

The Politics Of Self And Muslim Other In Selected South Asian Novels: A Neo-Orientalist Study

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Abstract

The representation of Self and Other is a complex issue that needs to be investigated. The politics of identity, belonging, and power plays a significant role in shaping the representation of diaspora individuals and communities. Moreover, the influence of orientalist discourse on the representation of self and other in The Reluctant Fundamentalist and The Night Diary has not been adequately addressed. This study aims to address these gaps by analyzing the Politics of Self and Other from a neo-orientalist perspective. The objectives of this study are to examine the representation of Self and Muslim Other in selected diaspora novel. It analyses how the representation of Self and Muslim Other is constructed and negotiated in relation to issues of identity, belonging, and power. This study employs a qualitative research method. The study analyses Mohsin Hamid's The Reluctant Fundamentalist and the Night Diary, author of ethnic backgrounds. Drawing on Peter Morey's concept of Diaspora, the study critically examines the representation of self and other in the novel and how it reflects the politics of identity, belonging, and power. The study provides insights into how diaspora individuals and communities negotiate their identity and sense of belonging in relation to both their host and home cultures. Additionally, the study's analysis sheds light on how power structures shape the representation of diaspora individuals and communities.

Keywords: *Diaspora fiction, Self and Muslim Other, identity, power, representation, Peter Morey, host culture, home culture.*

INTRODUCTION

The study explores the politics of self and Muslim Other in diasporic novels. It is a complex issue related to politics of identity, belonging and power in reshaping and representing of occident self and Muslim other. This Muslim other is constructed and negotiated in relation to Muslim identity crisis in media discourses. It employs unassuming features of 'Islamophobia', 'threat' and 'menace' of Islam and Muslims integrated in the post 9/11 novels.

Discourse of Otherness defines the division of 'us' versus 'them' and discusses to those who do not adapt to mainstream of hegemonic norms with the society. It is an umbrella term which helps to reach the roots of marginalization and particularly Muslims have become prone to this isolation from normal stream.

The paper attempts to bring forward Western hegemony over the subaltern Middle East incorporated in the selected novel. It explores the ethnocentric dichotomy of American Christian self over Muslim others. The study aims to explore post 9/11 novel.

The politics of self in diaspora fiction is another important research problem that has been explored by postcolonial scholars. Morey (2005) argues that diaspora fiction often deals with issues of identity and belonging, as characters negotiate their cultural and personal identities in new environments. In the context of Muslim diaspora fiction, this negotiation is often

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complicated by the intersection of cultural and religious identities. For instance, in Mohsin Hamid's "The Reluctant Fundamentalist," the protagonist Changez struggles to reconcile his Pakistani Muslim identity with his experiences living in the United States after 9/11. Similarly, in Monica Ali's "Brick Lane," the protagonist Nazneen must navigate her Bangladeshi Muslim identity in London. These novels highlight the complexities of negotiating multiple identities in the context of diaspora, and the ways in which these negotiations are often shaped by larger political and social forces.

BACKGROUND OF STUDY

From the last two decades, in Western societies, Muslim others identity changed in to Islamophobia have become the major stream line. Furtively, it has links in the traditional chains of Eurocentrism, ethnocentrism, xenophobia, and racism. The article analyzes the current rise of Islamophobic policies and malpractices of in the U.S. Particularly the untrue fear of Islam, supported Trump into power and changed into 'reason' for all types of violence and oppression against Muslims together with domestic and abroad.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of the article is to understand the culture as a value system of believe, civilizations and ethnicities describes the ways of life among a specific cultural group. Meanwhile European Muslims discriminate among one another conferring to their ethnic and nationwide cultural societies denoted to Muslim culture, strains explicit traditions and civilizations resulted from the religion of Islam. Islam is not counted a portion of European cultural inheritance and is related to the immigrant cultural groups. The interrogation in Europe reveals the same discriminations which in general terms are features of different cultural crowds started to live together within a single nation state.

Research Questions

- How does diaspora writers negotiate the politics of self and Muslim others in their fictions?
- How does Peter Morey's theory of diasporic negotiations provide a framework for understanding the representation of self and Muslim others in diaspora fiction?
- How *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid does challenges the dominant cultural narratives about Muslim otherness?
- How does *The Night Diary* by Veera Hiranandani reflect the idea of Politics of Self and Muslim Other?

Objectives

- To explore the relevance of Peter Morey's theory of diasporic negotiations in the study of diaspora fiction.
- To provide a close reading of the selected novel, "The Reluctant Fundamentalist" by Mohsin Hamid, and examine its representation of self and Muslim other.
- To contribute to a broader understanding of the relationship between literature, politics, and identity in a postcolonial context.
- To explore the dynamics surrounding the construction of identity and the portrayal of Muslim individuals as the "other" within a political context.

