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Troublesome Minorities: Questioning Assimilation in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *Home Fire*

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO

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BY

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ABSTRACT

Troublesome Minorities: Questioning Assimilation in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *Home Fire*

By Nida Choudary

Cultural discourse has long proposed assimilation as the method for the social and political incorporation of immigrant populations in the West. The model minority myth is perpetuated as a success story of Asian immigrants achieving the American Dream, of finding success through hard work and trademark American determination, while marketing the perceived silence and patience of the minority as honorable traits. However, these ideals are insufficient and problematic as they ignore the challenges immigrants and their descendants face in the post-9/11 era and promote deep set notions of race and associated categories. In order to better understand the incorporation of immigrant communities in the new century, we need to deconstruct and reevaluate the collective memory of mainstream western societies for their own myths of cultural and hegemonic superiority. We must study these societies as ethnic, as equally rooted in tradition as immigrant communities are accused of. Exploring English literature, specifically works by South Asian Muslim writers on the post-9/11 western diaspora, and analyzing how Muslims negotiate an identity under various pressures reveals a more "humanist" understanding of these communities. Considering novels like *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *Home Fire* alongside theoretical works such as *Orientalism* by Edward Said, *White* by Richard Dyer, and Omi and Winant's racial formation theory offers a much more nuanced discussion on the racialization of Muslims after 9/11 through policing and surveillance, and the resulting isolation of the community into fundamentalisms and binaries.

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INTRODUCTION Western intellectuals have long defined and speculated about the people of the East; formulating and understanding images of Muslims, Arabs, and South Asians as dark-skinned savages, as the Other. My focus for this thesis is not discussing how the West has depicted this group in the past with a non-humanist view of belittling and animalizing; rather I will focus on how racialization has retained Orientalism and radicalized to encompass new discourses. My research will include *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid and *Home Fire* by Kamila Shamsie, texts written after 9/11 that grapple with the identities of Muslim South Asians living in an increasingly hostile West through first-person narratives. In response to contemporary discourse on the diaspora being mainly Eurocentric, these texts serve as new representations. They reclaim agency to represent and replace an older model of analyzing this demographic from white perspectives by articulating inner conflicts through fiction and initiating a flow of cultures between people. First, the paper will address popular political rhetoric and laws like the Patriot Act that reflect the continuous resurfacing of cemented binaries in the West. Having explored this rhetoric as functioning in the same world the novels are set in, my thesis will then research what these books have to contribute about the model of assimilation for immigrant communities through close reading of the text. How do the writers create individuality for a group consolidating their postcolonial subjectivity with the racialized images projected upon them? In times of criminalization, policing, surveilling, and mass media and political rhetoric misrepresenting Muslims in the West, how does assimilation become complicated? What are we assimilating towards? What is the common American identity and why does the delusion of a "model minority" persist? What is the price to pay when one deviates from it? I will be focusing on these texts and their characters as they are individual aesthetic objects with

autonomy but are significant because of the dialogue they conduct with a historical era. The personal lives of the authors or the reception of the books will not inform the study.

Through close reading I will explore these immediate questions and the larger questions of what this particular demographic has to contribute to minority literature. Functioning with a postcolonial twenty-first century focus, what place do these texts have in the modern configuration of Muslims and Islam? What is their place in Asian American literature? Do the novels provide a conceptual model for identity formation that is different from the racial identity model of colonial times? What can minority discourse contribute to majoritarian values? I believe that such works deconstruct imposed and self-imposed ideas of how proper western citizenship and personal Muslim identities formulate. They replace the model minority myth, the idea of a silent Muslim Asian promoted both within the Asian culture, post-9/11 Muslim populations, and by dominant assimilation discourse in the West. Such work subverts the image of a docile, cooperative minority based on stereotype and the reality of post-9/11 fear; it breaks the Asian culture of silence and belief that such an absence of speech or writing will protect the livelihood of immigrants. Stemming from the hazy assumptions and ignorance of what Edward Said calls Orientalism, racialization after 9/11 also involves surveillance, policing, and other forms of criminalization, of these various ethnic and religious groups that are perceived to be the same. Considering these circumstances, my theoretical base will include *White* by Richard Dyer, Omi and Winant's racial formation theory, and Edward Said's *Orientalism*. Elda Maria Roman's *Race and Upward Mobility* and John Alba Cutler's *Ends of Assimilation* will also play a role in how I define assimilation.

Shamsie tells a story of third-generation Britons of Pakistani descent: Isma, the oldest sister, and Aneeka and Parvaiz, the twins. Following their tragic childhood of abandonment by a

fundamentalist father and the death of their mother and grandmother, Parvaiz goes to Syria to join the troubled pursuits of his dead father. Isma tries to lead a life without the loss and disappointment of her brother in the US as she researches the "sociological impact of the War on Terror" while Aneeka takes desperate steps to save him (40). In contrast to these siblings is half-Pakistani, half-American Briton Eamonn and his father Karamat Lone. These two serve as the image of successful assimilation through the embodiment of whiteness that the others fail at. Karamat Lone is a notorious political figure from a Pakistani immigrant community. He continually dissociates himself from his past and eventually becomes Home Secretary, one of the many important positions in a nation fearful of Muslims. Lone has insight on how the community of Muslims thinks and how to successfully isolate them. Eventually the paths of all five central characters cross as the siblings try to save each other and Karamat Lone attempts to save his own son and serve his nation by destroying its "enemies." Hamid's novel follows a young Pakistani man named Changez in his shifts from Princeton student to employee of an impressive valuation firm to reluctant fundamentalist. His job at Underwood Samson, his steady adoption of American attitudes and mannerisms, and his relationship with a white woman named Erica allow entry to the elite social and economic world of Manhattan. Changez demonstrates how he begins to assimilate into American society through his adoption of whiteness and the quick rejection he faces as he is absorbed into the racialized categories of suspect after 9/11. The novel is set entirely from the perspective of Changez as he gives a monologue to a suspicious American visitor in a restaurant in Lahore. The identity of the mysterious man is never revealed, and he is continuously offended by Changez's deteriorating relationship with the US. Both of the novels produce complicated struggles to be loyal to one's family and home while still being accepted by the western societies the characters have either adopted or been born into. The

permeation of policing and surveilling into the way both political figures and citizens perceive Muslims in the West makes the post-9/11 era different from previous racialization that may have been limited to fewer and less dangerous incidents of discrimination.

My thesis will begin by exploring Shamsie as she does not offer a solution or stance. *Home Fire* presents the humanity of these characters and their attempts to survive in a very hostile environment, even more hostile because of the decisions their family has made.
They are trying to lead a normal life, but Shamsie challenges what normalcy is. Is a stable life for a Muslim the result of complete erasure of one's beliefs? Does the possibility of being loyal to one's family and culture and still being British exist?

With *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, Hamid offers more of a conclusion. He begins with some similarities to Shamsie while focusing on the specifics of New York, demonstrating how exactly Muslims are racialized through contrast with characters that are not immediately judged by their appearance and why assimilation is difficult. They both establish that the West is not as concerned with being humane as it keeps saying it is and Hamid also demonstrates that the American Dream is not as viable as promoted. It is the words and promises of an ideal against the reality of policies. However, Hamid's protagonist has other options besides struggling; he can return home knowing he will get a job with his American education. When he returns to Lahore and starts working as a professor, he begins criticizing US policies and the War on Terror. I argue that Hamid is proposing that Changez is stuck between two fundamentalisms, American corporate capitalism and the fabrication of Islam. Hamid presents Changez as reluctant to become a fundamentalist of the capitalist system in the US. That is what the majority of the novel is dedicated to, him trying to become a part of the "empire" by conforming to whiteness and constantly being rejected because he is seen only for his race. This repeated rejection and the

treatment of the Muslim world after 9/11 make him more reluctant to follow the fundamentals of a capitalist corporation but also make him cautious of the fundamentalism taking hold at home.

This thesis argues that colonial practices such as racialization disrupt postcolonial dreams of humanism and individuality. In contrast to the racial categories of crime and suspicion that confine South Asian Muslim communities, the primary texts reveal complex individuals with the ability for as much good or bad as anyone else is afforded. The characters' central, omnipotent positions in narration provide a less explored framework of ambiguous endings and perspectives from which the audience is meant to draw conclusions. These texts work through the effects of racialization and the tensions of assimilation that capture Muslims between modern systems of human subjectivity: western capitalism and religious fundamentalism, two ways of belonging to nationhood. Each offers something essential yet contradictory. Adopting a free-moving globalist lifestyle with the hope of economic and social upward mobility often involves the characters performing whiteness in a corporate setting, a world of plenty. While the other option requires another sacrifice of identity, family and country. The thesis explores how Islam is configured in the modern world and how Muslims negotiate an identity under the pressures of acceptance, social status, self-worth, and family.

