, leery, dependent, and exotic, whereas the Occident is civilized, logical, powerful and educated.
- Orientalism is a Western projection that creates representations for the East. Since the East is immature and uncivilized to have an autonomous government, it is the responsibility of the West to colonize and "guide" the East ensuring them of proper administration.
- Orientalism is a discourse in itself—it is an institution that the Empire uses to justify its fabricated knowledge using supposedly historical and scientific facts. Said calls such facts "second order knowledge" (Said 46) that reinforce the victimization of the Orient.
- Said's Orientalism fights Islamophobia. He refutes the notion that the Orient is timeless and barbaric, regressive, and needs to be controlled by the Occident and says that the Orient is undervalued by the Occident.

Neo-Orientalism as a Prologue to the Dissertation

Incarnations of Orientalism after September 11, 2001, are often pejoratively called Neo-Orientalism, a term used in academic literature to critique Western attitudes

of Islam in the twenty-first century. Neo-Orientalism has discursive tropes similar to the term, Orientalism, except that scholars limit this new term not only to Western interpretations of the Eastern Orient, but also to contemporary Neo- Orientalist scholars such as Middle Eastern writers and intellectuals who participate in prejudicially helping the West perpetuate stereotypes about the East. While discussing the aptness of the prefix "Neo" to describe modern affiliations of Orientalism, Ali A. Behdad and Juliet Williams in "Neo-Orientalism, Today" note that Neo-Orientalism is an extension of classical Orientalism. *Neo-Orientalism* not only emphasizes the binary divisions and complicated power structures of the Orient and the Occident but also points at new ways of Eastern othering by Western communities in post-9/11 societies:

> While the term Neo-Orientalism designates a shift in the discourse of Orientalism that represents a distinct, and in ways novel formation, it nonetheless entails certain discursive repetitions of and conceptual continuities with its precursor. Like its classical counterpart, for example, neo-Orientalism is monolithic, totalizing, reliant on a binary logic, and based on an assumption of moral and cultural superiority over the Oriental other. To put the point more aphoristically, neo-Orientalism should be understood not as *sui generis*, but rather as a supplement to enduring modes or Orientalist representation. (Behdad and Williams (n.p)

As classical Orientalism fossilized the other as a dehumanized entity, scholars have been discussing how Neo-Orientalism continues to estrange the other in the post-9/11 era. Salim Kerboua and Mohammad Samiei note that inception of Neo-Orientalism

is inspired by the conditions that distinguish the pre-9/11 other from the post-9/11 other. While the knowledge of a pre-9/11 Orient was a product of Occident's supposed understanding of the Orient, Salim Kerboua writes that post-9/11 Orientalism is a description of how right-wing circles in the Western world construct Islam and the Muslim world with the presence of "neoconservative and pro-Israel circles in the Western world" (Karboua 8) in current political situations. Samiei argues that Neo- Orientalism portrays a different version of the other compared to pre-9/11 other since the growing number of Muslims in Western countries have moderated the description of the other that was previously propagated when describing the Orient of *Orientalism*. Samiei holds the view that the presence of many Muslim scholars and intellectuals in Western universities has enabled them to present the other is a more nuanced light (Samiei 1150). Furthermore, successful business figures such as Prince Alwadeed Bin Talal, among many others from Gulf countries and Islamic states who have invested money in Western institutions, have played an active role in empowering the other if not portraying the other as a hostile entity in Western communities. Also, as Samiei argues, the use of technology and the internet has diversified the ways in which writers/scholars now portray the other. He mentions famous French political scientist Gilles Kepel's observation that Al-Jazeera, a television network in the Middle East, had its own voice with coverage throughout what George W. Bush called the "War on Terror" (Samiei 1150). In this case, Al-Jazeera, as a manifestation of the Orient, had the agency to refute stereotyped representations of the Orient, giving the world a balanced view of the causes and repercussions that led to 9/11.

The stereotyped similarities between classical Orientalism and Neo-Orientalism rest on one fundamental premise—the existence of the binaries of putative East and so-called West. Both discourses concentrate the necessity of the West's ownership of the uncivilized East. In "The Clash of Civilizations," published before 9/11, Samuel P. Huntington states that Islam and the West will always have polarized identifications, because the clash between these civilizations is not ideological, but cultural. He states that Islam and the West are each other's opposites, since both of these "civilizations are differentiated from each other by history, language, culture, tradition and, most important, religion" (Huntington 25). Huntington argues that since the West has been at its peak of power since World War II, the non-West increasingly has "the desire, the will and the resources to shape the World in non-Western ways" (Huntington 26). He continues to emphasize on the East-West binary, as he seems certain that the opposition between the West and the Islam is unlikely to decline because "Islam has bloody borders" (Huntington 34) and will continue to fight the West's supreme military strength, superior economic resources, and advanced international institutions.

Similarly, Bernard Lewis in his essay "The Roots of Muslim Rage," that also published before 9/11, emphasizes the opposition of Islam and the West when he says that even though Islam is a religion of peace, the Muslim world has of late directed hatred against the West (Lewis 47). He states that Islam reemphasizes an insider-outsider, in-group/out-group polarization because it has two groups based on Islamic belief each of which designates an other from a native. The two groups of Islam he names as The House of Islam and The House of War are described as follows: "The House of Islam, where

the Muslim law and faith prevail, and the rest, known as the House of Unbelief or the House of War, which it is the duty of Muslims ultimately to bring to Islam" (Lewis 49). Hence, he explains, anyone who doesn't practice the Islamic law is an infidel and will fall under The House of War. As Islamic fundamentalists would have it, the desire to assert Muslim values on a global scale is crucial to challenge Western imperialism, even if that challenge involves resorting to violent methods. The House of War is important to establish The House of Belief.

Lewis further argues that after World War II, when a wide range of American products suddenly flooded the global market, representing freedom and liberty, Islamic leaders saw the enemies of God in the West and made the United States their arch enemy (Lewis 54). He discusses his helplessness at being a part of the West, when it is associated with tyranny and colonization, but he argues that even then it is better than being associated with a civilization that encourages polygamy and violence against women:

> The accusations are familiar. We of the West are accused of sexism, racism, and imperialism, institutionalized in patriarchy and slavery, tyranny and exploitation. To these charges, and to others as heinous, we have no option but to plead guilty—not as Americans, nor yet as Westerners, but simply as human beings, as members of the human race. In none of these sins are we the only sinners, and in some of them we are very far from being the worst. The treatment of women in the Western world, and more generally in Christendom, has always been unequal and often oppressive, but even at its worst it was rather better than the rule of

> polygamy and concubinage that has otherwise been the almost universal lot of womankind on this planet. (Lewis 58)

In response to Huntington and Lewis, Said argues that Islam and the West share many things in common and that such binarism will strengthen the divide between Islam and the West rather than encourage ways in which different civilizations can coexist peacefully in the world. In "The Clash of Ignorance," which was published after 9/11, Said states that the nature of such binary divisions is "recklessly affirmed" by Huntington (Said 352) and that Huntington's discussion of the differences between Islam and the West is based on superficial evaluation of the two cultures. He notes that Western policy makers are particularly interested in dismissing the legitimatization and autonomy of other religions, Islam in particular. He says that labels such as *Islam* and *the West* can be confusing as they pigeonhole complex cultural issues into rudimentary, generalized definitions (Said 356). He further argues that these labels are anachronistic since on 9/11 Osama Bin Laden used sophisticated western technology to attack the Twin Towers. This sophisticated machinery, then, begs the question by projecting Islam as an anti-modern culture (Said 358). On similar grounds of resisting Islamophobic stereotypes, Emran Qureshi and Michael A. Sells in their introduction to *The New Crusades: Constructing the Muslim Enemy* state that Islam's designation as the religion of barbarism has further increased after 9/11 because the stereotype of Muslims' barbarism is derived from the "Saudi model of police-state repression, religious intolerance, oppression of women, moral hypocrisy among male elite, and an aggressive and a highly funded export of militant anti-western ideology" (Qureshi and Sells 18). Sells and Quereshi argue that

such constructions of the Muslim enemy create more than the East/West binary. They reinforce the idea that the West is up against a formidable adversary that somehow must be contained by civilized societies.

The containment of the other is another addition in the discourse of Neo-Orientalism. In "Neo-Orientalism and the New Barbarism Thesis: Aspects of Symbolic Violence in the Middle East Conflict(s)," Dag Tuastad states that Neo-Orientalism entails a "new barbarism thesis," where violence is more symbolically portrayed than was envisioned in Oriental studies. Tuastad argues that since Arab culture has always been at the periphery of Western civilization, its violence is seen as barbaric and irrational. As an extension of classical imperialism, the violence of Neo-Orientalism is motivated by political interests, if not social and economic, and violence is described by Neo-Orientalists as an inherent part of the Arab culture. Through the concept of new barbarism, terrorism and the Arab mind have become interconnected by Neo-Orientalists thus legitimizing the West's need to maintain colonial domination over Middle Eastern civilization. Tuastad also states that since it is already assumed by Orientalists and Neo-Orientalists that the Middle East is against democratization of its society, the US State department has made it a personal mission to broadcast Sharia law against a fulfilled human existence (Tuastad 594). Meghna Nayak extends the conversation about the thesis of a new barbarism when she writes in "Orientalism and Saving 'US' State Identity after 9/11" that the US government has become the moral police, aiming to save the world from the post-traumatic repercussions of 9/11. In order to control the new barbarism, the US State department has to reassert its identity legitimately through a ban on immigration

and extended militarism to "secure" the world from terroristic acts (Nayak 44). Nayak describes how 9/11 gave the State Department an opportunity to control the other, who she argues is now understood as an actor in Neo-Orientalism studies rather than an object as described in Said's Orientalism (Nayak 56).

Compared to traditional Orientalism, the objectification of the other in Neo-Orientalism is not a Eurocentric phenomenon. Neo-Orientalism is not entirely produced by Western subjects, but it is also produced by Muslim writers and intellectuals who claim to have a comprehensive understanding of all Muslim people around the world. Muslim writers and intellectuals claim exclusive ownership to all Muslim subjective experiences in Islamic countries when they write that their individual trials and tribulations reflect all Muslim life experiences in the world. Ali Behadad calls them "experts" in the discourse of Neo-Orientalism, because they participate in the production of the backwardness of the Eastern culture, thus reinforcing the idea of the progressive Western culture. Behdadi says that compared to classical orientalists, who were "European savants, philologists, established writers and artists, Neo Orientalists tend to be ordinary Middle Eastern subjects whose self-proclaimed authenticity authorizes their discourses" (Behdad and Williams n.p.). Behdadi and Williams go on to say that unlike the apparent and objective knowledge of the Western Orientalists, Eastern orientalists claim full authenticity through a journalistic pretense of universalizing personal experiences into communal experiences for the Islamic world. In contrast to classical Orientalism's apparent privileging of philological, cultural, and formalistic concerns over ideological ones, Neo-Orientalism is marked by an unapologetic investment in and

engagement with the politics of the Middle East. Neo-Orientalists such as Azar Nafisi not only maintain political affiliations with neo-conservative institutions such as Paul H. Nitze School for Advanced International Studies (SAIS), but in their writings as well, they pointedly criticize Islamic governments and unapologetically advocate regime change in Iran and other countries in the region. (Behdadi and Williams 2)

Hamid Dabashi adds to the conversation about the self-proclaimed expert Neo-Orientalists when he calls the native experts on Islam "native informants" or "comprador intellectuals." In his article "Native Informers and the Making of an American Empire, " Dabashi states that when people from Islamic backgrounds write memoirs after 9/11, talking about the plight of women in the Muslim world, about the importance of the veil, and about women's struggles to survive in an Islamic country, they "put that predicament squarely at the service of the US ideological psy-op, militarily stipulated in the US global mongering" (Dabashi 3). Dabashi then cites Gayatri Chakroborty Spivak's seminal essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" mentioning that such literature reemphasizes that Western hegemonization is crucial to save brown women from brown men (Dabashi 4). He also adds that since these writers are writing against the Islamic world, they provoke the darkest of Oriental fantasies about Oriental women in the West, thus perpetuating the essentialization of Muslim as an Other in global communities (Dabashi 5). Given the transnational nature of global communities, Dabashi states that these native interlocutors are giving ahistorical representations of historical accounts that describe the complexities of relationships between Islam and the West.

Muslims as Others and Others as Muslims: A Critical Framework

Scholars have long debated the meanings of other. In "Can the Subaltern Speak," Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak defines the other as the subaltern--a voiceless member of society. She describes the other as an object of fetishization in the Western culture. She also uses the example of Indian Sati practice or widow suicide while describing the subaltern. Her article specifically examines how Eastern cultures are Othered compared to Western cultures (Spivak 15). Similarly, Albert Memmi defines the other as a non-Western entity that is oppressed and colonized with no representation in its own history: "The most serious blow suffered by the colonized is being removed from history and from the community. Colonization usurps any free role in either war or peace, every decision contributing to his destiny and that of the world, and all cultural and social responsibility" (Memmi 68). In *Black Skin White Masks* Frantz Fanon observes the way in which the other is othered because of his skin color. Fanon tries to analyze the psyche of the Black man, in this case understood as the other, stating that the Black Man is often compared to animals and considered to have sinned in their life (Fanon 19). As an other, the Black man is a colonized person who suffers from an inferiority complex because he is moved away from his own culture and own history. He is expected to catch up to the White man because the more the Black man becomes white, the more he rises in the social circle:

> Every colonized people—in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality—finds itself face to face with

> the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle. (Fanon 25)

Fanon goes on to say that since the Black man is constantly othered by the White man he undergoes a tremendous mental struggle uncertain of what he needs to do to be accepted in the white society. While the Black Man addresses the White man as "boss" (Fanon 22) and "sir" (Fanon 45), the White man often calls the Black man as "negro" (Fanon 23) and "scum" (Fanon 45). Fanon mocks this racial binary that encourages otherness: "I am white: that is to say that I possess beauty and virtue, which have never been black" (Fanon 31) while simultaneously telling Black people that they need to take pride in being black and being different in communities that applaud blackness as deviant and dehumanizing.

Sara Ahmed discusses the alienization of the other while describing the relation between a stranger and a native of the nation. Ahmed argues that the native seeks differentiation from the stranger (Read: other) because the "stranger is figured as a violent monster, more specifically as a person of color" (Ahmed 89). She says that a stranger's "body is out of place" (Ahmed 89) in the nation and is not a part of the shared history of the nation. Such people are always associated with danger, and if they come too close to the nation, they should be policed to keep from disrupting the peace of the nation. Since the other is an unknown entity, natives believe that recognition and

knowledge about such people are important for their own survival (Ahmed 22). Survival then necessitates that the native know and by extension fabricate and assume knowledge about the other to keep the strange away from the familiar. Since the native "lives in the purified space of the community" (Ahmed 56), he likes the "same-thing-ness of himself" (Ahmed 56); it encourages him to "sneeze the stranger out of the philosophical body. . . . in other words, the stranger is produced as a figure that is distinct from the (philosophical) body only through a process of expulsion" (Ahmed 56). The other needs to stay away from the nation.

Discussing similar critical insights of otherness in *Alienhood: Citizenship, Exile, and Logic of Difference*, Katarzyna Marciniak calls the other an alien and shares her personal experiences of having to go through medical observations in the West to "legalize" (Marciniak xii) her alienhood. She says that in order to be accepted as a native she had to "understand that my rights are limited" (Marciniak xii) and that the success of her legalization process depended "on both the goodwill of the professionals assisting me and my own ability to accept 'feminized' humiliation quietly" (Marciniak xii). In her book she discusses how Mexicans and illegal immigrants are others who are often associated with the rhetoric of "danger," "peril," and "mortal menace" to the whiteness of America (Marciniak 11). She then describes the border of Mexico and United States as the War Zone of America, which tests the other's compatibility with the nation. If the other fails to qualify with the parameters of immigrant acceptability at the borders, he should not be allowed to be a part of the nation.

Similarly Zygmunt Bauman and Edward Said in "Making and Unmaking of Strangers" and "No Reconciliation Allowed" explain that all societies have their own others and that global immigration complicates the notion of strangers in contemporary times. While Bauman explains that others "gestate uncertainty" (Bauman 1) in nations and blur the borders of acceptable and unacceptable, Said corroborates Bauman's critical insight about others through his own life story as a Palestinian teaching in America who constantly felt that he didn't belong in the United States. While discussing the psyche of the other, Bauman says that the other often suffers from plural identities—he is unsure whether any nation will bring him a sense of belonging (Bauman 5). Bauman calls such identities "contrapuntal identities" where the other struggles to find a place he can call his home. Said shares similar views when he discusses his exilic identity as an important part of his existence: "I found myself reliving the narrative quandaries of my early years, my sense of doubt and of being out of place, of always feeling myself standing on the wrong corner, in a place that seemed to be slipping away from me just as I tried to define or describe it" (Said 96).

Scholars such as Arjun Appadurai, Seyla Benhabib, and Sunaina Maira have debated the relation between strangers and their political agency in nations. Literary representations that reflect the relationships between the East and the West and categorize them as "strangers" or "natives" are, in actuality, less exclusive in nature. The state is responsible for the political, social, and cultural security of its citizens—and, as Appadurai notes in *The Fear of Small Numbers*—the state can also resort to violence to restore peace in the nation. For people in power in the state, the legitimization and

exercise of violence is necessary for maintaining peace in daily life. Appadurai says: "Terror is the rightful name for any effort to replace peace with violence as the guaranteed anchor of everyday life. It uses emergency as its routine and values exceptional forms of violence and violation as its norm" (Appadurai 32). Even though as a propagator for human rights the modern State condemns the use of violence against citizens as an arbiter for restoring peace within its boundaries, it uses violence as an indispensable measure. Appadurai further argues that the state sees strangers as an obstruction to achieve security and purity in nations. He states that strangers, nomads, religious dissidents, and minority groups have always been the targets of xenophobia and prejudice because they are outsiders to the homogeneity of the nation: "They are marks of failure and coercion. They are embarrassments to any State-sponsored image of national purity and State fairness. They are scapegoats in the classical sense" (Appadurai 42).

Seyla Benhabib, on the other hand, states that immigrants give human currency to nations. In her eminent work *The Rights of Others*, Benhabib states that immigration is important for global justice. Benhabib argues that modern nations are increasingly State centric—in the name of national security, the State justifies the right to accept or refuse shelter to refugees, aliens, and other non-citizens (Benhabib 66). In the international order, the State is the sole proprietor that grants "political membership" (Benhabib 34) to its citizens. This political citizenship becomes a primary difference between citizens and strangers. Sara Ahmed advances Benhabib's arguments when she states that the strangers also run the additional risk of misinterpretation and misconstruction. The nation describes the stranger as a threat to humanity and often misrepresents the stranger: "The

figure of the alien reminds us that what is beyond the representation is also, at the same time, over-represented. What is over-represented and familiar in its very alienness cannot be reduced or *found* in such representation forms" (Ahmed 1).