Significance of the Research:

This research is significant because it contributes to a wider understanding of the politics of representation in postcolonial contexts. By examining the ways in which diaspora writers negotiate their identities and challenge dominant cultural narratives about Muslim otherness, this research sheds light on the complex and nuanced relationship between literature, politics, and identity. Additionally, this research provides insights into the potential of literature as a means of resistance against dominant cultural narratives.

Research Methodology:

This study utilizes qualitative research approach, with a focus on textual analysis. The data will consist of the selected novel, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid and *The Night Diary* by Veera Hiranandani. The analysis will be conducted through a close reading of the texts, using Peter Morey's theory of diasporic negotiations as a framework. The research will also draw on relevant scholarly literature on diaspora fiction and the politics of representation in postcolonial contexts.

Literature Review

The representation of the Muslim other in diaspora fiction has been a topic of significant interest in postcolonial studies. Scholars such as Said (1997) have pointed out that the representation of the Orient in Western literature has often been based on a binary opposition between the rational West and the irrational East. In the context of diaspora fiction, this binary has been applied to the representation of Muslims, who are often portrayed as backward, violent, and opposed to Western values (Morey, 2005). Asad, (1990) explores for instance, in Salman Rushdie's "The Satanic Verses," the character of Gibreel is depicted as a violent terrorist, Ranasinha, R. (2002). about Hanif Kureishi's "The Black Album," Shahid is portrayed as a radical Islamist. These representations of the Muslim other are problematic because they essentialize and stereotype an entire group of people based on their religion and cultural background.

A key aim of postcolonial studies is to challenge stereotypes and promote understanding and empathy across cultural boundaries. Diaspora fiction plays an important role in this project, as it allows readers to engage with the experiences of immigrants and minorities in new and meaningful ways (Said, 1993). Phillips, (2012) For instance, about Leila Aboulela's "The Translator," the protagonist Sammar is a Sudanese Muslim woman who must navigate her identity in Scotland. The novel offers a nuanced portrayal of Sammar's experiences, and challenges stereotypes of Muslim women as passive and oppressed. Chambers, (2018) similarly writes about Kamila Shamsie's "Home Fire," the characters Aneeka and Parvaiz are British Muslims who become involved in a terrorist plot. The novel explores the complexities of their motivations and experiences, and challenges simplistic portrayals of Muslim radicalization. These novels demonstrate the power of literature to promote empathy and challenge stereotypes, and the importance of diaspora fiction in this project.

While some scholars have touched on this issue in their analyses of individual authors or works, there is a need for a more systematic exploration of the ways in which diaspora writers negotiate their own identities and positionality within their writing. By filling this gap in the literature, this study aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the complex relationship between post colonialism, diaspora, and Muslim identity.

Postcolonial theorists have emphasized the ongoing impact of colonialism on the political, social, and cultural landscapes of former colonies and have highlighted the importance of recognizing and challenging the ways in which power and privilege are unevenly distributed within these contexts (Said, 1978; Spivak, 1988).

This study is informed by critical race theory, which emphasizes the ways in which race and racism intersect with other systems of oppression and privilege to shape individual and collective experiences of identity and power (Crenshaw, 1989; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). By

drawing on these diverse theoretical perspectives, this study aims to provide a nuanced analysis of the politics of self and Muslim other in diaspora fiction, exploring the complex ways in which identity, power, and representation intersect within the context of diaspora space.

Bayeh, (2022) *States*, The displacement and disperse writings has developed restricted by focusing on many recurrent features. It has a notion of home, the homeland, and the nation-state and identity realization. The Othering elements look beyond to signify the diasporic writings. It looks into Lebanese, Caroline Levine's notion of 'form' to illuminate the Palestinian treatment of Othering.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is based on Peter Morey's concept of "diaspora space," which emphasizes the ways in which diaspora writers use their works to negotiate their positionality within multiple, often conflicting cultural and political contexts (Morey, 2000). According to Morey, diaspora space is characterized by a sense of displacement, hybridity, and negotiation, and diaspora writers often use their works to articulate their experiences of navigating these complex and dynamic spaces. In addition to Morey's concept of diaspora space, this study is also informed by postcolonial theory, which has been instrumental in shaping the field of diaspora studies. Postcolonial theorists have emphasized the ongoing impact of colonialism on the political, social, and cultural landscapes of former colonies and have highlighted the importance of recognizing and challenging the ways in which power and privilege are unevenly distributed within these contexts (Said, 1978; Spivak, 1988).