The main discourses and fields this study will interact with are Orientalism, postcolonialism, globalization, specifically in the twenty-first century, and critical race theory. Edward Said describes the term Orientalism as such: "it is, above all, a discourse that is by no means in direct, corresponding relationship with political power in the raw but rather is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power" (Said 5). This idea applies to how Muslims are racialized. It does not occur in an incubator by politicians or other people in power, but rather develops in disorderly interactions with "power intellectual," "power moral," and the

media, social and traditional (Said 5). Orientalist thought can be traced back to several European thinkers who were able to distribute their knowledge as the sole source of information on the "Orient," an obsessively large amount of political, anthropological, scientific, and popular literature that was the authority on matters of the East due to the lack of any other available information and the fact that most people from European metropoles had not visited and would not visit this region. Today, in the postcolonial era, we continue to see such a phenomenon despite the democratic growth of publishing avenues and easier travel allowing multiple voices to be heard online and in person. Western powers, mainly the US, are able to shape worldviews and justify policy based on discourse that they produce and control. Other ideas become marginal and difficult to access. Thus, exploring the persistence of Orientalism and countering it with alternative narratives, narratives by the people of the "Orient" and their descendants in the West, becomes urgent.

Said and Dyer provide a historical background of how race and racial binaries came to be. They map and deconstruct the religious and cultural rhetoric around race that forms a) the East as the exotic, static "Orient" and b) the West as outside race and ethnicity. "The Matter of Whiteness" by Dyer studies whiteness as a race and highlights the different ways in which it is embodied: "a wider notion of the white body, of embodiment, of whiteness involving something that is in but not of the body. I approach this through three elements of its constitution: Christianity, 'race' and enterprise /imperialism" (Dyer 14). This paper will explore how these embodiments are performed by the various characters in order to assimilate into western workplaces, politics, and social elite. According to Dyer, "as long as whiteness is felt to be the human condition, then it alone defines normality and fully inhabits it" (Dyer 9). The central position of these characters is outside the "human condition," outside the linear progression of

western societies, and this outsider position depicts just how "raced" the West is. Omi and Winant establish what it means to live in that category, to have race determine every aspect of one's life from daily encounters with the public to job opportunities to how the justice system treats one. As their work explains, racialization "emphasize[s] how the phenomic, the corporeal dimension of human bodies, acquires meaning in social life" (Omi and Winant 109). Thus, Muslims attempt to shed the visual images associated with their race from their corporeal existence to ease social interactions. Besides discussing how race manifests in modern-day America, which I will expand to include the West in general, the racial formation theory provides definitions of racialization that are essential to understanding how exactly interracial relationships become so complicated. I will also use their work as an explanation for why some Muslims are racialized more than others. My close readings of the two different post-9/11 settings will break down who is able to successfully embody these ideals, who is not, and why. Together these works provide the framework of the racial world that the novels function in. Essentially, the characters of *Home Fire* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* are navigating a world that still holds on to ancient ideas of the Other, binaries between the East and West, and celebrates multiculturalism while maintaining myths of the "model minority" and actively encouraging the embrace of white traditions in order to achieve social, financial, and political success.

The works of Roman and Cutler discuss assimilation as the popular sociological model for the incorporation of immigrants and how socioeconomic power and class standing are tied to understandings of success. There is a tension between the characters that have and have not assimilated. In *Race and Upward Mobility*, economic upward mobility is the divisive factor between an ethnic group and that progression involves a "crisis of affiliation" (Roman 1). The

classic sitcom characters that Roman discusses are experiencing a crisis in their class and ethnic affiliations, but the characters I will be discussing also experience this crisis in religious, familial, and national affiliations. What separates people within the same group and from other minorities is their economic status and the resulting disparities can express a sense of betrayal to one's ethnic origins. This thesis will adapt the idea of socioeconomic success being perceived as closer to whiteness to the immigrant characters of the two novels. Being an "authentic" racial person and possessing an ethnic identity, a trait not debated for the white majority, means adhering to the standards and behaviors of a lower economic and social status. Titles like "resistant or sellout" are complicated by upwardly mobile characters and the specific situation of Muslim immigrants in the post-9/11 context adds more forces and ideologies to be contested with (Roman). Also, the novels deal with different areas of upward mobility; in Hamid's novel it is economic upward mobility and social class status. Shamsie's novel focuses on one's political and social upward mobility, analyzing how the various rankings lead to one's respect in western society and how they relate to the right of citizenship.

In *Ends of Assimilation*, Cutler examines Park and Burgess's 1921 definition of assimilation, the result of which is a "common cultural life" (Cutler). Cutler comments on what is lacking from this definition: "persons and groups 'are incorporated' with other persons and groups, but the definition names no agent of incorporation, as if the process happened by magic" (Cutler 3). I would like to add that the sociological definition is suggesting a mechanical, almost clinical agent of forceful transplant. Their definition is eerily biological: "interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons or groups" (Cutler 3). It is almost as though the incoming persons or groups, in this case immigrants, must go through a procedure of cell replacement, a rewiring of individual human

memories with the new nation's experience and history in order to create the same sentiments and outlook. The purpose is to replace the old, not mesh it with the new as there is only room for one. As Marilyn Chin explains, "The vector of assimilation only goes one direction" (Macdonald). As Cutler argues, "sociologists of assimilation, under the guise of providing a disinterested description, valorize a particular vision of American culture," as if it is a proven process, devoid of errors (Cutler 5-6). These works disrupt the nature of fact assimilation discourse pretends to possess and the various "vision[s] of American culture" (Cutler 6). I argue that resistance is the cultural production of these texts in response to hegemonic systems offered to them by fundamentalist corporations and politicians.

Legislation and Political Rhetoric After 9/11

In order to establish the fictional setting these authors are functioning in, an understanding of the "real world" sociopolitical climate is necessary. Soon after the 9/11 attacks, the predictable language of politicians promoting a war was backed by a media fearful and at times unwilling to protest blanket statements. In the book *South Asian Racialization and Belonging After 9/11*, Aparajita De explains that "The religion of Islam and the body of a racialized Muslim became centers and objects of terror and threat emanating from an intersection of discourses that were neoliberal, capitalist, historically situated, and imperial, such as in the United States and Europe" (De xi). Serving only as a sample of this language are the Patriot Act, President George W. Bush's speech to Congress after the attacks, and President Trump's rhetoric.

A few weeks after the War on Terror was declared, the government presented a bill to Congress "To deter and punish terrorist acts in the United States and around the world, to enhance law enforcement investigatory tools, and for other purposes" (GPO). The short title is

listed as "'Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism (USA PATRIOT ACT) Act of 2001''' (GPO). The diction invokes a sense of duty that cannot be debated and sets up this legislation as unopposable by a patriot because it functions to "unite" the nation. The mysterious and unexplained "other purposes" give law enforcement unlimited powers to surveil brown communities across the nation that have become suspects for a tragedy they neither committed nor are allowed to grieve. As the government made promises to save the civilized world from foreign threats, ordinary people living in the US were added to that category, officially and unofficially. Sunaina Maira's article argues that these post-9/11 security measures and the War on Terror itself reveals more about the "nationalisms, feminisms, and race politics" that govern the US than it does about the subjects that the West believes "need to be liberated in order to achieve the 'freedom' of individual autonomy promised to the fittest by neoliberal capitalism" (Maira). Extreme measures like this bill, the relative ease with which they become laws, and the quick materialization of friend and foe along racial appearances is revealing of the underlying issues of race that continue to grasp the West. Nationalisms are distributed and become a defining feature of the "struggle" to free the others of the world and bring to the "fittest" of them the promises of an economy and a society based on "neoliberal capitalism." Those accepting of this plan are welcomed as members of the free world and those that dare to speak against the cruelties of imposing fairytales of "individual autonomy" on others are painted as fundamentally contradictory to the nation and thus a danger to all of western civilization.

In "The Civil Rights of 'Others'" Vijay Sekhon argues that "the passage of the Patriot Act demonstrates that American society has not socially evolved to the point where the civil liberties of all of its citizens are indefinitely secured" (Sekhon). It is a failure in social progress, a

failure to fulfill constitutional guarantees of civil rights, to protect citizens in times of war. Like the internment of Japanese Americans during WWII and McCarthyism during the Cold War, the "disciplining practices of the War on Terror" are another example of hard-fought freedoms being sacrificed in a time of paranoia of conspiring foreigners hiding among the citizenry, an idea propagated by those benefiting from a state of hysteria (Maira). However, surveilling acts are justified because "'civilized' people who deserve 'rights'" are being protected from those deemed unworthy of inclusion in the "modern political community" (Maira 633). During a sensitive time, extreme measures were carefully proposed in language and propaganda like this, words meant to disguise US imperialist interests with compassion or actual concern for the safety of Americans while devaluing citizenship and its accompanying rights. The exact effects of this law are that it "implicitly defines and anticipates the victims of its mandates" as Muslims, South Asians, and Arabs in a disclaimer from Congress and the President addressing these groups with a promise that their rights will be protected (Sekhon 119).[1] Essentially the disruption or dismissal of established laws and rules of investigation is justified with an air of urgency for national security, with fear that convinces Americans that such violation of law is necessary, and this campaign convicts entire demographics to suspicion and suspends their rights indefinitely.

