

## Post 9/11 Identity Crisis in H. M. Naqvi's *Home Boy*

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### **Introduction**

With the fall of the Twin Towers on 9/11, it was not merely the geo-political infrastructure of the world that underwent a deliquescence; the idea of the self, when placed in a world of massive unpredictability and inveterate fear, underwent a drastic alteration. Ethnicity and religious identity came under the microscope as people were labelled "terrorists" on the basis of racial and religious affiliations. Literature could not remain immune to these changes, especially Pakistani fiction in English, since Pakistan's standing acquired ambiguity both as a friend and foe of the USA. This ambiguous status was transferred to the average Pakistani out on the streets of any American city. While the world reviewed its opinion about Pakistan, the Pakistani literati also reviewed their notions of identity in their fiction.

### **Research Objectives**

In view of this parameter, the research objectives of this study are as follows:

- To investigate the perplexity added to the concept of the Self in the average pro-West Pakistani citizen and its reflection in the post-9/11 Pakistani novel in English *Home Boy*.
- To define the idea of "terrorist" and "terrorism" in connection with the focus acquired by Pakistan in the immediate aftermath of 9/11
- To scrutinize the search for a new parameter to define identity in terms of being a Pakistani and a Muslim by the protagonist of *Home Boy*.

### **Research Questions**

This study will investigate the following research questions:

- How has the notion of identity crisis undergone an alteration in the post-9/11 global scenario?

- What alterations has the concept of the Other undergone in the post-9/11 world and how has the altered concept of the Other affected the notion of the Self in the post-9/11 Pakistani novel in English *Home Boy*.
- Is the protagonist of *Home Boy* moving from a hybrid identity to a unified Muslim identity?

### **Significance of the Study**

Since 9/11, it has been conventional for Western popular writers to portray Muslims in general in an unflattering light as "terrorists" or supporters of terrorism in the West. Basing their theories on the events and agents that shaped the 9/11 cataclysm, the Western literati and the masses formed stereotypical assumptions about Islam as a creed that harbors and nurtures terrorism. This prejudicial treatment has led to a sense of insecurity amongst the Muslims, particularly in the United States of America. Since Pakistan bore the heaviest brunt in the aftermath of the fall of the Twin Towers, many Pakistani expats faced racial harassment both on the streets and by the US government under its Patriot Act of 2001. This sort of harassment and discrimination was then made the subject matter of numerous Pakistani novels in English by Kamila Shamsie, Mohsin Hamid and H.M Naqvi. This study will bring into focus an analysis of the identity crisis that the protagonist of the novel *Home Boy*, Chuck, experienced in the aftermath of 9/11 as an expatriate Pakistani. It would invariably give a new direction to a study of the idea of the Self as being a construct responding to massive social alterations in the post-9/11 world. Moreover, this research attempts to highlight the refraction that the concept of the Other has undergone since the September 11 attacks. Since this is a theme which is constantly being dealt with by contemporary Pakistani fiction in English, analytical studies in this domain have not as yet taken wing. This study could help mobilize discussion and encourage further research in this domain.

### **Contextual Definitions Of Key Terms: Identity, Resistance Identity, Other And Terrorism**

This study has been conducted on the basis of the following formulations of the key terms that govern it.

#### **a. Identity:**

Identity is a relational term used in social psychology that highlights the relationship between an individual and society. The notion of the Self is the

consciousness of one's own identity (Burke and Stets 9). It is the emergence of this Self out of a sense of alienation and difference from the hegemonic community and reverting to the religious substratum within which it was originally embedded that has been displayed by Chuck's search for selfhood in the wake of 9/11. It deals with the following questions:

- Who am I and how did I develop into the person I am?
- To what culture am I forever linked?

**b. Identity Crisis:**

A schism emerging within an individual owing to drastic alterations in the social order, which, in turn, exerts pressures on an abruptly marginalized individual is termed an Identity Crisis. This schism leads to a subsequent appraisal and redefinition of the Self within a new paradigm, in Chuck's case, within the paradigm of his religion.

**c. Resistance Identity:**

A notion of the Self developed by the marginalized or stigmatized members of a community through the deployment of shields of resistance, by developing an assumption of the Self as being independent from the dominant order is termed a Resistance Identity. This could be through an outright rejection of the dominant order, as exemplified by Chuck's return to Pakistan.

**d. Other:**

In the post-9/11 power discourse, the notion of the Other – the “not me” (Bressler 240) – had come to signify that particular sense of being different which a person of Muslim roots experiences at the hands of the intensely xenophobic American hegemonic order. This Other finds itself on the reverse side of the power equation. In the post-9/11 scenario, the Other falls within the paradigm of the ‘Other of the USA’ and is no more confined to the postcolonial binary of “the West/the Other” (Bressler 240) as new modes of domination come into being.

**e. Terrorist:**

A terrorist is generally defined as a person engaged in illegitimate violence and instilling mass fear. In the post-9/11 world, this term was re-chiseled to encapsulate Muslims of all callings. Since labeling someone a terrorist is tantamount to condemning them, labeling Muslims terrorists unequivocally condemns them, as evinced by the treatment meted out to Chuck.

## **Research Method**

This study is a narrative research project incorporating some methods of historical research. Qualitative methods of data collection have been utilized. Since this study investigates the concepts of **identity crisis, identity, the Other and terrorist**, it incorporates social psychology as a pertinent theoretical tool for establishing a theoretical framework. The development and resolution of identity crisis in the protagonist is analysed in the light of these four major terms in a sequential manner and I have supported arguments through carefully culled textual evidence. In addition, since 9/11 is a major event of contemporary history, I referred to newspaper articles for delineating the subsequent impact of this event on Pakistani Muslims residing in America. The sampling frame incorporates one selected work (i.e. the novel, *Home Boy*). The study begins with a delineation of the research methods and research questions. Relevant statements and quotations have been selected from the novel under scrutiny as well as from the most pertinent critical articles and books relating to the sample population. The relevance of these quotations is then validated in the light of the operational definitions of the key terms. Research articles dealing with the political and literary discourse on the post-9/11 scenario have also been consulted. The study is exploratory in purpose, following the holistic content-based mode of analysis. This means that the life of the protagonist, Chuck, has been brought under the microscope so that the varying patterns of identity crisis may be traced. In addition, graphical presentations to elucidate the patterns of identity transformation have also been given.