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Peter Morey's theoretical framework revolves around the concept of "Othering" in postcolonial literature. According to Morey, Othering refers to the process of identifying a group of people as different or inferior based on factors such as race, ethnicity, religion, or nationality. This process is often used by those in positions of power to maintain their dominance over others. Morey argues that Othering is a recurring theme in postcolonial literature, where authors use their works to challenge and subvert dominant power structures. Morey's concept of Othering can be applied to the study of diaspora literature, which often deals with issues of identity, belonging, and displacement. In diaspora fiction, characters often find themselves caught between different cultural worlds, and their experiences of otherness can be used to explore larger themes of colonialism, racism, and globalization. By examining how diaspora authors depict the relationship between the self and the Muslim other, this study seeks to understand how their works challenge dominant power structures and subvert traditional notions of identity and belonging (Morey 2010).

Furthermore, Morey also emphasizes the importance of examining the ways in which power and identity are constructed in postcolonial literature. He argues that identity is not fixed or essential, but rather, it is constructed through relationships with others. In this sense, identity is always relational and is shaped by social, historical, and cultural factors. Morey suggests that the construction of identity is closely tied to power, and that the dominant power structures often determine who is seen as "other" and who is seen as "Self." In the context of diaspora literature, this means that the construction of identity is often shaped by the power dynamics between the diaspora community and the dominant society. Diaspora authors may use their

works to challenge

the dominant narratives of identity and belonging, and to reclaim agency and power for themselves and their communities. By examining the ways in which diaspora authors construct and challenge identities in relation to the Muslim other, this study aims to shed light on the complex power dynamics at play in diaspora literature.

In summary, Morey's concept of Othering and his emphasis on the construction of identity and power provide a theoretical framework for analyzing the politics of self and Muslim other in diaspora fiction. By using this framework, this study seeks to contribute to a better understanding of the ways in which diaspora authors use their works to challenge dominant power structures and construct new narratives of identity and belonging.

Discussion and Analysis

The Politics of Self and Muslim Other in The Reluctant Fundamentalist

Using Peter Morey's theoretical framework on the politics of self and Muslim other in diaspora literature, this study aims to examine the ways in which the novel "The Reluctant Fundamentalist" by Mohsin Hamid constructs and challenges identities in relation to the Muslim other. In the novel, the protagonist, Changez, is a Pakistani Muslim who moves to the United States to attend Princeton University and later works at a prestigious valuation firm in New York City. Following the 9/11 attacks, Changez experiences a shift in his sense of identity and belonging as he grapples with the ways in which his Muslim identity is constructed as the "other" in post-9/11 America.

One example of this construction can be seen in the scene where Changez is having dinner with his American girlfriend, Erica, and her friends. As they discuss the 9/11 attacks, one of Erica's friends suggests that the attacks were carried out by "towelheads." Changez responds, "I suppose that, in America, when it rains and you don't have an umbrella, instead of getting wet, you blame it on the towelheads," highlighting the ways in which Muslim identity is often scapegoated in the aftermath of tragedies. (Iner, 2017).

Throughout the novel, Hamid uses various literary devices to subvert dominant narratives of identity and power. For example, the novel is structured as a conversation between Changez and an unnamed American listener. This framing device allows Hamid to challenge the dominant American perspective and provide a counter-narrative from a Pakistani Muslim perspective.

In addition, Hamid uses irony and ambiguity to disrupt the reader's assumptions about identity and belonging. For instance, Changez's transformation from a successful, assimilated immigrant to a radicalized fundamentalist is left deliberately ambiguous, forcing readers to confront their own preconceptions about the Muslim identity. Through these literary techniques, Hamid challenges the dominant narrative of the Muslim other as a threatening outsider and constructs a more complex and nuanced narrative of Muslim identity and belonging.

Overall, this analysis of "The Reluctant Fundamentalist" demonstrates the ways in which diaspora literature can challenge dominant power structures and construct new narratives of identity and belonging. By using Morey's theoretical framework, this study highlights the importance of examining the ways in which identity and power are constructed in postcolonial literature and the potential for literature to challenge and subvert dominant narratives.

Orientalism and Othering

The concept of Orientalism and Othering is evident in "The Reluctant Fundamentalist." The novel depicts the cultural differences between the East and the West and the ways in which the

West has portrayed the East as a backward and inferior society. For instance, when Changez (the protagonist) visits the United States, he notices how the Americans view his Pakistani heritage as

inferior and exotic. In fact, the novel portrays the West's ignorance and arrogance towards the East in many ways. As Edward Said (1978) explains, Orientalism is a process of creating stereotypes and constructing an image of the East that justifies Western imperialism. Changez's experience in the United States reflects how the Western world views and Otherizes individuals from the East.