Bush's speech to Congress after the attacks further employed simplistic yet effective binaries to isolate certain Americans. Addressing the world, he said "Every nation, in every

[1] Furthermore, it limits free speech, derails the legal protections of the Fourth Amendment and the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 that created a legal system to ensure warrants granted to the CIA and FBI were unquestionable, deters the due process, and allows the constitutional right of attorney and client confidentiality to be disrupted (Sekhon).

region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists" (Bush). Holding all autonomous nation-states accountable, the leader of the free world demanded a choice to be made by other leaders and the citizens of the US. The decision was laid out simply; one could either completely agree with and support the wars the US was starting or become its enemy. There is no opportunity or tolerance for another position. Muslim Americans are placed in a particularly difficult position, having ties to both the US and the nations it is fighting against. Therefore, Bush's reassurance that "'good Muslims' . . . would undoubtedly support 'us' in a war against 'them'" simplified a complicated position (Maira 633). The proper performance of Muslimness is defined as "moderate" display of religious practices and steadfast support for a war against an ambiguous mass of enemies; any other position is a sign of an "extremist" or "radical" tendency of Islam. "Bad Muslim" is the default position of Muslim, South Asian, and Arab communities in the US until clear cooperation or confessions proved otherwise.

Edward Said's term Orientalism describes a discourse used to present the people of the East as "an ideal Other," a people in such opposition to the West that they form a near perfect binary (Said). While such rhetoric is still employed after 9/11 and Islam is similarly racialized, it also differs in that the people of the "Orient" are painted as mobilizing, as preparing a mission against the West. The physical Orient remains "outside history" and "placid," thus rendering it ripe for attack, and its geography a monotonous mass of desert (Said). However, the people have become something to be feared, not just ignorant and "backwards," but "barbaric" enough to actually pose a threat to the US (Said). This discourse at its time of conception was useful in negating the achievements of the Middle East, to make it seem like a non-reactionary, unmoving, slow place in need of "progress." After 9/11, the images and rhetoric of Orientalism are adapted for daily use by media outlets and politicians and they are adorned with new characteristics that

make their "backwardness" seem like an agenda capable of penetrating the US. The message of the War on Terror seems more urgent once the Orient takes on a violent nature.

Some of the more recent comments vilifying Muslims have come from Donald Trump. While campaigning for the 2016 election, he claimed to have seen people cheering during the 9/11 attacks: "I watched as people jumped and I watched the second plane come in." During a different rally as a candidate he also claimed to have seen "thousands and thousands of people were cheering as that building was coming down" in Jersey City.[2] His comments clearly implicate Muslims as supporters of the attack and the criminals responsible for them. His lack of factual evidence and childish hearsay have dire effects during a time of increasing Islamophobia when such comments can and have given courage to white supremacists.

In the midst of all these authorities, official and unofficial, attempting to speak about and for Muslim Americans, ordinary citizens have to compensate with overt performances of what Maira calls "good citizenship." These range from individuals displaying the US flag in front of their homes to Muslim civil rights organizations "testifying loyalty to the nation and asserting belief in its democratic ideals, often through public testimonials that emphasize that Muslims are peaceful, loyal U.S. citizens" (Maira 634). Using the example of WWI, Dyer explains a similar phenomenon of constructing national identity in war time: "the appeal to working-class sacrifice in the First World War … [was] a way of asserting a common white British identity …. a motif of national-regional inclusion with an imperial project that may well be identified in many other countries" (Dyer 19). This can be identified in the US where a patriotic identity (excluding racialized Muslims) is celebrated to spark "popular investment in" the War on Terror (Dyer). Working class Muslims make attempts to become a part of this identity to prevent accusatory

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[2] https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/16/nyregion/trump-september-11.html

stares and discrimination by dawning flags on top of cabs and outside stores to overtly identify as American, but "a common white [American] identity" is reserved for someone else. My thesis will emphasize the major and minor ways in which individuals perform "good citizenship" by participating as a hardworking, individualistic, economically upward and socially forward moving minority. These performances are not simply a way of blending into mainstream western society, but a way to defend oneself against the widespread label of terrorist and to secure oneself from legal actions by the obvious display of loyalty and peacefulness. Popular media sources, legislation, and the carefully crafted speeches politicians address the public with are meant to be presented as the "correct" position. A good American would cooperate in any way, including abandoning one's rights, for the safety of other Americans. Silence is not sufficient; disclaimers like the one Congress included in the act are clear addresses to Muslim communities that undivided support for these laws is the requisite for good citizen status and a life uninterrupted by "random" checks from the law.

In the article "(Un)tolerated Neighbour," Aysem Seval argues that *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* "reveals the illusory nature of the liberal discourse of tolerance and the impossibility of maintaining that illusion in emerging representations of self and Other after 9/11" (Seval 103). Considering the above examples and the forthcoming analysis of this novel and *Home Fire*, one can see this pattern of failure constantly emerging. The study of these novels reveals as much about the failure of classic western ideologies, which the West continues to pride itself on, as it does about the dichotomies of South Asian Muslim identities. As Madeline Clements notes in *Writing Islam from a South Asian Muslim Perspective*, politicians and the media saw the era after 9/11 as a "civilisational," global, moral battle "that could potentially be manipulated in the interests of revised geopolitical agendas" (Clements). Using Seval's

terminology, the “domesticating attitude” of post 9/11 discourse paints the War on Terror as a uniting struggle the way Dyer explains westerns were used to represent the physical spread of America’s manifest destiny (Seval). I am discussing this evidence and commentary to establish the severity of rhetoric. They go beyond a routine government statement and are more profound than an inconvenience for select individuals; they promote suspicion and justify the actions that seek to publicly confirm those suspicions. In particular, the Patriot Act is a form of social organization, a means of distributing power and deciding who gets surveilled and who does not based on color, anxiety, and fear. This provides the political and social context needed to understand the time the novels are set in, a time of politicizing the Muslim identity to justify everything from minor incidents of discrimination to political decisions that have global effects. Furthermore, it creates a clear landscape of how representations have progressed, regressed, evolved, and where there is room for improvement.

Home Fire

The contrasting dynamics of a minority, “ethnic” culture and that of the mainstream are more stark in *Home Fir*e. The differences between the South Asian immigrant community and the rest of England are more stressed and the tension takes on an urgent note. As if there is an ultimatum, the community is aware of its marginalization and their politicians’ impatience with their differences. The Pasha family, at the center of this story, represents all their fears. Their father was a terrorist and their brother is in Syria. However, Shamsie mirrors the Greek tragedy *Antigone* for its literary agency, its relatability and uses this family as a takeoff point. There is a view of this family that the authorities have and there are the intimate workings of the Pasha household and their inner trauma that Shamsie reveals as recognizable. Unlike Changez, they do not have a respectful education, job, or family to fall back on. They have a much bigger problem

than being embarrassed about their family's decreasing, yet stable financial status. They have inherited a fundamentalist father and the questions and psychological mess that comes with such a loss. Particularly for a young man like Parvaiz, inheriting the suspicion of everyone from neighbors to authorities based on the fact of his family makes his already difficult adolescence entangled in a specific way his sisters cannot even understand. The novel thoroughly demonstrates the ways in which certain characters successfully "embody" whiteness as their rite of passage into mainstream society and how others are isolated based on suspicion stemming from their appearances.

The following passages, related to Karamat Lone and Isma's relationship with his son, give insight into Lone's journey in upward mobility and Isma's struggle to survive in a society that views her as the enemy. Furthermore, it reveals how these different patterns and levels of success separate people belonging to the same community and ethnic group. When Eammon receives news that his father, Karamat Lone, has been made Home Secretary, he expresses anxiety over an unpleasant incident from the past.

"*All the old muck*. He meant the picture of Karamat Lone entering a mosque that had been in the news for its 'hate preacher.' LONE WOLF'S PACK REVEALED, the headlines screamed when a tabloid got hold of it, near the end of his term as an MP. The Lone Wolf's response had been to point out that the picture was several years old, he had been there only for his uncle's funeral prayers and would otherwise never enter a gender-segregated space. This was followed by pictures of him and his wife walking hand in hand into a church. His Muslim-majority constituency voted him out in the elections that took place just a few weeks later, but he was quickly back in Parliament via a by-election, in a safe seat with a largely white constituency, and

> the tabloids that had attacked him now championed him as a LONE CRUSADER taking on the backwardness of British Muslims." (36).

While this remains a remarkable memory in the mind of the British Muslim community, to Eammon and his family it is an inconvenient incident. To them, the Muslim community that elected Lone is the perpetrator and the cause for insignificant, petty, "old muck." Without having any connections to that community, Eammon is unable to view the issue from any other perspective than his own. Previously a "lone wolf," a man with unknown allegiances, Karamat Lone's predatory nature becomes associated with a whole group of people when he enters the mosque, a suspicious pack of others. Rather than questioning the racist tones of such headlines, he immediately becomes defensive and separates himself from the Muslim community, remarking on "problematic" details along the way. To counter the "absurd" ways of the Muslim place of worship, Lone makes another public appearance, "walking hand in hand into a church" with his white wife. The image of an interracial couple affectionately entering a church as a performance of a perfect, white, Protestant marriage, one that is rooted in western morals and religious hegemony, and not the intruding, backwards traditions of an isolated community is a calculated move. Lone strategizes his ascent to the mainstream white constituency just as elections are being held again. Being voted out by his Muslim supporters and rescued by his white ones is a clear shift of "allegiances." Having cleverly used his campaign as a platform for the lower-class, immigrant voice to make his way into the political world, he discards them when it is necessary to his upward political mobility. He is now situated with his new supporters in a "safe seat" that secures the longevity of his career rather than complicating it with issues of a controversial and difficult community. His title changes from Lone Wolf to "Lone Crusader," an imperialist-minded man of ambition. Karamat Lone as the "Lone Crusader" is a prop for the

conservative and liberal media to interchangeably and simultaneously use as a symbol of successful assimilation, defying regressive gender norms and religious ideals, a brave warrior set apart from "his people" and aligned with the interests of the state. He is the successfully assimilated man of color now on a crusade for the state in its efforts to either assimilate or isolate the rest of his kind.