### **Delimitations of the Study**

This study focuses on the novel *Home Boy* by H.M Naqvi. Based on the definition of identity crisis, this study primarily limits itself to defining the notions of identity and identity crisis against the backdrop of the conflict between Muslim religious identity and globalization (i.e. *identity for resistance*) (Castells 6) and focuses on the influence of these aspects on the protagonist of the novel. Since identity crisis takes place at multiple stages in life in a plethora of social and cultural paradigms, this study focuses on the notion of a schismatic self in the post-9/11 scenario. Moreover, it has restricted itself to identity crisis developing within the notion of the Self of an individual, instead the notion of the 'role' of an individual.

## **Literature Review**

While there is no dearth of material related to the assumptions of identity crisis in various contextual and thematic paradigms, the attack on American soil was an event of such great magnitude that it ushered in a new discourse of power politics in the light of what Said calls “American global dominance” (284). It is within the jurisdiction of this new discourse that the notion of the Other, particularly as the ‘Other of the USA’ acquired a new direction and which has been explored in this study.

The field of contemporary psycho-sociology is replete with literature pertaining to the theory of identity and the Self, and literature has not remained immune to the impact of these theories. Particularly, literatures in English written by non-Native English writers have invariably dealt with the varying notions of identity set in multiple socio-political backdrops. However, for convenience, my literature review deals with the socio-psychological theoretical assumptions presented by Erik Erikson, Manuel Castells, etc. surrounding the notions of identity, identity crisis, resistance identity and the modern terrorist as the Other of the USA. It then moves on to elucidate the various backdrops against which the theme of identity crisis has been dealt with by Pakistani writers of English fiction.

## **Identity and Identity Crisis**

Many sociologists and psychologists have dealt with the concept of identity in different contextual backgrounds. Erik Erikson defines identity crisis as a time during adolescence in which an individual experiences a tussle between individual identity and role confusion. In the book *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, Erikson presents the idea of identity as being relative to another group, and that a stronger identity develops when the weaker group is emancipated from the identity of the dominant group or community and that identity answers the question “Who am I?” As with all studies in identity crisis, this book is pivotal in formulating a conceptual outline for analyzing identity crisis in any literary paradigm.

On the other hand, Manuel Castells in his seminal work, *The Power of Identity*, deals with the “conflicting trends of globalization and identity” (1) that range across issues like the construction of identity and resistance voices against the various trends of globalization, giving an overview of the different revolutionary

movements that have shaped the contemporary world. It includes environmental movements and militias in American society, as well as Al-Qaeda's attacks on America, revealing America's "vulnerability" through its "media-conveyed humiliation of the imperial power of the United States, thus potentially freeing the Muslim masses from their feeling of powerlessness" (140). This book offers useful insights into "Muslim elites living in contact with the global, dominant networks" (144). For them, "the choice was between becoming culturally Western or being downgraded in their social and cultural status" (144). Castells astutely analyses how this event may be seen as a "revolt against socio-economic irrelevance and the resistance of identity against Western cultural domination that could alter the course of history [...]" (144). This angle of perception provides valuable insight into the dilemmas of the educated, Westernized Muslim community and on the protagonist of *Home Boy*. Castells's book displays great objectivity and research into the multiple factors that have gone into shaping and defining individual and collective identities from a global perspective.

*Identity Theory* by Peter J. Burke and Jan E. Stets presents identity theory as a social psychology theory, treating identity as an interactive process and the outcomes of these interactions. This work elucidates the concept of identity working on multiple planes such as "social identities and person identities" (112) and how every individual has multiple identities that are arranged according to a "hierarchical control system" (175). Although it is a work centered on social psychology, it offers a useful background on factors governing identity change within a shifting social order.

Identity formation and identity crisis take place in both the psychological as well as the social realms and are affected by developments in the political sector. Hence, the work *Citizenship, Identity and the Politics of Multiculturalism: The Rise of Muslim Consciousness* by Nasar Meer is useful to the current study in that it focuses on how British Muslims try to gain recognition in a society which treats them as alien subjects. This work provides insight into how Muslims are treated as suspects and their loyalties are doubted. This, in turn, forces them to re-evaluate their notion of selfhood within a multicultural society that has become increasingly xenophobic. While this book focuses on Muslim consciousness in Great Britain after 9/11 and 7/7 specifically, it is restricted to the issues of British Muslims.

## **The Other**

While identity has been declared a social construct, it is normally defined within two conceptual frameworks (i.e. Difference and Sameness). The Other is generally the individual who is not the 'Same', and these notions are constructs that stem from the notion of difference provided by Lacan, Spivak, Said, etc. in multiple contexts. Generally, it is those who are socially hegemonic who impose the notions of Sameness and Otherness. Otherness remains a multi-dimensional concept dealt with by Lacan in his philosophical anthropology, by Spivak in feminist discourse, and in "the Kantian notions of taste and sense" (Buyze) that focus on the Other as being less rational and more crude and primitive. However, in imperial discourse, the concept of Otherness was further elaborated upon vis-a-vis the Us/Other binary that existed between the colonizer and the colonized. In his work *Orientalism*, Said deals with the concept of the Orient as the Other of the West: inferior, alien and conquerable.

In the chapter entitled "The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism" in *The Location of Culture*, Homi K. Bhabha defines Otherness as "an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity" (67), focusing on how racial and cultural Otherness leads to the marginalization of the alien subject in the dominant discourse. Highlighting the historical dimension of Otherness in the colonial discourse, Homi Bhabha's work is an illuminating exegesis of the power politics that came into play in defining the identity of the colonized in relation to their colonizers and the difficult liminal space between them. While *The Location of Culture* provides a sound infrastructure for comprehending Otherness in a postcolonial ambit, its formulations need to be adjusted in light of the contemporary global changes where a new form of imperialism has taken wing.

