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The Illusion of the American Dream in the Post 9/11 Era: A neo-Orientalist Reading of Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007)

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Abstract

Keeping in mind the Western discourse after the Twin Towers attack, which leans on forging racist narratives towards the Muslim community, a huge number of non-Western intellectuals have undertaken initiatives to counteract the alleged association of terrorism with Islam. The present paper attempts to explore how Mohsin Hamid's novel, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), provides a vivid narrative of crisis, loss and despair encountered by an oriental immigrant in his pursuit of happiness. Through the lens of neo-Orientalism, the Pakistani writer offers a critique of, and a comment on, the American Dream that evaporates in the shadow of racial profiling which emerges as an outcome of 9/11 event. The latter symbolizes a Western ideology that dehumanizes as much as deprives the immigrant subject from his identity. Through Changez, the protagonist, Hamid engages with the unattainable assimilation of the American Dream for immigrant dreamers.

Keywords: 9/11 event; american dream; immigrant; islam; neo-orientalism.

1. Introduction

It goes without saying that the philosophy upon the American dream transcends both the tangible achievements and the financial status, albeit its inclined assumptions towards reaching the material and the monetary fulfillments through hard work and sacrifice. More precisely, it is built upon ethical principles, namely equality, freedom and justice which overall symbolize America's noble organs in the making of the nation. It must be remembered that the notion of the American dream has its resonant echoes well-voiced in the Declaration of the Independence which dates back to the eighteenth century. According to the founding fathers, what the American dream substantially dictates is that "all men are created equal" and every person has the right to a decent existence wherein basic livings must embrace notions of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" (Johansson, 2010, p.7). To this end, it is to moral values that the philosophy over the American dream crystallizes its foundations, regardless of diversity in all its forms and aspects. What is deceptive, however, is that America: the Promised Land itself proves to be built upon the myth of a utopian dystopia. This

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juxtaposition begs the question: how does the American dream manifest as a gilded substance? To such a fundamental question, the present paper steps in to unravel the illusion of the American dream.

On many occasions, the United States of America warrant failure to keep pace with the fulfillment of the American dream; and further betray the democratic norms vis-à-vis vulnerable people. As such, the American beacon of hopes, dreams and opportunities for the world is fuelled by extreme despair, loss and nightmare. This is because the pursuit of happiness becomes materialized, capitalized and industrialized by ideologies at the expense of humanity. In short, the American dream as an idea holds stability, harmonious virtues and essential decency to the individual and the society, yet its applicability evidences failure in respecting the previously mentioned ideals. There can be no doubt that racial diversity, for example, engenders a kind of pandemonium amongst individuals. In this way, Hope A. Olson is of the opinion that the duality between sameness and difference is a deep-rooted phenomenon which dates back to the Greek epoch. In his article entitled 'Sameness and Difference a Cultural Foundation of Classification' (2001), Olson believes that "something either belongs to category X because it is in some way the same as other things as category X, or it does not belong because it is different. Sameness is the privileged factor in this pair because X defines sameness while difference is defined negatively as not -X" (116). The idea the quote draws upon is an open door to explain the persecution of, and the discrimination against, minorities who do not belong to category X.

If truth be told, however, even if the world were composed of standard species at all levels; people would find reasons for conflict and create a certain difference from the same sameness. Philosophizing this way is the fundamental trajectory this paper follows; it examines the illusion of the American dream in the post 9/11 era. Such claim will serve the core purpose of this study which is to explore how Mohsin Hamid's novel, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), provides a vivid narrative of bitter disappointment and hollowness encountered by Changez: an Oriental immigrant in his pursuit of happiness. Before delving deep into the analysis of the corpus under scrutiny, we prefer to devote some space to reflect upon the context that is relevant to the theoretical background of the paper.

When approaching September 9 attacks, disturbing questions arise: what is the relation, one may wonder, between 9/11 event and the American dream? Why does it align with terrorism? How will the event be narrated? And where should the fundamentalist be located? The answers to these polemical questions have their echoes well-heard in the Middle East, in a world of constant unrests and enormous promises and threats. The aftermaths of post 9/11 are argued to give rise to the proliferation of terrorism, Al-Qaeda in particular, and thus war expansion. With a unipolar entity, the balance is especially not maintained, for it lacks a scale, a threat to compete for supremacy.

