

“Unwilled Choices”: The Exilic Perspectives on Home and Location in the Works of Zulfikar Ghose and Mohsin Hamid

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‘I once went to sleep and dreamt that I was a butterfly.
And then I woke up.
What am I, now?
Am I the man who went to sleep and dreamt that he was a butterfly;
Or am I the butterfly the man dreamt about?’ (Loa Tse, ‘The Way’)

Writing Home in Exile

Iocasta: What is an exile’s life? Is it great misery?
Polyneices: The greatest; worse in reality than in report.

(Euripides’s *The Phoenician Women*)

The phenomenon of human migrations and resultant shifts in cultural boundaries and shaping of identities is as old as human history itself. With the onset of the 20th century, the great imperial structures began to dismantle, resulting into large-scale immigrations from the former colonies to the erstwhile imperial centres. Never before in human history had so many crossings – geographical, cultural, racial – happened at such scale. On the heels of those crossings, the problem of identity of the immigrants emerged as the biggest issue among all such post-imperial concerns. The problem of cultural identity as it is studied in the postcolonial academia now is a result of the colonial encounter. The concepts of home/exile, cross-culturality/cultural purity, assimilation, and hybridity have become more important than the older forms of group identifications. Particularly “Home has become such a scattered, damaged, various concept in our present travails’ (Gurr 10). Closely related to the concept of home or Home is the classical idea of exile which has multiple layers of meanings. Andrew Gurr has suggested that a distinction should be drawn between the idea of exile, which implies involuntary constraint, and that of expatriation, which implies a voluntary

act or state. Edward Said has also explained four almost synonymous terms in his essay 'Reflections on Exile', that is, "exiles", "refugees", "expatriates" and "émigrés". In *Searching for Safe Spaces: Afro-Caribbean Women Writers in Exile*, Chancy provides a viable definition of exile as "the condition of consistent, continual displacement; ... the radical uprooting of all that one is and stands for, in a communal context, without loss of the knowledge of those roots" (1). Chancy has also delineated the specific conditions that force people to leave their countries of origin and live in involuntary exile:

The threat of governmental/political persecution or state terrorism; poverty enmeshed through exploitative labor practices that over-work and underpay; social persecution resulting from one's dehumanization because of color, gender, sexuality, class standing; ... the impossibility of imagining moments of leisure, moments for the nurturance of the soul.... Such indignities lead to suicide, violence, more poverty, a vicious cycle of hopelessness, or, finally, self-imposed exile, that is, emigration. (2)

Reading Chancy's list of possible reasons of exile, many writers of Pakistan come to mind who were either forced to leave or went into exile at will. A classic case in point is Faiz Ahmad Faiz. Iqbal Ahmad was another intellectual-activist who lived in many countries with his revolutionary zeal. Exile is often juxtaposed with escape – the yearning to redefine one's identity or to live out an imagined life elsewhere. In the context of contemporary Pakistani writings in English, many writers are living in diasporas and are documenting their exilic perspectives on home and exile. Bapsi Sidwa, Mohsin Hamid, Abdullah Hussain, Zulfikar Ghose, Hanif Kureishi, Nadeem Aslam and many others have given creative responses to their experiences of (voluntary or involuntary) exile. Invoking some of their writings, this article aims to answer three questions. First, that in the face of global migrancy and the formation of multi-lingual, multi-racial and multi-cultural societies in the west, to what extent the harmonizing of different cultures be realistically achieved without too many compromises on the part of the host or migrant communities? Second, what is the place and role of the creative writer, whose roots are located in one culture and whose mind is nurtured in another? Third, how the events of September-11 have become almost a cut-off point to

distinguish between the old/classical exile and the reformulations in the exilic perspectives of the Muslim migrants to the US and Europe, in particular?

The immigrant fiction writers in the Anglo-American world give overt and subtle references to the differences in life styles and culture they encounter in their host countries. Facing entirely new socio-cultural conditions, the immigrants in this body of work are often depicted as facing a series of crises of their values and beliefs, “surrendering to the unwilled choices” (Ghose 4), and, at times, discarding their original values for those of the host culture. As Iqbal Mahmood writes in his *Strategies of Negation*:

The immigrant fiction brings together people of diverse backgrounds, cultures, religions, nationalities and creeds. In addition to these concerns are the issues of migration, nationalities, displacement, diversity, and multiculturalism, which are addressed in a non-Western context. (Mahmood 24)

In this way, their previously whole, identifiable selves are shaken and split, resulting into a state of incessant anxiety, wherefore they endeavor to seek stability of their selves by resorting to establish new (hybrid) identities that conform to perceived expectations of the dominant society as a condition of acceptance. This dearth of stable identity and search for a new identity goes on under the influence of hegemonic influences that direct the transformation of identity. The exile only waits to reach “an interpretation that would solve the complex riddle of the buried self” (Ghose 72).