Another work that has dealt with the idea of the marginalization of the Other within imperialistic discourse and in the aftermath of the Empire is Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism*. This book deals with a multiplicity of issues related to the subjection of the colonized under imperial rule, challenging many Western assumptions about the East. This subjection was not merely political; rather, it extended into the cultural and literary fields as well. This subjection and marginalization led to the rise of dissenting voices and the politics of difference that are generated when a hegemonic culture almost effaces the subjected culture which it endeavours to control. Interestingly, culture became the dominant means of controlling the colonized. It also became the dominant tool of resistance used

by the colonized and suggests the contrapuntal method of re-reading the canonical texts to extract the subjected histories and discourses they encapsulate. The important element of this book is that it also highlights the shifts that have taken place in the global power structure in the wake of the rise of American hegemony. Like its earlier counterpart (i.e. European imperialism), American hegemony is ubiquitous in a number of post-9/11 novels. This form of “contrapuntal reading” (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 89) may be used in the post-9/11 Pakistani fiction to highlight the repression that the ‘Other of the USA’ experiences.

*The New Orientalists: Postmodern Representations of Islam from Foucault to Baudrillard* by Ian Almond is another book that traces the background of ‘the nightmare Other’ and the representation of Islam in a postmodern context. It covers the engagement with Islam as an Other by scholars like Nietzsche, Foucault, Derrida, Baudrillard and Kristeva. It outlines the evolution of the representation of Islam in contemporary history and Islam’s resistance to the global hegemonic order. However, while this book encapsulates the “multiple identities” (195) and the Otherness of Islam, it also identifies how Palmuk sketches the revival of the East and focuses on the notion of Islam as implicated in this nostalgia for a ‘true or ‘original’ identity (119) in the backdrop of the Turkish quest for redefining identity. While this book does highlight Zizek’s depiction of Islam as a fundamentally active and volatile Other, inserting a gap in the New York skyline through its attack, its premise can lead researchers to formulating a new foundation in which Islam can be proven to ACT constructively to re-forge a new consciousness of its Self.

### **Contemporary Terrorism**

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When the Twin Towers fell, the masses understood that the world had slid into a new phase of existence owing to its “symbolic shock” (Baudrillard). With the symbols of hegemonic power collapsing, a tangible manifestation of the desire of the dispossessed and disinherited could be read in the symbolism of the act. However, an important essay by Baudrillard provides valuable foundations for building a theory on the refraction taking place within the notion of the Other. This essay is entitled "The Spirit of Terrorism" and was published in *Le Monde* on November 2, 2001. Stating that through this event “not only are all history and power plays disrupted, but so are the conditions of analysis” -Baudrillard moves on to highlight that this event had been dreamt of since the downfall of a hegemonic power is a latent desire in everyone. This article highlights the binary of difference in the following terms:

It is almost they who did it, but we who wanted it ...When the situation is [...] monopolized by global power, when one deals with this formidable condensation of all functions through technocratic machinery and absolute ideological hegemony (pensee unique), what other way is there, than a terrorist reversal of the situation (literally 'transfer of situation': am I too influenced by early translation as 'reversal')? It is the system itself that has created the objective conditions for this brutal distortion. By taking all the cards to itself, it forces the Other to change the rules of the game. And the new rules are ferocious, because the stakes are ferocious. To a system whose excess of power creates an unsolvable challenge, terrorists respond by a definitive act that is also unanswerable (Baudrillard Trans. Dr. Rachel Bloul).

This important essay provides very pertinent insight into the changing global order and the reaction that it would elicit in re-framing the political infrastructure of the world. Although it highlights the hyper-reality of the situation via the media propaganda, its views about Otherness are very astute in the light of this study.

*The Terrorist Identity: Explaining the Terrorist Threat* by Michael P. Arena and Bruce A. Arrigo pertains to the issues related to terrorism. It offers a historical overview of organizations labeled as terrorist outfits (i.e. IRA, Hamas etc.). It is a meticulously researched text highlighting the origins of terrorism in the identity crisis that stems from a confusion of roles in a highly stratified and differentiating society and also in a “context of conflict” (6). Tracing the origins of terrorism to Erikson’s idea of identity crisis and relating it to Crenshaw’s summarization of terrorist behavior, this book is an important text displaying how terrorists, incapable of overcoming the “crisis of initiative” owing to inferiority or deficiencies, are unable to create what Erikson calls “positive identities” for themselves. This process of identity construction and its connection with a terrorist identity offers a comprehensive insight into the factors that go into making a terrorist.

The chapter entitled "Why the United States?" in *The Kristeva Reader* (edited by Toril Moi), highlights the opinions of Julia Kristeva pertaining to the "polyvalence" (274) of American society. This polyvalence, she states, leads to “‘ghettoizing’ the opposition, since for each opposition an enclave is created where it stagnates” (274). This premise provides the groundwork for future research into various forms of marginalization in American society and its outcomes.

### Various Paradigms of Identity Crisis in Pakistani Fiction in English

Since Pakistan has had a turbulent history, Pakistani fiction in English could not remain aloof to the socio-political developments that were contouring this country's temporal and spatial landscape. Moreover, since one's consciousness of one's individuality and identity cannot remain impervious to the socio-political developments that are configuring one's environment, identity, both collective and individual, underwent a transmutation. While Post-colonial fiction in general has dealt with the protean notions of identity crisis, Pakistani fiction in English has treated it within the backdrop of Partition, the secession of East-Pakistan, the Martial Law of the 1980s and the political alterations since the 1990s.

The Partition of the Indian Sub-Continent punctuated the notion of the Self with a big question mark. This notion of the Self anchors itself in both the collective and the individual domains. For instance, Mumtaz Shah Nawaz's novel *The Heart Divided* deals with the identity crisis that was generated amongst the Muslims of the Sub-Continent in the 1930s and 40s, when the over-arching notion of Indian-ness underwent a liquefaction owing to communal differences with the Hindus. As the protagonists Sughra and Zohra undergo an evolutionary change in their thought processes, they come to realize that they would have no separate identity as Muslims if they insisted on continuing their cooperation with the Congress:

Even if we all joined the Congress, we would only be as salt in the flour and no more. We would remain a minority: and we could not influence its policy. Besides, we want our own leaders, our own flags, our own songs. It's only natural (308).