It is equally important to explore possible motivations behind Karamat Lone's decisions, without endorsing them, as it is to observe Parvaiz's early life to understand how both these characters reached such different extremes. As Dyer suggests, "those who occupy positions of cultural hegemony blithely carry on as if what they say is neutral and unsituated - human not raced …. There is something especially white in this non-located and disembodied position of knowledge" (Dyer 4). Lone's every action is "raced;" his every decision is associated with character, the very biological nature of his race, as if he and the monotonous mass of brown faces, Muslim and not, are genetically engineered to have certain responses. Entering a mosque, a free place of worship, is judged to be motivated by malicious intentions rather than a simple attendance of a funeral. Not only will he come under scrutiny, but so will the "gender-segregated space" of his mosque and the other attendants. Meanwhile his obviously strategized move to enter a church hand-in-hand with his white wife goes on to not only be free of minute criticisms, but actually praised. The "cultural hegemony" of a white couple and a church, a Christian place of worship, makes this action seem not like a political move, but "neutral and unsituated" in the problematic ideals of white race, a natural and "human" habit. The "disembodied position of knowledge" of mainstream media outlets and the white constituency voting him into parliament decides which of Lone's movements are rooted in "backwards" ideology and which are acceptable. If he aligns himself with white cultural and religious symbols, "non-located" in the

color of his skin, he can accomplish his goals with less scrutiny. While there is room for empathy, it is also important to acknowledge the personal animosity he exhibits in multiple passages: "'She's going to look for justice in *Pakistan*?' That final word spoken with all the disgust of a child of migrants who understands how much his parents gave up … because the nation to which they first belonged had proven itself inadequate to the task of allowing them to live with dignity" (227). Clearly Lone does hold some grudge against his former constituency, a predominantly South Asian group of Muslims. The continuous attachment they may have to the homeland or their practice of that homeland's religion, in this case Islam, makes Lone resent them as he sees both as failures. His pursuit for political upward mobility is not solely an attempt to survive the political arena, but it is also based on personal "disgust" and resentment for the traditions he sees his community attach itself to and ones he tries to escape. It is difficult to imagine Lone revealing sentiments as weak and as uncalculated as regret and empathy. He chooses a pack that is "disembodied" from the racial body. John Alba Cutler aptly describes adaptation as "action and reaction, desire and survival" (Cutler 13). Lone and the other characters are involved in such a complicated process because of their desire to enter the mainstream and because of the necessity of existing in that safe space after 9/11. Adaptation is not only a beneficial decision, but one that is necessary to survival.

After Isma tells Eammon about her father's ventures "against oppression" as a jihadi and the fear of state retribution her family felt while searching for him, he makes "a face of distaste, clearly offended in a way that told her he saw the state as a part of himself, something that had never been possible for anyone in her family." (51). It is unclear if Eammon's "face of distaste" is the result of feeling disappointed in the system he believes in or disgusted with the opposition to this trust that Isma and her family represent. What is clear is that he sees "a part of himself"

being corrupted either by its own actions or the actions of Isma's family. The impossibility of Isma or her family feeling the same comfort that comes from believing you are contributing to the state and it is in return a protector of you as a citizen is an extension of the very insecurity Muslim communities in the West have felt after 9/11. Listed as suspect, they are pushed out of the state and it mobilizes through policing and surveilling them, isolated not by their own "backward" ways, but by the displeased state itself. Furthermore, Eammon's confidence and sense of security comes from his socioeconomic and political inheritance protecting him from the suspicion that other communities are treated with. He is a part of the political authority that dictates the livelihood of Isma's family, that decides what happens to her father and whether or not they are made aware of that decision. Rumors such as "the British government would withdraw all the benefits of the welfare state … from any family it suspected of siding with the terrorists" constitute the legitimate fear in which Isma and her family live and those consequences are created and enforced by the state that Eammon believes is serving the public (51). Furthermore, Eammon fails to imagine Isma's childhood, "the attempt was defeated by his simple inability to know how such a man as Adil Pasha could have existed in Britain to begin with" (60). He is unable to comprehend the fanaticism and aggression of Adil Pasha as the fanaticism and aggression of a British man because he has a different vision of Britain, the spirit of a developed civilization in which errors such as brown fanatics do not exist. Eamon's idea of a British citizen deludes his sense of empathy. He cannot "know … such a man as Adil Pasha" because Pasha is left out of discussions on British social issues and reassigned to foreign places despite being born in Britain, raised in Britain, and turned fanatic in Britain.

The next two passages demonstrate the typical response and rhetoric of authorities in the face of what they see as resistance to assimilation and to more extreme situations. Karamat

Lone's speech at a "predominantly Muslim school" is a notable moment because it depicts his Orientalist thinking and relationship with the Muslim community quite clearly:

> 'There is nothing this country won't allow you to achieve - Olympic medals, captaincy of the cricket team, pop stardom, reality TV crowns. And if none of that works out, you can settle for being home secretary. You are, we are, British. Britain accepts this. So do most of you. But for those of you who are in some doubt about it, let me say this: Don't set yourself apart in the way you dress, the way you think, the outdated codes of behavior you cling to, the ideologies to which you attach your loyalties. Because if you do, you will be treated differently - not because of racism, though that does still exist, but because you insist on your difference from everyone else in this multiethnic, multireligious, multitudinous United Kingdom of ours. And look at all you miss out on because of it.' (89-90)

This is an opportunity for him to promote conforming to ideals, appearances, and careers that Britain has approved of. Britain will "allow" the existence of normal pursuits of glory and fame; however, it will not "allow" people who "set themselves apart" from the mainstream simply by following their values. There is no decorum of celebrating multiculturalism; rather he is clear that this is a warning, almost a threat to those considering anything but approved Britishness. Lone plays on the perpetual pressure of how "one is identified and how one identifies" (Roman). He believes that the treatment of the Muslim community is the fault of their own childish attachment to "outdated" traditions; the opportunities they "miss out on" are punishment for their own decisions and not the judgement of ruling political forces to "identify" them as threats. Lone fails to understand that he too is promoting an ethnic and religious ideology, one that is rooted in western ideals; however, the dominance of this discourse allows it to be seen as a universal message, a tried and true method to success. He mirrors the condescending language of someone

who is completely confident in his choices and believes all others to be unenlightened, inferior, and fruitless attempts at individuality that put the individual himself at fault for his own mistreatment and misfortune. Being recognized as equal participants in national progress requires assimilation. Erasing differences rather than celebrating them is the path to success and Karamat Lone is an example of what this younger generation can achieve by conforming to western doctrines. Dyer explains this dichotomy of individualism and conforming as a privilege: “At the level of social mores, the right not to conform, to be different and get away with it, is the right of the most privileged groups in society” (Dyer 12). Therefore, practicing a different religion from the dominant one, wearing clothes that do not look like the ones in popular magazines, or speaking a language that does not sound familiar are all associated with the absurd mannerisms of the minority race that need to be replaced with default, generic symmetry. These students cannot afford to be “different” and to practice nonconformity.

In Roman’s words, “Ethnic upward mobility narratives often depict some form of this moment, dramatizing how the symbolic wages that come from racial and ethnic minorities’ elevated class identity are enticing in that they enable cognitive and social distancing from others who remain marginalized. But this tends to be represented as deep naivete and threatening to community solidarity” (Roman). Unlike the family sitcoms Roman is focusing on, the owner of an “elevated class identity” in this novel has no such teachable moments. There is no satisfying end to Lone’s 20-minute comical escapades with “symbolic wages” as he naively distances himself from the “others who remain marginalized.” Rather he intentionally and continuously revels in this distance. He seeks to maintain it because his political and social upward mobility does not last for a “moment,” nor is it innocently gained from hard work. His mobility is dependent on rejecting “community solidarity” as a backwards notion he no longer serves.

In Omi and Winant's words: "To identify an individual or group racially is to locate them within a socially and historically demarcated set of demographic and cultural boundaries, state activities, 'life-chances,' and tropes of identity/ difference/ (in)equality" (109). Karamat Lone is participating in racial formation by confirming the demographic boundaries and 'life-chances' of these students. Because they "insist on [their] difference," they will limit their opportunities for success and remain in the low economic status their immigrant family started their lives in. Lone blatantly identifies this group with the visual markers of their race, their "dress," their secret "codes of behavior," and assigns them an estimated rate of success, a diagnosis that cannot be argued. If this "behavior" is not altered, the future is dire for them and there is no "inequality" to blame. He, as a lawmaker, takes no responsibility for these 'life-chances.' In addition, Lone is perpetuating his image of model minority and advocating others inhabit it; he has pulled himself up by the bootstraps, "alluding to potent US myths of self-making and possessive individualism that link success to individual discipline and hard work" (Cutler 12). In the context of Britain, similar ideals apply. Rather than acknowledge the systemic inequalities that lead to disparities, he continues to argue that the path to success lies in "individual discipline and hard work" alone.