The misrepresentation of strangers by the nation has challenged the State's role as a protector of individual rights and freedom of immigrants. Sunaina Maira, *Missing: Youth, Citizenship, and Empire after 9/11*, discusses ways in which the State has used violence as a preemptive measure to combat terrorism. Maira notes that the Patriot Act (Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act of 2001) which was passed after 9/11 for apprehending terroristic suspects makes the United States "an imperial crusade against evil" (Maira 45). Maira satirizes the moral policing of the United States when she writes that the terroristic suspects are often jailed on assumptions rather than facts: "The State of preemptive and perpetual war is built on the assumptions that certain categories of citizens and subjects are criminal, undesirable and unworthy of national belonging, and so must be purged from the body politic" (Maira 70). Maira observes that in an attempt to seal its borders, post-9/11 America is in a constant state of self-preservation. Its borders are now pregnable.

Judith Butler argues that the stranger is a manifestation of US imperialism. She says that immigrants are important to global capitalism, and that at the same time when immigrants become a part of the global infrastructure, they become victims of Western hegemony. After 9/11, multiculturalism in Western communities acknowledges Western citizens whereas strangers and immigrants scrape for representation in the nation:

> Perhaps, then, it should come as no surprise that I propose to start, and to end, with the question of the human (as if there were any other way for us to start or end!) We start here not because there is human condition that is universally shared—this is surely not yet the case. The question that preoccupies me in the light of recent global violence is, Who counts as human? Whose lives count as lives? And finally, What *makes for a grievable life?* Despite our difference in location and history, my guess is that it is possible to appeal to a "we" for all of us. And if we have lost, then it follows that we had, that we have desired and loved, that we have struggled to find for the conditions for our desire. (Butler 20)

Dehumanization, sorrow, and loss constitute the bulk of immigrant literature. Through the logic of exclusion and violence, in the fiction the State legitimizes liminal spaces as a strategy to repress minorities. The alien must be contained within the nation to reinforce the idea of citizenry. Said captures this mechanism of containment and exclusion when he describes the problems of the stranger in the nation:

> Our general response is anxiety, rage; a radical desire for security, a shoring-up of the borders against what is perceived as alien; a heightened surveillance of who Arab peoples and anyone who looks like someone you once knew who was of Arab descent, or who you thought was—often citizens, it turns out, often Sikhs, often Hindus, even sometimes Israelis, especially Sephardim, often Arab-Americans, recent arrivals or those who have been in the US for decades. (Said 39)

Muslims, who are by proxy the other, have been marginalized and liminalized in the post 9/11 world. They have long been portrayed as one-dimensional characters who are dangerous threats and public enemy to the world. Mary R. Abowd in her dissertation "Atavism and Modernity in Time's Portrayal of the Arab World, 2001-2011" observes that people of Islamic descent have been portrayed as either atavistic or modern. She argues that in the atavistic portrayal the Arab is always the "blood thirsty Turk" (Said 264), while the "modern" Arabs are the ones who have unapologetically embraced Western attitudes (Abowd iv), Abowd states that after 9/11 Arabs had sympathetic portrayals as victims rather than victors in the US media. These positive portrayals of Arabs were short lived, however, since other Arabs were intensely demonized as the US State Department declared that Arabs needed to be controlled so that they would not perpetuate terror in the world. While some of the media descriptions focused on how Arab-Americans lost their civil rights after 9/11 (Abowd 3), a shift she sees from the traditional dehumanizing rhetoric when describing Arabs before 9/11, Abowd's research attests that 9/11 terrorist attacks "solidified the image of the Arab as terrorist and religious fanatic on a scale like no other . . ." (qtd from Anderson in Abowd 161). Also, despite several public calls that empathized with Arabs in America, she notes that third-world portrayals presented to *Time* readers depicted crisis and chaos that negated the image of the "modern" Arab. Moreover, she also observes that the modern Arab was still presented as backward in these magazine depictions because they were shown as following and aping Western culture (Abowd 163). In this case, the Arab can never be

secular: he is seen as atavistic if celebrates his Islamic life and backward if he follows the Western tradition.

The reinforcement of the Arab as a world villain finds expression in Tabish Khair's *Muslim Modernities,* which notes that such negative stereotypes about the Arab put into question not only the character of the Muslim but also of the West. He asks if the Arab is a violent perpetrator of inhumanity, then why shouldn't the West be charged with racism for perpetuating hatred towards innocent Muslims (Khair 42)? Why do we accuse the Arab's violence as backward and the West's violence as law (Khair 54)? While discussing the injustice of such portrayals, Khair notes that violence practiced by anyone should be condemned: "Why is it that we always justify our violence and consider violence by the enemy to sheer sacrilege?" (Khair 100). He says that people who practice violence are convinced of their own superior humanity—officials of the law believe that their violence will restore humanity to the nation, and terrorists are convinced of their superior humanity because they are fighting against repression of minorities. Thus violence becomes the only tool available to control those "aberrant" humanities, and finding peaceful resolution through other means becomes impossible. Khair's discussion of the legitimization of violence and saving Western identities mirrors the language of the current President of the United States, Donald Trump, in his recent speech in Warsaw: "The fundamental question of our time is whether the West has the will to survive" (New York Times 2). Declaring himself the leader of the West, Trump's speech assumes that the West is under attack by Islam and that along with other Western nations he will fight to restore the superiority of the West. Trump's speech focusses on two central ideas: the

West's interest needs to be protected through whatever means necessary, and White people's 's fears are real: immigrants are attacking the West. Discourses of fear reflect Khair's fair assessment of how fear is not only entitled to Westerners, but also to Eastern people. He says that the Eastern community feels fear the same way the West does:

> And then there is a kind of abstract suffering: that of many Americans who felt powerless in the face of the terrorist strikes and that of many Muslims of the Third World who continue to feel powerless in the face of the terrorist strikes and that of many Muslims in the Third World who continue to feel powerless in a US-dominated world order. Such suffering may be abstract but it should not be overlooked, for it gives birth to the concrete crimes of those who, like Bin Laden, want to be instruments of the "scourge of god" (Khair 185).

Aim of the Research

Critical theorists argue that others are defined by their differences from natives; their differences are unacceptable as they supposedly work against the interests of the nation. In a world where people are constantly migrating, mixing with other ethnicities, and becoming a part of the immigrant community at large, strangers still struggle to be accepted in global societies. Fiction written by Michel Houellebecq, Karan Mahajan, Leila Aboulela, and Mohsin Hamid indicate that narratives on Islam are always set up in a binary where they are pitted against the so-called West. These literary narratives strengthen the concept of Neo-Orientalism where the Western civilization is described as everything that the Muslim world is not. It is in this context of the Neo-Orientalism that began to arise in the 1990s, after the first attack on the World Trade Center, but solidified

after the 9/11 attacks that the novels I will analyze are set. These novels respond to Neo-Orientalism by affirming its premises of a civilizational clash between the putative East and so-called West. How they do so differs, however. In some cases, the novels view Islam as a threat and offer a warning of what its ascendance portends for non-Muslim societies either in the West or in national contexts such as India. In other cases, the novels sympathetically take the standpoint of the besieged Muslims and explore the limited space for agency. This agency entails rejection of the West, affirmation of Islamic tradition, and a corresponding search for "safe space," for refuge from the force of anti-Muslim hatred. In the divided space of this clash, the options are either to be vanquished or to retreat from or to resist the violent, malignant Other (Western or Eastern). I have chosen four novels that represent diverse geographical and cultural settings.

The four books analyzed in this dissertation, Michel Houellebecq's *Submission,* Karan Mahajan's The Association of Small Bombs, Mohsin Hamid *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, and Leila Abouelela's *Minaret* depict Islam as a threat to the modern world. In *Submission*, the conflict between Islamic traditionalism and Western modernity expresses itself through François, the main protagonist of the novel, who is also a professor at Paris-Sorbonne. His life lacks professional and personal fulfillment. When the Muslim Brotherhood, an Islamic party, comes into power in the French election and nominates Mohammed Ben Abbes as the first Islamic French president, François and his colleagues at Paris-Sorbonne face a political and a social dilemma. As Islam becomes the majority culture in France, François struggles to integrate his Western identity with the Islamic ethos. In the end, François and his colleagues at the University, namely Rediger

and Marie-Françoise succumb to Islamism in order to secure their employment in the newly established French Caliphate.

Similarly, the othering of Muslims continues in *The Association of Small Bombs* Shockie and Malik are seasoned terrorists who are fighting their battle against the Indian government. In this chapter the putative West is metaphorical in nature; India is the West in this context. The terrorists fight for the freedom of Kashmir, but it is unclear in the narrative if they are from Kashmir. Mahajan paints them as dark characters in the novel who show no remorse to kill people for their objective. They are also expert bomb builders and are affiliated with numerous terrorist organizations in India and abroad. Ayub, who is a part of an NGO organization in Delhi, also protests against the Indian government. He belongs from Nepal and fights Islamophobia in India to provide a voice to many innocent Muslims who are serving jail time in the Indian judicial system. Ayub is opposed to physical violence but embraces terrorism as the only way to strike a revolution against Muslim repression in India.

Again, in *Minaret*, a novel published in 2004 in the United Kingdom, Najwa describes Islam as a religion of peace. Najwa, the principal protagonist of the novel, belongs to a wealthy family in Khartoum. Her father is employed by the Sudanese government, and her mother is a homemaker. Both Najwa and her brother study at a top private school in Khartoum. Najwa's romantic interest, Anwar-al-Sir is a member of the Democratic Front in Sudan at the University of Sudan. After a coup, Najwa's father is incarcerated by the Sudanese government and is tried by the Sudanese judicial system. Her father receives capital punishment and they are asked to leave the country. When her

family loses everything in Sudan, Najwa and her brother move to London and settle as refugees. Life changes drastically for the affluent family as Najwa loses both her parents and becomes a maid in London. In the middle of such personal turmoil, she finds peace by practicing Islam. While she had not been a practicing Muslim in Khartoum, Najwa now identifies with Islam as it constructs a sense of identity for her in an otherwise alienating London metropolis. She frequents mosques, wears the hijab, prays five times a day, celebrates Ramadan, and finds her true love in Tamer who is also a follower of Islam. The narrator describes that during the personal, political, professional trials, Islam brings her inner peace. The religion helps her overcome an existential crisis while she battles with Islamophobia and the loss of her family in Britain.

Changez in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is a poster child for successful immigration to America. He is a Pakistani citizen who works his way to Princeton University in pursuit of his American dream. His success on American soil is granted on merit and not on his ethnic background or national origin. Changez graduate's *summa cum laude* from Princeton University and gets a job at Samson Underwood, one of the most elite firms in America. He identifies himself as an American, falls in love with a New Yorker known as Erica, loves his life in New York, and is a favorite in his professional cohort, which is headed by Jim, his immediate boss. He is a go-getter, and his aggression in chasing his American dream results in his success in America. Changez's American ambitions dramatically change after the World Trade Center collapses on 9/11. He is racially profiled in airports and garages, loses his romantic interest in Erica, and his work suffers at Samson Underwood. Changez faces an identity

crisis: he is unable to situate himself as a Pakistani or as an American. He realizes the pitfalls of American imperialism. He leaves America and goes to Pakistan and becomes a mentor to several students. He is a professor at a university in Pakistan, where he teaches classes against America's world domination. But while Changez is considered an asset to the United States by Western community, post-9/11 United States marks him as a traitor in the American fraternity.

Set in a post-9/11 context the characters in these novels are adapting to an Islamophobic West. They hail from different countries—Changez hails from Pakistan but works in the United States, Najwa works in the United Kingdom but hails from Sudan, Francois works in France but is terrified of France becoming an Islamic Caliphate, and Ayub, Shockie, and Malik live somewhere in India, but are fighting against the Indian government. Each novel with its different protagonist is responding to marginalization of Islam; they are adapting to the demands imposed on them by Neo-Orientalism. While the plot of *Submission* reinforces as a manifestation of Neo-Orientalism by stressing on the civilizational clash between Islam and France, Francois responds to the Neo-Oriental trope by succumbing to the fear of Islamification of France. Similarly, in *The Association of Small Bombs* Ayub, Shockie, and Malik respond to the new context of post-9/11 by their determination to wreak havoc in India through their consistent bombings. Sadly, they strengthen the Neo-Orientalism concept of Arabs being barbaric and demonic in culture, once again alienating Islam as an Other culture. Changez and Najwa adapt to the demands of Neo-Orientalism. While Changez finds his identity by embracing Islam in the United States after Twin Tower attacks, Najwa reacts to racial discriminations against

Muslims by finding solace in Islamic traditions and reaching for the safe space in the mosque of London.

With the novels and their characters in mind, this study aims to enhance the our understanding of what it means to be a stranger at the periphery after 9/11 America; how global trends of terrorism and war interact and converge with textual interpretations and, more significantly, the complex interconnectedness between text and context in the writings after 9/11 postcolonial and neo-liberal fiction written by immigrants. The Neo-Orientalism has come to India and to other non-Western societies for whom "the Muslim" constitutes a civilizational threat. The rise of BJP led Hindu nationalism in India, which can be argued to be a proxy for White supremacy in America, also involves the othering of Muslims. The estrangement of Islam occurs in part because of Hindutva, "Hinduness," in India, where Hindutva, according to Hindu nationalists, is the only culture that should be observed in India. Belonging to a Hindu majority in India, as well as a Hindu minority in the United States, I analyze the novels from both a position of cultural advantage and cultural liminality. While I have written my first chapter on *Submission* and my fourth chapter on *The Association of Small Bombs*, from my cultural viewpoint of an Indian Hindu's analysis of Islam as a purported sub-human religion, my chapters on Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and Leila Aboulela's *Minaret* stem from my personal experiences of feeling othered in the West. The othering that I have felt has found expression in my analysis of the characters of Changez and Najwa, who are forced to be the victims of Neo-Orientalism in the West. Apart from discussing how the characters are reenacting and reacting to the discursive tropes to

Orientalism in recent global contexts, the characters in my novels aim to answer the question of whether there are ways of peaceful methods of coexistence between the Orient and the Occident, or whether there are other ways of living beyond the binaries of the East and the West, or the division between colonizer and colonized. The protagonists in the novel make us rethink whether any good can be served by the labels of the West and the Rest and whether as a society we should value our differences rather than make our differences an antithesis to a peaceful living. The next four chapters will discuss that even though novels are set with a pretext of a civilizational clash between Islam and the West, each of them document a different type of response to Neo-Orientalism.

CHAPTER 1: THE RISE OF A DARK CULTURE IN FRANCE: ISLAM IN MICHEL HOUELLEBECQ'S *SUBMISSION*

Published in 2015, Michel Houellebecq's *Submission* responds to the binary of Islam and the West by estranging Islam, portraying it as a demonic culture. Although fictionally, it narrates the rise of an Islamic Caliphate in France advocating the fear of the decline of the West. As a veiled critique of French liberalism, *Submission* advocates the loss of Western culture in France, should Muslim immigrants become a part of the French culture. Before *Submission*, Houellebecq has unrestrainedly expressed his views on Islam. In an interview with a French literary magazine, *Lire* in 2001, Houellebecq attacked Islam by describing it "as the most stupid religion" (Lire, n.p.). While he was acquitted for his racist comments in 2002, in 2015, in an interview with the leading daily *The Guardian*, Houellebecq admitted that he is Islamophobic in nature (the guardian n.p.) and his phobia is more about the fear than the hatred of Islam.

While Western representations of Eastern civilization have always been an object of speculation, the rise of Islamism[4] has challenged dominant Western power structures in the world. While scholars such as Said and Hamid Dabashi argue against the victimization of Islam, Houellebecq along with scholars such as Peter R. Demant write that Islamic fundamentalism reverses the oppressor-oppressed relation between Islam and the West: "Islam is filled with neo-fundamentalists who want to emulate Muhammed's virtuous society by seeking to convert the world into an Islamic community" (Demant 216). Houellebecq, who paints Islam as a dark culture in *Submission,* reinforces the

[4] Islamism is a political movement in Islam that is inspired by Islamic fundamentalism. It encourages the exercise of sharia law in Muslim societies.

negative side of the binary of Neo-Orientalism when describing Islam. Painting *Submission* as a cautionary tale against the rise of Islam as a global power, Houellebecq reinforces the binary of the East and the West by perpetuating hostility towards the Islamic culture. In this chapter, I argue that behind the positive depiction of his Muslim characters in the novel, Houellebecq has a caustic underpinning of Islamic hatred. He estranges Islam by portraying Islamic ideology as a threat to western modernity.

Mohammed Ben Abbes Islamizes France

In the novel, Mohammed Ben Abbes is the most promising presidential nominee in the French election. The narrator describes him as a charismatic, multicultural, and an able politician who is a member of the Muslim Brotherhood. Abbes has visionary plans for French political growth in the European system, and unlike other French presidential nominees, his campaign has strategic plans for national progression. He plans to secure huge investments from the Gulf countries while reducing oil imports from the Middle East. He believes in an Islamic administration that will work in unison for all French citizens—those who practice Islam and those who do not. Abbes is a contradiction to the conventional expectations of the Orient. While, for example Said, in his seminal work *Orientalism,* bemoans the West's description of the Orient as barbaric, miscreant, lacking sophistication, and dependent (Said 126), Abbes shatters the stereotypical image of the Orient by being a charming, assiduous, and a graceful politician. His achievement of the early days of the presidency is described by the narrator this way: "The first fifty days of Ben Abbes's national unity coalition had been a unanimous success. All the pundits agree that no newly elected president had ever enjoyed such a 'state of grace'" (Houellebecq

62). Unlike Said's "subservient" Orient should follow Western ideologies, Houellebecq's Abbes wants to lead French people through Islamic ideologies.