While Mumtaz Shah Nawaz dealt with the notion of identity from a political as well as a feminist perspective, Bapsi Sidhwa deals with the notion of identity crisis from the perspective of a minority group in addition to the feministic angle. Identity is displayed as a flimsy construct emerging out of the partition of the Sub-Continent as individuals watch the "British gods" playing their insensitive game: "I am Pakistani. In a snap. Just like that" (Sidhwa 140). Yet at the same time, religion became the major standard for defining identity as Ranna's and Ayah's stories exemplify. The notion of Otherness had, thus, undergone a major refraction. The "politics of difference" (xix Raja) had finally reached the point of no-return.

Commenting on these "politics of difference" (xix) in *Constructing Pakistan*, Masood Ashraf Raja writes that the "development of a political language also

involved developing the concept of the Other within the language of Muslim politics. Muslims had to be defined as different from their Hindu counterparts...” (xix). Hence, the Muslim identity crisis was based on the premise of an overarching Indian-ness, which would lead to their marginalisation. The Partition became a turning point in the history of the Muslims of the Sub-Continent since it dealt with the restructuring their Selfhood within the new prototype of nationality which is a process “in which objective differences between peoples acquire subjective and symbolic significance” (121 Paul Brass as quoted in Raja). Ahmed Ali’s short fiction also deals with identity crisis within similar paradigms. Raja’s book *Constructing Pakistan* is a pivotal work that explores the relation between the Muslims’ political awakening and the evolution of Muslim literature in the Sub-Continent. .

However, as the ball of history rolled onwards, and Pakistan endeavoured to recover from the trauma of Partition, many other obstacles hindered its movement onwards. The experiences of the Martial Law, the secession of East Pakistan, Zia’s Martial Law regime, the nuclear tests conducted by Pakistan – all were interwoven into the literary fabric of Pakistani literature in English. Kamila Shamsie’s novel *Kartography* deals with the concept of identity crisis against the backdrop of the volatile ethnic rivalries that were ripping Karachi apart in the 1980s and 90s, while *Salt and Saffron* deals with Aliya Dard-e-Dil’s and Mariam Apa’s iconoclasm rooted in the sub-text of Pakistan’s turbulent history (Chopra). Kamila Shamsie’s *Broken Verses* focuses on the struggle of Aasmani Inqilab, the protagonist who forges a new identity for herself in the shadow of a celebrity mother.

*Twilight* by Azhar Abidi deals with the idea of resistance identity as two major characters in the novel resist traditional norms and conservative ideals to forge new niches and identities for themselves. But for Chanda and Jugnu, the protagonists of Nadeem Aslam’s *Maps for Lost Lovers* re forging of a new Self outside the cultural mores of their society leads to their brutal murders. Hence, numerous Pakistani writers have exploited the ideas of multiple identities and identity crisis within various socio-political and religio-cultural frameworks of the Pakistani environment. Similarly, *Moth Smoke* by Mohsin Hamid highlights how the notion of the individual Self transmuted as the power structure of the society changed “from the old feudalism, based on birth, to the new Pakistani feudalism based on wealth” (Desai) while Pakistan and India were engaged in a nuclear stand-off.

However, 2001 became a turning point for Pakistani writers writing in English. With Pakistan bearing the acrimony of the world as George W. Bush told the country's president "Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists" (Chalmers), Pakistani literature in English could not remain aloof to these developments.

*Burnt Shadows*, by Kamila Shamsie, deals with the theme of multiple identities and the tensions generated therein as the narrative of Hiroko, the protagonist, extends across multiple cultures and time frames until 9/11. With her son Raza, we enter the Afghan Jihadi camps in the 1980s, the smouldering ruins of the World Trade Centre in New York, and finally the Canadian border as Raza Conrad Ashraf himself replaces the Afghan, Abdullah, and is taken to Guantanamo.

While the protagonist of Mohsin Hamid's *Reluctant Fundamentalist*, Changez, presents the inner struggle of a young Pakistani working in the USA, he is inexplicably satisfied as he "was caught up in the symbolism of it all, the fact that someone had so visibly brought America to her knees"(43), despite his admiration for the USA as the land of opportunity. Subsequently, as he is viewed with suspicion, he returns to teach, yet harbours a resentment for the wrongs done to his part of the world, as he becomes a "reluctant anti-American" (Budhos). This novel gives insight into the notions of Otherness as they change, owing to the intensifying hegemonic discourse imposed upon the world by a wounded but aggressive USA.

This review of literature related to the major concept of identity crisis and the development of a new kind of Other indicates the extensive research that has been done in various socio-psychological and literary models and in Pakistani fiction in English. This study has engaged these fields and the insight provided by the above-mentioned works to highlight how the protagonist of *Home Boy* is treated as an alien, despite his immersion in the American way of life. While these works provide useful insights in support of this research, at some points, they tend to diverge from the premise of this study. Despite that, they provide a more lucid idea about the direction that this study has taken.

### **New Theorizations and Projections of American Power**

The latter half of the twentieth century and the early decades of the twenty first century have been times of monumental political alterations on the global geo-

political front. With the deliquescence of European Imperialistic rule in Asia, innumerable political changes further chiseled the world into new forms. The world's political scene seemed to have acquired the malleability of play dough as countries and political forces instituted massive changes on its canvas. Imperialism seemed to have given way to the Cold War as the USA and the USSR struggled to attain global supremacy. With the Cold War ending with the liquidation of the USSR, the USA emerged as the dominant political power in the world. America's rise to power was marked by "the ideological need to consolidate and justify domination in cultural terms that has been the case in the West since the nineteenth century, and even earlier" (Said 284). As the USA emerged as the new "guardian of the Western civilization" (Said 285), it dominated the world with its own "imperial creed" (Barnett as quoted in Said 286). This imperial creed was symbolically manifested in the Twin Towers as the hub of World Capitalism and unrivalled cultural domination. When the Twin Towers collapsed, the West took it as an attack on the heart of American Imperialism by "Islamic terrorists" (Cooper 2). As America sifted through the debris, Al-Qaeda and Islamic countries, particularly Pakistan, came under the spotlight. Since, Pakistan was a country that had extended recognition to the Taliban and had even been dubbed as the "The Taliban's Godfather" (Elias), Muslims in general and Pakistanis in particular were stereotyped as terrorists and exposed not merely to racial profiling but also to prejudices, harassment and discrimination in multifarious forms. This development provided fodder for many literati in Pakistan to integrate this monumental event into their writings and explore the resultant identity crises in their new forms.

