

Resistance Narratives: A study of H. M. Naqvi's Home Boy

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Abstract

The present paper analyzes H. M. Naqvi's *Home Boy* as counter-narrative to Orientalism in Western discourse that writes back to the American Empire apropos September 11 and terrorism. Naqvi tries to analyze, describe, problematize and destabilize Orientalist discourse of "othering" and "stereotyping". The narrative protests against American imperialism—its belligerent foreign policy, its suppression and exploitation of third world countries, interference in other countries, and occupation and invasion of foreign lands. The narrative starts as a typical immigrant narrative in which the protagonist comes to the United States in pursuit of the American dream of prosperity, happiness and freedoms. Initially, the protagonist has assimilative and accommodative tendencies in the hopes of partaking in the economic and social privileges bestowed by a prestigious American education and lucrative employment in big financial institutions in the metropolis. However, the events of September 11 exacerbate an already precarious atmosphere of discrimination that exists in the novel in which their protagonist is treated as an outsider and enemy.

Keywords: Orientalism, occidentalism, September 11 Novels, resistance narratives.

Direnç Anlatıları: H. M. Naqvi'nin Home Boy Adlı Eserinin İncelenmesi

Öz

Bu çalışma, H. M. Naqvi'nin *Home Boy* adlı eserini Amerikan İmparatorluğu'na 11 Eylül ve terörizm ile ilgili Batı söylemindeki Oryantalizme karşı cevap veren bir direnç anlatısı olarak incelemektedir. Naqvi, romanında "öteki" ve klişeleştirme ile ilgili Oryantalist söylemi analiz etmeye, tanımlamaya, problemize etmeye ve dengeleştirilmeye çalışmaktadır. Anlatı, Amerikan emperyalizmine, savaşçı dış politikasına, Üçüncü Dünya ülkelerinin baskı altında tutulmasına, sömürülmesine, diğer ülkelere müdahalesine, yabancı toprakları işgaline karşı bir protesto anlatısıdır. Anlatı, kahramanın refah, mutluluk ve özgürlük rüyasının peşinde koştuğu tipik bir göçmen anlatısı olarak başlar. Başlangıçta, kahraman prestijli bir Amerikan eğitimi ve metropolde büyük finansal kurumlarda kazançlı istihdamın getirdiği ekonomik ve sosyal imtiyazlardan faydalanma umuduyla özümseyici ve uzlaşmacı eğilimler sergiler. Fakat, 11 Eylül olayları, kahramanın yabancı ve düşman olarak gördüğü ve zaten mevcut olan ürkütücü ayrımcılık atmosferi ile karşılaşmasıyla, bu ayrımcılık daha da şiddetlenmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Şarkıyatçılık, oksidentalizm, 11 Eylül Romanları, direnç öyküleri.

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INTRODUCTION

The event of September 11 and terrorism transformed the world. Relationships among nations generally and between the West and third world countries specifically became strained. In *Orientalism*, Said focuses on the Western side of the conflict between the West and East. He suspected that there was a lack of continuity of the prejudicial Orientalist discourse, and even its exacerbation, after September 11. In "Islam and the West are Inadequate Banners", Said argues, everyone in America after September 11 incited an ambiguous "war against terrorism" without answering multiple questions about the means and ends of such a war, the enemy, and America's controversial role in the world ("The West and Islam). Yet, these ambiguities and vague suggestions were manipulated to make "the Middle East and Islam" the targeted enemy of the West ("The West and Islam"). Despite these continuities of Orientalism, he was also optimistic about intellectual, ideological and political resistance narratives and challenges to Orientalism in a post-September 11 world (Said, 2003, p. 326). In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said explains the ever-present resistance that takes place in the "interacting" experience that "links imperializer with the imperialized" (1994, p. 194). Said writes that there was always a resistance, "the assertion of nationalist identities" and along with colonialism "there was *always* some form of active resistance" (1994, p. xii).

Criticism of September 11 novel mostly deplores the limiting aspects of the evolving trends-the typically Western and more specifically American interpretation and response to the September 11 event, an unimaginative response to the conflict, and more importantly, the "War on Terror," rhetoric. Most third World countries, specially Islamic countries, believe "War on Terror" to be an excuse against weaker nations in order to further the imperialist goals of the American empire. Instead of taking a balanced view, American authors have taken an Orientalist approach, which hampers any meaningful understanding of the other, the conflict or terrorism or the event of September 11. Gray finds September 11 fiction unimaginative due to its "domestication" (2011, p. 51) of the crisis and its limited ability to "encounter strangeness" (2011, p. 32). Contrary to America's expanding empire and its involvement in world's affairs, authors go inside their national borders. Similarly, in comparison to Henry James and Joseph Conrad's successful engagement with "new, impersonal forces," Martin Randall believes that "contemporary American writers have been too preoccupied with purely national, local and domestic concerns, and in doing so have ignored the importance of their relationship with global forces" (2011, p. 134).

This parochialism has been compounded by content focused on issues such as Islam because its discussions call up negative images perpetrated by intensified Islamophobia in the West. The media, governments and even literature have contributed to the exacerbated perpetration of these images. As Homi Bhabha argues in his response to the September 11 attacks, it was "difficult to draw a line between the outrage and the anxiety by terrorist attacks" in the heat of the moment after the attacks (2002, p. 1). Islamophobia, which was already there in the West due to historical roots, was triggered by September 11, as John L. Exposito argues in his introduction to *Islamophobia: The Challenge of Pluralism in the 21st Century* (2011, p. xxii). Thus, it has become difficult in the West to "invoke 'Islamic' images without calling up the Abu Ghriab album, the televised beheading of an American businessman, and many other entries in the *musee macabre* of war and terror" (Bhabha, 2002, p. 31). Some September 11 novels too contribute to "these pernicious stereotypes of Muslims by suggesting that Islam is the cause of political violence" (Morton, 2010, p.18).

Despite these dual features of Islamophobia and parochialism that haunt many post September 11 novels in the West, there have been counter-narratives that suggest the East is equally the victim of the scourge of terrorism. These narratives also discuss America's increasing role in the world and raise questions about its predominantly controversial involvement in instances of violence in mostly Islamic countries. *Home Boy* is a representative novel of this evolving trend. The novel's subject is the "insular tendencies" of the American September 11 novel to the "postcolonial gaze" in order to resist the accelerated process of re-signification of older forms of colonialism by the American empire after September 11" (Hartnell, 2012, p. 82). This and other similar novels are part of a new era of "internationalization of the novel in English" (Head, 2008, p. 100) in which issues are not exclusively American or Western, but have become "worldlier" (Medovoi, 2011, p. 644) to include issues outside of the West's borders.