Despite his son's revelation that he is in love with Aneeka and wants to help her brother come home, Karamat Lone's perspective remains the same. He sees the relationship as an attempt to use his powers to free a terrorist and seems to be motivated by his son's irreverence; wanting to harden him to the truth as he perceives it, he becomes more volatile in his decisions. However, Aneeka is too late in her attempts and Parvaiz is killed outside the British embassy in Istanbul by an unknown man. In a newspaper article featuring a statement from Isma about her brother's murder after spending months working for the ISIS media cell, Lone's idea to contain threats like Parvaiz is revealed: "Sources in the Home Office say the Immigration Bill due to go

before Parliament in the next session will introduce a clause to make it possible to strip any British passport holders of their citizenship in cases where they have acted against the vital interests of the UK." (205-06). In order to punish the criminal and to discharge British authorities and society of all responsibility, Lone seeks to strip a future Parvaiz of citizenship. Stateless, Parvaiz is no longer the responsibility of his homeland where he first became disillusioned and misled into this fundamentalism. Just as his family was abandoned in childhood, Parvaiz is literally banished once again and his family is left to make amends and prove their loyalties through media statements; he is a burden that even his sister must reject for her own survival. As Shah explains, "State power and sovereignty came into being over the regulation of human mobility. States simultaneously regulated individual identity through passports, permits, and visas, and channeled human mobility through defined gateways, transportation systems, and territorial boundaries" (Shah 30). One of colonialism's many legacies is the creation of borders and legal forms of identity like passports. Lone seeks to control Parvaiz's mobility even in death, prohibiting the entrance of his corpse into the nation as if even in death he presents some threat. He is equally guilty of promoting fundamentalism as Parvaiz or Changez are; Lone is caught in a political fundamentalism while Parvaiz is attaching himself to a religious one in some attempt for personal autonomy.

Furthermore, "US immigration historians have explained how a nationalizing agenda proliferated exclusionary racialization and divided people into either citizens or aliens" (Shah 30). I would like to argue that after 9/11 "exclusionary racialization" becomes a nationalist "agenda" and regulated forms of "individual identity" like passports no longer guarantee everlasting protection of rights, but become limited to intimidate certain groups into silent cooperation. Parvaiz is now an alien, a mysterious, other-worldly danger eliminated. Lone's

proposed reversal conveys a greater reminder that the West's "power and sovereignty" lies in its ability to accept and reject even its own citizens, to change the law whenever it pleases.

Parvaiz's life is not perceived as an alarming fact of British society, a result of the complicated environment structured by policies and perceptions of Muslim communities. Rather than learning why he chose to go to Syria, the authorities ignore and eliminate the problem as non-British, ills of an immigrant community they need not answer. His actions do not inform psychology or cause self-reflection. This distinction is all the more tragic when recalling that Parvaiz's sister Isma is building an academic career through her research of post-9/11 policing of Muslims; her "textuality offers something that oral communication does not: an opportunity to challenge the dominant public discourse through sustained research and argumentation" (Chambers 215). However, Isma's "challenge" is unsustainable and the same policies she opposes are used against her brother. As Said explains in his book, "As a system of thought about the Orient, it always rose from the specifically human detail to the general transhuman one; an observation about a tenth-century Arab poet multiplied itself into a policy towards (and about) the Oriental mentality in Egypt, Iraq, or Arabia" (Said). Similarly, in a position of significant power, Lone can apply observations on a twenty-first century Arab terrorist to policies affecting young Muslims born and raised in Britain. The same psychology used to explain the "mentality" of a global criminal organization can be applied to young adults living across the world. Humanity is reserved for the white race, which as Dyer explains, is not associated with cruelty or crime. Britons want to disown Parvaiz and racializing him, associating his decisions with some innate fanaticism present in the brown body, is simple because he is not seen as the human norm.

The following passages involve Parvaiz's childhood and the possible motivations behind his decision. They discuss what makes assimilation problematic for the families of Muslim convicts after 9/11 and by extension for those simply suspected of having malicious intentions. Parvaiz's childhood is marked by the trauma and constant reminder of his father:

> "He'd grown up knowing that his father was a shameful secret, one that must be kept from the world outside or else posters would appear around Preston Road with the line DO YOU KNOW WHO YOUR NEIGHBORS ARE? and rocks would be thrown through windows and he and his sisters wouldn't receive invitations to the homes of their classmates and no girl would ever say yes to him" (128).

Parvaiz and his family are punished for the actions of their absent father. He has a list of consequences memorized that personify when he asks about his father while living under the surveillance of suspicious government agencies. The aggressive hiding of his father's actions, the criminalization of his questions, the lack of kindness and patience towards Parvaiz consistently make him feel isolated and fearful of his neighbors' questioning eyes and the risk of he and his sisters losing a normal childhood and future. He is not seen as a responsibility, rather he and his sisters are seen as wayward children and their backwards troubles as menacing. Parvaiz is not allowed to go through natural processes of grief and acceptance but is shunned for inquiry and interest. He is taught rehearsed statements just in case an agent approaches him. His life is already decided for when he is cast into suspicion, threatened by his family's past and isolated in it. This passage serves as insight into the fear and rejection that leads to Parvaiz searching for a purpose outside his community and country and without his family. Yet he is expected to assimilate towards some definitive, normal lifestyle under such circumstances.

Parvaiz eventually meets Farooq, a fellow young Muslim Briton whose main point of persuasion is giving Parvaiz everything that he has been lacking, answers about his family's history, meaning and purpose, and control over a life constructed by the decisions of the government and his elder family members. As he begins to consider the alternatives, Farooq vocalizes the questions Parvaiz is taught to be ashamed of: 'Who are you going to believe about what it's really like? The same people who said Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, the ones who tortured your father in the name of freedom, or me?' (147-48). Considering his childhood, Parvaiz is more open to someone promising him the knowledge he should have received at home. Farooq makes clear that Parvaiz must choose his loyalties, either he believes the entities responsible for his personal suffering and the transhuman atrocity of war or he believes his friend. There is no scenario in which he can love his father without hating the country he lives in. Farooq exaggerates his sense of hatred to include more than his anger at losing his father and to a large enough notion where he might believe he needs to arm himself against the state. He is then at the mercy of whoever promises some small confirmation of his pain and shows kindness and is conveniently forgotten by the state when his corpse returns, filed away as an unavoidable situation, a lost cause predetermined to follow the road his father chose when in fact, a fearful childhood and neglecting motherland have led to this.

Claire Chambers describes Parvaiz as an "unusual jihadist," as separate from the "cliched portraits of terrorists as young, death-obsessed men" (Chambers 207). She attributes his turn to terrorism to the constant discrimination and suspicion he faces, "feelings of camaraderie with his new friend Farooq … sense of emasculation around his sisters … search for a connection with the father that he never knew" (207). I would like to add that a deep sense of disempowerment and the state's apathy towards himself and his future also contributes to Parvaiz's decision.

After Parvaiz's death is announced, his family and neighbors become regulars in the news cycle; Shamsie includes several sections of the media's reaction. These passages reflect the typical response of mosques and family members of Muslim criminals after a tragedy, a display of patriotism to ward off further hatred. Parvaiz's older sister Isma releases a statement: 'My sister and I were shattered and horrified last year when we heard that our brother, Parvaiz, had gone to join people we regard as the enemies of both Britain and Islam. We informed Counter Terrorism Command immediately …. My sister and I have no plans to travel to Pakistan for the funeral.' (204). Isma's perfect speech expresses that they are both 'shattered' by their personal loss and 'horrified' as if they are distant, disassociated neighbors watching in disbelief. Burdened with absolving herself, her sister, and her community of his sins, she must abandon her dead brother to ensure the survival of her living sister. Isma is participating in a common post-9/11 practice of performing "good citizenship" (Maira). In Isma's case, she has to prove her loyalty as a British citizen despite "democratic ideals" being withheld from her and the threat of her citizenship being revoked should she be suspected of disloyalty (Maira). Before her brother's death, she "felt the slight tremor of something on the cusp of waking," a physical sensation of anger surfacing to her tongue to speak and to her hands to write (40). Now she must reject her work and beliefs and publicly praise the nation that fails to serve her.

Referring to the 1985 Air India bombings and the Canadian government's apology to the victims' families, Chandrima Chakraborty writes "The model immigrant, like model mourner, successfully suppresses his or her racial grief and grievances against the state, is compliant, displays approved public behavior, and supports the policies of the state" (11). Isma, as a "model mourner" complies with accepted "public behavior." She will definitely not display "anger or frustration" as that is her punishment for being a daughter and older sister to jihadis she could

not protect. She must politely absolve the government she otherwise criticizes. Isma will prove herself a model citizen again, one that trusts the "Counter Terrorism Command" and other protective agencies. She will silently accept the consequences of her family's actions and endorse whatever policies Lone proposes. Isma's sister, Aneeka, has a very different response.