Homi K. Bhabha describes the state of displacement as a disorienting condition thus:

It captures something of the estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world – the unhomeliness – that is the condition of extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiation ... In that displacement, the *borders between home and world become confused*; and, uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting. (Bhabha 9) (emphasis added)

In this way, the sensibilities of diasporic communities are affected by the process of dislocation and, therefore, need regeneration, recollection, and creative reimagining of their memories in the production of their literature. In their writings, they attempt to depict their struggles with hierarchies that are inclined to set their culture aside. As a result the immigrants often have to replace their cultural values in favor of the values and practices of the dominant culture. Another aspect of the immigrants' haunted psyche is their memory. It "refers to the capacity to store and recall past experiences" (O'Sullivan et al. 177), yet its long-term storage in terms of history is significant in that it evokes nostalgic appeal among a displaced people in an alien setting. Thus, they nostalgically keep on recalling the language(s), customs, cuisine, values, beliefs, and even climate of their home vis-à-vis their host cultures. As Ghose writes in one of his poems:

My temporary peasant fervor
plays out its fantasy on the Texas hillside.
I'm not sure what this earth means to me.
I don't take the peasant's pride
in the quality
of the soil. I don't need to. But feel poorer
because of this loss,
this irrelevance. (37)

The immigrants, having an entirely different history, memory, and cultural roots are placed in a different land which "implies a disruption and forcing together of any unlike living things, grafting a vine or a rose onto a different root stock, making difference into sameness" (Young 26). Such grafting or hybridization, takes many forms: linguistic, cultural, political, racial, etc. Cultural hybridization forces the immigrants to live in a 'Third Space of enunciation' or a liminal buffer-zone:

Hybrid agencies find their voice in a
dialectic that does not seek cultural
supremacy or sovereignty. They deploy the
partial culture from which they emerge to
construct visions of community, and
versions of historic memory, that give

narrative form to the minority positions
they occupy: the outside of the inside: the
part in the whole. (Bhabha 58)

The immigrants' relationship with the culture of their host country is ambivalent as it continually fluctuates between wanting to live there and returning to their country of origin. It is a complex mix of simultaneous attraction and repulsion for a foreign culture. The relationship is ambivalent because an immigrant is never simply and completely opposed to his host land. "This relationship produces subjects whose mimicry of host culture is never very far from mockery. Ambivalence describes this fluctuating relationship between mimicry and mockery." (Ashcroft et al. 13) Among writers of Pakistani origin, Zulfikar Ghose is perhaps the only expatriate whose work is fraught with issues of ambivalence and the dilemma of living multiple identities. In Alpana Sharma Knippling's words "Zulfikar Ghose is a writer who transcends categories and exemplifies the complex nature of the Pakistani-American experience" (160).

Ghose's Triple Exile

His personal journey as a rootless man qualifies him almost as a modern day Odysseus: he has migrated to three continents and has lived in four countries, since his birth in 1935 in Sialkot (now in Pakistan) where, even before 1947 Partition of India, he felt and lived like an exile. He first went to Bombay and lived through the traumatic tragedies of Partition. Realizing that the old multi-cultural India was lost forever to the conflicting nationalisms, his family migrated to England where he first tasted the bitter-sweet fruit of exile in a world ravaged by the Great War.

Ghose is one of the most unusual world writers. Married to a Brazilian artist, Ghose has multiplied his exilic experience to a very complex state. In his third novel, *Triple Mirror of the Self*, he traces his own steps back to his Subcontinental roots. Like his own protagonist, who is known as Urim in the Amazon, Shimmers in London, and Roshan in India-Pakistan, Ghose has lived like an archetype cosmopolitan figure – mapping continents, exploring cities, breaking taboos, negotiating multiple identities. One is reminded of Bharati Mukharjee's character Jasmine who goes through several changes in quest of her identity; her journey starts in a small place in India as Jyoti and in the course of a few years changes from Jyoti to Jasmine to Jazzy to Jassy to Jase to Jane. However, unlike Jasmine who seems to oscillate between two points on the identity scale, the Ghose persona has a more splintered personality, imbibing various influences and getting

transformed in the process. He is more like Hanif Kureishi's young anti-hero, Karim, who proclaims at the outset in *The Buddha of Suburbia*:

My name is Karim Amir and I am an Englishman born and bred, almost. I am often considered to be a funny kind of Englishman, a new breed as it were, having emerged from two old histories.... Perhaps it is the odd mixture of continents and blood, of here and there, of belonging and not, that makes me restless and easily bored. (3)

The identity motif is closely linked to the place of birth and the changing landscape. Both Mukharjee and Ghose protagonists' names change with the shifting locale. His protagonist is not just the proverbial two-sides-of-the-same-coin; rather, in T.S. Eliot's phrase, 'a heap of broken images'; all of them ostensibly mirror one another and seem to be forming a composite self. From the silent, child-like Horuxtla whom he meets in the deep dark forests of the Amazon to various sexual escapades in Bombay and London he comes to live out a culture in all its peculiarities and subtleties. In a review article, Alamgir Hashmi has aptly summed up how Ghose's journey through decades of exile and alienation has determined the course of his life and creativity:

As a child he suddenly found himself chucked out of his original habitat; as a youth he had to leave the landscape to which he was accustomed and cope with a new environment with which he could never be at one without the doubtful aid of "external" interferences and attachments; as a man he had to consider his roots, rely on memory, and invent a language that would make sense of the contemporary world for him who has all but lost his "home". (66)

The titles and subtitles of Ghose's novel *Triple Mirror of the Self*, and autobiography *Confessions of a Native-Alien* suggest a worthwhile way to explore his fiction. For example, he divides *Triple Mirror of the Self* into three parts of meaningful subtitles – 'The Burial of the Self', 'Voyager and Pilgrim', and 'Origins of the Self'. So much so that the name of the first 'self' is Urimba, or "the scattered one." (Ghose 3) Each new name encompasses a new identity and a rebirth of sorts.

The roots of Ghose's exilic perspective and alienation lie in his childhood in India-Pakistan and his school days in Britain, the time of his first identity transplant. As in his autobiography, *Confessions of a Native-Alien*, he confesses about his multiple experiences as a global exile. For this reason, he confesses to be an "Indo-Pakistani who had gone Anglo" (156). The paradox in the title itself reflects the leitmotif of his work under discussion.

Following a visit to Pakistan Ghose wrote an article "Going Home". One feels that Ghose is deeply struck by the feelings of nostalgia, loss and recovery which keep a permanent resonance in his creative memory. Ghose writes:

It was my first visit to Pakistan in twenty-eight years but when I climbed up the stupa at Dharmarajika in Taxila on a beautiful clear May morning and looked at the land stretching to the mountains on the horizon I had the sensation that absence from that soil had been of a far longer duration and, at the same time, now that I had my feet planted in it, I had existed continuously on that earth for two thousand years ... There are moments in our lives when we can hear the soul whisper its contentment that the long torment of being has been stilled at last. The air in Taxila filled my brain with that serenity. I felt I was at home.

(3)

Ghose's homecoming is reminiscent of such a sensation felt by Rudyard Kipling that he expressed in an uncollected article, 'Home', written during his last visit to India in December 1891 and was published in *Civil and Military Gazette*. He expressed his private vision of India, the India of his childhood (1865-71) and of his early youth (1882-89). They always co-existed in his imagination.

A smell came out over the sea – a smell of damp earth, coconut oil, ginger, onions and mankind. It spoke with a strong voice, recalling many things; but the most curious revelation to one man was the sudden knowledge that under these skies lay home and the dearest places in all the world. Even the first sniff of London had not caused so

big a choke in the throat, or so strict a
tightening over the heart... Allah be praised
we stepped straight into India again. (Karim
20)

Both the pieces have close resemblance, in terms of subject-matter and for the fact that both the writers were returning *to 'Home' from* England. It is apparent that the postmodern dilemma of "living here and belonging elsewhere", has always been haunting exiles and expatriates, particularly, in an unprecedented fashion, in our relentlessly globalized world.