Home Boy offers these internationalized and worldlier narratives of protest against the continuities of Orientalism and exploitation. This resistance narrative by a third world writer against Orientalism and imperialism appropriate the novel form to provide "a more developed historical analysis of the circumstances of economic, political, and cultural domination and repression," and to challenge the "historical and historicizing presuppositions" in western literary discourse, whose ideological paradigms put people in plots with predetermined endings of a master-slave narrative (Harlow, 1987, p. 78). The weaker and oppressed are blamed as responsible for the unequal power-relationship that justifies their need to resort to violence. The writer of this novel arrives at different and opposite conclusions by making America equally responsible for resorting and contributing to violence. The burden of historical knowledge, "historical referencing" (Harlow, 1987, p. 80) is on the reader, as the novel tries to give new historical facts hitherto unknown to the readers. Pakistanis and readers in the third world might get exposed to some new facts about America, its efficient economic and educational systems, the kindness and humanity of its individuals, which might be different from the all-evil America they know. Similarly, Western readers might get exposed to facts unlike the official ones, which always blame Islam and Muslims for violence.

Naqvi offers counter-narrative because he has studied and stayed for some considerable time in America and, therefore, understand its ethos and literary discourse. Naqvi studied at Georgetown and Boston Universities, worked in the financial sector in New York, and now divides his time between Pakistan and U.S. His main protagonist mirrors those lives. Chuck (Shehzad), Naqvi's protagonist in *Home Boy* studied at New York University, works in a bank on Wall Street, and drives a cab after losing his job. Education and work experience make him credible individual who has lived in two cultures and who has obtained a significant knowledge of both. This hybrid identity allows the protagonist to have a simultaneous awareness of both "the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts" (Said 1994: 51), thereby enabling his protagonist to re-signify history. His narrative constantly questions, challenges, and resists the historicity of western discourse regarding its signification and identification. Naqvi does this by historicizing the rich historical heritage of Pakistan in the past and its current decline. As a peace-loving nation, it's equally the victim of extremism and terrorism. Its people have educational, economic and social dreams like those in the West. Contrary to their violent and backward stereotypes in the discourse of Orientalism, it has a heterogeneous population of diverse individuals.

To achieve this, Naqvi makes use of popular tropes in postcolonial theory to tell the interlinking experience between the imperializer and the imperialized in an atmosphere of as cited in Said, "mutual siege" (1994, p. 195) in the postcolonial and neo-colonial world. These tropes include identity, stereotype, difference, ambivalence, home, migration, culture, hybridity and imperialism in a migratory world of vanishing borders. The protagonist in the novel tries to negotiate new identity in pursuit of social and economic goals, contrary to the orientalist discourse, which fixes identities. The discourse heightens after September 11, and this young man suffers disorientation, as his racial, religious and national identity becomes suspect in the eyes of the people and law in America. His individual experiences of discrimination compels him to engage with broader issues of identity, the conflict between America and Islam, and America's involvement in the world and Pakistan. Despite his innocence and openness to other cultures, he is forced towards his previously static identity. After relentless discrimination and loss of hope, he reconsiders his previous allegiance, becomes resentful towards America, and goes back to Pakistan.

Home Boy resists and moves away from America. This is an immigrant tale in reverse. Typically, immigrant tales concerned with coming to America, narrate the ordeals, hopes and disappointments of people who want to be enriched from an immersion in American society. This narrative is different though because it not only explains why he came to America, but also elaborate as to why he left it (Medovoi, 2011, p. 644). This is quite contrary to what Gray requires the September 11 novel to achieve. He wants the September 11 novel to engage imaginatively with the new crisis in the form of a narrative to deal successfully with strangeness or newness and to engage the "other". Gray considers novels like Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* (1989) and Christina Garcia's *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992) as successful attempts to engage with this newness. According to him, these immigrant novels succeed, as their immigrant characters make up new identities in "their liminal conditions, their position between historical borders and cultures" (Gray, 2011, p. 88). Michael Rothberg supplements this "deterritorialized" (Gray, 2011, p. 71) America, which he thinks is centripetal, with a centrifugal one (153). In other words, Gray's model is based on America becoming a universal nation, whereas Rothberg believes in the outward universalization of America. *Home Boy* partially follows Gray's model but then switches towards Rothberg's model to show the outward movement and impact of "America's global reach" to reveal "the cracks in its necessarily incomplete hegemony" (Rothberg, 2009, p. 158). The novel concerns the immigrant protagonist who initially is passionate about education, work and life in America. However, the American dream of happiness and freedom is shattered by circumstances following the September 11 attacks, which necessitates a re-evaluation of his previous assessment of America. The protagonist decides to return home. In these voyages out, *Home Boy* is pessimistic, as it fails in its hopes concerning a peaceful co-existence in a post-September 11 America.

Said believes that such resistance narratives become the methods oppressed people "use to assert their own identity and the experience of their history" (194, p. xii). *Home Boy* starts with a thematic sentence, which resists the imposed history of Orientalism. The discourse of that imposed history has transformed those in the East into outcasts like "Japs, Jews, Niggers" (Naqvi, 2011, p. 1). Therefore a narrative is needed to push back against how they are currently perceived and a history lesson provided to explain how that perception was formed. Naqvi is quick to assert how the protagonist and his friend, having read the "postcolonial canon" (2011, p. 1) now want to express their interpretation of history and its

influences on issues in the present against the background of a discourse of terror which reiterates "the colonial in the postcolonial world" (Boehmer&Elleke, 2010, p. 6). The novel engages with these perceptions in an immigrant tale where the protagonist and his friends suffer the hardships of discrimination, stereotyping, othering and dislocation. The story moves around immigrants from Pakistan, the Caribbean and Africa. Chuck (Shehzad), a Pakistani student in the U.S., is the first person narrator. He along with his friends AC (Ali Chaudhry) and Jimbo (Jamshed), also immigrants from Pakistan, are the main characters in the novel. AC is a Ph.D. student who has been trying to write his dissertation for a long time. Jimbo is a DJ who has a flare for bringing together and combining words from different languages and dialects into musical and funny rhymes. There are American characters, but they usually stay in the background. An American girl named Duck, who has an affair with Jimbo, plays a comparatively neutral role. There are American investigators and guards who have been depicted as sinister with one exception. Though the locale of the novel is the metropolitan space of New York, the stories revolve around immigrants, their experiences and identities.