Abbes's inter-ethnic and cross-cultural identity receives unanimous public relatability across varied ethnic communities in the French election. Sara Ahmed (*Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality)* is right when she observes that strangers are unwelcomed guests in every community. Because of their different cultural and ethnic affiliations, people consider them in aliens in Western nations (Ahmed 56). However, Abbes in *Submission* contradicts the attitude of Sara Ahmed's stranger, as his political marketability thrives in an economy of French and Islamic cultural differences. He is not Ahmed's stranger "who lurks in the dark" (Ahmed 37) but a sophisticated presidential figure who dazzles the French electorate with his 'twinkling-eyes' and wit. His humble background comes from his Tunisian father, who was a grocer, but Abbes earned his way to a private high school and later to the prestigious to École Polytechnique on his own merit. He represents the middle-class French population—hard working and ambitious yet following a religious and conventionallifestyle. With a strong sense of social justice and equality, people like François who is the main character of the novel, finds Abbes as the perfect presidential candidate:

> No one, Ben Abbes reminded us, had benefited from our republican meritocracy more than he had. He had no wish to undermine a system to which he owed everything, even the supreme honor of asking the French people for their vote. He recalled doing his homework in the little apartment over the family shop. He

> briefly invoked the memory of his father, with just the right touch of emotion. I thought he was superb. (Houellebecq 86)

Compared to his French political adversaries, Abbes is an able leader. He not only plans to rule France but holds a high ambition of being the next Islamic leader of Europe (Houellebecq 68). While his competitor for French presidency, Marine Le Pen of the National Front speaks against Muslims, Houellebecq, not ironically enough, depicts Abbes as a powerful, well-calculated, and crafty politician who can compete with Marine Le Pen. Houellebecq shares that François becomes impressed by Abbes's erudition in national and foreign policy. Apart from his ability to harmonize elements of French modernity and Islamic traditionalism, François likes his novel idea of blending French capitalism and Islamic traditionalism:

> It turned out that some of Ben Abbes's ideas had nothing to do with Islam: during a press conference he declared (to general bafflement) that he was profoundly influenced by distributism. He had actually said so before, several times, on the campaign trail, but since journalists have a natural tendency to ignore what they don't understand, no one had paid attention and he'd let it drop. Now that he was a sitting president, the reporters were forced to do their homework. So, over the next few weeks, the public learned that distribution was an English economic theory espoused at the turn of the last century by GK Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc. It was meant as a "third way," neither capitalism nor communism—a sort of state capitalism, if you like. (Houellebecq 165)

In addition to his progressive policies, Abbes appeals to liberal ideas of cultural assimilation and ethnic integration. Compared to the far-right politician presidential nominee in the novel, ironically named Marine Le Pen, Abbes appeals to French people "with a voice of: moderation and dialogue" (Houellebecq 92). A politically apathetic François also finds Abbes's political campaign interesting becauseAbbes paints Islam in a positive lens, discouraging fundamentalist ideas of Islam and Christianity. As Kristeva would have it, Abbes evolves as a modern-day stranger, who is a symbol of a wise leader. He seems to appear "a different human being who . . . .may be assimilated into the fraternities of the 'wise', the 'just' or the 'native'" (Kristeva 2). He "hypnotized" the press and spoke in a "smooth and purring style" (Houellebecq 87). In a time when French society fears Islamic indoctrination, Abbes neutralizes the fear of Islamic traditions, by proposing policies in his campaign that promotes him as the moderate Muslim who can take over France through Islamic spiritual integration and a revolutionary enthusiasm . François describes Abbes's character as a hybridization of Muslim exoticismand rationality:

> He understood that the pro-growth right had won the "war of ideas," that young people today had become *entrepreneurs*, and that no one saw any alternative to the free market. But his real stroke of genius was to grasp that elections would no longer be about the economy but about values, and that here, too, the right was about to win the "war of ideas" without a fight. Whereas Ramadan presented sharia as forward-looking, even revolutionary, Ben Abbes restored its reassuring,

> traditional value—with a perfume of exoticism that made it all the more attractive. (Houellebecq 124)

Along with displaying rationalism, Abbes promotes himself as a moderate Muslim. He is a powerful expression of the hybridization of Islam and Westernization; he portrays himself as a blend of modernity and traditionalism. Abbes is a nonconformist, culturally elite stranger who breaks barriers of fixed identities and produces a fantasy of empowerment that is capable of navigating disparate ethnic and religious boundaries. In the words of Sara Ahmed, he becomes the "passing" figure who navigates extremes to the limits as well a potential risk: "Passing is here the phantasy of an ability (or a technique) to become without becoming. . . .the process of fixation where identities are adopted through dress and manner, also involves the threatening potential of its own unfixability. It is this relation between fixation and loss that marks the risk of passing" (Ahmed 100). He is against jihadism, but he encourages France to embrace Islam for a better future. While Islam is believed to have anti-Western values, Marie Françoise tells François that contrary to what they believe, Abbesmakes France believe that the Islamic takeover doesn't mean advocating jihadism:

> He is a *moderate* Muslim. That's the point. He says so constantly, and it's true. You can't think of him as some kind of Taliban or terrorist. That would be completely mistaken. Ben Abbes has nothing but contempt for those people. You can hear it whenever he writes those editorials for *Le Monde*—underneath all the moral condemnation, there's an edge of contempt. In the end, he thinks of terrorists as amateurs. The reality is that Ben Abbes is an extremely crafty

> politician, the craftiest, most cunning politician France has known since François Mitterrand. And unlike Mitterrand he has a truly historic vision.
>
> (Houellebecq124)

Abbes speaks against assumptions of a monolithic Islam and upholds a nuanced Islam that promotes liberal citizenship and multiculturalism in its *umma,* the Islamic universal community. He makes children's education as priority in France and believes that religion is important to France's secular progression. Not strangely however, in the novel, Houellebecq's dark vision of Islam gains full momentum when French citizens start realizing that Islamic indoctrination is the only solution to a diverse society:

> But, he went on, everyone had to admit that times had changed. More and more families—whether Jewish, Christian or Muslim—wanted their children's education to go beyond the mere transmission of knowledge, to include spiritual instruction in their own traditions. The return to religion was deep, it crossed sectarian lines, and public education could no longer afford to ignore it. It was time to broaden the idea of republican schooling, to bring it into harmony with the great spiritual traditions—Muslim, Christian, or Jewish—of our country.
>
> (Houellebecq 86)

Abbes garners political capital in his campaign when he states the Islamic caliphate under him will be secular and accommodating. He says that Islamism and secularism are not disparate phenomenological discourses, but are intertwined to resist racism within the context of nationhood. Similarly, Tariq Modood in "Muslims and the Politics of Difference," argues that people often assume all Muslims as culturally similar

but at the same time observe a variety of ethnic practices in Islam: "Muslims, are however not a homogenous group. Some Muslims are devout but apolitical, some are political but do not see their politics as their nationality of origin, such as Turkish; others with the nationality of settlement and perhaps citizenship, such as French" (Modood 100). Modood's emphasis on the ethnic disparity of Muslims blends with Houellebecq's secularization of Islam, as Abbes promotes it as an important part of his administration. One of the characters in *Submission*, Marie- Françoise, a university colleague to the main character (François) says that the new Islamic government will be religiously impartial:

> There's an idea you hear in far-right circles, that if Muslims came to power, Christians would be reduced to second-class citizens, or dhimmis. Now, dhimmitude is part of the general principle of Islam, it's true, but in practice the status of dhimmis is a very flexible thing. Islam exists all over the world. The way it's practiced in Saudi Arabia has nothing to do with Islam you find in Indonesia or Morocco. In France, I promise you, they won't interfere with Christian worship—in fact, the government will increase spending for Catholic organizations and the upkeep of churches. (Houellebecq 125)

Islamism as a Substitute to François's Empty French Life

In the novel, François has an empty personal life. During his term as a professor at Paris IV-Sorbonne, his rather brief physical relationships with many of his students satisfies his sexual instincts, but often leave him with a sense of emptiness and numbness. His frustration at not finding a stable partner expresses itself through an immense number of unresolved, unfulfilling relationships. He refers to his students as his mistresses and

girlfriends: “Mostly I had mistresses—or rather, as people said then (and maybe still do), I had *girlfriends*, roughly one a year” (Houellebecq 9). These relations disappear faster than he wants it to be: “When we came back from summer vacation and the school year began again, the relationship would end, almost always at the girl’s initiative” (Houellebecq 10). François thinks of this plethora sexual exchanges as “sexual vagabondages” (Houellebecq 10), which in a way is “apprenticeships—in a sense, as *internships*” (Houellebecq 11) for long-term relationships that never result in a family. These frequent sexual gratifications with fleeting girlfriends such as Aureile, Sandra, Chloe or Violane fill him with a sense of self disgust and emptiness. He discusses the futility of his relationships with his several girlfriends: “Our episodic sexual relationships, pursued with no hope of any lasting attachment, had left us similarly disillusioned” (Houellebecq 14).

Unfulfilling relationships bring François misery in the long run. His sexual relationships lack intimacy, are narcissistic, and aim towards instant gratification. His freedom is primary to him: “And yet after the morning I defended my dissertation (or maybe the same night), my first feeling was that I had lost something priceless, something I’d never get back: my freedom” (Houellebecq 6) and he believes that “intimacy isn’t something that men talked about” (Houellebecq 14). He refuses to be a responsible adult, and through his mechanical sexual lifestyle, he replaces one woman with another. His consistent insecurity hurts his chance to build an honest relationship with his student Myriam. While the inception of the relationship with Myriam is sexual in nature, he soon develops feelings for her. They confess their love for each other, but he

fails to raise a family with her. Myriam's departure makes him "painfully aware I hadn't even suggested Myriam come live with me that we move in together" (Houellebecq 91) and he is "very much alone" (Houellebecq 61) when he hears about her dating other men in Israel. Because of his experience, François turns into an emotional stranger i.e. emotionally unavailable to anybody. From a theoretical angle, he mirrors Julia Kristeva's definition of an emotional stranger which she describes as:

> Free of ties with his own people, the [emotional] foreigner feels "completely free." Nevertheless, the consummate name of such a freedom is solitude. Useless or limitless, it amounts to boredom or supreme availability. . .The paradox is that the foreigner wishes to be alone but with his partners, but yet no one is willing to join him in his torrid space of uniqueness. (Kristeva 12)

On this account, in *Submission*, Islam fulfills François's empty French life. Houellebecq satirizes that while French culture makes it difficult for François to find someone, sharia law will give him the opportunity to marry more than one partner. Dr. Abu Ameenah Bilai Philips and Jameela Jones in *Polygamy in Islam: Ta'addud al-zawjāt fī al-Islā* state that polygamy[5] is an acceptable practice in Islam, and they argue against Western practices of monogamy and having multiple sexual partners before marriage. Polygamy is communal in nature, where a man's responsibility towards more than one woman helps the community to work as units' codependent on each other, resulting in more fulfilled lives. Jones and Philips state that the Prophet himself spoke for polygamy:

[5] Polygamy is a highly controversial subject. Even though Philips and Jones argue for polygamy, scholars such as Nina Nurmila in *Women, Islam and Everyday Life : Renegotiating Polygamy in Indonesia* and Elissa Hall in *Stolen Innocence: My Story of Growing up in a Polygamous Sect, Becoming a Teenage Bride, and Breaking Free of Warren Jeffs* argue against polygamist practices.

"Marry of the women that please you; two, three or four, but if you fear that you will not be able to deal justly, then only one…" (Quran 4:3; qtd.in Jones and Philips 12). Following Jones and Philips's advocacy for Islam's legality for a polygamous marriage, François can secure multiple partners to raise a family. Interestingly enough, he no longer needs to find one partner for the rest of his life, but can have multiple partners permanently with legality. Philips and Jones argue that unlike polygamy in the Western culture the male can have many sexual relationships without taking any responsibility of his sexual adventures before committing himself to a monogamous relationship: "the fact is that institutional polygamy is vehemently opposed by male-dominated Western society because it would force men to fidelity. It would oblige them to take socio-economic responsibility for the fulfillment of polygynous desires and provide protection for women and children from mental and physical abuse" (Jones and Philips 16).

In the novel, when the Muslim Brotherhood becomes the ruling party for the French government, they endorse Jones and Philips advocacy for polygamy to make the French society more secured for women. If a French citizen practices polygamy, he is exempted from tax deductions and qualifies for state benefits (Houellebecq 65). Rediger, the president of the University of Sorbonne IV, points out that polygamy will not only give François happiness but also provide socioeconomic benefits that are unavailable in monogamous marriages. While François is scared of such an Islamic indoctrination in his life, Rediger says that not embracing the sharia law will be disadvantageous to him:

> "So their only chance is to adopt a two-track education system. They'll probably model it on the polygamy agreement, which will maintain civil marriage as a

> union between two people, men or women, but will also recognize Muslim marriage—and ultimately polygamy—even though it isn't administered by the state, and will come with the same benefit and tax exemptions."
>
> "Are you sure? That sounds so drastic…"
>
> "Quite sure. It's all been settled. And it is exactly in line with the theory of minority sharia, which the Muslim Brotherhood has always embraced."
>
> (Houellebecq 65)

Not surprisingly, François rationalizes his need for multiple relationships through polygamy. As an academic and an intellectual who frequently publishes in the *Journal of the Nineteenth Century*, François's views of women seem less than intellectual, stagnant, and reductive. He sees women as ornamental, not functional. For him, women are objects of sexual satisfaction and they should not actively engage in fields that are male dominated. In a conversation with Myriam, François points out that he has "never been really convinced that it was a good idea for women to get the vote, study the same things as men, go into the same professions, et cetera" (Houellebecq 28). Following his advocacy for patriarchy, he ensures that women's necessity in society is to raise a family and procreate children (Houellebecq 28). According to Philips and Jones, since men in polygamic societies are usually the providers and women are the nurturers, the purpose of these polygamic societies is to serve, supposedly, more meaningful lives than apparent lives in Western societies:

> The monogamous marriage system, clearly, does not take into consideration the real needs of human society. It limits possibilities for both men and women while

> claiming to protect the later. Instead of providing protection for the women, it provides a hypocritical shield for men to hide behind while favoring a wife to the detriment of a girl friend or vice versa. Islam has a complete marriage system which takes into account all the human variables and provides men and women with viable options. To deny the validity and the legality of polygamy is tantamount to denying the comprehensiveness of the Islamic marriage system and the wisdom of the divine decree . . . . Although polygyny may be painful for some women, it is also beneficial for other women and society as a whole. (Jones and Philips 19-20)

Furthermore, Rediger emphasizes the need for polygamic indulgences to maintain man's virility. In the novel, Rediger's book *Ten Questions on Islam* justifies polygamy in human creation to François. Interestingly enough, in the book, in the process of natural selection, male creatures have the right to choose multiple partners as they carry the seeds of procreation, so the creator should allow polygamy to ensure financially secured families in society (Houellebecq 212). Philips and Jones argue that since the man's natural need for sex is more than a woman, a society that engages in polygamy will restore the ratio of sexual relations between a man and a woman. In this case, marrying more than one wife will stop illicit relationships, by explicitly and legally allowing or permitting protection and provision "for the ever present surplus of females in most human societies" (Jones and Philips 49). Basing on such rationalizations of polygamy, Houellebecq reinforces his satirical contempt for Islam when François feels comfortable

with its practice. He in fact starts liking polygamy more than before and offers philosophical underpinnings for his choice:

> Like most men, probably, I skipped the chapters on religious duties, the pillars of wisdom, and child-rearing, and went straight to chapter 7: "Why Polygyny?" The argument was original, I have to say: to realize his sublime plan in the inanimate world, the Creator of the universe used the laws of geometry (a non-Euclidean geometry, to be sure, a non-communicative geometry, but still a geometry). When it came to living beings, however the creator expressed himself through natural selection, which allowed animate creatures to achieve their maximum beauty, vitality, and power. And for all animal species, including man, the law was the same: only certain individuals would be chosen to pass on their seed, to conceive the next generation, on which an infinite number of generations depended. (Houellebecq 220)

Islamic Annexation "Saves" France from Immoral Travesties

In the novel, Islamism usurps French society. In Houellebecq's French multicultural society, Islam is a religious *persona non grata*—unlike French society, Islam is anti-secular and anti-individualistic. Islamic culture believes in traditional ideas of community building where religious identities hold higher importance than national identities. In the Islamic community, the whole world is an *umma,* which is an essential part of Islamic civilization. Tibi describes the difference between a European identity and *umma*: "in this case, community is the *umma*, but in Islam *umma* is a universal entity, not an ethnic one. In the European community, *umma* becomes an ethnic community in

which the constructed identity rests" (Tibi 131). Tibi's description of the *umma* mirrors the Muslim Brotherhood's need for Islamic identity in France. This cultural confrontation is pushed to the forefront in the novel when François receives a letter from his former university, Paris III, (which now is renamed as the Islamic University of Paris-Sorbonne) asking him to resign his position as a professor unless he is willing to convert to Islam: "Robert Rediger, the new president of the university, had signed the letter himself…I was, of course, welcome, to pursue my career in a secular university" (Houellebecq 146). The attempt to create a global Islamic caliphate is unsettling to François, yet the fear of the loss of his livelihood forces him to succumb to Islamic colonization. He becomes a Muslim, wears long garb and "bear witness in front of his Muslim brothers, my equals in the sight of God" (Houellebecq 244) while he chants his allegiance to God. The narrator paints a dark picture of the caliphate:

> Ašhadu an la ilaha illa-llah, wa ašhadu anna Muhammadun Aabduhu wa rasuluhu: I testify that there is no God but God, and Muhammad is the messenger of God. And then it would be over; from then on I'd be a Muslim. (Houellebecq 245)

Islamism terrifies François. He is petrified that as a lawful French citizen, he has no rights in his own country until he becomes a Muslim. Islam wants "complete submission" (Houellebecq 212) from François because, in the novel unlike other religions, "Islam accepts the world, and accepts it whole" (Houellebecq 213). François is scared that the political system he grew up with "might suddenly explode" (Houellebecq 61) and his academic career undoubtedly has "ended in a matter of minutes" (Houellebecq147) in the Islamic regime. He wonders if he can survive the "the deluge"

(Houellebecq 85) of Islam and considers the Islamic regime equivalent to his death: "What if the deluge came before I died? Obviously, it's not as if I expected my last years to be happy. There was no reason I should be spared from grief, illness, or suffering. But until now I had always hoped to depart this world from undue violence" (Houellebecq 56). François doesn't care about his political affiliations in the beginning: "My political ideas are thin as wearing a bath towel" (Houellebecq 27) but, expresses abhorrence when his colleague, tells him that French citizens must adopt Islamic beliefs if Muslim Brotherhood comes into power. François seems cognizant of his rights as a French citizen and finds it drastic (Houellebecq 65) when he is forced to convert to a Muslim.

When François fails to find a familiarity with Islam, he faces an identity crisis. When Marie- Françoise's husband explains the disturbed political scene in France, François is rattled and experiences a deep existential crisis in what has become an alien surrounding for him. He is agitated when he is asked to close his bank accounts in France and opt for English banks outside the country:

> "So, I'd suggest you open an account with a foreign bank—ideally an English one, like Barclays or HSBC."
>
> "That's it?"
>
> "That's not nothing. Do you have a place in the country where you can go to ground?"
>
> "No, not really."
>
> "Even so, I'd urge you to take off, sooner than later. Find a hotel somewhere. Didn't you say you lived in Chinatown? I doubt we'll see any looting or rioting

near you, but all the same, I'd take a vacation and wait for things to settle down." (Houellebecq 69)

Houellebecq presents Islamism, in this case, as what Arjun Appadurai calls a predatory identity. Appadurai states that a predatory identity doesn't allow other ethnic acculturation: "social constructions and mobilization require the extinction of other, proximate social categories, defined as threats to the very existence of some group defined as we" (Appadurai 51). Islam becomes a social punishment for Europe when it justifies colonization to save France from its immoral travesties. The narrator justifies Islamic annexation over France: "The facts were plain: Europe had reached a point of such putrid decomposition that would no longer save itself, any more than fifth-century Rome could have done" (Houellebecq 26). Since Europe struggles with its ideals of individualism, the Muslim brotherhood observes communalism and anti-ethnocentrism as the only antidote to what it considers a narcissistic French culture. The narrator states that immigrants in the French society is the only way to cure France of its political decomposition: "This new wave of immigrants, with their traditional culture—of natural hierarchies, the submission of women, and respect for elders—offered a historic opportunity for the moral and familial treatment of Europe" (Houellebecq 26).