Shamsie's use of newspaper clips and social media feeds throughout the final two sections of the novel creates an almost cinematic show out of the plot, structured pauses to reveal a world in manic obsession with the destiny of the Pasha family. This is one such example

#WOLFPACK

Just started trending

#PERVYPASHA

Just started trending

#DONTSULLYYOURSOIL

Just started trending

#GOBACKWHEREYOUCAMEFROM

Just started trending (194)

Both novels discuss how news is consumed, a fast-spreading wave of compact knowledge. In *Home Fire*, news is presented as convenient, catchy phrases that get passed around faster than ever before, disregarding the humiliation it causes the Pasha family and their loved ones. Everyone participates in creating and spreading news. In the span of Parvaiz's death, Karamat Lone goes from being the Lone Wolf, unsupported, disliked, to being the leader of his own personal cheer squad, the "Wolfpack." Parvaiz's misspelled name, "Pervys", becomes a humiliating hashtag; his corpse and Lone's comments about it become a patriotic declaration to keep British soil pure; and a general racial slur is rehashed to exclaim dislike for "foreigners,"

British citizens perceived as so far-removed from western ideals that they are loudly told to leave by strangers typing on an electronic keyboard.

In the final days of *Home Fire*'s plot, Aneeka sets up her brother's casket in public with his face visible as she howls next to his corpse. In "Remembering Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece*," Julia Bryan-Wilson discusses the significance of Ono's performance in terms of memory. I want to extend her point to Aneeka's vigil: "Ono offers her body in dialogue with these photos, which were deployed as visible proof of the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In these stilled photos, history becomes an unrepeatable instance that is documented and frozen in time" (Bryan-Wilson 111). Aneeka too is offering her brother's body and her own to document the destruction and chaos that her brother's exile has brought. Her "howl" that Shamsie describes as "deeper than a girl … that came out of the earth and through her and into the office of the home secretary" is the "unrepeatable instance" that will become history (236). Her own animalistic voice and the earth's participation give a deeply fearful nature to this act, an almost divine reproach against the offices that banish human bodies. Bryan-Wilson also argues that "Ono clearly viewed this work as protest, however unconventional, for it operated on a level so removed from normal discourses of protest that no one could constrain it" (Bryan-Wilson 116). Aneeka's vigil is also an "unconventional" protest and its limitlessness is what makes it so antagonizing to Karamat Lone. He has banished Parvaiz, but with the presence of social media, Aneeka's grief gains new accessibility and power that he cannot eliminate. The immortality of her protesting body is imprinting in the nation's psyche and memory the horror of her loss, not a random and undocumented loss of radical people, but of Britons. The distinctive silence of the immigrant culture that seems to be the lot and inheritance of descendants, that is reflected in Isma's speech, is broken by this "performance."

The Reluctant Fundamentalist

Changez's central motivation is economic upward mobility and his idea of self stems from wealth and social status. As soon as he feels secure in the same strata as his colleagues, the equal sum of acceptance and privilege minus a few minor, harmless racial remarks, 9/11 occurs and he is forced to face the illusion of acceptance. The following passages deal with Changez's navigation of his opportunities and the very subtle ways in which he accomplishes ascendance on the social ladder. Changez recalls his interview with his boss Jim for a competitive position at Underwood Samson and discusses his growing impatience with his family's declining socioeconomic status. While he allocates his energy to multiple work study jobs and hiding the fact of his financial need from his wealthy peers, Jim has a different response to this information: "I see the power of that system, pragmatic and effective, like so much else in America …. But fortunately, where I saw shame, he saw opportunity." (4, 11). Further along in the novel, Changez uses certain parts of his immigrant background to his advantage, something he has learned from Jim since this very moment during their interview. Jim teaches Changez how to monopolize on the "shame" of his life, how to use his disadvantaged financial background (in comparison to the other Princeton students) and the discipline and work ethic he has garnered because of it as selling points at his company. Jim sees drive and growth in the very background Changez is reluctant to share. Reflecting on Jim's impressions of him, Changez realizes that he too was a recruitment of a "pragmatic and effective" system meant to select certain employees seen as assets and weed out possible bad investments.

In her essay "Possessed by Whiteness," Delphine Munos views this celebration of "Changez's 'difference'" as "the sense of social shame that he [Jim] shares with his protege and that fuels the race-free, all-American 'rags to riches' standard narrative into which he cast his

own life" (Munos 401). Changez is also "casting his life" into the sacrificial flame of the American Dream, offering his "social shame" to the altar of dreams that will transform him into a "race-free, all-American" boy. The faith that he has in his professional success as some redeemer is childish; Changez believes his upward mobility will incorporate him into the locus of color-free Americanness. Successfully removing himself from race involves removing associated frugality. Dyer might explain Changez's desire for this assimilation into white success as such: "The dynamism of white instability, especially in its claims to universality, is also what entices those outside to seek to cross its borders and those inside to aspire ever upwards within it" (Dyer 40). This "instability" is dynamic because of its many paradoxes: "at once a sort of race and the human race, an individual and a universal subject" (Dyer 39). Rather than being bound to the "properties" of his race, Changez wants to surpass them and "cross" into the universality of this white race. He wants to be like his white coworkers, "unmarked" and unproblematic (Dyer). Without the erasure and replacement of his old identity, his existence in this sphere is illegitimate. Having crossed the borders of whiteness, he must "aspire ever upwards within it." Only then can he make up for the financial need and low social bearing that comes with his immigrant existence. When he is rid of these markers, he can be both an ambiguous race (a multicultural yet non-threatening, hard-working American) and the spirit of the "human race," a man of will and direction at the peak of human success, the capitalist corporation.

Changez is entirely aware of the effect his appearance has on others and soon realizes that the right hint of foreignness can actually excel his upward mobility rather than hold him back:

> "I have subsequently wondered why my mannerisms so appealed to my senior colleagues. Perhaps it was my speech: like Pakistan, America is, after all, a former English colony, and it

stands to reason, therefore, that an Anglicized accent may in your country continue to be associated with wealth and power, just as it is mine. Or perhaps it was my ability to function both respectfully and with self-respect in a hierarchical environment …. I was aware of an advantage conferred upon me by my foreignness, and I tried to utilize it as much as I could." (41)

Changez's adoption of an Anglicized accent is valued and approved because it signifies "wealth" and "power" and those attributes are more closely associated with the white majority than with the immigrant community. Thus, Changez's slightly less stereotypical accent and his intonation separates him from other South Asian immigrants; his accent is seen as sophisticated rather than as a caricature of himself. His first interaction with someone can spark curiosity; the ambiguity of his race can be a point of wonder and even admiration rather than disdain and mockery. It automatically makes him appear more intelligent, interesting, and suggests a childhood of both western and "exotic" eastern influences, enough to make him popular among liberal socialites and to allow entry into the "real world" where big influential jobs are waiting. In order to reach that space of influence and to gain material success and access, he is investing in whiteness: "I suspected my Pakistaniness was invisible, cloaked by my suit, by my expense account, and - most of all- by my companions" (71). It is almost as if the constant appearance of his American "companions" will dispel the oddness of his foreignness just by visual satiation. His performance requires the literal investment of money in his bank account and clothing. Furthermore, he interacts "respectfully" in the pecking order, but has enough "self-respect" to not be complacent, adapting the nature associated with his immigrant background to the aggressive environment of Wall Street. The confidence of his speech, will to not settle, and overall mannerisms generate interest, yet they do not threaten his senior colleagues; he strikes a balance of familiarity and mystery, an "advantage" to his success.

When the doorman to Erica's building gives Changez a "coldly disapproving expression," he reveals a very interesting mannerism he has developed: "Naturally I responded with an equally cold and rather imperious tone - carefully calibrated to convey both that I had taken offense and that I found it beneath myself to say so" (49). Although it comes to him "naturally," this impersonal and rude attitude has developed over careful "calibration," suggesting numerous such experiences to which he has learned to respond, an effortless calculation to solve the problem of small, everyday discrimination. Changez has composed his body language and "imperious tone" to silently remind the doorman that despite the preconceived notions he has about men of his color, he belongs outside the building and Changez belongs inside. The doorman's distaste and disapproval of a man like him entering the building has no value or authority in deciding whether he can enter or not. Not only is this a fact of their social conditions, but Changez is above showing offense and reacting to the doorman's quite yet all too familiar expression of discomfort, a state that Changez has reached not after some achievement of inner calm and forgiveness, but from practicing confidence in his new identity. That he finds it beneath himself to deal with a doorman's opinion of him is the outcome of old-fashioned ideas of service workers and a newfound tool of survival, confidence in one's standing, a combination of arrogance and necessity to maintain the image of an ordinary, law-abiding American despite his race working against this appearance of well-being. Changez is upwardly mobile in silence and in action.

The next few passages involve Changez beginning to explore the people he has chosen to be like and the effects of his assimilation after 9/11; his experiences take on a darker tone. During a business trip in the Philippines, Changez encounters a Filipino man glaring through his car at him with contempt. This exchange sticks with him and despite the constant reminders of

intensive work at a high-stakes company, he is distracted by the random appearance of his coworker: “I looked at him - at his fair hair and light eyes and, most of all, his oblivious immersion in the minutiae of our work - and thought, you are so *foreign*. I felt in that moment much closer to the Filipino driver than to him” (67). This is the first time in the novel that Changez remarks on blonde hair and blue eyes as foreign. As Bhabha comments on Fanon’s work: “From that overwhelming disorientation of nausea Fanon makes his answer: the black man wants the objectifying confrontation with otherness” (Bhabha 120). Changez is having this “objectifying confrontation” with the “otherness” of his white coworker. Karamat Lone also participates in such an encounter with those in power and intensifies the already existing otherness of his Muslim community. Changez recognizes the state of oblivion he and his coworkers operate in to complete the complicated task of analyzing details that make up workers’ lives; their fundamentalism is an “immersion" in numbers and requires an act of ignorance of irrelevant minutiae. For Changez’s coworkers, perhaps there is no difference between doing this job in a small American town, New York City, or the Philippines. He senses a recollection of home being in Asia again and some relation to this foreign yet familiar third world country, one that is much closer to him than Manhattan. He is an analyst among many, but the driver manages to silently disturb Changez’s comfort and forces him to notice the absurdity of his sudden ascent in social hierarchy, taunting his self-assurance, waking him from the ignorance required to maintain his American assimilation and confidence in his upward mobility. Racial imagery is composed of indicators and those indicators are typically used to form a dangerous, malicious “Other” that will eventually be isolated. Changez is recognizing the “others” in his environment through the racial imagery of eye and hair color.