1. THE EXILIC IDENTITY AND DETERRIORIZED-SELF

The identity of the author and his protagonist has a strong verisimilitude with Said's exilic identity. One might include others like Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak and Salman Rushdie in similar identity formations. Said's identity as an Arab-Palestinian Christian, American citizen and critic in academia inform the contours of his theory. As a cultural critic, his exposure to different cultures and ideas, and his movement across cultural and national borders contribute towards his exilic, hybrid and displaced identity. In his theory, hybridity is an effect of modern empire as "all cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated, and unmonolithic" (Said, 1994, p. xxv). Similar to Homi Bhabha's theory of hybridity, Said considers hybridity to be an asset, as "belonging ... to both sides of the imperial divide enables you to understand them more easily" (1994, p. xxvii). Regarding identity, both Said and Homi Bhabha believe in the unfixed, impure and ever-changing type. Identity always succumbs to change, as "each age and society recreates ... over historical, social, intellectual and political process that takes place as a contest involving individuals and institutions" (Said, 2003, p. 332). The uneven distribution of wealth between the first and the third, itself caused by colonialism and perpetrated by imperialism, the resultant migration and dislocation of people across borders in search of greener pastures, and the closing gap between the imperializer and imperialized have created conflicts among cultures and the vexing questions of identities. Naqvi and his protagonist grapples with the same cultural conflicts and conflictive identities. Both of them occupy liminal spaces by acquiring hybrid identities.

The immigrant characters in *Home Boy* occupy the same hybrid space, which is less conflictive and ambivalent before September 11. Chuck calls himself and his friends "Metrostanis" (Naqvi, 2009, p. 14, 99), a word that Naqvi has said applies to those people who "fuse this and that and the here and there into coherence" (qtd. in Aroosa Masroor). At another place in the novel, Metrostanis are described as working as bridges connecting cultures; they are the "glue keeping civilization together" (Naqvi, 2009, p. 26). These people from all over the world bring their languages, food, dress and other aspects of their respective cultures to metropolitan spaces like New York and London. They read authors

from the center and the periphery, listen to different types of music from around the world, watch different sports on TV, and try listening to and speaking new languages. Metrostanis sounds like Gautam Malkani's *Londonstani* (2006), a word that applies to an immigrant community who, coming from different nations, occupy the shared space of London. Chuck, the first person narrator of *Home Boy*, is a young man in his mid-twenties from Karachi, Pakistan. His motive for coming to America is essentially economic, as "the pursuit of happiness is material" for him (Naqvi, 2009, p. 35). He left his hometown for New York when he was seventeen for his undergraduate degree in literature. Later on he changed his major to banking. After completing his education, he worked in a bank on Wall Street, but was fired in a declining economy. In his struggle for economic independence, he considers himself in alliance with other immigrants in the United States, all like "peas in a pod ... denizens of the third world turned economic refugees ... by fate, by historical caprice" (Naqvi, 2009, p. 16). Still, Chuck, AC and Jimbo consider themselves self-invented and self-made individuals, who, occupy a similar liminal, hybrid or "third space" (Moore&Gilbert, p. 194). They consider themselves lucky to "have their fingers on the pulse of the great global dialectic" by living in America. These hopes turn sour after September 11 as their racial, religious and national identities turn them into pariahs.

In relative terms, religious identities in the novel plays a insignificant role until the end. Chuck and his friends in *Home Boy* are modern day young men who have no leanings towards religion. There is an explicit attempt in this novel to exclude religion from conflicts and reconfigure them in the context of geo-politics, economy and empire. As counter-Orientalist and resistance narratives, it tries to depart from Orientalism's implication of religion as a root cause of conflicts and terrorism. Even the protagonist's identification with ethnicity, culture or nation is sporadic and insignificant before September 11.

Home Boy argues for the comparative peace in Pakistan in the past before the intrusion of America in the region as its narrative provides the reader with the country's recent history. It recalls how this peaceful country became violent and instable because of the Cold War and the war against the USSR in neighboring Afghanistan. Pakistan was used as a launching pad to wage a protracted war against Communism. The Mujahedeen, a group of religious fanatics, was created, brainwashed, supplied with arms and ammunition, and trained in guerilla warfare by American and Pakistani security agencies (Naqvi, 2009, p. 13). The novel implies that at the end of the war and defeat of Soviet Union, America left Afghanistan in the lurch. As the situation in Afghanistan got out of control due to fighting among warlords in the early 1990s, the same old players brought together the remnants of the early Mujahedeen to create the Taliban, a ruthless group of orthodox Muslims. *Home Boy* connects the worse security situation in Pakistan with a destabilized Afghanistan. Refugees from previous Afghan wars and the impending American attack on Afghanistan after September 11 created turmoil in Pakistan. Internally, the political and security situation in Pakistan deteriorated with the overthrow of the democratic government by the military with support from the United States in 1999. In *Home Boy*, this instability inside Pakistan affects the Pakistani immigrant community in the United States. Some characters support the military government for its fight against terrorism, and the comparative economic prosperity during the dictatorship of General Pervez Musharraf, who allied with America in war on terror, whereas others blame the military government for its unconditional alliance with the United States.