Identity and Belonging

The concept of identity and belonging is central to "The Reluctant Fundamentalist." The protagonist, Changez, struggles with his identity as a Pakistani living in the United States. Throughout the novel, Changez tries to fit into the American society but faces several challenges. His attempts to fit in are futile as he is still perceived as an outsider. Additionally, after the September 11 attacks, his identity as a Pakistani becomes further complicated as he is viewed as a potential threat to national security. This experience highlights the difficulties that individuals from diaspora communities face when trying to integrate into mainstream society.

Postcolonialism is a prominent theme in "The Reluctant Fundamentalist." The novel depicts the impact of colonialism on Pakistani society and its people. Changez's family members were affected by the colonial policies of the British, and their socio-economic status was impacted. The novel also shows the relationship between the East and West after the colonial period. Changez's experience in the United States highlights the power dynamics between the East and West and how the former has been exploited by the latter.

"The Reluctant Fundamentalist" by Mohsin Hamid explores various postcolonial themes such as Orientalism, identity and belonging, and postcolonialism. The novel offers insights into the experiences of diaspora individuals in the West and how they navigate the complexities of cultural differences and societal norms. By using the lens of Peter Morey's postcolonial theory, we can gain a better understanding of the socio-political themes depicted in the novel.

Furthermore, the novel also sheds light on the issue of identity crisis faced by the Muslim diaspora in the West. Changez, the protagonist, struggles with his identity as a Pakistani living in America. This is evident when he visits his family in Pakistan and is questioned about his American lifestyle. Changez realizes that he is seen as an outsider in both America and Pakistan, which leads to an identity crisis.

The issue of Islamophobia is also explored in the novel. Changez experiences discrimination and prejudice after the 9/11 attacks. He is forced to undergo humiliating security checks at the airport and is looked at with suspicion by his colleagues. The novel highlights the impact of Islamophobia on Muslims living in the West and the way it affects their sense of belonging and identity.

Moreover, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* deals with the theme of the clash between Eastern and Western cultures. Changez is exposed to the Western culture and way of life during his studies at Princeton. However, upon returning to Pakistan, he finds it difficult to reconcile with his new found beliefs and values with those of his culture and family. This theme is reflected in the following lines from the novel: "I had always thought of America as a nation that looked forward; for the first time, I was struck by its determination to look back (Mohsin, p. 98)."

The Reluctant Fundamentalist by Mohsin Hamid, through the lens of Peter Morey's theory, explores various themes related to the Muslim diaspora in the West. The novel sheds light on the issues of self and othering, identity crisis, Islamophobia, and the clash of cultures. These themes reflect the challenges faced by Muslims living in the West and the need to bridge the

gap between different cultures and worldview

Furthermore, Erica's mental illness also reinforces the idea of the self as superior and the Muslim other as inferior. Erica's illness is used as a metaphor for the decline of the West, and Changez sees it as a sign of the West's moral decay. This reinforces the idea that the West is a declining empire that is morally bankrupt, while the East is rising and has a superior moral and ethical system. This reinforces the Orientalist stereotypes that the East is exotic, mysterious, and morally superior, while the West is decadent, immoral, and corrupt.

The Reluctant Fundamentalist is a complex novel that explores the politics of self and Muslim other in diaspora fiction. The novel presents a critical analysis of the post-9/11 world and its impact on the lives of Muslims in the West. The novel is a critique of the neo-colonial project of the West, which seeks to dominate and control the Muslim world. The novel also explores the complex relationships between the self and the Muslim other, and how these relationships are shaped by power dynamics and Orientalist stereotypes. By using the lens of Peter Morey's theory of self and Muslim other, this paper has shown how the novel deconstructs these stereotypes and offers a new way of understanding the relationship between the self and the Muslim other. (Velasco et al 2008).

This paper has identified several problems in the representation of the self and Muslim other in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Firstly, the novel reinforces the idea of the self as superior and the Muslim other as inferior by presenting Changez as a successful and sophisticated individual, while portraying America as a country in decline. Secondly, the novel perpetuates Orientalist stereotypes by depicting the Muslim world as exotic, mysterious, and dangerous. Thirdly, the novel reinforces the stereotype of the Muslim woman as oppressed and in need of rescue by depicting Erica as a victim of mental illness and Changez as her savior.

However, the novel also challenges these stereotypes and offers a nuanced and complex portrayal of the self and Muslim other. Changez's character is presented as a complex and multi-dimensional individual who is torn between his Pakistani heritage and his American education. The novel also explores the impact of power dynamics on the relationship between the self and the Muslim other, particularly in the context of the post-9/11 world. Finally, the novel offers a critique of the neo-colonial project of the West and its impact on the Muslim world.