#### **Identity and Identity Crisis in *Home Boy***

Since this research focuses on the concepts of identity and identity crisis, one needs to highlight some of the important definitions of these concepts so that they are effectively elucidated.

**Identity**, according to Castells, is "the people's source of meaning and experience" (6) If one explores the various meanings of identity, it comes to light that identity, whether of objects or of people, develops out of a sense of belonging or association with a group or assemblage due to some common denominators. At the same time, identity is also based upon the notion of being different from some other entity, which leads to moments of intense recognition. According to Kath Woodward:

Identity is marked by similarity, that is of the people like us, and by difference, of those who are not. [...] identities are necessarily the product of the society in which we live and our relationship with others. Identity provides a link between individuals and the world in which they live. Identity combines how I see myself and how others see me. Identity involves the subjective, and the external. It is a socially recognized position, recognized by others, not just by me (7).

Thus, identity remains firmly entrenched in both the subjective and the collective substratum of an individual's being. It is relational, based on the linkage between 'me' and 'them', 'us' and the 'others' and manifests itself by operating on the social canvas. Woodward adds that the question of identity also deals with the "tension between how much control I have in constructing my identities and how much control or constraint is exercised over me" (8) or in Lacanian terms, how the Other imposes itself upon us through its hegemonic place in the social order.

Shehzad a.k.a Chuck, the protagonist of *Home Boy*, is a Pakistani expat living in America who has to bear the direct brunt of the fall of the Twin Towers as his control over constructing his identity vacillates. Residing in New York, whose air still reeked of the burning smell from the molten detritus of the previously towering symbols of American hegemony, his own awareness of his Self in association with the American society undergoes a deliquescence as well. The very first sentence of the novel *Home Boy* begins with a notion of the Self:

We'd become Japs, Jews, Niggers. We weren't before. We fancied ourselves boulevardiers, raconteurs, renaissance men, AC, Jimbo and me. We were self-invented and self-made and certain we had our fingers on the pulse of the great global dialectic (1).

A close reading of this paragraph indicates the identification of the first person narrator, i.e. Chuck, with the cultural openness that was the hallmark of the American Dream. Before the 9/11 debacle, the USA was seen as the Promised Land for political exiles and migrants. Yet history proves that the Japanese, the Jews, and the Black Americans had faced an uphill task integrating into American society. All were treated as pariahs at one time or another; they did, however, manage to gradually forge a niche for themselves in a society that gave them space in the margins. Chuck, being a Pakistani Muslim, is placed in such a time frame when he and his compatriots would be looked down upon with suspicion just as the Japanese had been viewed in the post-Pearl Harbour world. This association of his Self with these forcibly marginalised people remains significant as its implications tend to get magnified throughout the novel.

While, at the beginning of the novel, Chuck's leanings are more pro-American, readers feel the pull from the Pakistani aspect of his identity pronouncedly. Although he develops qualities of sameness with the citizens of the host country, particularly of New York – "I'd since claimed the city and the city had claimed me" (Naqvi 3) – he cannot extricate himself from the qualities of sameness that he shares with his home country, i.e. Pakistan.

... we listened to Nusrat and the new generation of native rockers, as well as old school gangsta rap, so much so that we were known to spontaneously break into *Straight outta Compton*, ... *From a gang called Niggaz With Attitude* but were overwhelmed by hip-hop's hegemony... Though we shared a common denominator and were told half-jokingly, *Oh, all you Pakistanis are alike*, we weren't the same (Naqvi 2).

His identity, at this initial stage, is thus a nexus point arching forward towards acquiring an American mantle, and yet is drawn backwards. It vacillates between US brands and Pakistani food, between locales like Rothman, Lincoln Plaza and Clifton Beach and Bundoo Khan. Since identity is a construct; it contains some inherent tensions that stem from what Castells calls a "plurality of identities" (6) which creates conflicts within an individual, also known as an identity crisis. Oxford Dictionaries.com defines **identity crisis** as

a period of uncertainty and confusion in which a person's sense of identity becomes insecure, typically due to a change in their expected aims or role in society.

In part, this definition provides the most appropriate paradigm within which the concept of identity crisis functions in Naqvi's novel *Home Boy*. Indeed, the protagonist of the novel, Chuck, does seek a more lucid sense of the self in the society where he was situated at the "turn of the century" (Naqvi 3), a turn which had been "epic" (Naqvi 3). A few weeks later, for him, "it was time to forget, time to be happy" (Naqvi 6), yet this was to mark the beginning of the "period of psychological distress" as the definitions of his identity, vis-a-vis his nationality and religion are blurred. Taking up Kath Woodward's expression, his social position as recognized by others undergoes a metamorphosis.

Since identity stems from the internalization of socially dominant institutions (Castells 7) and are in effect "constructed" (Castells 7), any change in the social institutions would require a readjustment of the notion of the Self in the backdrop of such major transitions. The fall of the Twin Towers was indeed one such

change. The researcher has built this generalization on the premise provided by Castells

The construction of identities uses building materials from history, from geography, [...] from collective memory and from personal fantasies, from power apparatuses and religious revelations. But individuals, social groups, and societies process all these materials, and rearrange their meaning, according to social determinations and cultural projects that are rooted in their social structure, and in their space/time framework (7)

When social determinations and cultural structures undergo alterations, the notions of identity, both on collective and individual levels, experience a metamorphosis too. 9/11 was one such socio-political alteration that did not merely destabilize the pre-existing world order; it also induced insecurity and complexity in the average person's life particularly in Pakistan and the USA. Moreover, in such a scenario, the indeterminacy and confusion in identity that is induced gains greater intensity. To highlight the tenuousness of identity in the wake of a development of this magnitude, two events at the beginning of the novel *Home Boy* may be cited as examples. One is Chuck's encounter with the dazzlingly beautiful Venezuelan "Girl from Ipanema" (Naqvi 11) who, despite being a political exile declares herself an American: "They take all Papa's houses. We are leaving. We are American" (Naqvi 13). These three sentences couched in grammatically aberrant English simplify the entire concept of American openness to foreigners. Contemplating this, Chuck believes that by marrying her, he "too would become a bonafide American. In a sense, we were peas on a pod, she and I, denizens of the Third World turned economic refugees turns scenesters by fate, by historical caprice" (Naqvi 13). Ironically, she had assumed that he was Italian, and finding out that he wasn't, she politely removed herself, while he was left in a state of inert numbness. This event is prophetic since Muslims in particular would have a hard time blending into American society, a society that is a medley of innumerable alien nationalities.