These divisions, in and outside Pakistan, create anxiety for many characters in the novels. Chuck's mother constantly worries about the precarious situation in Pakistan due to the impending attack in Afghanistan and wants her son to stay in the United States (Naqvi, 2009, p. 50). In *Home Boy*, Pakistani Americans are confident that the economic and military aid of America will strengthen Pakistan. They also respect America's right to defend and retaliate, as it has been attacked. Chuck however disagrees, as he believes that America's obsession with security has put the lives of innocent people like him at risk. Chuck finds comments about corruption, fundamentalism, and other socio-economic problems in Pakistan upsetting, but at the same time exaggerated. He suggests that these perceptions are based on a few news stories spread by the media, which constant repetition turns into the norm. Both novels reveal Pakistanis who blame the United States for security, economic and political problems in the country. Historically, Pakistan has been a close ally of the United States in the South Asian region. Pakistan became the base during the Cold War, and later the supply line, in the West's war against the USSR in Afghanistan in the 1980s. As America left the region after USSR's dismemberment in 1988, Pakistan experienced upheavals due to bad law and order situations, a bad economy, internal strife, civil wars in Afghanistan, and a precarious relationship with India. After September 11, Pakistan became a launching pad against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. The security situation declined further as extremist forces in Pakistan and Afghanistan turned against the Pakistani government due to its uncritical alliance with the United States. It has since become a common perception in Pakistan that all kinds of problems in the country are due to America's interference.

2. FRUSTRATION AND AMBIVALENCE TOWARDS THE U.S.

It is true that Chuck has a sense of displacement and feelings of nostalgia for home, but then these are concomitants of the postcolonial condition and migration. Empire and the uneven distribution of wealth between first world and third world and wars prompt migration across national borders. This displacement brings with it the "vexed questions of identity, memory and home" (Ashcroft et al, 2002, p. 218). Chuck displays these feelings of displacement. Similarly, Chuck is happy with his life in America, though he misses the food, Lollywood movies (Lahore and Bombay movies named after Hollywood as Lollywood and Bollywood, respectively), and the "simple times and simple pleasures" of life back in Pakistan (Naqvi, 2009, p. 42). Once the process of alienation intensifies after September 11, the feeling of displacement intensifies too. After torture in detention, Chuck wishes he had never come to America. Back in Pakistan he was "himself" and "fully alive," whereas his life in America has become lonely and frustrated (Naqvi, 2009, p. 273). There is a pre and post September 11 America in the novel. As the alienation on different fronts intensifies, the protagonist resorts to an intensified identification strategy for control and stability. As America changed after September 11, it enforced a certain obligation of change on others. In simple terms, a pre-September 11 love of America turns into resentment after September 11.

Chuck's pre-September 11 impressions of America are unambiguously optimistic. He came to the United States to realize the American dream of economic prosperity and freedom. In his optimism, he finds America more welcoming in comparison to other countries in the West. He believes that the founding fathers of Pakistan found the United Kingdom "hospitable if not always hospitable" (Naqvi, 2009, p. 19). In comparison, "America was something else" because of its friendly weather and warm people. He suggests that it is possible to spend ten years in Britain and not feel British, but after

spending ten months in New York, one was a New Yorker, like an original settler (Naqvi 2009:19). New York offered itself as a cosmopolitan space of egalitarianism. All were equal and free. Chuck prides himself with fondest memories of the city while AC curses the terrorists as they have destroyed his city. Interestingly, the attachment is reserved for people and the cosmopolitan space of New York in the novel.

Relations with the American people are seen as more encompassing than geographic space. Similarly in the novel, though Americans hurt Chuck, they also help them. Gritty, the investigating officer, releases him at great risk to his job after he certifies that the charges against Chuck are false. Similarly, Jimbo is released by the intervention and recommendation of Duck's father, Drake. Drake also tries to help AC, but the latter is convicted of a crime unrelated to terrorism. The most harmonious relationship between the West and Islam is the possible future marriage of Duck and Jimbo in *Home Boy*. This is an occasion, which the novel foretells, that may provide a platform where the West and East might arrive at some understanding. Old Man Khan, Jimbo's father, even though he immigrated to the United States decades ago, still remains a staunch conservative Pathan. Jimbo is scared to tell his father about his relationship with Duck. Chuck and Jimbo's sister Amna are apprehensive about a possible overreaction from Old Man Khan to this improbable marriage of East and West. Against all pessimism though, Mr. Khan receives Duck, his would-be daughter-in-law, with respect and love. It is a singular moment of relief to see the East and West understand one another's true feelings and appreciate the same. And Chuck hopes that a "Pathan and Anglo-Saxon, Muslim and Episcopalian, immigrant and son of the soil"(27) might find some shared ground for peaceful coexistence.

Another occasion in *Home Boy* also points towards an improbable mutual understanding in the future. An obituary in a newspaper writes about Muhammad Shah, "a Pakistani Gatsby" (Naqvi, 2009, p. 27) who was killed in the September 11 attack. Chuck tries to remove the misperception that September 11 was carried out by Muslims to kill only people of other religions. Those who carried out the attack were fanatics, and they did not have any respect for religion. As Muslims were killed in the attack, Naqvi tries to convey the message that Muslims themselves are the victims of terrorism. The obituary of the slain Muhammad Shah is entitled "NO FRIEND OF FUNDAMENTALISM" (Naqvi, 2009, p. 270). He is described as having common American dreams and pursuits. Like others, he loved to eat out and read. His career was on a fast track as he worked hard. Contrary to the popular belief in America that "Muslims are fundamentalists" (Naqvi, 2009, p. 270), the obituary claims that Mohammad Shah was not. Like other Americans, he too wanted to settle down in life, get married, start a family and live like others around him.

3. IDENTITY ISSUE AND REACTING AGAINST STEREOTYPE

The media in America projects the third world countries to be corrupt, primitive, backward and resistant to change and progress. Uncritical Americans enjoy watching the invasion of other countries by their army without qualms. The so-called experts in the media talk about issues of life and death without credible knowledge. No one knows about the realities on ground or the loss of human life, "but everybody's busy parceling myths and prejudice as analysis and reportage" (Naqvi, 2009, p. 114). Innocent people become the victims of such misplaced perceptions, which are readily accepted by people. One such victim in *Home Boy* was Ansar Mahmood, a twenty- four-year-old Pakistani. This innocent student asked a passerby to photograph him against the Hudson. A guard at a nearby post

called the police because the shot included a water treatment plant. He was arrested, investigated, tortured and released after the FBI found him to be innocent. Ansar became a victim because he hailed from a perceived fundamentalist society.