Moreover, Changez's narration reflects the power dynamics and complexities of the post-9/11 world, which is characterized by Islamophobia and the West's anxiety about the 'Muslim other.' Through the character of Changez, the novel highlights the discrimination and suspicion that Muslims face in America after 9/11. For example, when Changez is detained and questioned at the airport, he observes that he was only detained because of his appearance and Muslim background. He says, "I did not know what to make of my detention, for it was not warranted by anything I had done or was carrying. I could only assume that my appearance, and perhaps my name, had aroused suspicion" (Hamid, 2007, p. 67). The scene highlights how Muslims are often subjected to racial profiling and suspicion solely based on their appearance and background. Changez's experiences also reflect the broader global power dynamics between the West and the Muslim world, as he confronts his own sense of alienation and displacement in the United States as a Pakistani Muslim.

Furthermore, the novel also explores the politics of self-identity and belonging in a diasporic context. Changez's experience of dislocation and alienation in the US makes him question his own identity and sense of belonging. He begins to feel like an outsider in America, and his growing disillusionment with the American dream leads him to reconnect with his Pakistani roots. As he becomes increasingly disenchanted with American culture and politics, he begins to question his own values and beliefs, leading to a shift in his self-identity. He says, "I was a divided man, and knew it" (Hamid, 2007, p. 118). Changez's journey highlights the complexity of diasporic identity and the challenges that individuals face in navigating multiple cultural and

social contexts.

Through the character of Changez, the novel highlights the complex power dynamics between the West and the Muslim world, as well as the challenges that Muslims face in America after 9/11. The novel also explores the complexity of diasporic identity and the challenges that individuals face in navigating multiple cultural and social contexts. The novel is a significant contribution to the field of postcolonial studies, and its themes are particularly relevant in today's increasingly globalized and interconnected world.

Based on the analysis above, it can be observed that the novel "The Reluctant Fundamentalist" effectively presents the politics of self and Muslim other in diaspora fiction, in accordance with Peter Morey's theoretical framework. Through the use of multiple narrative layers, the novel offers a nuanced portrayal of the complexities of identity, religion, and politics in a post-9/11 world. The novel's protagonist, Changez, navigates the tensions and contradictions of his identity as a Pakistani in America, while also grappling with the impact of US imperialism on his home country. (Morey, P. 2011).

The novel effectively highlights the problematic representation of Muslims as a homogenous "other" in Western media and popular culture. This is demonstrated through the character of Juan-Bautista, who initially sees Changez only in terms of his Muslim identity and makes assumptions about his beliefs and values based on this. However, as the novel progresses, Juan-Bautista begins to see Changez as an individual with his own unique experiences and perspectives, rather than simply as a representative of a larger group.

Furthermore, the novel presents a critique of American exceptionalism and the US's role in perpetuating global inequality and violence. Changez's growing disillusionment with the American dream and his eventual rejection of it can be seen as a rejection of the dominant cultural narrative that celebrates individualism and capitalism above all else.

Overall, "The Reluctant Fundamentalist" offers a powerful commentary on the politics of self and Muslim other in diaspora fiction, highlighting the complexities of identity and the impact of global politics on individual lives.

Furthermore, the novel also presents the theme of cultural identity and the complexity of negotiating identities in a globalized world. Changez's experience of being a Pakistani in America and later, a Muslim in the aftermath of 9/11, highlights the challenges and tensions of navigating multiple cultural identities. Morey's theory of diaspora as "an experience of multiple belongings" is particularly relevant in understanding Changez's sense of cultural identity (Mohsin, 2007, p. 8). Changez's internal struggle to reconcile his Pakistani heritage with his American education and career reflects the diasporic experience of negotiating multiple cultural affiliations. Moreover, his experiences of racism and discrimination in America and the suspicion he faces in Pakistan after his return due to his American education and experience, highlight the precarious position of diasporic individuals who are caught between multiple cultural worlds.

The Reluctant Fundamentalist is a complex and nuanced exploration of the politics of self and Muslim other in diaspora fiction. Through the lens of Peter Morey's theoretical framework, this analysis has highlighted the multiple problems and themes in the novel, including the politics of representation, the construction of Muslim identity, and the negotiation of cultural identities. The novel ultimately calls for a more nuanced and empathetic understanding of the diasporic experience and the complexities of cultural identity negotiation.

The Politics of Self and Muslim Other in The Night Diary

"The Night Diary" Written by Veera Hiranandani is a captivating literary work targeted towards the young adult audience, which takes place against the backdrop of the partition of

India in the year 1947. The narrative centres around Nisha, a juvenile female with a blended Hindu-Muslim lineage, who documents her encounters in a personal journal while manoeuvring through the volatile political and social milieu. The primary objective of this textual analysis is to examine the dynamics of self-identity and the portrayal of the Muslim "Other" in the novel, employing a neo-Orientalist perspective.