In the novel, the Islamic government succeeds as the next government in France; Islamic national identity overthrows French national identity. When the Muslim Brotherhood comes into power, François realizes that there will be no more secular education. Religious education will be primary in schools, and State and religion will not be separate entities in civic administration. Peter R. Demant, in a research article

discussing Islamic State observes that in any government, the Islamic State would encourage Islamic citizenship and encourage an Islamic administrative order to find salvation for the individual soul and mind: "The aim of the Islamic state is to stimulate and facilitate a religious lifestyle for all Muslims and thus optimize their chances for salvation. Hence the state will maintain a framework of Islamic ritual and public prayers and guarantee religious education" (Demant 212). In a similar vein, the narrator in *Submission* believes that the Islamic State in France will call for a geo-political Islamic annexation about which François reveals mixed feelings of acceptance and rejection:

> They want every French child to have the option of a Muslim education, at every level of schooling. Now, however, if you look at it, a Muslim education is very different from a secular one. First off, no coeducation. And women would be allowed to do certain things, what the Muslim Brotherhood wants for most women is to study home ec, once they finish grade school, then they get married as soon as possible –with a small minority studying art or literature first. That's their vision of an ideal society. Also, every teacher would have to be Muslim. No exceptions. Muslim dietary laws and the five daily prayers; above all, the curriculum itself would have to reflect the teachings of the Koran. (Houellebecq 65)

In the novel, violence and terror are modernity's quickest solutions to mandate Islamic identity in French social spaces. While the dawn of the Islamic regime in France brings the possibilities for a better job, it comes with a deeper crisis for the nation state. François thinks that it's "unwise to think about the future" (Houellebecq 102) since

"everything in the country seemed to be broken" (Houellebecq 103). He also sees that the National Front, an alliance of the Muslim Brotherhood, uses "back channels" (Houellebecq 51) to bring about civil war and create terror and fear. There are empty supermarkets "deserted checkout counters" (Houellebecq 96) and "protests" (Houellebecq 97) with an imminent fear of terror attacks. Eventually chaos is created as the newly installed Islamic government tries to hold power, amidst protests and riots:

> The fighting had begun. You could make out groups of masked men roaming around with assault rifles and automatic weapons. Windows had been broken, here and there cars were on fire, but the images shot in the pelting rain, were of such poor quality it was impossible to get a clear idea of who was doing what. (Houellebecq 97)

On one hand *Submission* is clearly a response, a counter point to Western systems of thought and governance, on the other hand the novel's discussion of reversal power that comes with the Islamic state is not creating harmony. The solution that the moderate Muslim is providing even if practical, is at times unsavory and to also to an extent, experimental. Based on the foregoing description of the type of Islamic state in France, at least two general interpretations can be made: from the perspective the moderate Muslim taking over France shows agency, power, and sophistication of the new leader in the global system, on the other hand the implications of French takeover by Islamic force shows signs of vandalism and a disputed governance. Ultimately the fact that the novel ends with François thinking that the Islamic life is better than his French life (Houellebecq 246) and that "he has nothing to mourn" (Houellebecq 246) strikes fear

about an Islamic colonization in France posing French citizens as helpless and hapless victims of Islamism. In order to save the West, France needs to fight back to restrain the vicious ambition of a global Muslim world. Houellebecq, through *Submission*, appeals to the world to check the growth of Muslims before they turn the world into a global Islamic caliphate.

CHAPTER 2: THE BARBARIC ORIENT OF NEO-ORIENTALISM: AYUB, SHOCKIE, AND MALIK IN KARAN MAHAJAN'S *THE ASSOCIATION OF SMALL BOMBS*

Karan Mahajan's *The Association of Small Bombs* responds to the civilizational clash between Islam and the West by reinforcing the Oriental trope of Muslims as savage and brutal beings in a post-9/11 context. The novel takes the negative side of the binary, strengthening the fact that "the Arab mind [that is] depraved, anti-semitic to the core, violent, unbalanced" is an assertion of Muslims in the world stage as they pose a challenge to the world order of things. In this chapter, India is a metaphorical interpretation of the West. Living in a Hindu dominated space, Muslims have faced severe discrimination and racial annihilation in India. They have always been othered in the Indian community. Saba Naqvi in *Good Faith: A Journey in Search of an Unknown India* notes that the Indian society divides Muslims in two groups: ""good Muslims", who are liberal and moderate in their political and religious leanings, and "bad Muslims", who are conservative and fundamentalist in their outlook." (qtd in the Herald). If a Muslim does not agree with Hindu frames of national representation, he is automatically considered a bad Muslim.

Published in 2016, Mahajan builds on the description of bad Muslims as they fight for self-representation against the Indian government. Apart from describing them as revolutionaries, Mahajan depicts them as terrorists hungry to achieve power in their lives. They are fighting for the freedom of Kasmir and with consistent bombings they show agency in Indian demography by striking fear among the masses. Mahajan paints

them as dark characters in the novel who show no remorse to kill people for their objective. They are also expert bomb builders and are affiliated with numerous terrorist oranizations in India and abroad. In Mahajan's novel, *The Association of Small Bombs*, I argue even if the terrorists Ayub, Shockie, and Malik are fighting against the Indian government to reclaim Kashmir, they reinforce the image of the blood thirsty Muslim.

Shockie: The Ambitious Terrorist

Shockie is an ambitious terrorist. In the novel, Shockie embodies an Orient who is not an object as described in Orientalism but an actor of Neo-Orientalism. Shockie is grim, aloof, cold, and emotionally sterile. As an embodiment of the Orient, he reinforces the Oriental trop that Muslims are violent and blood thirsty in nature, who loves destruction. Said, who speaks against such Oriental depictions in *Orientalism* describes how the Orient has always been stereotyped as violent and blood thirsty in nature. He attacks Professor Gil Carl Alroy's negative stereotyping of Arabs in "Do the Arab Want Peace?" by stating that since his Alroy believes that "Arabs want to destroy Israel" (Said 308), he is describing a very fossilized, monolithic negative view of Arabs:

> In other words, Alroy must prove that because Arabs are, first of all, as one in their bent for bloody vengeance, second, psychologically incapable of peace, and third, congenitally tied to a concept of justice that means opposite of that, they are not to be trusted and must be fought interminably as one fights any other fatal disease. (Said 308)

Mirroring the violent Orient, Shockie as a seasoned terrorist, he makes it difficult for the police to track his whereabouts: "Shockie was the leading bomb maker of the Jammu and Kashmir Islamic force, which operated out of exile" (Mahajan 33). He is glamorized and glorified as a revolutionary who makes his presence felt by perpetuating fear through terrorism: "In the past four years he had killed dozens of Indians in revenge for the military oppression in Kashmir, and are expanding 'JKIF theater of violence', as the newspapers called it" (Mahajan 33). In the lifelong war between Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir, he is regarded differently with different people. While Muslims in Pakistan iconize Shockie as the leader of repressed Muslim masses, people in Delhi detest him for his terroristic attacks (Mahajan 42).

Shockie fights against the Indian government. Said observes that while the West argues the need to bring out the East "from the wretchedness of their [East's] decline" (Said 35) and turn them into "rehabilitated residents of productive colonies" (Said 35), the East remains a silent observer to the rationalizations of colonial domination. Shockie subverts such holistic presentations of Said's Orient by becoming a leader and fighting the Indian government for Kashmir's annexation. When the renters in the locality of Neeti Nagar in Delhi, "would not deal with Muslims" (Mahajan142), Shockie, through his blasts, turns the rhetoric of hate to rhetoric of empowerment for Muslim people. Fueled by hatred from Delhi people, Shockie feels compelled to fight against Muslim discrimination. In Mahajan's book, the Indian government is a despot, under-privileging Muslim minorities in the Indian community. They are treated as secondary citizens compared to Hindus in India, the majority national community who also holds the

mainstay of power. Often described as fundamentalists and anti-Hindus by Hindu nationalists, Muslims are dehumanized militant individuals who are "of the terrorist religion" (Mahajan 35). Shockie uses these derogatory representations to his advantage, as he derives motivation from them to fight for an *azad* Kashmir--'Pakistan dominated area of Kashmir'. He takes pride in the number of dead bodies he produces in each blast. He dreams of dead bodies in Kashmir's Dal Lake and finds beauty in piled bodies after bombings (Mahajan 114). He understands that small bombs create less mass destruction, so he decides that fighting for Kashmir in Delhi requires more casualties to catch attention of the Indian government.

Shockie reclaims agency by using fear and violence through his bombings in Delhi. He uses violence to assert his power over the Indian government. Through his bombings, he not only protests against the bigotry of the Indian government but uses Indian people as collateral damage. He keeps bombing throughout Delhi and perpetuates attacks, aiming for higher casualties with each blast. Some of the attacks such as in Chandni nagar and J.P nagar reek of trauma and catastrophy, even after months of tragedy. These attacks also show Shockie's flagrant manifestation of power to assert dominance over the government. Hannah Arendt, a political theorist, has noted that violence is sometimes used to exhibit power that produces a distinct way of domination: "If we turn to discussions of the phenomenon of power, we soon find that there exists a consensus among political theorists from Left to Right to the effect that violence is nothing more than the most flagrant manifestation of power" (Arendt 236). Similarly, Shockie, whose expertise as a bomb maker is well known to his terrorist-cohort,

embodies Arendt's version of power as he uses mass destruction to exert his power over the Indian government. When his bomb does not go off as planned in Lajpat Nagar, he is disappointed in himself and believes that he failed as a member of the anti-colonial struggle. Again Arendt argues that a strong man needs to make his domination known by his use of sense of force, and the failure to do so undermines his position of authority (Arendt 237). Similarly, Shockie is disheartened by his mass destruction, after he fails to achieve his desired death count. While another terrorist of his gang applauds him for his success, he remains uncertain if he has achieved what he wanted:

> After the blast, Shockie returned to Kathmandu, retracing his steps, reading the news whenever he could.
>
> The *Times of India* featured a picture of a blasted stray dog.
>
> When Shockie got back to the base in Nayabazar—he had separated from Taukir and Meraj, who had gone elsewhere, into hiding—he was surprised to find himself embraced as a hero. "You killed two hundred," Masood said. "God bless you."
>
> "It was more like fifty, "Shockie said, immediately disgusted by his own lie. He tended to believe the Indian papers on this subject. They had no incentive to play down the horrors.
>
> "Our reports say a hundred at a minimum," Masood said.
>
> Shockie didn't say anything further. (Mahajan 51)

Shockie desires to be and becomes powerful in the novel. He is competitive; he wants to lead organizations, earn more money from bigger terrorist organization groups,

and make powerful bombs. His identity evolves from being a person hiding in liminal spaces, to being a terrorist of infamous repute. In *Orientalism*, the Orient is voiceless—a subaltern that cannot speak for its desires and needs. Shockie subverts Said's traumatized narratives of the Orient by becoming the representation of the Neo-Orient who is out to rewrite history: the Neo- Orient changes Said's framing of the Oriental from a position of marginalization to a position of empowerment. Power is always spatialized, and manifests itself through bodies: "Power is always spatialized, and, as Foucault demonstrated, it is also always 'embodied'. The body is also a spatial unit of power and the prime site of personal identity" (Munck 6). Shockie mirrors Munck's rhetoric of power as a part of his personal identity because the more he learns about the Indian government's atrocities on Muslims, the more motivated he is to disrupt the Indian society. Shockie's exercise of violence comes with no sense of remorse; he is certain that violence is the only way to get what he desires. His need for power is perfectly reflects Munck's legitimization of violence in a nation: "the nation-state scale of human activity is the one most closely associated with the 'legitimate' exercise of violence" (Munck 6). Shockie legitimizes the use of violence by considering himself a proponent of Islamic brotherhood. He takes pride in the fact that terrorists who die during the operation achieve respect and power. Shockie, moreover does not see his terroristic activities as merely having a local impact, but rather associates himself with global figures like Yousef, a fellow terrorist, responsible for 9/11 attacks in the United States. He admits this when he tries to justify his ambitious endeavors of terrorism:

> He wanted to be like Yousef, the Kashmiri Yousef, but even Yousef, who had shocked America—who had almost toppled a building that seemed to snick heaven like a finger, who had tried to blow up jetliners over the Pacific and kill the Pope—even Yousef was fallible. (Mahajan 46)

Shockie is not only invested in the discourse of mass destruction but also in the instruments that create such destruction. He is unpredictable—unlike Said's description of Orient, his activities cannot be defined or understood or controlled by the Delhi police. Shockie reflects the dark Orient who is, "coeval with the darkest and most slothful period of European annals" (qtd from Goethe in Said 59). Barbaric and uncivilized, Shockie is rather cunning and sophisticated; a fact proven by the efficiency and adeptness in carrying out mass executions, that while characterizing him as a brutal terrorist, also establishes him as the efficient and proficient actor of the Neo-Orient. For him, mass destruction is an essence of his identity, but also a source of aesthetic pleasure, albeit pervasively. This comes out, for example clearly in an episode where he compares the purchase of materials for bomb making with picking up wedding ornaments for a beloved one:

> He himself took a certain sensual, even feminine, pleasure in shopping for materials for a bomb; he might have been a man out to buy wedding fixtures for his beloved sister. But he had to keep his instinct for haggling and jolliness to a minimum. You had to make as little as impression as possible, and it was crucial to get material of the highest possible quality for the lowest possible price. (Mahajan 42)

Experimenting with bombs gives him the credibility of an established bomber. Furthermore, experimenting with making bombs is also a source of technical pride for Shockie. That he is good at it and that he can use his technological knowhow to reverse relations of power appears to be a conscious effort on his part:

> You did not want your bomb to go *phut* when the day came—something that happened all the time, even to the best bomb makers. It had certainly happened to Shockie. One of his bombs had fizzled and let out a small burp of fire. This was in a market in Jaipur. He ran away for being caught, but his two fingers were burned and had to be chopped off at the ends. He lost some feeling in his hands too, but it was for the best. It marked him as serious. When bomb makers met each other, they inevitably looked at each other's hands. (Mahajan 42)

Malik: The Intellectual Terrorist

Malik, another terrorist operative in the novel figures more than the revolutionary Orient--he is the Orient that thinks and strategizes. While his aggressiveness and determination are no less than Shockie's, Malik nonetheless believes that calmness is an asset to a terrorist's well-being. He reads Mahatma Gandhi, is well versed with his terroristic plans, and well-spoken among his gang members. He is the mastermind of the mass executions in the Delhi bombings. Unlike Said's discourse of *Orientalism* where "The West is the actor, the Orient a passive reactor" (Said 109), Malik strategizes terror and leads the group in executing mass murders. Malik through these bombings takes a lead in power interactions between himself and the Indian government, by making the Indian government a helpless spectator in securing the nation. In the novel, he is a highly

coveted criminal who has been "a major exemplar of protest in the country" (Mahajan 201) and has a nationwide reputation of a notorious terrorist who has achieved distinct fame and recognition where "even the foreign media has covered him" (Mahajan 201).

Like Shockie, Malik believes in achieving power through terror. He thinks things through, though. He understands the demography of violence; one of his cunning moves being that while he is himself one of their own, he kills Muslims in order to create confusion and intensify terror across Delhi. Malik believes that mass casualties should not be based on religious identity but should be seen as an act of anarchy, to scare the Delhi government. E. V Walter explains how the process of terror creates physical and mental annihilation:

> The word "terrorism" conventionally means a type of violent action, such as murder, designed to make people afraid. In ordinary usage, however, the word "terror" is ambiguous, often suggesting any kind of extreme apprehension, without regard to the cause. (Walter 248)

Malik believes that smaller but frequent bombings would induce a bigger sense of fear (Mahajan 45). Since consecutive large bombings often have a distinct time interval, Malik believes small bombs will induce a higher panic in the Indian government. He is determined to be the dominant power in the Indian political climate by creating systematic and prolonged violence through consistent bombings. Mahajan characterizes Malik as a classical Orient who is "underhumanized" and "antidemocratic" and will do anything to achieve his means (Said 150). He understands that in a city like Delhi, where the government is corrupt enough to serve its own interests, frequent bombings will force

the government to obey the terrorists' wishes. Compared to Shockie, Malik is pragmatic and understands that power works best by perpetuating fear in masses. When Shockie asks Malik to go for bigger bombings, Malik tries to explain to Shockie that the bombings are not crucial, but the element of fear is. He explains to Shockie that to perpetuate fear, both Hindus and Muslims in India should be the collateral damage. As the dialogue between the two quoted at length shows below:

> But mostly Shockie felt there was no innovation when it came to bombs.
>
> "You just have a habit of complaining," Malik said.
>
> "That's not true."
>
> "It's true, yaar. Even if the blast had been huge, you would have complained. Now, what do you want? That the whole country fall to its knees? This isn't America, bhai. There the people are rich and they wait excitedly for tragedy. You set off a small pataka and they cry." Malik hadn't been to the U.S., but he was a big reader, and this fluent authority brought tears of satisfaction to his eyes.
>
> "Whereas a city like Delhi—what can you do?"
>
> "We could try Parliament, like I told Abdul."
>
> "Leave the Parliament. There's too much security."
>
> "What about Teen Murti or IIC? FICCI. World Trade Center. Oberoi."
>
> "You are not getting my point," Malik said, shaking his head. "Delhi is a Muslim city, with a Muslim history and Muslim monuments. If you want to shake people, you have to attack Muslim targets. It makes our decision to attack harder. And

when you look at the new construction, it's all Punjabi and awful. No one cares if it falls." (Mahajan 52)

Malik believes that he can reclaim his identity through martyrdom but also entertains other outlets. In that case, he is a rebel with a noble cause, as he believes that arms and bombings can never secure the aim of the revolution. His idolization of Mahatma Gandhi, who believed that non-violence was the most effective way to defeat the British for India's independence, helps him to see himself in the war against the central government by self-immolation. He thus rises beyond the image of the barbaric Orient by not only believing that blasts were the only solution to claim power, but also at times empathizing with his victims. It gives him the sentiment that he is a revolutionary rather than an executioner, and a killer as well as a hero (Mahajan 58). Malik rises above Said's barbaric Orient, not by believing that blasts were a solution to claim power, but by respecting the victims who die in these catastrophes. He wants to be a revolutionary idol: "What do you think these attacks are going to achieve? Today when you were complaining about the blast not being big enough, I was thinking it doesn't matter. It's all wrong. Blasts are a way of hiding. If you want to be a hero, you have to be a martyr" (Mahajan 58).