Speaking of the post-9/11 New York he returns to, Changez finds that "... America, too, was increasingly giving itself over to a dangerous nostalgia at that time" (114-15). Comparing the nostalgia of the nation with Erica's mental breakdown over the loss of her boyfriend attaches a sense of mourning and sympathy with the US. However, like Erica's nostalgia, America's nostalgia is also capable of devastating consequences. Calling on the idea of an older, stronger US, much like Trump's suggestion of returning to an America that *was* great, politicians and citizens slowly move towards a patriotism rooted in the history of divinely inspired expansionism and displays of military prowess in foreign lands to assert American survival after tragedy. Like the nostalgia of Islamic empires that terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda and ISIS promote to glorify their own "caliphates," the US is possessed by its own longing for a past of global dominance. As Mahmutovic argues, "Hamid's America is not mother America. It is not a matriarchal protector and caregiver, but an object of desire. It is a young traumatised woman with an unhealthy nostalgia and historical amnesia, which are aggravated but not caused by 9/11" (Mahmutovic 10). America is the object of Changez's desire, but its "unhealthy" attachment to the past and constant forgetting are being intensified by the tragedies. Fundamentalisms based on division of people are beginning to take hold and he is pressed to choose a side. His future is no longer lit by the optimism he felt after graduating and he begins to feel the uncertainty of his place in America as it gears its patriotism towards him.

When their relationship develops sexually, Changez personifies Erica's dead boyfriend (Chris) and is left at a crossroads afterwards: "My satiation was understandable to me; my shame was more confusing. Perhaps, by taking on the persona of another, I had diminished myself in my own eyes" (106). His sexual satiation is almost sin-like, a false satisfaction derived from pretense of identity, and his "shame" is the result of sacrificing his identity for a love rooted in

passion for someone else. Hamid carries the "representational foci of his adopted nation into Underwood Samson (US) and Erica (America), that is corporate capitalism and the American nation" (Mahmutovic 10). In addition to this array of professional and "political allegiances" that his "identity seems to necessitate" is Changez's affinity to his homeland and the middle eastern countries under attack (Mahmutovic 10). Setting Erica as the "representational foci" of Changez's adoption of whiteness extends the cause of his repulsion. He is not only losing his identity by pleasing Erica, but also in the exhausting demand of "global civic engagement" (Mahmutovic 10). As Roman says "if upward mobility grants wages, it also imposes a tax. This tax reveals the impossibility of straight-line assimilation into a white mainstream" (Roman). Changez is witnessing the "impossibility" of painless assimilation and the prices he must pay in order to maintain the security of identity he thought he had.

Munos argues that "assimilation discourses can be seen to work along especially melancholic lines in the US, because they perpetuate inclusive narratives of Americanness that are bound to remain unattainable for a large number of minority groups" (399). Such a "melancholy" is consistently present in both novels. As Dyer explains, whiteness is void of racial markings and study. Until we deconstruct its hierarchical position, study it as a race, and acknowledge the illicit relationship it has with western identities, the incorporation of other identities in "Americanness" will not be permitted. How can one be a part of American liberty and individualism when one is the subject of exclusion? Changez suffers from disillusion with the American Dream when he is betrayed by the promises of assimilation. He is caught in the exhausting process of balancing the model minority image and embodying enough whiteness to comfort others. However, I would like to argue that Changez and Karamat Lone are not "possessed by whiteness" so much as they are consciously choosing it. It is not some invisible

force entering them without permission, rather whiteness is an embodiment they are choosing to embrace for the sake of personal success. Unlike Karamat Lone, Changez abandons this venture.

This passage marks one of the points at which Changez decides his identity needs a remake and he starts with a physical change: "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" (130). Changez's beard is a physical reassertion and reminder of what he sees as his identity, an attempt to regain the self-respect he has lost in the diminishing act he performed with Erica. He no longer wants to be the "single-minded" employee obliviously immersed in work and ignorant of the issues affecting the world outside his building. To Changez, the events of 9/11 and after are personal; they are not inconvenient politics to be left outside the office. His obvious association with the nations involved and his coworkers' knowledge of this persuades him that by somehow donning the fearful image of a beard, he can embrace that association rather than deny his empathies. The conflicted condition of being a western citizen or being in the process is manipulated and Changez rejects it by claiming his corporeal identity. He is responding to the exaggerated patriotic expressions of "nostalgia" and countering his coworker's "fair hair and light eyes" with his own physical foreignness, dark skin and thick hair. As Munos argues "the post-9/11 context makes it even clearer that the ethnic part of hyphenated identities must remain skin-deep and definitely not hinder the pursuit of 'true' Americanness" (Munos 401). While his boss Jim tolerates the illogical personal expression at first, he eventually loses patience for this differentiating marker because it cannot be "co-opted and altered … into pre-existing raceless romances of upward mobility" (Munos 401). The recognizable feature is too closely associated with race, a classic feature of Orientalist images of dark-skinned men, unable to be appropriated into ideals of economic success and social progress

because they are seen as foundationally oppositional to the free-mined, linearly progressive superpower. Changez is the “tolerated neighbor” (Seval). He is a part of his coworkers’ world and a contributor to his firm, a part of New York. He becomes the “untolerated neighbor” once he decides to tear at the facade with his defiant beard (Seval). The unspoken possibility of his silly solidarities preventing promotions is something both he and Jim are aware of. By revealing Changez’s psyche with honesty, the reader’s own paranoia and habit of judging the Other’s body is acknowledged.

Increasingly Changez associates the company with an army of fundamentalists, an image of “clean-shaven,” twenty something-year olds with tunnel vision in matters of success and prosperity, who can only see through the single-mined drives and principles of the company, much like the fundamentalists surfacing in Changez’s home. This image does not oppose as much as it complements the popular image of bearded men with rifles and turbans; Changez sees both as extreme oppositions to who he is. While his coworkers certainly would not recognize their company as a divisive operation based on the fundamentals of financial value and would not identify themselves as members of a uniformed army trained to serve that purpose, Changez does. While they believe themselves to be a part of a free, individualistic society and economy and view Changez’s beard as an absurd attachment to old-fashioned ideals, he sees their faces and clothing as allegiance to the ideals of a company he no longer wants to be a part of. This recognition and the accompanying desire to separate himself from these workers are rooted in the post-9/11 retaliation that the Middle East faces. He does not find the “common white [American] identity” being advertised to promote the newest “imperial project” appealing (Dyer 19).

He cannot verbally express that he is “deeply angry” because his anger is no longer understood as a normal human emotion, but is criminal and invalid, a “natural” part of who he is

as a dark-skinned Muslim. On the other hand, Isma is unable to express this anger as a "model mourner" because her brother dies escaping the fundamentalism he chooses rather than dying from normal causes. A part of this disparity is the result of their vastly different socioeconomic positions. Changez is one of the most valued employees at his firm and so his behavior is tolerated, and he is not immediately fired. Meanwhile, Isma is facing the law, which two of her family members have broken on a catastrophic scale. Her life and anger is visible to the public while Changez only upsets a couple of people at work. While Changez's coworkers sympathize with him, very few find the same humanity in Isma despite her innocence. She has no defense to legitimize her anger and the free expression of it because the crimes of her family are mounted against her as well.

In the book *Writing Islam from a South Asian Muslim Perspective*, Madeline Clements discusses the difference between the terms affiliation and affinity and how those processes are realized in the context of South Asian Muslims. Affiliation is described as "a 'turn' from a lost or outmoded natural familial 'filiation' to a critically created and 'compensatory' cultural and societal system of 'affiliation' … an individual's desire to become an 'agent' or 'bearer' of a particular notion of 'civilisation' or 'culture'" (Clements 3). Affinity is "a more natural, unplanned or even involuntary sense of being drawn to a particular community grouping, geographical area, or imaginative realm" (Clements 3). Changez's original affiliation with the highly educated, socially elite, ambitious young men and women of his Manhattan firm is a voluntary "turn from [his] lost or outmoded natural familial 'filiation'" with his family and Pakistan. Having been so far from home and experiencing the loss of his family's financial well-being and social prosperity elicits in Changez a desire to form new affiliations; he is experiencing what Roman calls a "crisis of affiliation" (Roman 1). Not only does he want to be a

part of this new, “compensatory cultural and societal system,” but he wants to be seen as assimilated enough to be a default representation of this affiliation, a “‘bearer’ of [his new] notion of ‘civilisation.’” Changez repeatedly remarks on the past glory of the subcontinent's civilizations that is reflected in the remaining architecture of Pakistan. He laments the decline of his family’s old money respectability and in a larger sense the forgetting of an older civilization with the emergence of a new, more aggressively globalist one. Thus, he embraces this new formation of civilization by affiliation with his capitalist job and elitist friends. However, his reaction to post-9/11 injustices, the “anger” he feels at the United States’ ability to endanger any nation it wishes, is the result of “a more natural, unplanned, or even involuntary sense of being drawn” to the nations that are geographically proximal to Pakistan, and to the “community grouping” of Muslims. He feels an “unplanned” affinity with people that are related to him in either their culture, their religion, or appearance. The beard becomes a marker of affinity. In analyzing sociological discussions of assimilation, Cutler points out that much of discourse “reaffirms the superiority of white middle-class values and behaviors by opposing them to self-defeating gestures of ‘ethnic solidarity’” (Cutler 17). Changez’s “self-defeating gesture” of solidarity with his fellow Muslims through a politically charged corporeal identity is antithetical to the white values of his upper-class status. There is something “lower-class” about his decision to discard elitist detachment from “ethnic” issues.