History's capricious play would not be as simple for Chuck as it was for the Girl from Ipanema. Drawn forwards, he endeavours to reconstruct his identity in a new form, defined by the American ideal. Yet, in a later temporal space, he would be forced to redefine his identity counter-directionally. This redefinition would not be based upon his personal dreams, but would be impelled by the political and religious machinery of the post-9/11 USA. Hence, Chuck, at this time is on the

fulcrum of change, rocking back and forth, his identity is merely an attenuated entity.

### **Alterations in Identity Consciousness**

The direction of Chuck's identity crisis will take a U-turn when he is arrested while looking for his friend Muhammad Shah, née the Shaman, who has gone missing since 9/11. Before this, however, his sense of identity crisis is deepened when Chuck is beaten up by a gang of bar brawlers at Jake's bar. Using expletives, these brawlers maul Chuck when he and his friend are disparagingly called "*A-rabs*" (Naqvi 23). Just as the event with the Girl from Ipanema rattles Chuck so that "that night would stand out in the skyline of my memory" (Naqvi 14), this event was "almost like we weren't just contending with each other but with the crushing momentum of history" (Naqvi 23). It is the symbolic weight of this conflict that adds perplexity to Chuck's notion of his Self and his awareness of his own being as he realizes "Things were changing" (Naqvi 25). Ruminating over this insult and almost independently of his will, Chuck retaliates physically, as if something innate awakens. The following passage brings this aspect into relief:

Repeating the word in my head, I realized it was the first time I'd heard it spoken that way, like a dagger thrust and turned, the first time anything like this had happened to us at all... This was different. 'We're not the same,' Jimbo protested.

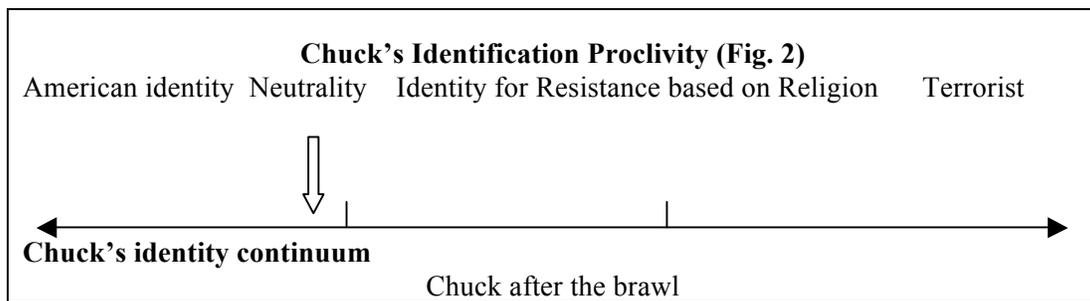
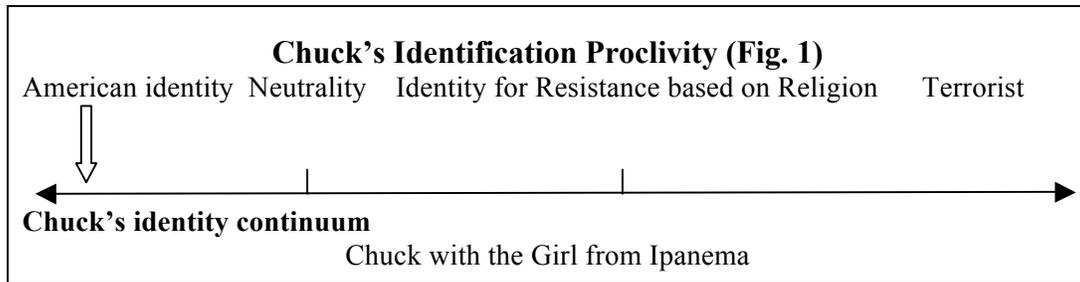
'Moslems, Mohi-cans, whatever,' Brawler No.2 snapped...

Then for some reason that remains inscrutable to me, I rose as if I had just been asked to deliver an after-dinner speech... with uncharacteristicchutzpah, proclaimed, 'Prudence suggests you boys best return to your barstools \_\_ ' Then there was a flash, like a lightbulb shattering, a ringing in my ears, the metallic taste of blood in my mouth. I didn't quite see the fist that knocked me flat on my back (Naqvi 24).

It is this kind of identity crisis – "I didn't know where or who I was" (Naqvi26) – that leads and has led to the creation of a particular form of identity, particularly amongst the expat, diasporic Pakistani community in the post-9/11 USA. This form of identity is known the "Resistance identity" (Castells 8). With Muslims being labeled as 'terrorists' in the post-9/11 USA, Pakistanis like Chuck faced a double brunt (i.e. they were stigmatized due to both their religious association with Islam and due to Pakistan's support for the Taliban that was believed to be harboring Al-Qaeda). This became a situation, which caused many Pakistanis

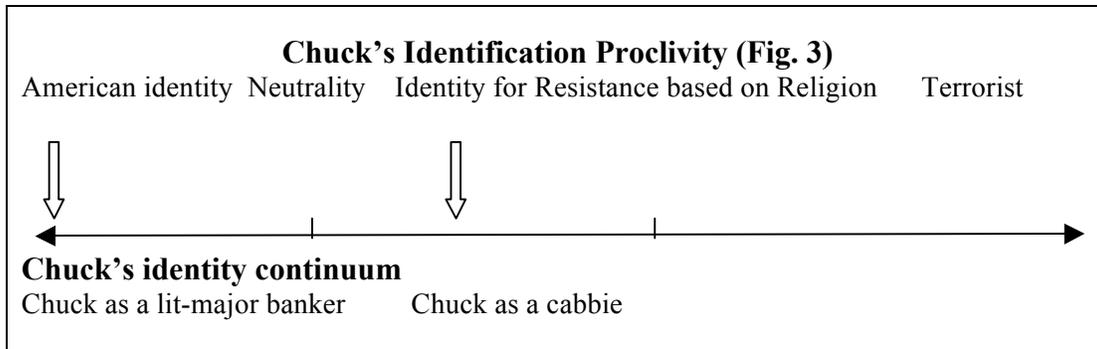
residing in America, both on a permanent and temporary basis, to revise their status in the radically changed American society that had provided a habitat for them. A resistance identity then surfaced. Castells says this resistance identity is “generated by those actors who are in positions/ conditions devalued and/or stigmatized by the logic of domination, thus building trenches of resistance and survival on the basis of principles different from, or opposed to, those permeating the institutions of society” (8). With the antipathy that an average Muslim garnered on the streets of any American city, it was imperative that they fit in with the society. Failing to do so yielded difficult scenarios (i.e. they were either forced to go back to their homelands, to rescind their allegiance to their ethnic roots or to be imprisoned under the Terrorism Criminal Law of the Patriot Act 2001). This is the world in which the identities of Chuck in particular, and of AC and Jimbo in general, had to undergo a re-evaluation.