Malik has a softer side to his personality than the other terrorists. Since he has always been hiding out and living a life of abjection; trauma resonates more with him than other terrorists. Of all the characters in the novel, Malik is the most complex character. As an erudite person who reads the *Hindustan Times*, a mainstream Indian newspaper; he is aware of Gandhi's pacifist ideology and also reads Hitler's

autobiography. From the point of view of the other members, Malik's intellectualism is viewed as effeminate[6] but also based as the "reputation of being the thinker of the group" (Mahajan 55). Congruent with the belief of the theorists like Munck, who states that power is often gendered and associated with masculinity (Munck 9)[7], Malik's group members are seen often describing him as "effeminate, confused, contradictory, ineffectual, and eccentric" (Mahajan 56).

Malik's Martyrdom and the Indian Government

As a part of the revolution, Malik embraces torture from the government. As a student in Kathmandu, he revolts against the despotic Indian government. He suffers physical trauma when he "had been shocked in the genitals and had some of his tongue scraped off with a blunt knife" (Mahajan 141) during his protests against the Indian government. Described as one of the most powerful terrorists in the country, he is responsible for kidnapping the vice chancellor of the University of Kashmir. When Malik is incarcerated, he is not provided with a lawyer and is physically tormented despite having no evidence against him: "Malik was placed in police custody in Delhi on a Sunday. He was tortured for ten days straight" (Mahajan 62). The Delhi police in this situation violate human rights, making Delhi a "State of exception." Giorgio Agamben states that in a state of exception torture is legalized and law is suspended for political expediency: "the state of exception is not a special kind of law (like the law of war); rather, insofar as it is a suspension of the juridical order itself; it defines law's threshold

[6] Intellectuality and sensitivity to the death of the victims are considered feminine in the terror cohort.
[7] Munck states that concepts of power are often gendered since the fundamentals of power are often associated with masculinity: "for one thing, they are a part of a broader set of powerful but disempowering binary oppositions. They are linked with power and knowledge hierarchies that equate 'male' with 'rational' and 'scientific' and 'female' with 'irrational' and 'intuitive'" (Munck 9).

or limit concept" (Agamben 224). Kept in cells that deny proper human habitation, Malik struggles to keep his sanity: "The smell of sweat had become Malik's relentless companion in the past month, in the heat of Delhi, in his small cell that he shared with ten others" (Mahajan 62). The bomb maker of the group, who has skills for navigating any difficult circumstances, is reduced to an ineffectual man who has no power. He is often taken to a cell, stripped and beaten. He struggles with hunger and thirst while the judge gives a verdict of his life-long imprisonment:

> Malik and the others stood in front of the judge, facing him, but all Malik could think about was his hunger. He had been fed his breakfast at six a.m. as usual, but had been given his "lunch" at seven thirty a.m. That was because you could not eat outside the jail. He was dying of thirst and hunger. "Barbarous actions…Civilization…The killing of innocents," the judge said.
>
> "Bread. Pizza. Chowmein," Malik thought. (Mahajan 62)

Ayub: The Revolutionary Embodiment of the Neo-Orient

Joining the gang, as the last member, Ayub uses Islamophobia as an instrument of counter-hegemony towards the West. He has a college degree and is a more positive character compared to Shockie and Malik. Previously, he uses his college degree by heading an NGO that fights religious hatred. He understands the discriminations faced by an average Muslim in the Indian community and takes charge to rebel against Islamic demonization through protests, writing editorials in the newspaper, and speaking against Narendra Modi, the Hindu prime minister. At a global level, he also feels that globalization is a cultural strategy that has deepened divisions between the majority and

the minority. He believes in Muslim brotherhood and sees Muslims being tormented throughout the globe because of their religious affiliation. Mahajan describes Muslim profiling in India as seen from the eyes of Ayub:

> The story is that thousands of innocent Muslims are being killed in plain sight, that innocent Muslims are being harassed in America for a crime they didn't commit, that innocent Iraqis going about their business now wake to hear American armored vehicles razing the sonic towers of the muezzin with their sirens while gangs of disaffected young men in office clothes shoot back from the alleys, reloading their AK-47s. (Mahajan 220)

The Indian government, like the West, is reputed to indiscriminately associate Muslims with terrorism and apprehending them without evidence[8]. The Indian government dehumanizes the Muslim population, making them collateral damage in the fight for Kashmir against terrorists. He speaks against the Indian government which denies Muslims access to education, employment, and other professions. He dreams of taking revenge on Modi and is not afraid to "take matters in his hands" (Mahajan192). Critic Omar Farooq Zain supports Mahajan's description of the treatment of Muslims in India. Zain notes that India has always believed in cleansing Muslims out of its political system, hence it shows a deep racial bias when dealing with criminal, social and political cases that involve Muslims. Zain notes that due to a distinct Hindu preponderance in India, the country continues to face communal riots in the present. He says that India will face Hindu-Muslim antagonism because it upholds a racist sense of multiculturalism: "By trying to achieve their objective of purging India of Muslims, they resort to rioting, thus

[8] See Zoya Hasan's *Politics of Minorities: Caste, Minorities, and Affirmative Action*.

depriving them from privileges and preferential treatment" (Zain 104). Ayub has seen such differences throughout his life and is motivated to bring a change in this system. As an important member of the NGO, Ayub witnesses a lot of wrongfully accused Muslims who are serving sentences in the Indian prison system without fault. They are abject bodies, which are not worthy of representation in the Indian judicial system. Ayub mirrors Zain's description of Muslim description in India when he travels to Delhi from Nepal. He faces blatant racism on the train because he is a Muslim:

> An old man with powerful jaws was demanding a magazine from a bearded student. When the student said, "Let me finish," the old man started swearing, "You pigs! Fucking Muslims!" (Mahajan 193)

As a member of the educated elite in India, he is aware of racial profiling against Muslims. As an Indian citizen, he is always treated as a stranger. He sees India as a reluctant superpower in its battle with Pakistan. Coming from a working-class Muslim family in Azamgarh, he has "established himself with his wit and charm and intelligence" (Mahajan188) but finds it difficult to secure financial security in the real world. He knows that his erudition will not make him worthy in the Indian system: "his work in the Muslim community had taught him how difficult it was for educated Muslims to get jobs or even housing and this paranoia infected every future he could imagine for himself in Delhi" (Mahajan 189). In this regard, Zain points out, that subcultures are created by minorities where discrimination perpetuates between majority and minority cultures in a nation, often resulting in civil conflict: "A majority of analysts hold religion mainly responsible for communal confrontation, and certainly religious symbol, mythology and

terminologies are frequently employed in various communal frenzies" (Zain 104). Ayub understands the reason for such communal conflicts between Hindus and Muslims and believes that he needs to bring a more powerful change to support Muslim representation in the Indian national community.

Ayub wants to gain publicity for his revolution. Ayub's search for recognition leads to his break up with his girlfriend Tara. He is an ambitious revolutionary—he wants publicity through his protestations against the Indian government. Ayub defies the stereotypical Orient as he wants to create his own presence socially as well as politically. When he rallies against the atrocities of the Indian government, his fight for the common good also puts him in the limelight personally:

> "Arrest me," Ayub said, holding out his wrists.
>
> "You are not worth an arrest," a policeman with gray hair said, stepping out to shout at a pimply activist who started running at the bark from the policeman.
>
> Then something terrible happened on that spring day. The crowd dispersed.
>
> The next day when Tara and Ayub opened the paper, there wasn't even a mention of the protest. (Mahajan184)

Ayub's higher purpose comes with a strong sense of harboring an anti-Hindu sentiment that is made more profound by Modi's presence. Even though he loved Hindus he "hated the Chief minister because he represented the worst in Hindus" (Mahajan196) but finds it difficult to pursue decolonization without his narcissistic needs. It gets even more complicated for him, because his girlfriend Tara, who is a Hindu, ends their relationship accusing him of colliding his grandiose plans of decolonizing with his

personal fame. As a Hindu, she has democratic views of how the Indian government should treat Muslims, but loses her motive to fight against the oppression of the Indian government because of Ayub's constant neediness and his delusions of grandeur (Mahajan186).

Losing Tara and not finding adequate publicity, Ayub turns to terrorism. After this moment, Ayub's quest for liberation and self-actualization becomes unanimous with achievement of political power. Having bought a gun, he imagines himself as a glamorized CBI, (India Intelligence Agency) operative to work for the Indian government. Confused and unfocussed, he suffers from an acute sense of low esteem as and constantly tries to be involved in acts that boost his ego. At one moment, he is seen buying a gun with an intent to kill India's prime minister before another radical Muslim group would do so. His obsession with power gradually severs ties with his parents, cuts off contact with acquaintances, and ends up being recruited as a terrorist with Malik, Shockie, and others. As he prepares to challenge Modi's legitimacy as a leader, he imagines the recognition he would gain within the gang and beyond if he becomes successful in killing him. He believes that the world operates by force and thinks that: "he always thought you had to educate others about your pain, show them how to solve it. Now I realize you have to make them *feel* it" (Mahajan 200).

Ayub finds a higher sense of power through finding the right balance between finding justice and striking terror. While planning a bomb attack, he wants to make sure that there is minimal collateral damage and maximum fear: "'I don't want to kill

innocents,' Ayub said. 'I'm happy to kill people in BJP, RSS[9], even the police.'" (Mahajan 210). But at the same time he believes that a blast brings out the truth in people and the nobility of their ideology: "A blast reveals the truth about places. Don't forget what you're doing is noble" (Mahajan 223). As the novel ends, he struggles with his inner conscience as he is going to annihilate a lot of people. While he wants to be like the terrorist Atta, who bombed the Twin Towers, he acknowledges that there is too much "blood involved—blood tossed against the mile-high windows of the WTC" (Mahajan 227). This ambivalent attitude of Ayub towards violence and power and the complex thought processes like Shockie and Malik point at the direction of emerging Neo-Orientals who disguise themselves as terrorists in order to effect social transformation.

Looked from the conventional representations of the Oriental figures, it is easy to see these characters perfectly fitting the old stereotyped barbaric image of the Orient. On the other hand however, reading their activities is also helpful to see their ideas and actions as renewed attempts to reclaim agencies in a struggle to reverse the West's hegemonic order. Reading narratives of terrorism with the understanding that it is different from showing compassion to the acts of violence is a useful critical engagement to interrogate all assumptions of the Orient and rethink the various contexts, motivations, and dilemmas that influence and shape the Orient and its varied and complex identities, especially as manifested in the discourse around Islam, both at the local and the global levels.

[9] Hindu nationalist political parties in India

CHAPTER 3: FINDING SELF-FULFILLMENT THROUGH ISLAMIC FAITH: NAJWA IN LEILA ABOULELA'S *MINARET*

With the rising misconception of Islam in Europe, the cultural clash between Islam and the West has strengthened in recent years. Describing this rift between the two, in an interview with the Frontline, Chandra Muzaffar, professor at the Center for civilizational dialogue at the University of Malaysia, states that Muslims see the domination of the West headed by the United States as a threat to their own culture. He says that practicing Islam has become important for Muslims in this era of globalization because the need to assert their identity comes from their sense of faith in this world: These are Muslims who say that, in the midst of globalization, you have to reassert the essence of Islam. And that is its universalism, its inclusiveness, its accommodative attitude, its capacity to change and to adapt, while retaining the essence of faith. In other words, expressing faith as something that is truly ecumenical and universal" (Frontline n.p.) Practicing Islamic faith. Muzaffar states, has become important for self-actualization after the West continues to perpetuate the idea that it is superior to Eastern civilization.

Published in 2004, Leila Aboulela's *Minaret*, through the main protagonist Najwa, mirrors the importance of the practicing the Islamic faith is an Islamophobic London. Imaginatively grappling with the negative side of the binary, *Minaret* responds to Neo-Orientalism by portraying Islamic faith as a powerful force of peace. Unable to leave London on her own terms, Najwa reacts to the threat of Islam by embracing it as a part of her existence. She finds solace through Islamic faith and a sense of self by frequenting the mosque in London. In this chapter I argue that despite the current

political rhetoric of fear surrounding Islam, Aboulela's *Minaret* restores faith in Islam. Her novel documents the importance of Islamic religion and culture as a tool that constructs Najwa's identity and community.

Najwa's Discovery of Romance through Islam

As a romantic couple, Najwa and Anwar have different purposes in life. Najwa is empathetic to others, she is religious in her beliefs, and family oriented. Anwar is opinionated, secular, and a loner. Coming from an affluent family, Najwa (before the passing of her parents) had access to several luxuries in life. She had many servants and cars, and used to spend her summers in London. In short, Najwa lived a life of luxuries that Anwar couldn't afford. Najwa often ate "from china and silver" (Aboulela 16) and wiped her "mouth with napkins that were washed and ironed everyday" (Aboulela 16). She wanted to live lavishly like her mother. Apart from being a member of an elite club, Najwa's mother was a glamorous role model for Najwa: "I wished I were as glamorous as her, open and generous, always saying the right things, laughing at the right time" (Aboulela 16). Attending a private school, Najwa had perfect English and frequently travelled overseas. Compared to Najwa, Anwar belonged to a working-class family who had difficulties in making ends meet (Aboulela 21). Anwar is hesitant to marry her since he believes relationships satisfy biological needs but do not otherwise have a purpose in life (Aboulela 15). He is a political activist who voices his opinion against capitalism and the autocratic Sudanese government. He often uses Najwa's father as a podium to express his grievances against the Sudanese government in his campaigns at the University of Sudan. Anwar believes that Western influences have drained Sudan culturally,

politically, and socially (Aboulela 16). Even though he likes Najwa's attention, he constantly accuses her father of being a traitor to the interests of the country. He derives satisfaction from scorning her father and insulting Najwa in the process. While he speaks against the Sudanese government, he uses her father as an example of a corporate capitalist looking for profits from the Western world (Aboulela 18).

While Najwa loves Anwar, Anwar's criticism of her father bothers Najwa. Najwa experiences discomfort due to the antagonistic nature of their relationship. Even though she is emotionally attached to him, she is nonetheless frequently upset with him: "I could still feel, moving in the water, a dull anger towards him" (Aboulela 41). Anwar often professes his admiration for Najwa's beauty and her sense of independence, but Najwa feels that Anwar's lack of empathy for her father is damaging to the relationship. The more Najwa tries to find an absolution in life through Anwar, the more she finds it difficult in seeing him as a part of her future family. Najwa feels uncomfortable that Anwar cannot accept her father as he is: "My anger was like a curtain between us. 'How dare you say these lies about my father! My father is me. My family is me'" (Aboulela 45). She finds him a good orator who can influence the youth of Sudan, but is hurt by Anwar's disparaging remarks about her father:

> I felt proud of him, and the pleasure of looking and listening to him was a treat- like ice cream when I was a child, a chocolate sundae with cream on top and wishing it would not end. But then he hurt me, and I should not have accepted it. I should have seen it coming, the inevitable dig at the bourgeoisie. It was his favourite word. But even worse, he was explicit now, using my father's name- my

> surname, so familiar, so close-and it was like a punch in the stomach, high in my stomach. My breath caught and I went cold but my cheeks were burning. A roar in my ears-the laughter rising around me-blocked out the rest of the sentence. He did not once look at me. I was invisible but that was my name in the direct accusation of my father. (Aboulela 37)

Tensions in their relationship don't stop even after they leave Sudan. While freelancing for newspapers and writing against the Sudanese government in London, Anwar refuses to stop writing against Najwa's father. Anwar accuses her father of "pulling some strings" (Aboulela 45) for Najwa because he thinks she is not capable of getting through Khartoum University on her own merit. In a conversation with Najwa, Anwar insults her father:

> "They only take qualified students. There's no cheating"
>
> "I find it hard to believe."
>
> "But I'm sure. Why don't you believe me?"
>
> "Because I know better." He was irritated but it was too late to stop.
>
> "You don't. In this case you don't. I'm sure of what I'm saying because my father did try his best to get my cousin Samir into Khartoum University. Samir didn't have good grades and they just wouldn't take him"
>
> "Well, at least you're honestly admitting that bribery and pulling strings was second nature to your father." (Aboulela 152)

While Najwa is proud of being a Muslim, Anwar finds it disgraceful to be called a Muslim. Compared to the West, he finds the Arab culture regressive. He says that he

finds "The West is very impressive" (Aboulela 67) since in the West "Everything is organized. Everyone has a part to play. There's a system at place. A very structured system" (Aboulela 149). He believes that compared to the Arab culture, the Western culture is advanced, civilized, and believes in equality. Contrary to Anwar's views on Islam, Ibrahim Kalin in, "Islamophobia and the Limits of Multiculturalism" says that the Islamic way of life is considered aberrant to the Western methods of living, because it doesn't follow Western lifestyle. The Islamic culture is defined as regressive and violent in Western culture (Kalin 4). Anwar resembles Kalin's interpretation of Islamic culture as he fixates on the regressive nature of the Arab culture throughout the novel. Kalin discusses the strategy of dominance of Western culture on global community:

> The assumption that because different minority groups have distinct religious, ethnic, and cultural traditions, their central value system is largely incompatible with that of their host societies. Exaggerating cultural differences to the point of moral incompatibility is a tactic often employed by cultural conservatives[10] to maintain a certain imagery of European and Western civilization. (Kalin 7)

Anwar believes that unlike Arab culture's understanding of what is considered appropriate between a man and a woman in regards to relationship and intimacy, he does not value women's virginity as an asset within the framework of marriage. He also believes that the burqa is not a marker of religious performance but a show of barbarism and repressiveness (Abouelela 48). While Najwa views the burqa as an important part of

[10] While Kalin discusses while cultural conservatives maintain the binary of the East and the West by describing Islam as an antithesis to multicultural societies, Shireen M Mazari's "Multiculturalism and Islam in Eupore" extends the conversation by stating that post-9/11 Europe uses a racist approach towards Muslims by purposefully implementing national and secular policies to isolate Islamic community from integrating in the European society.

a Muslim women's identity, Anwar detests the burqa. While walking on the streets of London, Najwa and Anwar share different attitudes towards the burqa:

> We passed a couple of Arab women dressed in black from head to foot; their faces were veiled. Anwar made a face and, when they were out of earshot, he said, "It's disgusting, what a depressing sight!"
>
> His expression made me laugh. "Aren't you curious about all the beauty they're hiding?" (Aboulela 167)

Tamer, Najwa's new romance is antithetical character to Anwar, her past lover. Both Najwa and Tamer find an affinity in their love for Islam. Tamer, who develops romantic feelings for Najwa, is the son of Najwa's employer in London, Dr. Zeinab. Compared to Anwar, Tamer is more emotionally available to Najwa. While Anwar tries to connect with Najwa on an intellectual level, Tamer gets close to Najwa on a spiritual level. He treats her with dignity and respect. Apart from his deep sense of spirituality, Tamer is interested in attending lectures outside his business school—he is interested in Islamic and spiritual lectures at the university. He doesn't treat Islamic faith as regressive to Western culture but treats Islam as an integral part of his existence. While Najwa likes discussing Islamic scholars like Khalifa Omar and Rumi[11] with Tamer, she is impressed with Tamer's passion for Islamic history and his literary collection: "Books about Sufism, early Islamic history, the interpretation of the Quran. He reads them; they are not just there to fill shelves" (Aboulela 99). Tamer's importance for spirituality mirrors Najwa's search for spiritual subjectivity in London. While Najwa is self-conscious when she cleans his desk and washes his clothes, she finds herself excited when he is around: "I

[11] Islamic poets and philosophers.

feel uplifted when I see him" (Aboulela 100). She adores when he complements her on her wisdom: "you know a lot" (Abouela 118), and she is physically attracted to him because he is a "tall young, Arab-looking, dark eyes and the beard" (Abouela100). Since both Tamer and Najwa identify themselves as Muslims, their religious identities help them understand each other. Even though Najwa is older than Tamer (Aboulela 119), they connect with each other on the spiritual plane. As both are practicing Muslims, they understand the complicated dynamics between Muslims and the Western world. Tamer and Najwa realize the value of Islamic faith in a foreign culture. They treat Islam as a part of their emotional and spiritual singularity, and not as a political affiliation. Aboulela narrates their empathy for each other's precarious existence in an Islamophobic Britain. Najwa and Tamer discuss how London has politicized Islam:

> I fold Lamya's[12] nightdress and start ironing her purple skirt. "You have to trust your instincts when people are talking. People say things they don't mean."
>
> "What bugs me," he says, is that unless you're political, people think you're not a strong Muslim." He gulps down the rest of the Vitamin C. "Are you interested in politics?"
>
> I shake my head and tell him why I am afraid of politics, why I am afraid of coups and revolutions. I start to speak about my father, things I have never said to anyone else. They surprise me by coming out fresh, measured – maybe because it all happened many years ago.
>
> 'You know a lot,' he says, offering admiration instead of pity. (Aboulela 117)

[12] Tamer's elder sister in the novel.