During his final business trip, Changez travels to Chile and his client, Juan-Bautista, compares his position to that of an Ottoman janissary which he soon accepts as his reality: “I was a modern-day janissary, a servant of the American empire at a time when it was invading a country with a kinship to mine …. I was predisposed to feel compassion for those, like Juan-Bautista, whose lives the empire thought nothing of overturning for its own gain” (152).

Dyer describes enterprise as an embodiment of whiteness and its effects as "business, wealth creation, the building of nations, the organisation of labour" and "the most important vehicle for the exercise … of this enterprise, is imperialism" (Dyer 31). In the case of Changez, he is embodying whiteness most truly when he is participating in "wealth creation" and "the organisation of labour" during his assignments. He inhabits the will, "a central value in Western culture" that can be traced back to Plato and the ancient spirit of innovation (Dyer). Unlike his ancestors, he proudly enacts his capitalist, imperialist fervor on the companies he is assigned to in formerly colonized parts of the world. Equipped with Juan-Bautista's analogy, Changez now sees himself as an unwilling participant in the American empire that invades and overturns lives of people that share a "kinship" with him. As Changez mentions, his company's driving motto is to "*Focus on the fundamentals,"* a mindset that allows no room for "compassionate pangs ... for soon-to-be redundant workers" (98-99). Changez is recognizing that he too is categorizing people when he blindly removes liabilities, reduces costs, and increases profit, a process that is meant to be impersonal and based in principle, yet is so personally poignant for Changez.

As Cutler remarks, "assimilation reinscribes as fact the fiction of a unitary national culture … and valorizes upward economic mobility in a way that accepts liberal capitalism as a politically neutral index of success and failure," a narrative that Changez buys and participates in (Cutler 6). Changez, believing that he is a part of the unitary American culture, uses his "fundamentals" as fair determining agents of which businesses get to exist and which employees get to work and provide. He does not see fault in this because he is convinced of the detached nature of justice his principles promote, ignoring the politics of US involvement in foreign business and the "interlinking" of race and class that completely delegitimize the processes he practices (Cutler 6). He also accepts whiteness as a socially neutral, humanist index of success

and failure that solicits equal opportunities when adopted, ignoring the racist foundations of such thought. Furthermore, unlike the janissaries, Changez chooses to be a part of "the empire" as a respected employee because it promises the socioeconomic status he lost in Lahore and has the potential to improve his professional prospects. Although there is a ruthlessness to his profession, towards the workers and towards the company's own employees who are masterfully chosen and disposed of based on standardized number game, Changez is a part of it voluntarily and can opt out. Changez's "epiphany" starkly contrasts to his first days at the company when he gazes at the streets below his skyscraper and does not see what he has done and will have to do in order to continue his life in New York. Unlike the janissary allegory presented here, *Home Fire*'s Karamat Lone creates and perpetuates his crusader image, accepting and benefitting from the privilege of this title.

After he leaves New York and settles in his hometown with a comfortable teaching position at a university, Changez reflects on the post-9/11 conflicts between Pakistan and India and the US and the Middle East:

> "A common strand appeared to unite these conflicts, and that was the advancement of a small coterie's concept of American interests in the guise of the fight against terrorism, which was defined to refer only to the organized and politically motivated killing of civilians by killers *not* wearing the uniforms of soldiers" (178).

Having been a part of the capitalist corporation, he understands "American interests" as profit-driven and determined by a small group of people in power but exaggerated as if they are a battle for the very livelihoods of ordinary Americans. Both sides are functioning on "organized and politically motivated" narratives of vengeance that are sold as noble missions to serve the greater good; what differentiates them is whether they wear the "uniforms of [American] soldiers," or

the turbans, beards, and shalwar of the brown man. Like Karamat Lone's political and Parvaiz's religious dilemmas, Changez also finds himself caught in multiple different systems of human division, an economic fundamentalism taught to him by a legal corporation and the religious fundamentalism offering itself as the solution to his "anger" towards US policies. Changez abandons one and never chooses another. Ultimately, all three of these men are dealing and interacting with ideologies based on simple narratives of us versus them: a mainstream white constituency versus the immigrant Muslim community in which Lone was raised, the "enemy" of Islam, the country to which Parvaiz belongs or his fellow Muslims, the efficient corporation versus the "redundant," profitless workers.

The novel ends without a clear explanation; Changez is walking his American visitor back to his hotel and comforts him that he is not dangerous because of his political stances, which include a commitment to nonviolence. As Changez extends his hand to the American, he catches a glimpse of a metal object and the novel ends. As Clements explains, "Hamid's reader is left to draw his own conclusions as to which of the characters is the victim and which is the assassin here … and who exactly must be misled or misread in order for this work of fiction to find foundation" (Clements 74). If this paper assumes that Changez is the assassin, it negates the struggle he expresses of being caught between the fundamentalisms of the US and of terrorist organizations in his home country and makes the assumption that he chooses violence. Thus, I argue that this novel "finds foundation" when the reader accepts Changez's claims of nonviolence, his critical analysis of the global situation, and sympathizes with his journey to contribute to his profession despite the callings of two different extremes. He abandons the career he sees as increasingly fundamentalist and the nation he witnesses becoming violently

defensive while rejecting the fundamentalisms attempting to incorporate him on the basis of his critique of US foreign policies.

Concluding Remarks

Home Fire as a tragedy reveals the failure of western institutions (political and academic) to discuss Muslims with the same empathy afforded to other groups, to expand authority of discourse to those deemed antithetical and repulsive to our definitions of citizen. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* lays out the emotions of a Muslim man openly and challenges the reader to empathize. Both authors work through the pressures of being a model citizen, model daughter and son, model provider and not disappointing certain affinities. They explore colonial legacies like the concept of assimilation, racialization, and legal identities in the globalized postcolonial era. However, they also encourage one to believe that a "multicultural" identity is possible, that people can be both Muslim and contributing members of a globalized society. Sacrifice is not the ultimate end. There are other options for brown Asians than the stereotypical ones of hostile or docile; there are more possibilities than tragic consequences.

Chandrima Chakraborty discusses "a long history of racial grief (dislocation and resettlement, in/visibility of minorities, and the psychic and corporeal effects of racialization)" and argues that "a commitment to multiculturalism means working to produce multiple and contested histories of different marginalized groups that can allow these groups to reflect on and share their repressed histories and personal memories of marginalization" (16). The novels discussed in this paper perform a similar act of reconciliation with "racial grief." Through the subjectivities of their characters, Hamid and Shamsie are able to hold "the psychic and corporeal effects of racialization" accountable. Texts such as this are important, especially in the discipline of humanities, because they widen the scope of memory and history that may otherwise be lost in

the margins; they facilitate an exchange between marginal and mainstream cultures. Shamsie and Hamid are successful in imagining the Other as an individual and not representative of its "people;" nor do they offer "pathological insights" into the mind of "the Muslim" (Clements). Their works are fiction, not social history, and do not accept the burden of completely representing Muslims and South Asian culture. Through fiction, they materialize inaccessible thoughts into tangible books and their electronic and auditory versions across wide ranges of distribution. In publishing and in text they encounter new forms of media, in contrast to popular, anthropological judgements passed on western Muslim communities by Eurocentric discourse.

Perhaps the word assimilation, the age-old condition of acceptance, the demand and its fruitless promise, needs to be abandoned altogether. These works do not cooperate with mainstream ideas of the minority; they demonstrate the failures of western values and its redeeming characteristics. Troublesome minorities complicate perceptions and compete with various models of citizenship. As Edward Said argues, "Orientalism is— and does not simply represent—a considerable dimension of modern political-intellectual culture, and as such has less to do with the Orient than it does with "'our' world." Therefore, the literary study of Muslim South Asian literature should not be reserved for classes on ethnic studies or elective literature courses. Rather than remain nomadic in its categorization, the task of this literature is to hinder Eurocentrism. They do not lack the depth and relatability associated with the "universal" western canon and the characters are not far-removed particulars undeserving of our sympathy. Literature from the western diaspora has something profound to contribute about the West; Muslim American literature is American literature. Postcolonial studies need to expand to the present, to include emerging fundamentalisms and pressures in an age of globalization and that cannot be accomplished without discussing the intersection of race, religion, and class.

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