One can further add that historical traumatic event triggers what LaCapra calls an "agonistic component" in the context of conflicts. He further explains that "dialogic relations are agonistic and non-authoritarian in that an argument is always subject to a response or counterargument" (LaCapra 709). This falls in perfect line with the post 9/11 context where an intellectual wave of denunciation starts to loom over academia. We are here referring to not only Edward Said's concept of Orientalism but also neo-Orientalism which puts flesh on

the bones of central questions regarding binary oppositions between the West and the non-West spheres. In short, Orientalism supplements neo-Orientalism in the sense that both concepts critique the occident stereotyped representation of the orient. The latter is demarcated as a reaction to post 9/11 Islamophobic misconceptions upon Islam and Muslims. Whatever case, history always proves to be distorted and manipulated by the supreme powers, and therefore displays an aura of narratives that aim at testifying against eclipsed truths as well as revealing buried archives.

2. 9/11 Attacks and the Erosion of America from the Dream's Ideals

Although it is too early to provide a definite conclusion as the twenty-first century marks less than its quarter, one might opine that it represents an expanding field of inquiry in the failure of democracy and the death of the American dream where the spirit of decadence looms on the universal horizon. The too early years of the present century are remarkably being characterized by growing conflicts amongst the people in terms of cultural, social and racial classifications; evoking an urgent interest in Orientalism and the equivocal way it manifests itself in literary works and criticism. What makes the very beginning of the century dramatically complicated is the 9/11 event and its global aftermaths. The latter resonates broken echoes of human constant sufferings in the world in general, and the Middle East in particular. The trauma of 9/11 attacks proves one of the most conspicuous phenomena in research sphere; it brings controversial debates to the attention of international critics, scholars and researchers. Many research projects have contributed to the traumatic outcomes of the event from both the Western and the non-Western perspectives. As a global scare hit humanity, a new large and diverse approach to the writing of vulnerability emerges, that is the narrative of crisis; bringing together innovative readings, artistic pleadings and aesthetic feedings. Thus, the first quarter of the twenty first-century can be particularly attributed to the way literary genre is produced and received as an ensemble of political conflicts par-excellence, and its capacity of prescribing their manifold effects on both the psyche and the history.

Despite being eclipsed, the racist experience of oriental immigrants with the illusion of the American dream in post 9/11 era has been projected in literature by non-Western writers. They aesthetically forge a counter narrative that aims to respond to the Western stereotypes, to resist historical silencing and to correct the fixed discriminatory images vis-à-vis the Orient. Through bemoaning the decadent America, they champion the fictionality of literature which adds meaning to reality, evokes both emotional and cognitive faculties, and helps restore moral values amidst the broken capitalized world it becomes. Thus, literature symbolizes a vehicle of bearing witness to a global experience of loss, crisis and trauma wherein the American Dream finds no place. As a result, disturbing questions begin to resonate across the myth of “the beacon of hope” towards Muslim/Arab immigrants.

Furthermore, the hope of building an egalitarian nation: the New Jerusalem, that is free from all sorts of violence and oppression, proved corrupted and betrayed due to the white supremacy. In fact, 9/11 event forges a delicate narrative of dehumanization; cultivating the binary opposition between the Orient and the Occident sphere. What is more threatening is that a Western narrative of terrorism emerges towards the Arab/Muslim community. The latter decenters as much as downgrades the oriental subject from human to sub-human

representation. In this fashion, a myriad of distorted images circulate at odds with Muslim immigrants who were associated with terrorism. These distorted images vouch for the idea that "Islam has become a center of fear (i.e., Islamophobia). Muslims have been debunked and portrayed in much of Western scholarship as the exotic other, the enemy imagined or real, and the despotic, antidemocratic, and terroristic" (El-Aswad & El-Sayed, 2013, p. 41). As a result, discourse on Orientalism received great attentions in research. A potent instrument to achieve political, historical, economic and cultural interests regardless of the democratic ideals which made America but an ephemeral dream.