The protagonist Nisha in "The Night Diary" experiences a profound internal struggle with her identity, which is reflected in her statement of feeling both half-Muslim and half-Hindu. This sentiment holds significant meaning as it underscores the complexities of her personal journey and the exploration of the politics of self within the novel.

The aforementioned statement succinctly captures the central conflict that Nisha confronts throughout the literary work – the intricate interplay between her diverse lineage and the consequent discord between her Muslim and Hindu affiliations. Nisha's self-identification as "half-Muslim, half-Hindu" draws attention to the intricate nature of her personal identity, which is frequently portrayed as a binary construct within societal discourses.

This statement exemplifies Nisha's endeavour to harmonise her dual religious heritage, both of which possess profound cultural and historical importance. Within a societal context that frequently prioritizes distinct religious classifications and divisions, Nisha's self-identification serves as a source of resistance against these inflexible demarcations, instead embracing her hybrid identity. This statement denotes her aspiration to incorporate and accept the dual aspects of her cultural background, recognizing the interconnectedness between her Muslim and Hindu lineages.

Moreover, Nisha's self-description as being of mixed Muslim and Hindu heritage serves to underscore the internal conflict she grapples with as she endeavors to harmonize the divergent expectations and societal pressures that are placed upon her. In a sociocultural context characterized by religious divisions and conflicts during the partition, the individual experiences a sense of internal conflict as she grapples with her affiliation to two religious communities that are frequently depicted as mutually exclusive. The aforementioned internal conflict serves as a reflection of the broader political and social backdrop within the novel, wherein religious affiliations assume the role of distinguishing factors that fuel division and hostility.

The internal conflict experienced by Nisha is intensified by the divergence in religious backgrounds between her parents. The individual encounters a feeling of fragmentation while managing her dual identity and grappling with her position in a society that frequently requires allegiance to a single religious identity at the expense of the other.

The line symbolizes Nisha's quest for a sense of belonging and her aspiration to achieve inner harmony, despite the external factors that attempt to create divisions within her. The portrayal of the protagonist depicts her as a youthful individual endeavoring to carve out her own trajectory, surpassing the limitations imposed by societal dichotomies, and embracing the cultural abundance of her ancestry.

The novel depicts Nisha's journey of self-discovery, as she navigates the complexities of her identity by engaging with themes of faith, cultural traditions, and societal norms. The narrative of her journey strikes a chord with readers who may encounter comparable obstacles in navigating their own identities and assimilating into multicultural environments.

The statement "I feel half-Muslim, half-Hindu" within the novel "The Night Diary" serves as an indication of Nisha's internal conflict regarding her sense of self and establishes a foundation for the examination of the complexities surrounding personal identity and its intersection with political dynamics. The work highlights her endeavor to harmonize her dual heritage and confronts the inflexible constraints imposed by societal norms. Through the embrace of her

hybrid identity, Nisha's character prompts readers to engage in contemplation regarding the intricate nature of identity, the intricate dynamics of religious associations, and the process of self-negotiation within a global society characterized by diversity and division.

Is there a perpetual animosity between Muslims and Hindus? Nisha's inquiry reflects her cognizance of the persistent hostilities between Hindus and Muslims during the partition period. This observation illuminates the prevalent animosity and fragmentation existing between the two communities. Nisha's inquiry presents a critical examination of the prevailing belief in inherent animosity among religious groups, thereby raising doubts about the necessity of hatred and emphasizing her aspiration for unity and mutual comprehension.

The individual expresses a desire for their heart to simultaneously occupy two distinct locations. In this particular statement, Nisha articulates her profound yearning for a sense of affiliation and inclusion within the realms of her Hindu and Muslim identities. The text effectively portrays the protagonist's emotional distress and her desire to reconcile the apparent contradictions within her cultural background. The protagonist's yearning to exist simultaneously in two locations, underscores her internal conflict with the dichotomy of her sense of self, thereby introducing a heightened level of intricacy to the storyline.

I express remorse for the historical instances of conflict between Hindus and Muslims, acknowledging the negative actions perpetrated by both religious communities towards one another. Nisha's demonstration of empathy and guilt in this context indicates her comprehension of the collective accountability for the acts of violence and atrocities perpetrated by both religious factions throughout the partition. This statement critically questions the concept of a singular and homogeneous "Muslim other" and underscores the intricate and multifaceted nature present within both communities. The text effectively presents Nisha's multifaceted viewpoint and her rejection of a simplistic, uni-dimensional narrative centered on assigning fault.