According to Gurr, exile has had an "enormously constructive" effect on writers who were born in colonies and fled to metropolis, since it creates in them "a sense of home" and thus "a clearer sense of [their] own identity" than is available to their metropolitan counterparts (9) Questioning this essentially romantic view of exile, Said writes: "To think of exile as beneficial, as a spur to humanism or creativity, is to belittle its mutilations... For exile is fundamentally a discontinuous state of being. Exiles are cut from their roots, their land, their past" (Said 50ff). Ghose attempts to create a composite self out of the fragments of various selves: "I create personae which aren't just fantasies but different approaches to the same self: the desperate lover, the silent poet, the worried alien." The images that haunt his mind from his present and past, he says, "are not about myself so much as of the idea of what I have been and of people and things around me. From them I proceed inwards." He says that his present is unwholesome and meaningless without his past, which he reflects upon living in the present. He wants to know himself "and that is why I turn from myself to the outer images and thought" (Ghose 100).

Throughout his *Confessions*, Ghose seems to be oscillating between his past and present. He keeps assessing his failures and disillusion; he has to live in a land with which he feels almost no bond. In the last three chapters of *Confessions* Ghose has documented his feelings of alienation, rootlessness and the problems of a hybrid identity and its consequences. He is vaguely considered as an Indian (or a Pakistani) in England and a British in India but without a protocol, which hurts him deeply and he concludes that he is none of them. Even his 'Indianness' is questioned by an English boy as he is without a bow and an arrow. Ghose needs 'home' and recognition as a writer. Or, in Gayatri Spivak's words, he wants to be known to put an end to the torments that he is conscious of:

The person who knows has all the problems of selfhood. The person who is known, somehow seems not to have a problematic self...Only the dominant self can be problematic; the self of the Other is authentic without a problem, naturally available to all kinds of complications. This is very frightening. (66)

When he arrives at Karachi airport as the sports correspondent for *The Observer*, the local news reporters refuse to consider him as a British journalist due to his brown skin.

I was not mentioned and felt stung; some people must have thought I was some sort of fraud trying to obtain free passes to the test matches and I continually had to produce my credentials to convince them that I was genuine reporter. 'But this name', many would say 'Zulfikar and Ghose is very odd. Who are you? (Ghose 125)

Such encounters only deepened his alienation and "exaggerated the truth that I did not belong to any group of people who have allegiance to a country...Myself and my loneliness were all and the intensified need to write poetry" (126). Ghose expresses his struggle with the new language as he tries to mimic to get recognition and regain his lost self-hood: "I woo the English language each morning and... she divorces me each night" (126).

His exile marks the state where all exiles struggle with antithetical forces and then come to terms with the third, hybrid way of existence that allows them to move back and forth between two worlds with the least possibility of belonging anywhere. He finds different justifications to lessen the torments of his dissonance with all the countries he has lived in. He belongs neither here nor there, as he writes about one of his visits to India:

This is not my country. I'm an alien here. I have the same paranoiac sensation of being watched by people, being pointed out with whispers of 'He doesn't belong here' which I

experienced when I would walk and walk
round Putney Heath day after day during the
years we lived near there. (Ghose 138)

Bill Ashcroft et al. describe the erosion of the exiled postcolonial subject through the processes of dislocation and cultural denigration:

A valid and active sense of self may have been eroded by dislocation, resulting from migration, the experience of enslavement, transportation, or 'voluntary' removal for indentured labour. Or it may have been destroyed by cultural denigration, the conscious and unconscious oppression of the indigenous personality and culture by a supposedly superior racial or cultural model." (9)

Ghose's sense of self is eroded by not only the dominant culture but also by the culture that is dominated. The errant life that Ghose is compelled to lead seems to have been marked by "the mind of winter", a term Said borrowed from Wallace Stevens, using it to situate exile in a space where "the pathos of summer and autumn as much as the potential of spring are nearby unobtainable" (Said 55).

The condition of exile is no longer rendered simply as an aesthetic formulation as in the days of such expatriate writers as James Joyce, T.S. Eliot, and Ezra Pound; or the creative exile of Auerbach in Istanbul, and Edward Said in New York. "Home" now signals a shift away from homogeneous nation-states based on the ideology of assimilation to a much more fluid and contradictory definition of nations as a multiplicity of diasporic identities (Mishra 7-45). Such identities are hyphenated as Asian-American, African-American, Pakistani-British, Indian-Canadian; the list is endless. As Knippling writes, "hyphenation institutes unequal power relation" and that it "negatively emphasizes ethnicity and a minority status over a viable American cultural identity" (Knippling xxi).