An important speech that stands out prominently in the novel *Home Boy* is the one delivered by AC. Although inebriated, AC is able to present the entire debacle of how the Mujahideen turned from “Holy Warriors” into the “the Taliban, the Bastards of War!” (Naqvi 10). According to AC, the Taliban were “all transmogrified into the villains of modern civilization, but you know, they’re not much different from their fathers – brutes with guns – except this time they’re on the wrong side of history” (Naqvi 11). This is a pivotal speech since at a later stage in the novel; this would become the pole towards which the USA’s hegemonic policies would push all Muslims, particularly those of Pakistani origin, for identification. Being a “country which continues to try to dictate its views about law and peace all over the world” (Said 286), America’s “cultural imperialism” (Said 291) was to become the new force that would cause the schism in the identity consciousness of people like Chuck. He is pushed into a liminal territory where American society, owing to its indoctrination through government propaganda via the American media, blindly implemented the policies of alienation that its government proselytized. In order to observe how this liminality in Chuck’s identity is posited, one may graphically present the two poles that would govern his identity through subsequent stages as indicated in the following graphic depiction of the alterations in Chuck’s identity along a linear continuum. The reason why I devised a linear continuum is not to over-simplify the process of identity metamorphosis; rather the aim was to portray the change in a lucid manner.



In figure 1, Chuck's leanings are more towards the American ideal at the beginning of the novel. In figure 2, his identity marker leans away from a sense of identity couched in the American ideal after the brawl at Jake's at the end of Chapter Two of *Home Boy*, and moves towards a neutral signifier between the American identity and his religious identity.

In addition to the Girl from Ipanema being an indicator of the paradigm within which Chuck endeavours to place his awareness of his Self, his attaining a job as a banker at a "big bank that had just become bigger" (Naqvi 28) is also a signifier of his pro-American leanings. The American Dream seemed to be more than palpable as this individual with no particular professional inclination, majoring in literature, attained this prestigious position. A year later, he was fired with nothing tangible being offered as an excuse except "the Invisible Hand" (Naqvi 31). Since the banking sector may be taken as an electrocardiogram or facsimile of the thriving American Capitalistic ideology, Chuck's sacking may symbolise his being pushed away by the American system so that Chuck retaliates by becoming a "bonafide New York cabbie" (Naqvi 35). One notices his repeated desire to be amalgamated in the US society at all costs. It also indicates his trust in the opportunities that the American system has to offer. The following figure elucidates the transformation in his concept of his identity.



In figure 3, the pointer of Chuck's identity has slid further and further away from the American signifier towards a more religion-based signifier on the identity continuum. Since the cabbies are all lower-class immigrants of Asian, Middle-Eastern or South American ethnicities, they may all be taken as the marginalised communities on New York, composed of people who have not been able to make it big, yet are determined to remain peripherally annexed to the system that may disgorge them at any time. It is this element that binds them together in times of crises, with the "concern one Muslim has for another (Naqvi 42):

... on 9/11 we frantically dug up each other's numbers, scrawled on the backs of receipts and folded scraps of notebook paper, and called to exchange disyllabic assurances and expressions of disbelief... (Naqvi 36).

The breach in Chuck's identity further opens up with Chuck's consolatory comment explaining the reason why he had reacted physically to the insult which the brawlers had levelled against him. The statement "When somebody hits you, you hit back." (Naqvi 40) gains ironic reinforcement as Chuck re-configures his identity, but not as a retaliatory terrorist.

### **The Self: The Other or the Terrorist?**

#### **The Other or the Terrorist?**

The formulation of a Resistance Identity is a complex process incorporating intrinsic shifts in the notions of 'Us' and the Other stemming from a new, modified "rupture in experience" (Alpert 92). In the Imperialistic discourse, Otherness came to be a pivotal term in the context of the colonizer and the

colonized. However, over time, this concept experienced a metamorphosis. In the words of Edwin Thumboo,

As a literary term, the circumstances of Other applications are generally cross-cultural, colonial to ex-colonial, their continua and subsequent incarnations. Almost inevitably, there are nuances of inequalities, and one-sided understandings, compulsions, urges, preferences, and judgments. These reflect a fundamental *difference* that defines the Self as content, thus making it a word, a metonym for national identity, sustaining the 'us' and 'we', as distinguished from 'them' and 'they', respectively subject and object...("Conditions of Cross-Cultural Perceptions: The Other Looks Back" 11).

In the post-9/11 scenario and the rise of American Imperialism, this notion underwent refraction since it was religious identity that came to be the identifying signifier for the marginalised Other in collaboration with the characters' national identities. Hence, this notion of the Other indicates a shift from the concept that Edwin Thumboo has defined. It is this sense of Otherness that is experienced by Chuck:

You could feel it walking down some streets: people didn't avert their eyes or nod when you walked past but often stared, either tacitly claiming you as their own or dismissing you as the Other (Naqvi 45).

This sense of Otherness that is experienced by Chuck would provide the foundations for the creation of the terrorist Other. In comparison with the notion of the "Other of Europe" (Spivak 24) in post-colonial jargon, this terrorist may be said to be the 'Other of the USA'. Writing in 1994, seven years before the collapse of the Twin Towers, Said dilated upon this Otherness with reference to Operation Desert Storm in *Culture and Imperialism*:

Arabs are only an attenuated recent example of Others who have incurred the wrath of a stern White Man, a kind of Puritan superego whose errand into the wilderness knows few boundaries and who will go to great lengths indeed to make his point. Yet of course the word "imperialism" was a conspicuously missing ingredient in American discussions about the Gulf (295).