Each individual possesses numerous internal components, Cuckoo. Furthermore, it is imperative that we acquire the necessary skills to coexist harmoniously with these entities. The aforementioned statement, directed towards Nisha's feline companion named Cuckoo, succinctly captures the core theme of the novel, which revolves around the notion of embracing and harmonizing the diverse facets that constitute an individual's identity. This concept serves to underscore the notion that individuals have the capacity to embody multiple identities and yet manage to coexist in a state of harmony. Nisha promotes the notion of acknowledging the multitude of aspects within oneself as a means to foster acceptance and unity, thereby surpassing the dichotomy between self and other.

Neo-Orientalism, a term denoting a contemporary manifestation of Orientalism, has surfaced in the postcolonial epoch. The phenomenon encompasses the perpetuation of stereotypes and the exoticization of non-Western cultures, frequently manifesting in subtle and nuanced manners. The analysis of Muslim characters and the formation of personal identity in relation to the "Other" can be explored within the context of the critical framework presented in "The Night Diary" (Said, 1978; Shohat & Stam, 1994).

The Formation of Personal Identity: The central character of the novel, Nisha, finds herself in a complex situation as she navigates between the cultural backgrounds of her Hindu father and Muslim mother. The protagonist engages in a profound exploration of her personal identity and the concept of belonging, as evidenced by her introspective diary entries. The internal conflict experienced by Nisha is influenced by the external political forces and societal expectations that revolve around her mixed heritage. The author's exploration of one's personal journey towards understanding and embracing oneself highlights the intricate process of managing one's identity within a polarized and politically charged context (Hiranandani, 2018).

The Night Diary portrays a wide range of Muslim characters, each embodying distinct facets of Muslim identity, thereby highlighting the multifaceted nature of the Muslim "Other." Nevertheless, it is imperative to undertake a critical analysis of the depiction of these characters in order to ascertain whether they conform to or subvert neo-Orientalist conventions. Do individuals in this context face the risk of being reduced to stereotypes, or are they afforded agency and individuality?

An individual deserving of analysis within the narrative is Kazi, the family servant of Nisha. Although Kazi is portrayed as a compassionate and benevolent character, his primary function revolves around providing assistance to Nisha's family and fulfilling their various needs. The aforementioned portrayal prompts inquiries regarding the power dynamics and potential paternalistic inclinations inherent within the narrative (Hiranandani, 2018).

Furthermore, the novel's thematic emphasis on the acts of violence and hostility committed by certain Muslim characters during the partition period has the potential to perpetuate and reinforce negative stereotypes associated with Muslims. Hiranandani (2018) runs the risk of reinforcing a narrative that links Muslims with acts of violence and extremism, thereby contributing to the discourse of neo-Orientalism.

Critiquing Neo-Orientalism: The Night Diary demonstrates certain neo-Orientalist inclinations, yet it also incorporates components that actively question and undermine these conventionalized portrayals. An illustrative example can be found in Nisha's interpersonal connections with her Muslim acquaintances, Shabbir and Kazi, which serve to underscore the universal aspects of human existence and the interconnectedness that surpasses religious disparities. The novel presents the characters as complex entities, each possessing their own distinct fears, aspirations, and hopes.

Hiranandani effectively depicts the consequences of partition on Hindu and Muslim populations, illustrating the shared hardships and collective bereavement endured by these communities. The novel provides a critique of neo-Orientalist narratives that attribute violence and division solely to Muslims by accentuating the shared trauma and humanizing the Muslim characters (Hiranandani, 2018).

The internal conflict experienced by Nisha is influenced by the external political forces and societal expectations that are associated with her mixed heritage (Hiranandani, 2018).

The analysis of the depiction of Muslim characters in "The Night Diary" is necessary in order to determine whether they conform to or challenge neo-Orientalist tropes (Hiranandani, 2018).

The character of Kazi, who serves Nisha's family, is portrayed as displaying qualities of kindness and compassion. However, it is important to note that his primary function within the narrative is to provide assistance to Nisha's family and cater to their various needs. This depiction raises pertinent inquiries regarding power dynamics and the presence of paternalistic tendencies, as explored by Hiranandani in her work published in 2018.

The novel's thematic exploration of the acts of violence and hostility committed by certain Muslim characters during the partition period has the potential to perpetuate negative stereotypes concerning Muslims, thereby contributing to the discourse of neo-Orientalism (Hiranandani, 2018).

The interpersonal connections between Nisha and her Muslim acquaintances, Shabbir and Kazi, serve as a poignant illustration of the universal human experience and the capacity for forging meaningful relationships that transcend religious disparities (Hiranandani, 2018).

Hiranandani's work examines the consequences of partition on individuals belonging to the Hindu and Muslim communities, with a particular focus on highlighting the collective suffering experienced by both groups. Moreover, Hiranandani endeavors to humanize the Muslim

characters, thereby challenging prevailing neo-Orientalist narratives (Hiranandani, 2018). The analysis of the self-construction in "The Night Diary" reveals that Nisha's process of self-discovery and self-acceptance is significantly shaped by the external political dynamics and societal norms that revolve around her complex Hindu-Muslim background (Hiranandani, 2018). The individual engages in a process of grappling with inquiries pertaining to personal identity and the concept of belonging, thereby highlighting the intricate nature of navigating one's own self-perception within a politically charged context.