Both Tamer and Najwa observe Islamic rituals and traditions. Observing Islamic festivals ties them to Islam while enduring life in a Western culture. Najwa and Tamer religiously take part in the celebration of Ramadan [13]While Najwa is never tired of keeping up with its harsh rituals, Tamer takes a hiatus from his everyday life to observe Ramadan. Najwa finds her strength through Ramadan: "Now that Ramadan is over I wonder where I got my energy from—fasting all day while working, then, instead of going home, going straight to the mosque" (Aboulela 188) while Tamer comes home from his travels to follow Ramadan's rituals with propriety (Aboulela 189). Both of them see the hijab as an important part of Islamic identity. Najwa never wears the hijab in Khartoum, she sees the hijab as an expression of Muslim identity in London. Despite Western liberalism modifying the symbolism of the hijab to connote fear and terror post 9/11, Najwa uses the hijab to express pride in her Islamic faith by wearing it on the streets of London. Md. Mahamudul Hasan in "'Seeking Freedom in the Third Space of Diaspora: Muslim Women's Identity in Aboulela's *Minaret* and Jan Mohamed's *Love in a Head Scarf*" argues that writers like Aboulela and Shelina Zahra Janmohamed paint their women characters' choice of religious performativity in public places as a sign of protest against Western hegemony. In this case, Aboulela uses Najwa as a spokesperson to speak against the negative stereotypes of hijab and depict it as a necessity for Islamic women: "The stories of lived experiences of Muslim women who wear the hijab and face multiple challenges for adhering to this outward expression of faith and how they grapple with them especially in non-Muslim-majority contexts are in short supply. Therefore writers like Aboulela and Janmohamed seek to find a space of recognized articulation to

[13] An Islamic festival where Muslims fast for a month.

tell the untold stories of Muslim women" (Hasan 93). Aboulela, through Najwa's hijab not only destigmatizes stereotypical definitions of hijab but depicts the hijab as an important component that helps evolve Najwa's character in an Islamophobic world. Surrounded by friends in Sudan and her employees in London who never wear the hijab, Najwa finds a deep appreciation for Tamer who understands the importance of hijab in everyday life (Aboulela 67). Since no one wears the hijab in Tamer's family, he develops a deep respect for Najwa for following Islamic traditions. In the eyes of Tamer, Najwa is a perfect Muslim woman.

Hijab as an Expression for Najma's Selfhood

The hijab is considered as a symbol of oppression in Western popular culture[14]. When Najwa struggles to integrate with the Western community, the hijab helps her remain close to Islamic culture. The hijab has always been a loaded cultural construction for Western society, for on one hand, the West sees it as a necessary cultural identifier for Muslims and on the other hand it is a symbol of Islamic radicalization[15]. While the veil is seen as a religious signifier that is crucial to female performativity in the Islamic community, the hijab is also symbolic of misogynistic oppression in the Western community. On contrary grounds to Western beliefs, Rai Platt argues that the hijab is an

[14] See Katherine H. Bullock and Gul Joya Jafri's "Media (Mis) Representations: Muslim Women in the Canadian Nation" and Asra Q. Nomani's "Wearing the Hijab in Solidarity Perpetuates Oppression" for more details.

[15] The hijab is a highly politicized in Muslim and Western societies. Rachel Anderson Droogsma in "Redefining Hijab: American Muslims Standpoints on Veiling" discusses the alternative views on hijab. She states that while Americans view the hijab as a site of oppression, Muslim women see it as a part of their existence: "Thus, while many Americans believe hijab—also called a "veil" or "headscarf"—functions to oppress women, veiled women probably possess alternative understandings. In this study, 13 veiled American Muslim women share their experiences, and under the lens of standpoint theory, the participants' definition of hijab emerges. Specifically, the women inscribe hijab with meanings shaped by their unique cultural standpoints" (Droogsma 293).

excuse of the West to racially profile Muslims: "Where the Arab man's dress signifies an oppressor or seducer, the women's dress is read as a symbol of the oppressed. By focusing on women's oppression, the West legitimizes its 'War on Terror' as bringing liberation to Muslim women" (Platt 4). In addition to political implications of the veil, Susan Taha Al-Karawi and Ida Baizura Bahar discuss the social implications of the veil that go beyond Muslim racialization and oppression. The veil has dynamic meanings for Muslim women:

> The veil speaks to the continuous effort to shape their identities as modern and respectable women of faith. Whether she wears the veil or not, its presence or absence suggests a dense web of meanings that often change over time. Therefore, the veil is a metaphor of daily life, a trope in fiction and the arts loaded with contested meanings. (Karawi & Bahar 255)

Contrary to Karawi & Bahar's discussion on the veil, Randa, Najwa's friend in Khartoum, sees the veil as a fixed symbol of barbarity. She associates the veil with backwardness of the East. While discussing Iranian women wearing black chadors[16] in the Iran-Iraq war written in *Time* magazine, Randa expresses her dislike for the veil to Najwa:

> "Totally retarded" she said looking at the picture and handing me a spoon. We're supposed to go forward, not go back to the Middle Ages. How can a woman work dressed like that? How can she work in a lab or play tennis or anything?
>
> "I don't know." I swallowed spoonfuls of crème caramel and stared at the magazine, reading bits of the article.

[16] A large piece of clothing wrapped on the head and upper body. A chador is worn by Muslim women.

> "They're crazy," Randa said. "Islam doesn't say you should do that". (Aboulela 29)

Unlike Randa, Najwa sees the hijab as a part of Islamic tradition. She sees the hijab as a cultural symbol that makes Islamic women different from other women in the world. She doesn't see it as a representative of oppression or a public display of religious beliefs but as an aspect of individuality and personal preference. She finds British Muslims who wear the hijab having a sense of "individuality and outspokenness" (Aboulela 77) and women wearing hijab in Sudan having "preciousness and glamour" (Aboulela 77) in their appearance. She regrets not wearing the hijab during her teenage years in Khartoum: "I see teenage girls wearing hijab and I wish I had done that during their age, wish that there was not much during my past to regret" (Aboulela 98). Contrary to Western perceptions of the veil, Homa Hoodfar observes that the marginalization of Islamic women wearing the veil has caused a stir in Canada. Hoodfar posits that Canadian Islamic women see the veil as an ethnic requisite in Islamic tradition:

> Many Muslim women are outraged by the continuous construction of Islam as a lesser religion, and the portrait of Muslims as "less developed" and "uncivilized," feel a strong need for the Muslim community to assert its presence as part of the fabric of the Canadian society. Since the veil, in Canadian society, is the most significant visible symbol of Muslim identity, many Muslim women have taken up the veil not only from personal conviction but to assert the identity and existence of a confident Muslim community and demand fuller social and political recognition. (Hoodfar 19)

For Najwa, the veil is not a sign of subjugation, but a cultural expression within a global community. She tries to get Anwar on board with the veil: "Ever since I started to pray and wear hijab, I have been hoping he would change like I've changed" (Aboulela 95) and grows fond of Tamer when he understands the significance of the veil in Islamic traditions. Tamer finds Lamya against Islamic tradition when she does not wear the veil: "I don't approve of her. She hardly prays. She doesn't wear a hijab" (Aboulela 115). Like Najwa, Tamer wants to raise a family with someone who wears the hijab (Aboulela 199). Similar to Tamer and Najwa's views on the veil, Hoodfar believes that apart from being a distinct part of Islam the veil helps women participate in Western community without compromising their cultural values. She states that a lot of Islamic women see it as a protest against patriarchal society (Hoodfar 20). Najwa finds the hijab more than a cultural affiliation; it gives her a sense of security and belonging in alien Western surroundings. In London, Najwa's veil is perceived and associated with gypsy culture; yet too, she thinks of the hijab as an ethnic uniform:

> I am told: "You look like a gypsy," and I laugh. It must be my earrings and curly hair, the skirt of my dress. Or perhaps I look intriguing; with secrets, I don't want to share. This is not a fancy-dress party. But it is as if the hijab is a uniform, the official, outdoor version of us. Without it, our nature is exposed. (Aboulela 186)

London as Anti- Muslim Space and Najwa's Growing Confidence

Islam salvages Najwa in an Islamophobic London. When political situations in London are racially tense, Najwa's faith helps her battle through dark times. Since Najwa's happiness has been challenged after the loss of family, her home, and her lover,

her religious identity helps her find a sense of self within a culture of xenophobia in London. In the novel, Aboulela notes that post- 9/11 London defines Islam as a demonic race with axioms of mass destruction and violence. Western interpretations of Islam uphold the notion that Muslims identify with their religious identity more than their national identity; they are loyal to their *umma*, 'the Islamic community' rather than the national identity of Britain. Religious favoritism trumps nationalism for Muslims. As Kalin states that Islam is often seen as anti-secular, religiously inferior to other religions of the world, "words such as militant, uncivilized, oppressive, barbaric, authoritarian, promiscuous, and violent are used to depict religious beliefs *and* the cultural practices of Muslims. 'Racially inferior' has gradually been replaced by 'religiously inferior'" (Kalin II). Finding herself trapped in supposedly racially inferior and ethnically violent culture of Islam, Najwa is subjected to racial abuse on London streets. Najwa's hijab becomes a cause for concern as she struggles to feel safe with the conductor of a public bus: "He is glum but I feel safer in his presence and in the knowledge that I can hop out at the traffic lights if I need to" (Aboulela 80). She is ethnically profiled and thinks, "it is best to look down at my shoes" (Aboulela 81). People in the bus racially profile her and as an act of racial aggression, throw drinks at her: "You Muslim scum', then the shock of cool liquid on my head and face. I grasp and taste it, Tizer[17]. He goes back to his friends – they are laughing. My chest hurts and I wipe my eyes" (Aboulela 81). She adds, "I stifle the feeling of being trapped" (Aboulela 80) and starts to ask her God for saving her from racial hatred: "*Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of Daybreak*. I recite it again and again" (Aboulela 80).

[17] A cold drink in United Kingdom.

Islam, Sudan and Najwa's Post-Exiled Trauma

Loss of family traumatizes Najwa. In a coup when Najwa's father is imprisoned and later executed by the Sudanese government, Najwa not only loses her father but also loses a mother to grief. Najwa continues to live in traumatic spaces when she cannot recover from the loss of her family in London. She constantly remembers her life in Sudan: "There are all kinds of pain, degrees of falling. In the first weeks in London we felt the ground tremble beneath this. When father was found guilty we broke down, the flat filling with people, mom crying, Omar banging the door, staying out all night" (Aboulela 61). She struggles with a constant trauma of fear and loss that resonates with Brison's definition of a traumatic life disorder: "A traumatic event is one in which a person feels utterly helpless in the face of a force that is perceived to be life-threatening. The immediate psychological responses to such include trauma, loss of control, and intense fear of annihilation" (Brison 41). Najwa struggles with her personal trauma as she compares her family falling into an existential abyss after the death of her father:

> When Baba was hanged, the earth we were standing on split open and we tumbled down and that tumbling had no end, it seemed to have no end, as if we would fall and fall for eternity without ever landing. As if this was our punishment, a bottomless pit, the roar of each other's screams. We became unfamiliar to each other simply because we had not seen each other fall before. (Aboulela 61)

As a refugee in London, Najwa struggles with personal loss. Najwa's family is financially affluent in Sudan—they employ servants to do their household chores, drive their cars, and water their plants. In Khartoum, Najwa's mother gives expensive jewelry

to maids as an appreciation for the work that the servants do for Najwa's family. Contrary to their affluent position in Khartoum, Najwa is the maid in London: "I was the servant like the servants my parents had employed" (Aboulela 239). She is employed as a nanny for a little girl called Mai, where she tries to bond with her employer's family, looking for a sense of self through them. The more she tries to hide her financial status from her employer's family, the more she finds it difficult to build trust with her employers. She struggles to believe that her future will become better. On one hand she yearns for a family, but on the other hand she cannot make a connection with the family she works for. She is always scared that her Muslim identity will be exposed as she tries to assimilate in the Western culture. The narrator says that haunted by her traumatic memories, the present does not offer her possibilities for a better life. As Brison defines it, memories of the past often create a psychological breakdown impairing the individual to live to the fullest potential: "traumatic memory perpetuates the loss of control experienced during the traumatic times. Traumatic memories are intrusive, triggered by things reminiscent of the traumatic event and carrying a strong, sometimes overwhelming, emotional charge" (Brison 45). This dynamics is reflected in Najwa's behavior that when Dr. Zeinab asks about her family roots in Khartoum, she is tortured by deeper feelings that her past might taunt in a world that was already hostile to her. Yet, in the conversation, Najwa's feelings are stronger than she is able to control and consequently gives away some of her identity secret:

"Are your family here or in Sudan, Najwa?"

> "I have a brother here." I try to sound open, natural. Yesterday I received a visiting order from Omar. He is allowed to write letters but he rarely writes to me.
>
> "Do you have children?"
>
> "No, I'm not married."
>
> "Were you living in Khartoum?"
>
> "Yes, in Khartoum."
>
> "Lamya was born in Khartoum," she says. "Her father is Sudanese."
>
> "Really?" My heart starts to pound as it always does when there is the threat that someone will know who I am, who I was, what I have become. How many times have I lied and said I am Eritrean or Somali?' (Aboulela 71)

Recovering from loss makes Najwa miserable and lonely. When she tries to find herself through others, Najwa feels a sense of loss. While she has been "trying to draw close to" the child she baby sits,(Aboulela 70) while she "feel[s] sheepish and anxious" (Abouelela70) at the same time wonders how her life has radically changed; what it is now, and what it should be. She remembers her mother when she sees how Lamya "kisses and hugs her daughter" (Aboulela 73) but she finds herself lost in her own pain and misery: "I owe myself an absence of envy; I owe myself a heart free of grudges" (Aboulela 73). The absence of Najwa's family creates a traumatic stress for Najwa that creates a psychological myth that she can consider her employer's family as her real family. Dominick LaCapra argues that alienation from a cultural or a personal association deepens psychological crisis for the trauma victim: When absence itself is narrativized, it is perhaps necessarily identified with loss (for example loss of innocence, full

community, or unity with the mother) and even figured as an event or derived from one. (LaCapra 701). Najwa mirrors LaCapra's description of loss because the loss of her family discourages her to find an identity in London. She cannot let go of her past. She cannot stop picturing a different life in Sudan if her parents were alive at this moment. She remembers her life in Khartoum nostalgically:

> I could picture our house, busy and tingling because I was getting married. My mother and father were arguing over whom to invite to the wedding. "if we don't invite her," Mama was saying, "she'll be offended and we'll never hear the end of it". My skin glowed from all the scrubbing and *dilka* it was getting everyday. My muscles ached from the new dance routines I was learning. The telephone didn't stop ringing, my friends came over, we giggled nonstop. (Aboulela132)

The pain of the past, the longing for settled family, and the insecurities with her job become more pronounced as she realizes she is in an existential crisis: "it was becoming clear that I had come down in the world. I had skidded and plunged after my father's execution and through my mother's illness, when I dropped out of college, then after Omar's[18] arrest and through my relationship with Anwar" (Aboulela 239). The more she tries to define her present, the harder it becomes to move away from her past.

When Najwa is in emotional turmoil, she tries to find peace through her faith. She reassures herself that God will take care of her when she is in trouble: "Rely on Allah, I tell myself. He is looking after you in this job or in other job" (Aboulela 98). She attends religious programs in the mosque because she feels that the presence of a higher power brings a purpose to her life. She starts cherishing her life because she believes that God

[18] Najwa's biological brother. He serves jail time in London.

will resolve her struggles: “He knows you love Him, He knows you are trying and all of this, all of this will be meaningful and worth it in the end” (Aboulela 98). Her troubled conscience finds stability through Islamic faith. She feels guilty if she doesn’t observe Ramadan: “I do but I can’t live a life where I don’t know that Ramadan has started. I can’t. I am tired of having a troubled conscience” (Aboulela 244). Looking for a spiritual sanctuary, she frequents a mosque in London which becomes her sacred haven. It reminds her of her life in Khartoum. In the mosque she meets other Muslims and participates in social and cultural events that give her a sense of normalcy. The mosque becomes a familiar space, offering spirituality and joy in the most practical sense: “In the mosque I feel like I’m in Khartoum again” (Aboulela 244), she says and expresses her happiness and appreciation of community life in most the most profound terms:

> This is a happy occasion and I am happy I belong here, that I am no longer outside, no longer defiant. One more line to go. “My Lord, give us your mercy and blessings so that we can love what you love and so that we can love all those actions and words that bring us closer to you.” (Aboulela 184)

In *Minaret*, Leila Aboulela creates for her character a space in the mosque that fosters a sense of home and salvation. As discussed, the mosque gives her a sense of security to the character, where she is not judged on her religion or political affiliation. While the mosque provides a safe refuge for her to practice her religion and culture, that is without being harassed and rationalized by the main stream Western ideas of Islam, it also enables Najwa to connect the gaps in her life such that she is able to somehow link with her fractured country and integrate (somehow) in her new global environment--London:

"In the mosque no one knew my past and I didn't speak of it" (Aboulela 239). The mosque allows Najwa to transcend her present and reconnect with her past. The mosque saves her from "a fractured country" (Aboulela 265) and from "a broken home" (Aboulela 265).