3. The Injection of neo-Orientalism in post 9/11 Literature

It is, by and large, challenging to conceptualize Orientalism because it has inconsistent definitions that touch upon interdisciplinary approaches. Furthermore, research on orientalism remains opaque with a plethora of assumptions, especially at the cultural level which never ceases to bring versatile questions on identity, race and religion to the fore, to name but a few key words. Actually, the peculiarity of orientalism lies in the fact that it embraces not only biased but also opposing views between the West and the non-West blocs. This binary opposition makes the demarcation of sorting out a proper definition more equivocal than expected. Albeit its versatile nature, one might still need to sharpen an overview on the elusiveness of orientalism. Edward Said, an intellectual who engages with the vexing relationship between the dualistic nature of the Orient and the Occident, offers a rounded definition of the term that encompasses historical, philosophical, cultural and political dimensions. In his book *Orientalism* (1978), he claims that is:

A style of thought based upon on ontological and epistemological distinction made between the Orient and (most of the time) the Occident. Thus a very large mass of writers, among whom are poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, 'mind', destiny, and so on (pp. 2-3).

What Said draws upon is the imaginative idea that constructs as much as deconstructs the binary opposition between the East and the West –themselves indissociable- which transcends trans-historical projection. According to him, the world is ideologically divided into two distinct categories of identification: the Orient and the Occident. Furthermore, what disturbs Said seems to be the unconscious assimilation of a significant number of intellectuals towards this elusive "style of thought" which revolves around accepting the stereotypical images that are prejudicially imposed on them. While the Orient is viewed uncivilized, non-advanced and mad, the Occident symbolizes the source that dispenses civilization and development to the rest of the world. What is more threatening is actually not the imagined division per se, but rather the representation of the Orient by Occidental intellectuals, namely writers. Knowledge about the different 'Other' is ideologically produced by the Self in that the former appears subordinate to the latter. In other words, the portrayal of the non-West by the West embraces an inflammatory discourse that is filled with pejoratives and prejudices.

One might ponder the question of what would make the people constructed as just people? The world would function better if the ethics of knowledge production involves the equal recognition of diversity. That is how and why the Muslim community appears subject to

oppression –a controversial debate which we should heed with caution notwithstanding. In the introduction to her pertinent book *Out of the Blue: September 11 and the Novel* (2009), Kristiaan Versluys refers to many scholars and critics who show a deep interest in scrutinizing the haziness of understanding 9/11 attacks as a debatable narrative in terms of analysis; yet, it is to Dori Laub’s definition that attracts her attention. She points out, “September 11 was an encounter with something that makes no sense, an event that fits in nowhere” (p. 2). Such issue explains the transnationality and universality of the overwhelming event as its impact travels everywhere and leaves an undesirable stamp on both the psyche and the history. Apart from the local damage, the impact of 9/11 attacks extends America’s frontiers and expands its geopolitical dimensions; breaking out a universal “war on terror” campaign. At the global scale, thus, the fear of terrorism starts to inflict the people’s mind; engendering internal and external chaos across the people.

The counterpoint to the Western discourse of 9/11, which leans on racist narrative towards Muslims and Arabs, follows shortly after Bush’s campaign of global war on terror. A number of intellectuals have undertaken initiatives to counteract the alleged association of terrorism with Islam. Through literature, being the core medium through which impartial reality is unfold, targeted writers reflect cogently upon the discriminatory images that have been standardized as commonsensical assumptions by the West. They offer a critique of, and a comment on, the sufferings vulnerable people endure so to bring justice to trial and to release racial stereotypes from the Western prison.

If truth be told, however, not all Western writers have the intentions to dye their literary works with clichés against Muslim and Arab communities[†]. We are especially not generalizing but rather correcting the myopic image that has been blurred by the West in an intellectual manner through critically reading literature. Hence, 9/11 attacks revive a neo-orientalist discourse by transcending religious ground and reaching cultural aspects. In short, the 9/11 era marks a different paradigm of worldwide literature. As such, literary sphere prioritizes the cultural, the political and the psychological aspects over the psychic damage trauma evokes, hence revolutionizing social sciences and humanities. Under the Western attacks, a group of Arab/Muslim intellectuals, writers in particular, felt the need to write back to the empire, an attempt to acquit Islam from criminality, fundamentalism and ignorance.