However, 9/11 attacks and the resultant global war on terror, and its politics, gave rise to new fears and conflicts among the diasporic communities and their host countries. Romantic exilic perspectives gave way to new apprehensions and trepidations. Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is the prototype work of fiction that is based on those new trends in reformulating the immigrants' relationship with the local populations. As the feelings of alienation is increasing, the Muslims living in the West in particular have been forced to redefine their relationship with their host cultures, especially in the United States of America.

Hamid's Reluctant Fundamentalist

Muslim immigrants from South Asia, particularly Pakistan, live through a double bind: on the one hand they are bracketed with the Asian/South Asian diasporic identity, and on the other, their transnational identity also compels them to be part of the Muslim *Ummah* at large. For this reason they have to respond to international political crises confronting Muslims, such as the Rushdie affair, the Gulf War or, more recently, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the confrontation between India and Pakistan over Kashmir. The conflicting pull between the economic interests lying in the West and Muslim national loyalty creates fissures in psycho-cultural terms. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is the narrative of that conflict epitomized in the personal dilemma of its protagonist to come to terms with the post-September 11 America and the new identity imposed upon him.

As the racial scenario changes in the wake of 9/11 attacks, Hamid's protagonist faces debasing stereotypes based on religion and ethnicity. The novel is a narrative of emergence as well as regression since it relates an immigrant's success story, culminating in the achievement of an autonomous, unified self on the one hand and his ultimate rejection of that newly acquired transplanted American identity on the other. "Princeton made everything possible for me. But it did not, *could* not, make me forget such things as how much I enjoy the tea in this, the city of my birth" (Hamid 9). In this sense, it is not a completely realized postcolonial text, since Hamid's portrayal of America in the first part of the novel does not rely on the trope of the Manichean allegory and the demonization of the American system. "This, I realized, was another world from Pakistan; supporting my feet were the achievements of the most technologically advanced civilization our species had ever known" (20). However, Erica, his American girl friend, and Jim, his boss, notice a "foreignness" in his mannerism and his bearing that gives him advantage over others. Erica remarks, "You give off this strong sense of home, you know that... This I-am-from-a-big-family vibe. It's nice. It makes you feel solid" (12). Later Jim tells him, "You are a watchful guy. You know where that comes from?" I shook my head. 'It comes from feeling out of place', he said. 'Believe me. I know.'" (25) Thus his survival in the land of dreams depends upon a flexible strategy of appropriation and transformation, resulting into a new self that is plural yet divided.

Prior to the xenophobia that gripped certain section of the American society and government in the wake of 9/11, Changez seems to have assimilated perfectly into the host culture. As he informs the readers: "I felt bathed in a warm sense of accomplishment. Nothing troubled me; I was a young New Yorker with the city

at my feet. How soon that would change! My world would be transformed. (27)
The American corporate system and multicultural society exert a powerful influence on Changez as long as he does not resist and is ready to become a cog in the machine. “I was the only non-American in our group, but I suspected my Pakistaniness was invisible, cloaked by my suit, by my expense account, and – most of all – by my companions (42). The corporate success and pre-9/11 America gives him such confidence that he, while visiting his girlfriend’s family, “wore a starched white kurta of delicately worked cotton over a pair of jeans. It was a testament to the open mindedness and – that overused word – *cosmopolitan* nature of New York in those days that [he] felt completely comfortable on the subway in this attire” (29).

Until 9/11 happens, there is no visible threat to that enforced identity except that Erica, in spite of their close physical intimacy, remains aloof emotionally and accepts him only when he is “willing to try to take on the persona of Chris [Erica’s dead boyfriend], because my own identity was so fragile” (89). He is still struggling with this crisis when forces larger than Erica come into play. In the wake of 9/11, he is stripped of his illusions and acquired identity. A few days after the attacks, as he returns from Manila with his team, on the airport he was separated from his colleagues at the immigration desk. “They joined the queue for American citizens; I joined the one for foreigners” (44). This is the moment when regression starts and any hidden/subconscious desire to see America harmed is entrenched in his conscious self. The transformation begins, both for Changez and the host country. His emergence into visibility for the wrong reasons makes him a locus of suspicion and discourse. As he informs the readers:

America was gripped by a growing and self-righteous rage in those weeks of September and October as I cavorted... Pakistani cabdrivers were being beaten to within an inch of their lives; the FBI was raiding mosques, shops, and even people’s houses; Muslim men were disappearing, perhaps into shadowy detention centers for questioning or worse. (56)

Our telephone extensions and fax machines would mysteriously stop working; our security badges and notebooks would disappear. Often I would emerge into the car park to find that one

of the tires of my rental car was punctured – far
too often for it to be mere coincidence. (57)