Home Boy tries to dissociate religious connotation from the word “fundamentalist,” common in stereotypical parlance. The narrative uses the term in its usual meanings as someone who have radical views about issues. The term “fundamentalist” is employed to signify Iran as a dangerous neighbor of Afghanistan (Naqvi, 2009, p. 200). Chuck talks about these basic fundamentals of capitalism to increase value and profit in *Home Boy* (p.36). The implications of such an assessment are far-reaching. It is not Islam that is fundamentalist, but Capitalism. The identification of a few fundamentalist and violent individuals with mainstream Islam has become problematic because the stereotype is often taken for the whole. Then there are some Orientalists who believe that radicalism and fundamentalism is inherently Islamic. Francis Fukuyama considers the whole Muslim society as an “Islamic-fascist sea within which the terrorist swims” (Fukuyama, 2002, p. 34). *Home Boy* resists these Orientalist stereotypes by separating individuals from the pack. According to Chuck, the West perceives all Muslims as terrorists after September 11. Like stereotypes of black men as violent gang members and Jews as conspirators in the West, Muslims are perceived to be members of sleeper cells, plotting against America (Naqvi, 2009, p. 152). The West has lumped together all Muslims under a single stereotyped definition of Islam, which simplifies diverse and complex communities into a homogenous entity. Consequently, violence of one strayed individual would be considered collective violence. These are the stereotypes, which the investigator simultaneously imposes and questions when he explains to Chuck, “I’m trying to understand why Muslims terrorize ... does the Koran sanction terrorism” (Naqvi, 2009, p. 147). Chuck replies that he is Muslim and that he has read the Quran but he is not a terrorist. Similarly, Jimbo, the happy-go-lucky DJ is a “bad drunk—but he’s no terrorist” (p. 209). Naqvi tries to question the misplaced basis of these stereotypes to clarify the confusion surrounding the representation of Muslims in the West. He does this by giving examples of diverse Muslims from around the world, working and living in the United States along people of other faiths. Chuck and his friends go to bars and drink. Jimbo is in love with Duck, who is an American and Christian. If stereotypically believed that Islam enjoins the killing of infidels, Naqvi argues, how can a Muslim enter into marriage with a Christian or non-Muslim? Even Jimbo’s father, who happens to be a conservative Pathan from Northern Pakistan, is happy with their union. Naqvi tries to represent a progressive identity against a regressive identity of Muslims in the West.

Naqvi also tries to change the common misperception of a patriarchal Islamic society, which purportedly oppresses women. In the novel, women have control of domestic and non-domestic space. Mini Aunty is a successful professional woman working in the medical field in America. She has the influence to bring together influential people, including the Consular General to the United States and Federal ministers from Pakistan to her house parties in New York. Chuck, AC and Jimbo always turn to her for help. Chuck’s mother (Ma) has the most powerful influence on him. As a teenager, he remained a good kid because he “didn’t want to upset Ma” (Naqvi, 2009, p. 139). Chuck’s identity is nothing more than a projection of what his mother wants him to be. He summarizes the influence of his mother in one sentence during his investigations by Grizzly: “I suppose the single guiding motivation of my life has been to impress Ma” (p. 145). Although, his Ma never appears in the novel, Chuck mentions her incessantly whenever he tries to connect the present with the

past. He calls her daily, and keeps her informed about his everyday life in America. He would tell her petty things, but he did not tell her about his imprisonment, as “everything’s changed for worse” (Naqvi, 2009, p. 236). This youth does not have any religious, cultural or national heroes as his ideals. His life revolves around his mother.

Another female character in the novel is Amna, Jimbo's sister, to whom Chuck is attracted. Amna wears a veil even though she was born and raised in the United States. Chuck tries to know her reasons for wearing the veil in a place like America. There does not seem to be any social pressure compelling her to do so. He is surprised to know that she started wearing the veil (hijab) for non-religious reasons, but for a very common human reason to hide her chubbiness, as her schoolmates would bully her by calling her a “marshmallow girl” (Naqvi, 2009, p. 265). Chuck’s own view about the veil is quite contrary to the stereotype. Wearing the hijab weirds him out, as “donning the thing” is due to a faulty interpretation of religion (Naqvi, 2009, p. 68). Chuck’s mother never wore one and he himself “did not care to wear identity on sleeves” (Naqvi, 2009, p. 68). Similarly, the directives about liquor in Islam could “easily be interpreted either way” (Naqvi, 2009, p. 71). These examples point to the fact that Naqvi wants to humanize Muslims. They do things that average young Americans would do. These young scholars do not run from an American identity, but try to assimilate in or adapt to it. They even question Islam as a religion of peace. AC, who has leanings towards a “vigorous atheism” (Naqvi, 2009, p. 122), does not shy away from calling Islam a “bastard religion.” According to him, Islam is as violent as Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, and others, because it’s due to religion that “man has been killing and maiming ... since the dawn of time” (Naqvi, 2009, p. 122). Naqvi, in his attempts to counter stereotypes, goes to the extent of producing long and didactic speeches.

Naqvi has been criticized for producing implausible characters as he seeks to correct stereotypes. Hirsh Sawhney, in his review of *Home Boy* in *The Guardian* on 17 November 2011, finds Naqvi’s characters improbable, as the effort to make his characters more well-rounded backfires. Sawhney specifically mentions the inconsistencies in AC’s character, who works as a substitute teacher in a “rough-and-tumble South Bronx school” (Naqvi, 2009, p. 41), and receives medals and honors for his meritorious teaching services. These unlikely characters, as Sawhney argues, are expendable because these are “props designed to explode misconceptions about drug users, Pakistan or Islam.” Similarly, Naqvi’s prose becomes didactic and digressive at places to clarify misconceptions about his identity. This intent on Naqvi’s part becomes apparent in the first pages of the novel. Against the charge that “all you Pakistanis are the same,” Chuck responds in no unambiguous terms by saying that “we weren’t the same” (p. 2). Every single collective stereotype about Islam and Muslims is complicated in authorial commentaries and in discussions among characters. In one such discussion, Old Man Khan, while talking about gardening, connects it to the concept of Jihad in Islam to clarify misconceptions about it. In stereotypical terms, Jihad means the holy war Muslims are directed by Islam to wage against non-Muslims and unbelievers. *Home Boy* emphasizes the subjective interpretations of the concept in the context of individuals’ inner struggles. Old Man Khan considers gardening as his jihad since it is nothing more than doing God’s work to make Heaven on earth (p. 67). Here Jihad is the inner struggle to fight against one’s evil and temptations. It’s the struggle to remain moral and charitable to others. It also means the ordeals one bear to acquire knowledge. All these interpretations are ignored, as these would complicate the stereotype. As Naqvi tries to

counter stereotype, he also realizes its power. Chuck believes that he “could not change the way” he was perceived by others (Naqvi, 2009, p. 130). These perceptions intensified after September 11, which resulted in a proportional increase in discrimination.