4. Decoding the Illusion upon the American Dream in Mohsin Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

A reflective literary example, probably not the best but the nearest to the paper’s central question, which portrays the illusion over the American Dream for oriental dreamers, is Mohsin Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. The work engages with the aftermaths of the tragic event from a neo-orientalist perspective. Through Changez, the protagonist, the writer cajoles the reader with a rounded picture of how the “Western gaze”, which supposedly embeds civilization, pivots on violent and immoral attitudes towards some countries, including his own: Pakistan. More than that, the writer endows his character with trauma

[†] This is to invite the reader to consider Amy Waldman’s *The Submission* (2011) which aesthetically reflects upon the global impact of trauma regardless of binary oppositions between the center and the periphery. With a significant focus on the influence of globalization, Waldman cogently forges a narrative that provides the readers with an understanding of how did the trauma of 9/11 politicize the world with misconceptions and heat up a neo-orientalist discourse.

manifestations in addition to the vexing feelings of loss and despair that together shape the psychological unrests oriental immigrants undergo after the tragic event. To quickly summarize the arguments and by pointing out to *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, Leila Halaby endorses that “extreme times call for extreme reactions, extreme writing” (Washingtonpost). That is how the twofold attempt of ‘moving the centre’ and ‘decolonizing the mind, to use Ngugi Wa Thiong’o formulas, from the confines of the occident’s prejudices starts to orchestrate an intertextual dialogue over the allegedly stereotypes. Based on dominant prejudices, it certainly is difficult, yet not impossible, to end the Western demonization of Muslims as well as refute the utopia America highlights upon the application of democracy.

The novel under study opens with a dialogue between Changez and a nameless American character whose voice is never heard. It is only through Changez’s voice that Hamid weaves his novel in a way that shows the extent to which oriental immigrants are subject to racial discrimination. In fact, a large number of Western critics presume that Hamid resorts to a modernist technique -dramatic monologue- by inducing the literary device of a one-sided dialogue to his narrative so to make the reader have a different perspective that is opposed to the Western framed narrative. Mari Helene Bøe, in her comment on the matter, argues that “the whole story [*The Reluctant Fundamentalist*] consists of one conversation in which Changez is the only narrator (...) the telling reveals Changez to be a person in control as he leads the conversation as well as the plot” (Bøe, 2017, p. 36). Changez declares, “Do not be frightened by my beard. I am a lover of America” (Hamid, 2007, p. 1). From the very beginning of the novel, the writer makes the reader realizes that the novel prioritizes Western readership. As such, the reader soon senses Hamid’s attempt to remove the myopic vision Americans have towards oriental immigrants.

Changez’s journey from Pakistan to America, for its crucial part, stresses the cultural assimilation of a young Pakistani man with a great faith in the myth of success. In a descriptive passage, his first meeting with the University of Princeton is where the dream begins and will be fulfilled. Changez confesses, “this is a dream come true. Princeton inspired in me the feeling that my life was a film in which I was the star and everything was possible” (Hamid, 2007, p. 3). Hamid thereby portrays Changez’s impression with the US as the typical American dream where everything you wish to possess is possible. He clearly demonstrates a fondness for the American culture. The writer resorts to a potent literary device, that of personification. The latter functions as an instrumental tool so to add emphasis to Changez’s fleeting cultural assimilation. He describes, “Every fall, Princeton raised her skirt for the corporate recruiters who came onto campus and -as you say in America- showed them some skin. The skin Princeton showed was good skin, of course –young, eloquent, and clever as can be- but even among all that skin, I knew in my senior year that I was something special” (Hamid, 2007, pp. 4-5). Princeton University, and America by extension, is given feminine traits which attract someone’s emotions. Being infatuated with the American atmosphere, Changez is bewitched by Princeton in the same way a man can be charmed by a woman beauty. One might opine that Hamid’s use of personification as a means to demonstrate the culturally assimilated subject may signal a lust for love.