Leila Aboulela writes from her subjective experience of living with customs and beliefs though her narrative that do not satirize or teach Islam in the Western world.. Through Najwa, Aboulela not only paints Islam as a religion of peace, but creates a dialogue through literature that positions religion as a tool that can cultivate a sense of security in culturally intractable foreign lands. And all this senses and to that extent, *Minaret* is a text whose cultural function invites a sympathetic or a reading or positive empowerment and the capacity of agency for Muslims like Najwa in the Western hemisphere. While Najwa doesn't use Islamic fundamentalism to exert her agency, but shows Islam can help move troubled Muslims from a space of anxiety to peace and tranquility. She, in a way, blurs the distinction that Traditions practice of Islam can exist in the modern metropolis of London.

CHAPTER 4: CONUNDRUMS OF A POST-9/11 MUSLIM IN WESTERN SOCIETY: THE "STRANGER" AND THE "NATIVE" IN MOHSIN HAMID'S *THE RELUCTANT FUNDAMENTALIST*

As a writer, Mohsin Hamid has always been vocal about global immigration. Since he has lived in several countries, he sees the global citizen as an asset to the world, rather than a problem in modern communities. Hamid has expressed strong feelings against Trump's revised travel ban on Muslims stating that the travel ban reiterates the idea that others are not worthy of respect in some nations: "I think that when we take the long view, the notion that some people are deemed less worthy of being able to move — to not have the right to cross borders — over time that's going to seem as outmoded and as unfair, really, as racial discrimination or other kinds of discrimination." (Hamid npr). Apart from migration, Hamid has actively spoken about othering and treating Muslims as a monolithic group in post-9/11America in various interviews, while implicitly addressing that the ideological clash between natives and others has complicated in the recent decade.

Similarly, published in 2007, Hamid 's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* discusses how othering is not limited to an individual; Othering can affect a whole group. Set in a pretext of post-9/11 xenophobia, Changez responds to Neo-Orientalism by embracing Islam in an Islamophobic world. He adapts to the demands of Neo-Orientalism by making it a part of his identity in the United States and beyond. In this chapter, I argue that while the Twin Tower attacks demote Changez from an American loyalist to an

American traitor, he adapts to hostility against Muslims by becoming a part of the Muslim world.

Changez as a "Native"[19] of Western Culture

Changez finds a sense of self in New York. He speaks English, likes American food, and works for an elite American firm known as Samson Underwood. Graduating *summa cum laude* from Princeton University not only gives him the opportunity to work for Samson Underwood but leads him to believe that he is "one of the brightest minds of the world" (Hamid 23). Changez describes himself as a "lover of America" (Hamid 1) and is hesitant to be identified as a Pakistani. He is embarrassed to accept that the financial endowment of an American university is more than that of any city of Pakistan (Hamid 67) and that the American dollar is worth more than the Pakistani rupee (Hamid 36). He finds an infrastructural similarity between Manhattan and Lahore (Hamid 42), but wants to be identified more as a New Yorker than a Pakistani. He forgets that he is a foreigner and becomes a part of New York's multicultural community. He believes New York is the world's multicultural capital, which welcomes people from around the globe.

The New York of Hamid's novel exemplifies Ahmed's description of multiculturalism as it encourages unity in global diversity and promotes global citizenship rather than a national one. Sara Ahmed observes that since multiculturalism welcomes people from various cultural representations, it crosses borders of ethnic backgrounds and national origins:

[19] *Native* here indicates Changez's American identity. Changez wants to be identified more as an American and less as a Pakistani. He desires to be native to the American culture.

> By suggesting that multiculturalism is *not* a provision for services to specific ethnic groups, and then defining multiculturalism in terms of cultural diversity, this statement powerfully evokes then erases particular histories of racial differentiation: racial difference, already construed as ethnic difference, is redefined in terms of cultural diversity, that is, in terms that erase any distinctions between groups. The "acceptance" of difference actually serves to conceal those differences which cannot be reduced to "cultural diversity." (Ahmed 96)

Changez becomes a member of New York's diverse cultures. He sees Urdu-speaking taxi drivers two blocks away from his East Village Street apartment and finds Pakistani eateries in his immediate proximity. He feels ethnically close to New York: "a samosa and chana serving establishment called the Pak-Punjab Deli; the coincidence of crossing Fifth Avenue during a parade and hearing, from loudspeakers mounted on the south Asian Gay and Lesbian Association float, a song which I danced at my cousin's wedding. . . . I was, in four and a half years, never an American; I was *immediately* a New Yorker" (Hamid 33). For Changez, New York is a blend of traditionalism and modernism: while he is comfortable walking in fully covering ethnic clothes in the subway, it seems perfectly acceptable to see New York City women wearing short skirts (Hamid 45).

Changez looks for white validation through his professional accomplishments in New York. His idealization of the United States resonates with Frantz Fanon's Black Man's idealization of Europe. According to Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks,* the Black Man needs constant validation from the White Man to find his self-worth. The Black

Man's ego is governed by the White Man's assurance. Fanon calls this the process of epidermalization, "colonization through skin color," which challenges the self-worth of a Black Man in a white world. It rationalizes the racial bias of White Man's towards the Black Man. Ziauddin Sardar, in his epilogue to *Black Skin, White Masks* explains how epidermalization justifies mental colonization. Through epidermalization, the Black Man rationalizes his need for a white identity:

> When the Black Man comes in contact with the white world, he goes through a process of sensitization. His ego collapses. His self-esteem evaporates. He ceases to be a self-motivated person. The entire purpose of his behavior is to emulate the white man, to become like him, and thus hope to be accepted as a man. (Fanon xiii)

Changez becomes a part of Western meritocracy. He finds his acceptance in Princeton a *"dream come true"* (Hamid 5, emphasis in original) and feels that Princeton "inspired in me the feeling that my life was a film" (Hamid 3). For Changez, an acceptance at Princeton makes him a Western-educated brown person with a top position in the global meritocracy. Alaa Alghamdi notes that Changez, at this moment, sees the relation between Eastern and Western cultures as beneficial to the Western community. With Princeton, like other Americans, gives him equal access to opportunity, he "demystify[ies] the power differential that exists between them [the East and the West] and carefully dispelling any notion of a cultural superiority that would favor the West" (Alghamdi 53). Admission to Princeton favors Alghamdi's discussion of Changez's evaluation that the West and the East show no racial or cultural imbalance in the novel

because Changez calls his Princeton experience exhilarating: “That, in an admittedly long-winded fashion, is how I think, looking back, about Princeton. Princeton made everything possible for me” (Hamid 15).

Samson Underwood, the firm Changez worked for, also makes it possible for Changez to belong to the American fraternity. Jim, who is a partner at Samson Underwood, finds a protégé in Changez. Like Jim, Changez has been through trials and tribulations to achieve success. In an interview when Jim asks Changez to explain why he should be hired over other Americans, Changez explains he is more than his “sophisticated accent” (Hamid 5) and a *summa cum laude* from Princeton. He is thirsty for a bright future and is willing to commit himself to the job. Jim sees that as a great potential for success: “You’re hungry, and that’s a good thing in my book” (Hamid 10). Jim is a physical manifestation of Changez’s prosperous future. He hones Changez’s acumen in business negotiations and teaches him how to deal with any adverse business situation: “where I saw shame, he saw opportunity” (Hamid 12). Changez’s dedication towards his work and his persistence to secure more profits for Samson Underwood makes him the best hire in the firm.

In Manila, Jim praises Changez’s efforts in taking Samson Underwood to new heights of financial profit (Hamid 35). Jim treats Changez as an equal rather than as a trainee. In his article “The Politics of Recognition,” Charles Taylor observes that equality is an essential component of identity formation in a community: “The politics of equal dignity is based on the idea that all humans are equally worthy of respect” (Taylor 41).

Jim's respect for Changez as an equal mirrors Taylor's discussion of equality. Jim praises Changez for his work and sees him as an equal partner:

> "I like you, you know that?" he said. "Really. Not in a bullshit, say-something-nice-to-raise-the-kid's-morale way. You're a shark. And that's a compliment, coming from me. It's what they called me when I first joined. A shark. I never stopped swimming. And I was a cool customer. I never let on that I felt like I didn't belong to this world. Just like you". (Hamid 80)

Despite his not being an American by birth, Changez's firm gives him privileges and equal access to opportunity. Since the firm exclusively hires from Ivy League universities, as an employee Changez prides himself on global meritocracy. Employees at Samson Underwood classify themselves as a part of the higher society: "We all exuded a sense of confident self-satisfaction; and not any of us was either short or overweight" (Hamid 43). At the age of twenty-two, he prides himself on having an expense account for business negotiations: "But for me at the age of twenty-two, this experience was a revelation. I could if I desired to take my colleagues out for an after-work drink—an activity classified as 'new hire cultivation'—and with impunity spend in an hour more than what my father earned in a day" (Hamid 37). He is an accomplished young New Yorker who gets rewarded for his hard work: "I felt bathed in a warm sense of accomplishment. Nothing troubled me; I was a young New Yorker with the city at my feet" (Hamid 51). Changez starts seeing himself less as a Pakistani and more as a New Yorker.

Apart from his professional success in New York, Changez finds self-fulfillment through his romantic association with Erica: she helps Changez become a part of the Western fraternity. Changez is "well and truly smitten" (Hamid 34) by her and considers her as an important part of his New York life. Erica is a member of New York's elite, and, as her partner, Changez becomes a part of New York's wealthy community. He sees himself as valuable in Erica's life and in the larger American community.

Erica, who is a wealthy New Yorker, finds romantic potential in Changez. For Erica, Changez has a unique quality—despite his success in America, Changez is sensitive towards Pakistan. Erica admires this sensitivity: "I think it's good to be touchy sometimes. It means you care" (Hamid 64). Erica, in fact flaunts Changez's foreignness, his ethnic difference, in her regular social circles. Changez is pleased with his Western integration in the United States:

> This role pleased me indeed. I was presumptuous enough to think that this was how my life was *meant* to be, that it had in some way been inevitable that I should end up with the truly wealthy in exalted settings. Erica vouched for my worthiness; my way of carrying myself—I flattered myself to believe—suggested the impeccability of my breeding; and, for those who inquired further, my Princeton degree and Samson Underwood business card were invariably sufficient to earn me a respectful nod of approval. (Hamid 97)

Changez's Un-identification as a "Native" in Post-9/11 United States

Manila un-Americanizes Changez. He journeys around the world making business transactions on behalf of Samson Underwood, but a business trip to Manila reminds him

of his third-world roots. In the jeepney, where Changez was travelling with his American colleagues, the driver identifies (arguably) with Changez's physical features and skin color, and stares at him displaying an "undistinguished hostility in his expression" (Hamid 76), reminding Changez that he is not a citizen of the first world; he has a "third world sensibility" (Hamid 77) to account for. Changez's third-world sensibility with the jeepney driver in Manila acts as an acknowledgment for his subdued third-world association. While he is reluctant to acknowledge his third world roots when working in the United States, the stare of the jeepney driver in Manika makes him realize that he works in a foreign environment and his co-workers "are so *foreign*" (Hamid 77). As the first call of awakening against his identification with the United States, the gaze of the jeepney driver instills a realization in Changez: he is not an American; he is a Pakistani.

Changez's emotional realization mirrors Fanon's Black Man's acknowledgement of his existential crisis in a white world, saying that when the Black Man recognizes that he is not a part of the white culture, he realizes that his identity is defined by the white culture: "Identification, as it is spoken in the *desire of the Other* is always a question of interpretation, for it is the elusive assignation of myself with a one-self, the elision of person and place" (Fanon xxxi). Similarly, Changez's American identity faces problems when the jeepney driver makes Changez aware of his pseudo-Americanness: "We had not before—of that I was certain –and in a few minutes we would probably never see one another again. But this dislike was so obvious, so intimate, that it got under my skin" (Hamid 67). The jeepney driver reminds Changez that he is not a part of the first-world camaraderie; he needs to embrace his third-world sensibility.

The jeepney driver questions Changez's present choices as an American native. United States, but ethnically, culturally, and professionally contributes to a nation that is not his own. While adept in evaluating the benefits and losses of the business, he seems helpless in being evaluated as a foreigner in the United States. He realizes that he is not a part of the American cohort, but rather a corporate slave who has always lived in America's liminal spaces. Homi Bhabha describes the psyche of the familiar and the unfamiliar in Fanon's Black Man's identity, discussing that White Man never sees the Black Man as an equal:

> Remembering is never a quiet act of introspection or retrospection. It is a painful re-membering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of trauma of the present. It is such a memory of the history of race and racism, colonialism and the question of cultural identity, that Fanon reveals with greater profundity and poetry than any writer. What he achieves, I believe, is something far greater: for in seeing the phobic image of the Negro, the native, the colonized, deeply woven into the psychic patterns of the West, he offers the master and slave a deeper relationship of their interpositions, as well as the hope of a difficult, even dangerous, freedom. (Fanon xxv)

Changez finds an instant connection with the jeepney driver whom he has met momentarily— a connection he does not have with his colleagues, whom he has known for a couple of years. Changez feels an instant sense of bonding with the jeepney driver: "I felt much closer to the Filipino driver than to [Changez]; I felt I was play-acting when in reality I ought to be making my way home, like the people on the streets outside"

(Hamid 67). He suddenly finds American "fair hair and light eyes" (Hamid 77) not a part of his ethnic entitlement: what he finds to be significantly familiar in America, he finds foreign in Manila.

Changez's Transformation from an American Loyalist to an American Traitor

If the incident at Manila helps him understand his Pakistani roots, the Twin Tower attacks makes him to acknowledge that he is not a part of the American fraternity. The Twin Tower attacks turn Changez from an American loyalist to an American traitor. His foreign status becomes more pronounced after the 9/11 attacks. Changez's subconscious conflict to identify as an American or a Pakistani finds clarity when the narrator states that Changez smiles at the fall of Twin Towers. The attacks complicate his relations with the United States: he sympathizes with the victims of 9/11 attacks, but at the same time he cannot restrain his excitement about the victimization of the United States. While watching the September 11 attacks from Manila, Changez expresses a clear conflict in his emotions:

> 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 83)

While Changez struggles to be loyal towards the United States, post-9/11 America becomes more adamant in securing its borders. In post-9/11 America, the sense of belonging is dictated by American standards of immigrant acceptability; the nation defines "natives" and "strangers" in a post-9/11 world. Changez, who has excelled in proving himself a professionally worthy immigrant, finds his American identity at stake

after the Twin Towers are struck. Lindsay Ann Balfour states that post-9/11 United States is hostile, and therefore hospitable to Changez. Balfour in "Risky Cosmopolitanism: Intimacy and Autoimmunity in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*" discusses how the hospitality of the United States towards Changez evolves after the Twin Tower attacks. Balfour claims that before 9/11 what Changez saw as a positive manifestation of power, post-9/11 America uses the power of imperialism to scare strangers like Changez:

> In what follows I suggest that *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* recalls and exposes both the conventional and unexpected implications of a hospitality toward the stranger. It is a novel about the War on Terror and related critiques of American imperialism in the aftermath of 9/11, to be sure, but it remains preoccupied— not only tangentially but, I argue, intimately—with questions about what it means to engage with others and strangers in a time of terror. The novel thus asks implicitly, how we might live alongside others when hospitality is anything but simple and may, in fact, be closer to the experience of terror itself. (Balfour 215)

Balfour's description of an inhospitable America no longer treats Changez as a valuable asset to the American economy. Post-9/11 America sees his religious identity as more significant than his professional identity. He is a threat to national security rather than an asset to American nationhood. Being a Pakistani Muslim, Changez is subjected to racial stereotyping and communal hatred, and often designated as a potential suspect in the US nation-space. He is called a "fucking Arab" (Hamid141), stripped down to his boxer

shorts under suspicion in airports (Hamid 85), and constantly accused of being an outsider in the United States.

Changez realizes that the American dream is no longer accessible to the outsider. He admits that his world is falling apart: "the crumbling of the world around me is the impending destruction of my personal dream" (Hamid 106). Life becomes precarious for Changez when New York becomes the war zone in America. The World Trade Center symbolizes the destruction of a mighty power, and the fall of the Twin Towers calls for a reevaluation of the national policies that regulate immigration in the country. Changez states that the victimization of America runs amock in New York City, as he sees "photos, bouquets, words of condolence—nestled into street corners and between shops and along the railings of public squares" (Hamid 142). Flags of American potency are waved everywhere: "*We are America—not New York, which, in my opinion, means something quite different—the mightiest civilization the world has ever known; you have slighted us; beware our wrath*" (Hamid 79, emphasis in original). Changez notices a clear shift in the rhetoric of the American dream. The version of globally accessible ideas of liberty and equality of the American dream is replaced by state-defined, violence-regulated definitions of American nationalism.

In the novel, Americanism is gripped by ethnic particularism and racial exclusivism. After the Twin Tower attacks, being a Muslim in America becomes a challenge for Changez, when his alien status becomes pronounced. His former advantages of having a foreign accent and a steady, well-paying job and navigating the world without a visa become problems. His degree from Princeton no longer defines his

eligibility to pass as a true American, but a foreign passport and an alien nationality works against his validation as an American:

> When we arrived, I was separated from my team at immigration. They joined the queue for American citizens; I joined the one for foreigners. The officer who inspected my passport was a solidly built woman with a pistol at her hip and a mastery of English inferior to mine; I attempted to disarm her with a smile. "What is the purpose of your trip to the United States?" she asked me. "I live here." I replied. "That is *not* what I asked you, sir," she said. "What is the purpose of your trip to the United States?" … Our exchange continued in much this fashion for several minutes. In the end I was dispatched for a secondary inspection in a room where I sat on a metal bench next to a tattooed man in handcuffs. (Hamid 75)

Changez realizes that he has always been a second-class citizen in the United States. His American dream is alive only as long as it benefits the United States. Jim reassures him that his position in Samson Underwood is secure, irrespective of the recent social and political upheavals in New York. While Jim assures Changez that such incidents will be soon forgotten, the hate crimes in New York against Muslims escalate exponentially: "Muslim men were disappearing, perhaps into shadowy detention centers for questioning or worse" (Hamid 107). Hamid writes that the nation focuses on elimination of Muslims, accusing them of being a national threat.

Judith Butler's *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* posits that the nation has the power of representation of its people, and it also has the power to decide who is worthy of its representation as natives to the nation: "Normative schemes are interrupted

by one another, they emerge and fade depending on broader spectrums of power, and very often come up against spectral visions of what they claim to know: thus there are 'subjects' who are not quite recognizable as subjects, and there are 'lives' that are not quite—or, indeed, are never—recognized as lives" (Butler 4). In Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, Changez is reminded of the reality that he doesn't have a right to a "valuable life" (Butler 3) when evaluating a firm in Valpraiso, Cuba. Juan- Batista, the owner of the firm, calls Changez a janissary to the American Empire (Hamid 142). The janissaries who were trained to fight for the Muslim army were "ferocious and utterly loyal" (Hamid 172) and have "fought to erase their own civilizations, so they had nothing else to turn to" (Hamid 172). Changez represents the janissary because he has been indoctrinated to serve the American Empire with an expectation to reap profits in his business endeavors that will benefit the American economy. He is trained to work for a dream that will never contribute to Pakistan's development. As Butler observes, Changez's life holds no value to the United States as his fortune "fades" after the events of 9/11.