According to Said the discrimination against diverse immigrant communities intensified after September 11 due to the fact that they were lumped together under a single denomination “Arab” despite a plethora of differences among these communities (2003, p. 305). *Home Boy* also raises this issue as protagonist is discriminated against as Arab. Chuck is not an Arab. In fact, religion is confused with ethnicity. One was taken for the other, demonized and abused. Even Sikhs from India, who usually have long beards, were abused because they were mistaken for Muslims and Arabs (Cohen, 2009, p. 6).

Home Boy bemoans the highhandedness and discrimination following September 11. As so many critics point out, Muslims as “suspect citizens” came under scrutiny for “signs of betrayal” (Maria, 2011, p. 111-112). Chuck and his friends are discriminated against and abused. As everything changes for worse, they abandon their carefree lifestyle to watch CNN all day, feeling “anxious and low and getting cabin fever” (Naqvi, 2009, p. 7). In public spaces, Chuck observes non-verbal forms of hatred towards him. He could see people stare at him for no obvious reasons. Chuck felt “like a marked man” as people would stare at him (p. 262). He was confused whether people stared “to tacitly claim him as their own or dismiss him as the Other” (Naqvi, 2009, p. 56). They got involved in a bar fight when some Americans take them for Arabs because of their skin color. Chuck expresses the helplessness of both parties to stay peaceful in the present due to a long history of hatred and enmity over which it seems they have little control because it derives from the “crushing momentum of history” (p. 30).

A police officer became suspicious about them for no obvious reason other than the existence of Chuck and his friends as a group. In his search for a clue as to why the police stopped and interrogated them, Chuck could not find any other reason except their appearance. Comparing pre and post-September 11 America, Chuck muses that no one in a pre-September 11 America could have predicted that it would be impossible for brown men to drive across America (Naqvi, 2009, p. 87). Now affronts from law and people are everywhere. Even bouncers at bars refuse to let them in because of their ethnicities. Naqvi recalls that there were so many hate-crimes that many Muslims crossed into Canada and Mexico to save their lives. Many would leave for the homes they had left decades ago, never to return (p. 229). Others were arrested, sometime even without reasonable suspicion, manhandled, tortured, and imprisoned for a long time. The same happened to Chuck and his friends. The pre-September 11 dreams of freedom and happiness became meaningless due to discrimination and torture. Chuck was compelled, as Sawhney argues, to “reconsider his own religious and national allegiances”(p. 229).

The turning point in the novel is their arrest by the authorities on charges of terrorism. The fear, uncertainty and insensibility of the arrest are depicted with graphic clarity. Readers feel fearful that the same can happen to anyone when the law reacts to misplaced fears. The arrest scene takes place against the background of President’s Bush’s famous speech to the nation after September 11. In the speech, which the novel recalls, the President assures the American nation of a befitting and just response to the terrorist attacks. The outside world is warned to either side with America or the terrorists. The President’s speech discourages those who “speak of an age of terror” following the loss of life and the logical outburst of

anger. He condemns this approach and advocates for “an age of liberty, here and across the world” (Naqvi, 2009, p. 129). Unfortunately, as incidents in the novel show, the government does opt for the “age of terror” approach to deal with violence. Žizek, in his famous essays following September 11, predicted somewhat similar approaches on America’s part. According to him, America could possibly go inside its shell, fortify itself against the outside or go outside and try that violence does not happen anywhere in the world (2002, p. 49). It should not only protect itself from violent attacks, but must stop violence in the world. As *Home* shows, America followed the first strategy in Žizek’s prediction. It also followed the second strategy, but instead of curbing violence around the world, it flamed it further.

Law enforcement agencies were given immense powers to strengthen America’s domestic defenses against immigrants from suspect nations. People were arrested without charges or lawful warrants. Muslims, and in some cases, the Sikh immigrant community, who look like Muslims because of their beards, were suspected, and in some cases violently beaten by private citizens, whereas others were arrested “on suspicion of terrorism on the flimsiest basis” by law enforcement agencies (Crockatt, 2007, p. 83). Muslims were subjected to extraordinary exceptions in the law to open the door to create “paralegal categories, torture, and rendition” (Morey-Yaqin, 2011, p. 35). Due to these highhanded and extrajudicial means, Chuck and his friends were not even told why they were arrested. They were frisked away in different cars by different personnel and taken to different destination centers. Rooney, Chuck’s investigator, uses intimidation and threatens to force Chuck to plead guilty to the charge that he and his friends are terrorists. If he does not agree, he will have to face the worst things in his life. As a non-American and persona non-grata without any rights, they might keep him imprisoned forever, or if he were lucky, they might deport him to Pakistan.

Rooney uses the word “Bumfukistan” for Pakistan to humiliate Chuck (2009, p. 135). Chuck is asked to take off his clothes in a very indecent manner. He’s called a “sand nigger” constantly. Grizzly, another interrogation officer, uses “Muslim” and “terrorist” alternatively, as he tells Chuck “You a terrorist, you a Moslem” (p. 43). From a baseless individual interrogation, there follows a general interrogation about Islam and Muslims. Instead of terrorism, Chuck’s identity, Islam, Quran and Islamic rituals of worship are scrutinized for signs of violence. The investigators have already made up their minds about Muslims as terrorists. They are now interested to know the reasons for their terrorism and its source in the Quran (p. 146). The investigators are not satisfied with Chuck’s answer that he’s a Muslim, has read the Quran, and that he has not found anything violent in Islam.