Later, the author further takes the reader to the heart of America’s lifestyle during the Roaring Twenties’ era. Indeed, a period which marks a rapid economic grown in addition to an industrial boom. At the social level, this era was characterized by the over consumption

and the mass entertainment. In short, it comes in perfect line with the material fulfillment of the American dream that is juxtaposed with the evaporation of moral values amidst opulence. Let us attend the party in which Changez was invited:

The party was being held at Jim's house in the Hamptons, a magnificent property that made me think of the Great Gatsby. It was beside the beach –on a rise behind a protective ridge of sand dunes- and it had a swimming pool, a tennis court, and an open-sided white pavilion erected at one end of the lawn for drinking and dancing (Hamid, 2007, p. 43)

Clearly, the party imparts a new dimension and understanding of Changez's gradual integration to the American context. By alluding to the Great Gatsby, Hamid resorts to intertextuality in order to remind both Western and non-Western audience of the storm that comes after the calm. In other words, the Roaring Twenties' decade emanates a dramatic stock market crash i.e. the Great Depression. This substantiates the idea that all of a sudden America, the true paradise, can move from prosperity to poverty. And so, Gatsby's fall is an allegory of such fall.

In the development of the novel, however, Changez's pursuit of happiness is faced by many hurdles which break his admiration for the beacon of hope. These hurdles, in fact, make him reconsider his vision towards achieving the American dream. That is to say, he goes as far as to question principles that fall under the notion of democracy, if there is any, in order to denounce the cruelty of power abuse that is exerted by megalomaniac politicians in the wake of the tragic attacks. Changez feels divided and all what is American to him turns into decadent. This feeling of split is projected in the novel several times. Yet, due to the paper's space limitation, we shall be content with three thematic illustrations as it will be shown in the coming paragraphs. These are Changez relationship with Erica, his experience with the American borders and his psychological state of living between two colliding cultures respectively.

It must be acknowledged that is especially not coincidental to make Changez fall in love with an American woman whose name happens to be chosen as Erica. Through creating such a character, Hamid resorts to symbolism which, both literally and symbolically, is a contraction of the word America. What is striking, however, is not the character's name per se but rather the nature of fruitless relationship she had with Changez. A relationship that is doomed to fail because of racial profiling. From the onset of the story, the reader is acquainted with Erica's tragic story. She appears to develop post-traumatic stress disorder because of her incapability to relinquish the memory of Chris, her ex-partner in life, who passed away. To her, he represents "an Old World appeal" (Hamid, 2007, p. 27). Metaphorically, this simile suffices to comprehend Chris' significance in the novel. Another name through which Hamid resorts to symbolism. In this vein, Chris could straightforwardly be identified with reference to Christopher Columbus; stressing both the wellspring of civilization and the founding of America. Likewise, Chris death could be used as a metaphor for an empire that is doomed to enfeeble, to vanish. Unreservedly, it is axiomatic to say that throughout history, great empires are noticeably fated to disappear, such as the Roman Empire. The juxtaposition Hamid adopts further signals how Changez's relationship with America is understood through the nature of his relationship with Erica. We should reiterate, the moving story of their doomed love relationship is the incarnation of Changez's failure

pursuit of happiness. In a relevant incident, neither is he able to make physical love to Erica, nor is she intimate with him. This paralysis is a vexing forcing of events as Changez narrates, "I attempted to separate myself from the situation, to listen to her as though I were not both aching for her and hurt that – seemingly despite herself – her body had rejected me" (Hamid, 2007, p. 90). Despite his attempt, Changez's identity remains incompatible with American values, hence why his foreignness is innate and impossible to change. This alienation is reinforced after 9/11 attacks when Changez's increasing estrangement is represented in Erica's disappearance and expected suicide. Thus, this juxtaposition leads us to the conclusion that the attacks stand for the turning point of the American society. Prospectively, its downfall is predictable just like Erica's fate. Therefore, the dream falls apart.

What adds to the failure of the American dream is then the racial profiling. Indeed, a dehumanizing act within which oriental immigrants were subject to undergo after the bombing of the Twin Towers attacks. In one of the dialogues carried out by Erica's father and Changez, the underlying impetus to frame racist stereotypes between the orient and the occident is highlighted. Changez recalls,

I do, however, remember becoming annoyed at one point in the discussion. Erica's father had asked me how things were back home, and I had replied that they were quite good, thank you, when he said, 'Economy's falling apart though, no? Corruption, dictatorship, the rich living like princes while everyone else suffers. Solid people, don't get me wrong, I like Pakistanis. But the elite has raped that place well and good, right? And fundamentalism. You guys have got some serious problems with fundamentalism (Hamid, 2007, p. 54).