The achieved state of the reconstituted identity is shattered. Zulfikar Ghose, writing much earlier, is strangely prophetic about the loss of such utopian America for the immigrant who now faces a revolutionary rhetoric and an official discourse that

... breeds

a counter-rhetoric's pretentious
slogans: *America – Love It or Leave It*, and so on.
Earth-kissing Zionists aside (and each country is an Israel for
someone),
people don't really
care nowadays for sentimental gestures,

for sacredness is suspect,
the earth more a problem for conservation than
a banner across a jingoist breast, and the land
merely a real estate speculation.
countries, countries! Brand-
names, faded and disfigured. (Ghose 38)

Changez, like millions of others who vied for the American dream, and idolized its history full of human struggles to achieve equality and freedom, reinvents himself by adopting a counter-rhetoric. His transformation may be seen as an active strategy of resistance against the official discourse of terror and the media images which were mistaking *effects* for *causes*. Suddenly a new identity, that of a terrorist or at least a terrorist-look-alike is imposed on the successful Princeton graduate and a brilliant business analyst for Underwood Samson's, whose cardinal business principle is "*Focus on the fundamentals*". Ironically, he starts concentrating on another set of fundamentals which turns him into a reluctant fundamentalist. He confronts and suffers many unpleasant changes in American attitudes from the highest echelon to public sphere. "Affronts were everywhere; the rhetoric emerging from your country at that moment in history – not just from the government, but from the media and supposedly critical journalists as well – provided a ready and constant fuel for my anger" (Hamid 101), and, "There was something undeniably retro about the flags and uniforms, about generals addressing cameras in war-rooms and newspaper headlines featuring such words

as *duty* and *honour*” (69). A promising business associate, vying to keep his place at the centre, is pushed to the margin once more. For Changez, the borders of conflict shift from American streets, corporate offices and metros to Pakistan, the frontline state in the war against terror.

The Reluctant Fundamentalist examines such shifting of the ideological borders and multiple identities, perpetually in a state of flux due to the pull and play of forces greater than the capacity of individuals. As the narrator remarks, “my blinders were coming off, and I was dazzled and rendered immobile by the sudden broadening of my arc of vision.” (87) Hamid’s migrant protagonist is simply alienated in the increasingly charged atmosphere in the US. Re-discovering and re-inventing the lost self and cultural roots is the only viable response available to him. The war on terror and the discourse surrounding it have further obfuscated the issue of identity for the migrants living in exile. Particularly the Muslim immigrants have been equated with terror and held responsible for the crimes of the few.

A noteworthy analogy in the work of Hamid and Ghose is that they both have voiced their painful sense of ‘exclusion’ in their respective exilic experiences in the western societies. In Ghose’s pre-9/11 world, the repressive encounter between the immigrants and their destination of exile in the West was rather passive, but Hamid’s post-9/11 encounter is more violent and dynamic, featuring struggles and counter-struggles between the host society and the immigrants. In Ghose’s work, the pain suffered is partly the result of his blurred identity which is evident from his being denied the status of a ‘British journalist’ in Karachi merely because of his indigenous sounding name. However, in Hamid’s work there is a rather clear differentiation in the treatment meted out to an American national and a foreign Muslim immigrant. Hamid’s protagonist Changez was not allowed to join the queue of American citizens on the airport and was subjected to additional inspections. The violent turn that things have taken for the immigrants in relation to the host communities in the context of the war on terror is clearly palpable in Hamid’s text. The situation in Ghose’s writing is rather more traditional and in line with the fashion of old (pre-terror) world and has a greater focus on the exilic effects at the individual level rather than the wider social group; Hamid, on the other hand, seeks to highlight the effects of exilic experience on an entire social, political or communal group. Such adverse effects become more painful when viewed against the apparent status of Hamid’s protagonist who has accepted and is fully conformed to the social and cultural norms of the host society. It brings out the fact that the troubles of the “unwilled choices” do not distinguish between the highly educated and successful elite and the common people. Despite the fact

that Changez has fully integrated and assimilated in the American society, he is still not spared the backlash of 9/11. Nostalgic patterns of the two writers are also comparable. While standing atop the stupa at Dharamarjika in Taxila, Ghose feels that his feet had existed there for two thousand years thereby showing a strong psychological bond with his native land. Similarly, Hamid's Changez also remains attached to his native Lahore, as he reminisces about taking tea in old Anarkali, while working in New York.

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