The interrogation turns out to be a debate between the stereotype and its reality. Chuck tries to apply the same rules of interpretation to Islam as Christianity and Judaism, arguing that while different people have interpreted religions other than Islam differently, it has been only Islam that has to be interpreted monolithically as violent. Grizzly is not persuaded by Chuck’s argument, as he believes that all Muslims around the world support their actions with violent injunctions that come from Islam. Grizzly’s retrenched position comes from an Orientalist discourse of prejudice and bias that turn innocent people into wicked and violent terrorists. After going through their belongings, the group is charged with possession of bomb making-manuals and plans. These bomb-making manuals turned out to be the text of *The Anarchist Cookbook* and Ibn Khaldun’s *Muqaddimah* that AC was studying for his PhD dissertation. Everything turns out to be a farce. Chuck and his friends

are “humiliated, starved, physically and mentally abused” for nothing wrong whatsoever on their part (Naqvi, 2009, p. 172). Something deeper and beyond individual control is working against them. The protagonist learns after many ordeals that it's the American empire, which is mistreating him and he therefore determines that it must be resisted.

4. CAPITAL AND CULTURAL SUPERIORITY

Home Boy is the continuity in the twenty-first century of what Said calls the “historical experience of resistance against empire” (1994, p. xii). Historically, according to Said, there has always been some form of resistance to colonialism and imperialism—armed resistance, cultural resistance to assert national identities and political resistance for self-determination and national independence. *Home Boy* takes the latter two forms. Its resistance narrative even goes a step further by blaming the American empire for conflicts and violence around the world. As a consequence, this narrative becomes a historical document of resistance, as well as an indictment of America for using force against individuals and countries. Said believes in the power of these narratives to disrupt the Western narrative of the Orient. Marginalized, exploited, suppressed and disenfranchised communities can employ such resistance narratives to let the mainstream discourse hear their different voices and recognize their histories. Working for the empire advances personal and professional goals. The empire is an object of romantic attachment, as “imagination has now been colonized by the United States” in the postcolonial world (Gray, 2011, p. 21). It is the center of global finance, which makes America “everything ... that people both hate and long for” (Buruma & Margalit, 2004, p. 14). It is also a violent and dangerous Empire against those who resist it. Moreover, it is an object of intelligible hatred because of its humiliating attitude towards other ethnicities and nations.

The September 11 novel has raised this issue of the totalizing order of the American empire against weaker populations around the world. Deborah Eisenberg's *Twilight of the Superheroes* (2007) reminds the reader about a “... dark world ... of population ruthlessly exploited, inflamed with hatred and tired of waiting for change” unknown to America till September 11 (p. 33). Jay McInerney's *The Good Life* (2006) speaks about the same exploited world which the U.S. views important only in “terms of investment and vacation opportunities” (p. 50). The consequence of this obsession with capital is a disinterest in what the rest of the world has to offer. In fact, the novel attempts to exclude reasons like religion and culture causing conflicts. Similarly, working on Wall Street as a banker, Chuck knows how the economic system operates. His conclusions about the exploitative nature of the system are the same, but, he is ready to perform the duties of a servant and an unwilling accomplice to capitalism who cannot resist the privileges bestowed by working inside the system. The fundamentals and principles of the economic system are the same in both novels. Chuck's bank's Vice President gives him similar lessons in economic growth. The system has to work by creating value and making markets more efficient. These fundamentals to increase material gains should be followed at all times. On a macro level, Capitalism commits itself to “Procrustean machinery” for its efficient working (Naqvi, 2009, p. 37). More worryingly, the whole system is based on the principle of slavery where one has to exploit the other. Chuck takes refuge in the excuse that since everyone else is a slave to the system, he cannot choose otherwise. To achieve his purely material goals, he has to participate in the only working economic system he knows, no matter how ruthless this makes him.

5. RESENTMENT AND RESISTANCE

Home Boy depicts a dangerous situation for the world due to America's aggressive response to September 11. The novel recalls *Post* calling upon America to respond in a swift fashion "to kill the bastards" and bomb cities and countries harboring them into basketball courts (Naqvi, 2009, p. 52). Similarly, *Time* presses for a "purple fury—a ruthless indignation that does not leak away in a week or two ... or wandering into ... corruptly thoughtful relativism" (p.52). Events following September 11, the wars in Afghanistan and in Iraq, and a growing phenomenon of terrorism were caused by such hasty policies inflamed by anger. Paul Gilroy believes that the "worst and most backward features of the latest U.S. imperial adventure" started to unfold after September 11 (Gilroy, 2005, p. xii). There was no critical thinking, as Said argues in his article "The West and Islam are Inadequate Banners," that appeared in *The Guardian* newspaper on 15 September 2001. Instead, collective passions and "thought-stopping fury" (Said, 2003, p. xxii) were "funneled into a drive for war" ("The West and Islam"). Said wanted a rational understanding of the situation after September 11, a revision of America's role in the world, and a new discourse of humanism to tackle issues and conflicts in the world.

Home Boy believes in similar ideals of Enlightenment, but unfortunately these ideals are difficult to be realized in presence of a thoughtless and revanchist mindset after September 11. This conflict between these opposite responses is played out in the novel in the arrest scene. Chuck, AC and Jimbo are on an innocent adventure to stop by their friend's house and find out his whereabouts, as no one knows where he is after September 11. The unfortunate friend was a victim of September 11 himself but they did not know. In his house, they listen to President George Bush's speech, challenging the world: "either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists" (Naqvi, 2009, p. 123). AC considers this in light of the biblical response of "Eye for an eye" to run counter to the ideals of the Enlightenment, to which the West professes adherence. His comment suggests that rationality demands of America a thoughtful perusal of its actions in the past to understand the conflict before it enters into thoughtless wars.

The novel goes into history to make the point that America is predominantly responsible for violence in the world. It created the Mujahideen in 1980s and later the Taliban in Afghanistan in 1990s, the twenty-first century pariah of the world. It creates them, and once the Frankenstein turns against its creator, the empire uses deadlier force to vanquish it. It creates stronger allies and friends who become ruthless enemies later. In the next phase, governmental and political rhetoric tries to convince the public that these enemies around the world resent America for its lack of power (Zizek, 2002, p. 49). The government empowers itself by convincing the public that it needs more funds and more stringent laws to fight the enemy. The reality is that it is the excesses of American power that create resentment against it in the third world. Based on the Manichean binaries of "us versus "them," America assumes "the hawkish, imperialist aspect that provokes a widespread sense of injustice, indignation and fear" (Bhabha, 2002, p. 4). The result is that more people are provoked into resentment toward America. *Home Boy* believes that instead of governmental rhetoric of "either you're with us or the terrorist," people should listen to dissenting voices like Emma Goldman, Noam Chomsky and Howard Zinn (p.123). These great names hold America to the same standards it applies to others.