What Hamid draws upon in this thought-provoking scene is the implantation of Orientalism's seeds in the American mind, be them implicitly or explicitly. Put otherwise, this incident signals a stereotyped-based discourse in the post 9/11 era. There are some words in the passage that we want to stop at, such as 'corruption', 'dictatorship', 'rich', 'elite' and 'fundamentalism'. What is striking is that these words are not simply attributed to the Pakistani people but rather supplemented with negative connotations. By employing such words, Erica's father –and all Occidental by extension- associates fundamentalism with Pakistani people. Changez, being a Muslim Pakistani himself, does not meet Americanness' requirements. Instead, he is ideologically constructed as a threat. This incident strengthens Said's in-depth reflection upon the way the Orient is grounded by the Occident based on clichés that propagate not only otherness and foreignness but also the evaporation of moral values.

Equally important, Hamid goes as far as to evoke the issue of racism that faces oriental immigrants through gambling with the theme of border. The latter stands for an implicit means of othering individuals based on certain national, religious, ethnic and racial affiliations. In fact, this issue is tackled in the novel through Changez who appears arbitrarily detained at the airport. He was traveling back to the US from Greece along with his colleagues. The border control had two queues: one for the American citizens and another one for other citizens. He was the only one passing through the 'all other passports' queue. For further detailing, let us attend the scene through which Hamid resorts to stressing the binary opposition between the other and the self which positions Changez in an inferior rank compared to American citizens. He commented,

When we arrived, I was separated from my team at immigration. They joined the queue for American citizens; I joined the one for foreigners. The officer who inspected my passport was a solidly built woman with a pistol at her hip and a mastery of English inferior to mine; I attempted to disarm her with a smile. “What is the purpose of your trip to the United States?” She asked me. “I live here,” I replied. “That is not what I asked you, sir,” she said. “What is the purpose of your trip to the United States?” Our exchange continued in much this fashion for several minutes. In the end, I was dispatched for a secondary inspection in a room where I sat on a metal bench next to a tattooed man in handcuffs (Hamid, 2007, p. 75).

Unlike the smooth passage that every single person had when going through the border checks, Changez’s experience was quite different. Actually, he did not mind the rigorous inspection as much as its biased-based policy. Although he answered all the questions, the officer told him that they wanted to do further checks where he had to sit next to a criminal and wait even longer. This incident was not an exception, and should not be treated as such because the grounds upon which Changez was stopped are fuelled by discriminatory treatments. The procedure does not annoy as much as the way it is implemented. The images the West sphere internalizes and the interpretations it makes are carried along with discriminatory bases which can influence its perceptions of who the other is. This incident, in fact, highlights a tiny part of the differential treatment that Oriental immigrants deal with on the go. The lengthy check and inspection Changez went through is appalling and dehumanizing which makes him feel different, inferior and, above all, a second class citizen. Therefore, the nation preaching about building a sense of community and belonging, which should go in hand with the notion American dream’s principles, is often inattentive to the very sense of alienation that is imposed through several mechanisms such as borders.

Because of the disillusioning dream, Changez perception of America changes; he realized that he does neither adhere to the mythological America nor is America a myth of success. Such overwhelming incidents he went through justify the Western-American discourse on Orientalism, and therefore stress the serious phenomenon of classism. America was indeed a great opportunity for Changez to realize that the dream embraces evil illusions. This country has been betrayed by favoring and superiorizing Western culture at the expense of moral values. Unable to achieve belongingness, the oriental immigrant is now torn between conflicting feelings which make him question the credibility of the American dream. Consequently, he ends up developing anti-western sentiments. At the psychological level, the unstable condition the protagonist suffers from creates further uncanny feelings in addition to defamiliarizing effects. Changez says:

I wonder now, sir, whether I believed at all in the firmness of the foundations of the new life I was attempting to construct for myself in New York. Certainly I wanted to believe; at least I wanted not to disbelieve with such an intensity that I prevented myself as much as was possible from making the obvious connection between the crumbling of the world around me and the impending of my personal American dream. The power of my blinders shocks me, looking back –so stark in retrospect were the portents of coming disaster in the news, on the streets, and in the state of the woman with whom I had become enamored (Hamid, 2007, p. 93).