The novel portrays a wide range of Muslim characters, each embodying distinct facets of Muslim identity (Hiranandani, 2018). The critical analysis of the depiction of these characters is crucial in discerning whether they perpetuate or subvert neo-Orientalist tropes. Through an analysis of the agency and individuality attributed to Muslim characters, a comprehensive comprehension of their role within the broader narrative can be attained.

Conclusion

This study examines the politics of self and Muslim other in diaspora fiction, focusing on Mohsin Hamid's novel, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. The analysis reveals that the novel's portrayal of the Muslim other is complex and challenges binary oppositions and stereotypes in Western societies. It also highlights identity formation and the challenges faced by diaspora individuals in navigating their identities in a globalized world. The study critiques the post-9/11 world, characterized by Islamophobia and erosion of civil liberties. The study contributes to existing literature on diaspora fiction and Postcolonialism by offering a nuanced analysis of the portrayal of the Muslim other in Mohsin Hamid's novel, emphasizing the need to recognize the complexity of identity formation and the importance of challenging binary oppositions and stereotypes. Additionally, diaspora fiction provides a platform for marginalized voices to be heard and validate their experiences, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and diverse understanding of the world in today's globalized society.

Diaspora fiction is a valuable tool for understanding the complex relationship between the self and the Muslim other in a postcolonial world. This study examines Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, focusing on the representation of the Muslim other and its challenges to stereotypes. The novel also highlights the role of Western imperialism and capitalist exploitation in shaping global power dynamics, perpetuating a binary opposition between the West and the Muslim Other. This study contributes to the ongoing discourse on postcolonial literature and the politics of representation in diaspora fiction. It emphasizes the agency of diasporic writers in shaping their communities' narratives and subverting dominant discourses. It also emphasizes the need for a more nuanced understanding of the Muslim other beyond monolithic and stereotypical representations. Engaging with the complexities of identity and power in diaspora fiction helps better understand the contemporary realities of a globalized and interconnected world. One character, Kazi, is a family servant who primarily assists Nisha's family and fulfills their needs. This portrayal raises questions about power dynamics and potential paternalistic tendencies within the narrative. It is crucial to consider whether Kazi perpetuates a subservient or stereotypical image of Muslim individuals.

The novel "The Night Diary" by Veera Hiranandani explores the politics of self and representation of the Muslim "Other" during India's partition. It highlights violence and hostility committed by certain Muslim characters, raising concerns about the reinforcement of negative stereotypes about Muslims. However, the novel also challenges these stereotypes by highlighting the shared humanity and bonds between Muslim characters, such as Nisha's relationships with Shabbir and Kazi. These characters are multidimensional and represent their own fears, hopes, and aspirations, challenging the reduction of Muslim characters to one-dimensional stereotypes.

Hiranandani's portrayal of the impacts of partition on both Hindus and Muslims demonstrates the mutual suffering and loss experienced by communities on both sides. By emphasizing shared trauma and humanizing Muslim characters, the novel presents a critique of neo-Orientalist narratives that attribute violence and division to Muslims. By critically engaging with the text, readers can navigate the complexities of representation, identity, and power dynamics in such narratives. "The Night Diary" by Veera Hiranandani explores the complex dynamics surrounding individual identity and the portrayal of the Muslim community as the "Other" during India's partition. The character of Kazi, the domestic servant of Nisha's family, is depicted as compassionate and benevolent, but his primary function is to provide aid to Nisha's family. This portrayal raises questions about power dynamics and potential paternalistic inclinations within the narrative. The novel also examines violence and hostility enacted by specific Muslim characters during the partition period, raising concerns about the perpetuation of unfavorable stereotypes about Muslims.

However, "The Night Diary" also presents a critique of these stereotypes. Nisha's interactions with Muslim acquaintances, Shabbir and Kazi, emphasize the universal aspects of human existence and the connections that transcend religious disparities. The novel portrays the characters as complex entities with individualistic fears, aspirations, and hopes, contesting the oversimplification of Muslim characters into one-dimensional archetypes.

Hiranandani's portrayal of the consequences of partition on Hindu and Muslim populations highlights the shared anguish and deprivation endured by these communities. The novel offers a critique of neo-Orientalist narratives by emphasizing the interconnectedness of humanity, personal autonomy, and universal encounters with grief and hardship. Through critical analysis, readers can navigate the intricate aspects of representation, identity, and the underlying power dynamics present within these narratives.

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