As the American empire discriminates, exploits, alienates, frightens, kills and invade other countries despite reservations and resistance, the protagonist in *Home Boy* is provoked and disillusioned. Chuck transforms into a potentially violent individual who would like to exact revenge on those who have wronged him. Disillusioned and disappointed with America, he confesses to have welled with anger. Though sure that his friends were not involved in any kind of terrorist activities against America, he would have enlisted in the cause if they were guilty as charged (Naqvi, 2009, p. 138). After torture and humiliation in detention, Chuck was thinking of the Anarchist *Cookbook*, of "sabotage and acts of terrorism" (p. 247). He becomes paranoid and haunted. The pain of disillusionment was so depressing that he even tried to commit suicide. Chuck too disengages from America by leaving it for Pakistan. America has nothing for him now. He leaves because of "the fear, the paranoia, the profound loneliness that had become routine features of life" after September 11 (p. 267). Furthermore, he seems to become what stereotypes have believed him to be. After reading Mohammad Shah's obituary, Chuck recites from the holy Quran, thus a seemingly non-practicing Muslim seems to have leaned on his religion. Religion, culture and nation become his refuge.

The protagonist retreats into Islamism after "having been courted and then rejected by the West" (Head, 2008, p. 144). This conclusion is dangerous and might benefit the very Orientalist discourse this novel is resisting. The protagonist is pushed towards identification with religion and nation, which he uses as resistance against the very empire. Ironically, the empire benefits from such identifications, as it reinforces them in the first place. Similarly, the empire attracts and then repels them. Fukuyama believes that even though America is a favorite place for immigrants, it has the potential to repel. Mohammad Atta and several of the other hijackers were educated people who had lived and studied in the West. They were not seduced by the West, but instead "were sufficiently repelled by what they saw" (Fukuyama, 2002, p. 28). Buruma and Margalit have similar views about resentment among mostly Westernized populations in the third world, who mostly consume its images (2004, p. 15). As the preceding discussions show, the alienation is not caused by one factor. Most importantly, it is not caused by modernity, liberty, freedom or the prevalence of immorality and godlessness in the West in these novels that are the usual tropes used by Orientalist discourse. Instead, alienation in *Home Boy* is provoked by an intensified discourse of discrimination and domination after September 11.

The protest and resistance of *Home Boy* is in alliance with Said's theory of resistance to Orientalism and empire, but the protagonist's final leaning on cultural, religious and national identities are at odds with some of his assertions. Said discourages cultural resistance to imperialism taking the form of nativism and nationalism as a private refuge (Said, 1994, p. 275). Here Said was inspired by Frantz Fanon, who preferred "national consciousness" to "nationalism" for the former's international dimensions in communicating with others (Fanon, 1963, p. 179). National consciousness springs from an inner national identity, but moves outside to communicate with other nations and identities. Contrarily, nationalism moves inside towards a national identity, without meaningful outlets for communication. Chuck leaves the United States in sheer disappointment. Contrary to these, Said advises an "integrative or contrapuntal" approach, which sees the interacting experience between the Western and non-Western as one connected by imperialism (Said, 1994, p. 279). The imperial divide tries to separate the metropolis and the peripheries, but the two are connected, though there might not be "perfect correspondence" between the two

(Said 1994: 276). But nationalism, like imperialism, uses hierarchical structures, which resistance narratives should resist. *Home Boy* moves toward similar hierarchies of nationalism. The Orientalist discourse excludes him by a parochial and hierarchical process of othering. Likewise, this novel leans mostly on national identities, and to a lesser degree, religious identities, to create a similar discourse of exclusion and disengagement with the center. Instead of an outward interaction in the presence of national consciousness as Fanon and Said desire, this narrative moves away towards exclusive nationalism. It is true that he tried to engage with the empire, but moved away from it in the present, with no structures of future engagement at the end of these novel except further disengagement and alienation. The novel implies that the protagonist's leaning on his perceived hostile national and religious identity, and his alienation and disengagement from America are not initiated by him, but by the treatment meted out to them by America. There is also this veiled threat that as long as America uses force and discrimination against other nations and identities, there will always be resistance, violence, alienation, and instability in the world.

CONCLUSION

The international reaction to September 11 came with the publication of the *Home Boy*. It might have been inspired by the intensification of Orientalism in literature, media, and common parlance after September 11 as the author was in the United States at the time of the event. *Home Boy* takes out the conflict from the binaries of religion and situate it in a larger discourse of conflict between the United States and the third world. Discrimination and exploitation are continuations of Orientalism in the form of the American empire, whereas the resistance in the narrative is a continuation of historical resistance to imperialism. Economic globalization or transnationalism in this novel is the new form of that exploitation. Contrary to common phraseology, the novel transfers the concept of fundamentalism to the Western Capitalist system. The novel also brings up the resentment felt by the third world people against the United States' aggressive foreign policies. The novel indicates that the third world people stand united in their resistance to America. It is important that America should be stopped from pursuing aggressive policies against weaker nations. According to the novel, the September 11 event itself was a manifestation of that resentment which America ignored previously. H. M. Naqvi believes that terrorism existed before September 11, but as it was somewhere else, America did not recognize it.

The resistance narrative also proves the point that it is not religion or culture or any other ideology that pushes people to extremism, but America's policies of discrimination and use of force against others, which make them resort to violence in return. Their argument is that instead of the problems lying elsewhere, the real issue is Orientalist narratives in which people are transformed into the very stereotypes these Orientalist narratives portray. Chuck, an educated and liberal individual who has a high regard for the West, is such an individual. Contrary to Orientalist stereotype and othering, the narrative responds to Orientalist narratives by making the point that the alienation is not caused by modernity, liberty, freedoms or the prevalence of immorality and godlessness in the West. Alienation is caused by America's discriminatory policies and its complicity in spreading violence to achieve its national interest. The novel indicates that even though the protagonist tried to engage with America, transform his identity, even go for things Western, and get exposed to enlightened ideas in the West, his efforts failed due to America's Orientalist attitude. Instead he becomes the very stereotypes he is discriminated against. The resistance seems to have been justified by the novel, and serves as a kind of warning to America that as long as it continues with its highhanded policies to others, violence will continue.

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