The conundrums in Changez's American life also appear in his relationship with Erica. Erica is a key component in his Americanization. She is a significant reason for his attachment to New York and his identification as an American. To Changez, Erica is an object of awe. Changez's relationship with Erica resembles Fanon's description of a Black Man in love with a white woman. Fanon says that when the man of color is in a relationship with a white woman, he is looking for more than romantic fulfillment: he is looking to be included in the white world. Fanon writes that a Black Man desires a white

woman because he feels white in her company (Fanon 45). Changez's relationship with Erica is more than romantic fulfillment; it is validation of his being a part of the American life. When he finds that Erica does not see him as a long-term partner, Changez becomes confused and disillusioned. Erica recognizes Changez only as an emotional substitute for her late ex-boyfriend, Chris. As his relationship with Erica deepens, in Changez's mind, Erica becomes detached from him and constantly lost in a world of Chris.

Since Changez's American identity is partly shaped by Erica, his romantic dissociation with her complicates his recognition as a future American citizen. Charles Taylor observes that misrecognition can radically harm a person's psyche but as Charles Taylor puts it, its repercussions can also diminish one's existence to the point of near absence :

> The thesis is that our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the *mis*recognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Non-recognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted and reduced mode of being. (Taylor 25)

Changez tries to replace Chris, but he isn't sure how he ends up with a dead competitor, and he becomes a part of "the strange romantic triangle" (Hamid 121) since he is competing against a "dead rival" (Hamid 121). When Changez cannot consummate the relationship with Erica, he asks Erica to imagine that he is Chris. Adnan Mahmutovic

argues that Changez's desire to consummate his relation with Erica goes beyond his sexual needs. Mahmutovic argues that by pretending to be Chris, Changez not only tries to save Erica's life, but allegorically wants to save America too: "Changez's desire to help Erica heal is a desire to help America heal after 9/11, despite the fact that 'their love … was, after all, a religion that would not accept me as a convert' (Hamid 129). Although he is talking about Chris and Erica, he is really alluding to different spheres of civic life" (Mahmutovic 3). As the sexual act desensitizes and dehumanizes Changez, he struggles to feel important in Erica's life. After he consummates his relationship with Erica, he feels a deep sense of void: "I felt something I have not felt before or since; I remember it well: I felt both *satiated* and *ashamed*" (Hamid 121).

Changez, the Stranger against the Empire

The ethnic profiling of Muslims after 9/11 leaves Changez angry and confused. His Western-educated ideals are constantly challenged by his Eastern values. He grapples with his relationship with Erica and his hatred towards America. Changez detests the fact that American superiority of strength comes at a cost of killing innocent lives in international combats. He particularly avoids watching television programs that dignify America's strength: "I have been avoiding the evening news, preferring not to watch the partisan and sports-event-like coverage given to the mismatch between American bombers with their twenty-first-century weaponry and the ill-equipped and ill-fed Afghanistan tribesman below" (Hamid 113). He describes how he trembles with fury when he watches the attacks on Afghanistan, and how he has to "sit down to calm

myself" (Hamid 114). He finds it difficult to "*focus on the fundamentals*" (Hamid 112) and has to drink "a bottle of whiskey before [he] was able to fall asleep" (Hamid 114).

Changez's protests against American racial discrimination find symbolic expression through his beard. After visiting his family in Pakistan, he starts growing out his beard. He identifies more with his religious identity than his pseudo-American identity, and performs, that identify publicly by keeping a beard to voice his protest against ethnic profiling. After 9/11, when Muslims became a marked identity of hatred and xenophobia[20] Changez uses his two-week unshaven beard as his protest against the injustice he faces on American soil. When he returns to New York, his parents ask him to get rid of his beard, but he is resistant to shaving it off. With racial prejudice becoming commonplace in America, Changez's decision to fight against such oppression becomes a part of his identity:

> For despite my mother's request, and my knowledge of the difficulties it could well present me at immigration, I had not shaved my two-week-old beard. 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; I do not recall my precise motivations. I know only that I did not wish to blend in with the army of clean-shaven youngsters who were my coworkers, and that inside me, for multiple reasons, I was deeply angry. (Hamid 148)

Even though Changez runs the risk of a being marked as a terrorist, he embraces his religious identity publicly to show he is proud of being a Muslim. His colleague

[20] For detailed descriptions and analysis of the relationship between United States and Muslim-Americans, see Sunaina Maira's *The 9/11 Generation: Youth, Rights, and the Solidarity on the War of Terror* or Lori Peek's *Behind the Backlash: Muslim Americans after 9/11*.

Wainwright asks him to shave his beard, but Changez does not abandon his protest: "I appreciated my friend's concern, but I didn't take his suggestion" (Hamid 131). He faces verbal abuse in the subway, and at Samson Underwood he becomes an object of "whispers and stares" (Hamid 148). He struggles to understand how an America that supposedly welcomes people from across the world has alienated Muslims from its multicultural community. Changez's hatred towards America escalates with America's invasion of other countries. While America reciprocated the 9/11terrorism with the "War on Terror," invading Afghanistan and Iraq to wipe out terrorists, Changez questions America's role as moral police of the world, arguing that America's endeavor to monitor the world has brought more suffering than peace:

> I wondered how it was that America was able to wreak such havoc in the world—orchestrating an entire war in Afghanistan, say, and legitimizing through its actions the invasion of weaker states by more powerful ones, which India was now proposing to do to Pakistan—with so few apparent consequences at home. (Hamid 149)

Hamid describes how Islam is demonized in post-9/11 United States. Changez has ambiguous feelings towards America: he sees it as a world of upward mobility and a center of global empowerment, but at the same time as a country that y globalspawns ethnic hatred. Changez states that the United States' refusal to see the importance of Afghans and Pakistani lives reinforces the impression that a war-driven America no longer values the humanity of others. And it is also for this reason that Changez thanks

the manager of a book industry, Juan Batista for enlightening him that he is a Pakistani, not an American:

> Armed sentries manned the check post at which I sought entry; being a suspect race I was quarantined and subjected to additional inspection; once admitted I hired a charioteer who belonged to a serf class lacking the requisite permissions to abide legally and forced therefore to accept work at lower pay; I myself was an indentured servant whose right to remain was dependent upon the continued benevolence of my employer. *Thank you, Juan-Batista*, I thought I lay myself down in my bed, *for helping me to push back the veil behind which all this had been concealed*. (Hamid 178, emphasis in original)

Changez's return to Pakistan as a final attempt to protest against American dictatorship underlines a strong opposition to American expansion of the idea of Islamic terrorism as an equivalent to any activity that does not comply with America's capitalistic interests. Changez speaks against this oppression by instructing students about American imperialism and its catastrophic global effects around the world. He becomes a professor at a university where he uses his "ex-janissary skills" (Hamid 203) to teach about American autocracy. He actively protests against American imperialism outside the classroom, and when America's ambassador visits town, he gets involved in burning effigies and holding placards, and he eventually "spent the night in prison, nursing a bloody lip and bruised knuckles" (Hamid 204). Occasionally his classes on anti-Americanism receive warnings, but his courses are not suspended. Through these forms of protest, Changez demonstrates that stereotyping and generalization of any ethnic group

works against global communities' ability to coexist peacefully. His arguments against America are pronounced: while America propagates multiculturalism, it also celebrates racist propaganda. Changez says that America's War on Terror should not be a war against immigrants.[21]

Hamid speaks against the othering of immigrants from a subjective stance, often engaging in fictional narratives through non-fictional experiences that discuss Muslim discrimination in the United States. Besides invoking sympathy of Changez through the narrative, Hamid subliminally points out that America creates its own enemies. While the narrative shows that the United States provides professional citizenship to people based on their merit, it also states how religious identities can over throw their American dream at any point of time. In a climate of fear and demonization, where Muslim fundamentalism is limited not just to attacking the Twin Towers but the American way of life, Hamid calls for global solidarity. The novel also calls for global justice for immigrants who come with dreams and aspirations, but often find themselves in limbo when they are deprived of rights and representation in foreign countries, in this case, in the United States of post-9/11. Like Fanon and many postcolonial writers before him, Hamid is convinced that respect towards all individuals, irrespective of their national origin and ethnic affiliation should form the foundation of a sustainable multicultural

[21] In critical studies, Judith Butler also questions such frames of Western representations of immigrants, arguing that institutions of power recognize people based on familiar ethnic constructs. In a conversation with the narrator, Changez mirrors Butler's theory of insider/outsider in a nation as he says that every human life is valuable: "It seems an obvious thing to say, but you should not imagine that we Pakistanis are all potential terrorists, just as I should not imagine that you Americans are all undercover assassins" (Hamid 209).

world in order for all natives and foreigners to transcend the pain and conundrums experienced after the 9/11 event in the United States.

CONCLUSION

I began this dissertation by engaging with Neo-Orientalism, explaining that although pejoratively, Neo-Orientalism is a modern incarnation of Orientalism. The West's romanticization, exoticization, and fetishization of the Other has increased the ideological gap between Islam and the West. As post 9/11 saw a widespread of xenophobia in the United States, where immigrants and people of color were considered the Other in the American nation, the black and the brown polyglot created a deep sense of fear and anxiety in the American demography. It created a racist sense of nationalism where anyone who didn't conform to American standards of national representation, was open to interrogation, abuse, and unlawful detainment by the state. The binary of Neo-Orientalism thus became stronger when the United States saw itself under attack by religious fundamentalists group from Asia or Africa. The Patriot Act, Aviation and Transportation Security Act, and Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act passed by Congress, are some of the very few ways exercised by the State on immigrants and people of color to normalize xenophobia after 9/11. In a way, the othering of Muslims became crucial to maintain West's legacy of superiority in the world, thus showing the relevance of Neo-Orientalism today.

The novels chosen in this dissertation are inspired by a similar notion; they all underline an ideological clash between Western and Islamic culture of Neo-Orientalism. Post-9/11 immigrant literatures featured in this dissertation depict manifestations of Islamic oppression in Western communities. They discuss the existence of a power relation between the putative East and the so-called West where the protagonists,

although imaginatively, grapple with existence of the Us/Them mentality, as they are forced to choose one side of the binary to survive in the nation that they live in. They must adapt to the demands of Neo-Orientalism, or else they will perish. The protagonists must negotiate with the needs of a Neo-Oriental living, to escape being Othered in their daily living. They need to find a way to escape being pigeon holed as the Other. As Amritjit Singh and Peter Schmidt in *Postcolonial Theory and the United States* describe the situation of the other living in a nation as precarious since, "any deviation from the 'norm'—assertions or display of strong individual experience or 'multiple identities'[by the Other]—would be seen as impure or even betrayal" (Singh 23), the other has to prepare itself to face the negative consequences of the binary, or else it has to face dire consequences.

On the subject of otherness, the writers Michel Houellebecq (*Submission*), Mohsin Hamid (*The Reluctant Fundamentalist*), Leila Aboulela (*Minaret*) and Karan Mahajan (*The Association of Small Bombs*) do not write directly against the Western Empire, but rather see themselves as participants in the making of new political realities. The characters in their novels hail and live in various multiple locations such as France (continental Europe), United Kingdom, Sudan, United States, Pakistan, India, and Nepal but they experience similar transnational crises in different national contexts. The novels set up a framework for academic discussion where literature can analyze, evaluate, and in a way, open up new spaces for imagination that can somehow, come up with a solution for a peaceful cohabitation between the putative East and the so-called West. Even though the novels have different reactions to the war of ideas between Islam and the

West, they call for global solidarity and global migration through immigrant literature. By sharing their transnational memories of trauma and discrimination, they call for a shared sense of justice for immigrants in global communities.

On the other hand, these novels reinforce the binary between the Islam and the West. The characters in the novels are either scared of Islam or embrace Islam as they are failing to integrate in the Western community. The characters thus become trapped in the native/Other binary of Neo-Orientalism continuing to reinforce the notion that even as a hybrid, westernized character like Changez in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* cannot be a part of American fraternity in post-9/11 United States. Character developments of François, Ayub, Shockie, Malik, and Najwa represent continued clashes of two disparate civilizations where each character reacts differently to the discriminations when they see themselves on the negative side of the binary. Even though, one can argue, that in *The Association of Small Bombs*, Ayub, Shockie and Malik defy Western characterizations of themselves by bombings in Delhi, they end up reinforcing the Oriental trope that without using violence they cannot claim representation in the nation. Similarly, Najwa's change from a Westerner in Sudan to an Islamist in London attests the fact that Muslims in a Western world see embracing Islam as a respite from the brutalities of the West. The novels create a world that has estranged Islam and embracing Islam means an automatic assumption of distancing themselves from the West. There is no integration of Islamic communities in the Western worlds, at least in the novels that I analyze.

In this transnational project, two of my chosen novelists are writing from subjective place while the other two are critiquing Islam from an outsider's perspective.

Submission by Michel Houellebecq and *The Association of Small Bombs* by Karan Mahajan describe Islam from an outsider's perspective where both of them critique the Islamic presence in the contemporary world. Demonizing Islam in Europe and India these novels reinforce Neo-Oriental tropes that the Orient is barbaric, fearful, uncivilized and should be estranged from global civilization. These novels react to Neo-Orientalism by confirming the pejorative depictions of Islam when compared to the West. India, in *The Association of Small Bombs* mirrors the West since the Hindu dominance in India resembles the white domination in the United States and European countries. Mahajan, in this case, acts as what Hamid Dabashi calls "comprador intellectual", who writes against his own Muslim community members in India. He then plays a significant part of promoting the demonization of Islam in India and beyond. Similarly, Najwa in *Minaret* and Changez in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* write from subjective stances where they have claim a journalistic pretense of capturing the liminal lives that Muslims face in a post-9/11 Western world. Changez and Najwa, face problems while integrating into the Western community. Their problems are that Changez integrates too *well* and Najwa too *little*, but the narrative solution then becomes their renunciation of Western cultural ethos to seek self-evaluation and self-identity. As a counter-response to discrimination, Changez decides to exchange the United States for Pakistan, where he exercises his full-fledged agency as a university professor. Najwa asserts her agency as a Muslim woman by accepting her faith as an autonomous Muslim individual in an alienating English world.

The first chapter discusses the advent and the popularity of the moderate Muslim by looking into Michel Houellebecq's novel *Submission*. By electing Mohammed Ben Abbes as their first presidential nominee, Houellebecq's France itself transforms through Islamic revolution. This new French Islamic society respects Islam while delicately respecting secularism and French liberalism. Abbes is suave, well-spoken, exotic, educated, and progressive in his ideas. He has a strong incentive for promoting Islamism, but at the same time is flexible enough to funnel money towards improving churches in the French society. He introduces traditions that are opposed to Western culture: in contrast to the monogamy, liberalism, secularism, and state education that are valued in Western culture, he introduces polygamy, traditionalism, Islamism, and religious education to French society. While the protagonist of the novel, François, is hesitant to adopt Islamism at the beginning, he soon starts to see the colonization of Islam as beneficial to French society. With Abbes as the Islamic French president and his desire to turn France into an Islamic caliphate, I argue that Houellebecq creates fear about the rise of Islam and terrorizing France with its power. Islam is depicted as a culture of scare, which holds the power to infiltrate western communities in the near future.

Similarly, the second chapter discusses a twisted sense of empowerment of the Orient. In this chapter Ayub, Shockie and Malik reinforce the Oriental depiction of Muslim as the bloodthirsty Turk. Said describes the violent and oversexed Orient aptly in *Orientalism*:

> In the films and television the Arab is associated either with lechery or bloodthirsty dishonesty. He appears oversexed degenerate, capable, it is true, of

> cleverly devious intrigues, but essentially sadistic, treacherous, low. Slave trader, camel driver, money changer, colorful scoundrel: these are some traditional Arab roles in cinema. (Said 287)

Terrorists Malik, Shockie, and Ayub are fighting for their agency in the Indian political scenario. They use fear and terror to free Kashmir from India. Their methods of violence are often described as extranormal, because they do not follow the "legitimized" methods of violence used by the state (Hutchinson 385), their objective is usually for a unified cause that has been significantly neglected by the state. As an insurgent strategy to seize political power, they use violence as a revolutionary method to represent the dominated, tortured, and underrepresented Muslim population in India. They are motivated to become a part of a revolutionary cause where they try to create psychological effect on majority groups to coerce them to change their political attitudes or behavior. Their incentive to liberate Kashmir from the Indian government using violent methods is described by them as a fair trade to the indiscrepancies against Muslims in India. It is their way their of expressing that Islam can also be integrated in the Hindu society, hence the democratization of Islam, albeit arguably difficult, is possible and with the terroristic attacks is now mandatory in the Indian political, civil, and social demography. Agency and resistance in their actions play interchangeably, because their agency to cause national psychological conditions of fear and their resistance which comes from them being the abjects of the Indian class system, and not of the elite makes their revolution and resistance a most formidable kind of agency. Through their consistent bombings in

Delhi, the terrorists prove themselves to be new forces of power, who operate outside the status quo of the Indian society.

The second and the third chapters written on novels *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *Minaret* discuss Islam as a religion of peace and narrativize the importance of Islamic identity for Muslims living in Western countries across the world. They react to the binary of Neo-Orientalism by embracing Islam. While Changez embraces Islam as a part of his identity, Najwa embraces Islam as a part of her faith. Both these characters are rather sympathetic portrayals of Muslim discrimination, where both Changez and Najwa deter from using fundamentalist agencies of Western resistance, once they are othered after 9/11. While Changez exercises his agency by becoming a professor in a University at Pakistan, Najwa frequents the mosque to find solace and sense of security. The initial reluctance of both characters to acknowledge their Muslim identities in their home countries is superseded by their struggle to make Islam central to their identities during their stay in the West is clearly a manifestation of protest, born out of discontent.

All in all, this dissertation aims to emphasize that immigrant literature in the post-9/11 world bridges time and place, universalizing the prevalence of the Orient in modern times. Sometimes using the Orient metaphorically and sometimes figuratively, I refute the timelessness of the Orient, and argue that it is dynamic in its evolution. While recognizing and building upon Said's work, I go a bit further and see the Muslim protagonists in these works as embodiments of a new image of the Orient as they define and renegotiate their positions in the new global system. These novels suggest readings

at are in consonance with my approach to the whole subject, and there are, of course, other ways of reading the novels than I do in my research. I am not claiming that I have done a definitive monograph on post-9/11 novels, but my analyses and critiques will not be irrelevant to the academic discussion, if other literary criticism arise after reading the novels. There are definitely other ways of reading the texts, but one thing will remain central to any discussion surrounding these novels: the politics of the binary between the putative East and the so-called West has strengthened in post-9/11 literature.

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