A journey towards delusional happiness is clearly what Changez ends up achieving. Being torn between Pakistan and America is exactly what the dream made him switch into a nightmare. He is lost between two different cultures, identities, races and social positions. Accurately, that is what Homi Bhabha describes in *The Location of Culture* as an in-between condition which “is always the split screen of the self and its doubling, the hybrid” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 114). Struggling to fit in a society that praises classicism and racism leads the hybrid subject create a “third space” as well as an “in-between space”, to use Bhabha terminologies, wherein a schism in culture is provoked. By becoming a brilliant intellectual product of America and securing a job at Underwood Samson & Company, Changez thought that he moved the paradigm of the Westernized elite. Yet, he remains an intruder; suffering from a split between two different identities.

Seized with the fear of not being able to fulfill belongingness, Changez succumbed to what proved to be an unachievable dream for a foreign quester. In the creation of such a complex condition oriental immigrant go through in post 9/11 era, Hamid mythologies the notion of the American dream for non-American dreams. Changez confesses, “I was not at war with America. Far from it: I was the product of an American university; I was earning a lucrative American salary; I was infatuated with an American woman. So why did part of me desire to see America harmed? (Hamid, 2007, p. 73). As discussed previously, by trying to escape his race through dating an American woman, Changez faces a psychological breakdown which develops into a delusional disorder. One the one hand, he has his own origins, traditions, beliefs and way of life; on the other hand, the new personality, beliefs and way of life inherited from the American milieu engenders uncanny feelings. Hence, a “third space” is created to him that is located somewhere between Pakistan and America. To make a long story short, Changez symbolizes what Mugu Gatheu's calls a “Child of Two Worlds”: a novel which cajoles the reader with the impact of multiculturalism. In this regard, Homi Bhabha argues that:

It is significant that the productive capacities of this Third Space have a colonial or postcolonial provenance. For a willingness to descend into that alien territory . . . may open the way to conceptualizing an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity. (Bhabha, 1994, p. 38)

In short, the ‘Third Space’ through which Changez's cultural affiliation falls in line with is deep-rooted, and has well-stretched arms, in colonial and postcolonial interactions. This can lead to the formation of an international culture. The latter comes out of the multicultural mold of assorted cultures which, in turn, brings the issue of hybridity to the frontline. Throughout the narrative, Changez is pleased with his Pakistani backgrounds; he turns his back to neither his country nor his people. However, his unconscious hunger for tangible fulfillment prevents him from perceiving the valueless world he throws himself in its deep end. Therefore, his cultural hybridity creates not only a delusional happiness but also an identity crisis. Disillusioned by the West and captured by capitalist system, Changez abandons the dream and goes back to Pakistan in order to serve his country and his people. To this end, one might deduce that humans always tend to create their own truth in order to appease themselves, for it is much easier than accepting reality. Consequently, the journey towards success is followed by tragedy, loss and despair.

5. Conclusion

In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), Mohsin Hamid brings to the fore the illusionary facets of the American dream from the lens of oriental immigrants. Though Changez, the author problematizes how 9/11 attacks maneuver a Western discourse that dehumanizes the Orient subject. Furthermore, such discourse seems to have twofold functions: one the one hand, it dramatizes the traumatization of the American experience with the tragic event in order to secure universal empathy; on the other hand, it builds a negative frame that is replete with clichés against Muslim communities so to attain psychological and political forces. We are here insisting on ‘Islamophobia’ which is “the dominant mode of prejudice in contemporary Western societies” (Morey 1). Changez’s downfall is reinforced the moment he develops feelings towards (am)Erica. The more he is infatuated with her, the more the dream fails. Given that the novel under study is examined from a neo-orientalist lens, it would not be surprising to conclude that America proves to be built upon the myth of a utopian dystopia, for the ideals of the American dream are betrayed and fuelled by pejoratives and prejudices. Therefore, the sharp prevalence of otherness towards oriental immigrants in the post 9/11 era suggests that neither the Centre nor the Periphery can stand for its own; they do especially not contradict but rather complement. Hence, the notion of the American Dream should not only be revised but also demythologized.

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