Carrying on with the argument in the same way, Edward Said writes very astutely that the first Persian Gulf War had been portrayed as a "painless Nintendo exercise" (301). In doing so, he ironically alludes to an important component that functioned in marginalising and dangerously stereotyping Muslims. This

component was the American media and the images it portrayed. In the post-9/11 scenario, America's aggression and anger were far more direct and tangible, owing to the fact that the terrorists appropriated the power of images for their own benefit since the media could be relied upon for the mass dissemination of their message. This is a point to which Baudrillard draws attention to in his essay "The Spirit of Terrorism":

The spectacle of terrorism imposes the terrorism of the spectacle... Any slaughter would be forgiven them if it had a meaning, if it could be interpreted as historical violence -- this is the moral axiom of permissible violence. Any violence would be forgiven them if it were not broadcast by media ("Terrorism would be nothing without the media"). But all that is illusory. There is no good usage of the media, the media are part of the event, they are part of the terror and they are part of the game in one way or another.

If this argument is applied to *Home Boy*, we notice that the media is playing a concrete role in the 'Othering' process. The news bulletin broadcast that Chuck watches while at the Shaman's home gives a practical demo of this fact. The story of Ansar Mehmood's arrest is narrated as: "*the FBI found that Mehmood had no terrorist objectives, an investigation revealed he had assisted some friends who had overstayed their visas, making him guilty of harbouring illegal immigrants...*" (Naqvi 91). This event functions as an objective correlative to Chuck's situation, since his visa was nearing its expiry date and he too was helping friends. American society, courtesy of the American media, was going to treat him in very much the same way, owing to its absorption of the projected "dehumanizing stereotypes" (Said 301).

It is in such a scenario that Baudrillard says that the Other is forced to change "the rules of the game" ("The Spirit of Terrorism"). The American game was then to be the "erasure of the Other" ("The Spirit of Terrorism") both on its home territory as well as abroad. Ironically, Pakistani Muslims residing in America had to face it on a more personal level, even as their friends turned their backs on them. The following statement elucidates this point with great clarity.

There was something in the tenor of the phrase, in the way she said *you guys*, that got me hot and bothered. It might have been the offhand suggestion that we eluded her despite all the time we had spent together or that we had somehow mutated overnight. Although I felt no different, I had this feeling that the Duck wasn't the same (Naqvi 72).

The over arching impact of this clear bifurcation between ‘Them’ and ‘Us’ leads to the creation of another term ‘terrorist’ - for those whose resistance against America is massively destructive and hence, more vocal.

A terrorist is defined as an individual who instils fear in the masses for political leverage (Scanlan 21, Cooper 31), feeding on the publicity gleaned thereof. The word terrorism and its derivative “terrorist” incites negative feelings in the masses because terrorism, in the words of Mark Hoffman as quoted in Barry Cooper’s *New Political Religions, or an Analysis of Modern Terrorism*, is

[...] the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence in the pursuit of political change. All terrorist acts involve violence or the threat of violence. Terrorism is specifically designed to have far-reaching psychological effects beyond the immediate victim(s) or object of the terrorist attack. It is meant to instill fear within, and thereby intimidate, a wider “target audience” that might include a rival ethnic or religious group, an entire country, a national government or political party, or public opinion in general. [...] Through the publicity generated by their violence, terrorists seek to obtain the leverage, influence and power they otherwise lack to effect political change on either a local or an international scale (31).

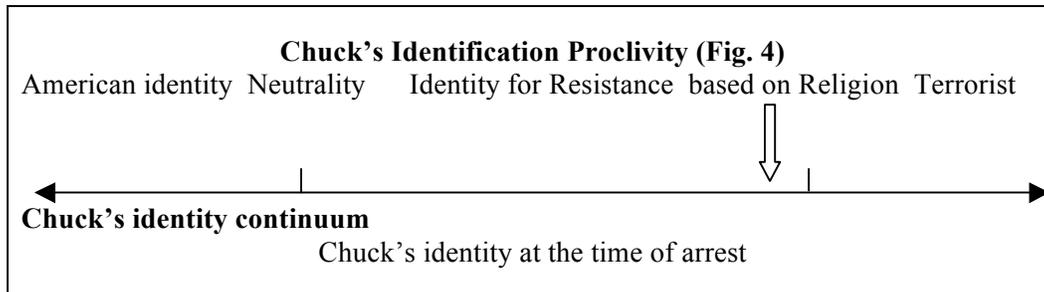
In post-9/11 USA, this notion of terrorism was re-formulated to fit in all Muslims or individuals resembling Muslims, as individuals who inspired fear. Terrorism was dangerously seen to have become synonymous with Islam (‘Struggling Against Stereotypes’). It is to be remembered that labeling an individual or a community a terrorist delegitimizes its standing, since terrorism is defined as “illegitimate violence” (Scanlan 6), or “other people’s violence” (Scanlan 6). Hence, terrorism jumped in to fill in the gaps left by the fall of Nazism, Fascism, Communism etc. (the previous Others). “To call people terrorists is to condemn them” (Scanlan 6), just as, earlier on, labeling someone a Communist had been equivalent to condemning them. It is this social condemnation of individuals who are not actual terrorists but have been termed terrorists or treated as such (Akram and Johnson 295), that leads to a revision of the parameters of identity which these so-called Others use to define themselves. With 9/11, the notion of the binaries underwent a tectonic shift, and while many individuals engaged in “creating new mythologies of resistance” (Raja 41), characters like Chuck had to experience an inner schism to negotiate a new identity for themselves, within the framework of their religion (i.e. Islam).

### **Formation of Chuck's Identity for Resistance**

In order to trace the metamorphosis of identity crisis into resistance identity, Chuck's unfounded incarceration in the Metropolitan Detention Centre "America's Own Abu Ghraib" (Naqvi 105) needs to be scrutinized. George Bush's speech was ironically resounding in the background at the time of his arrest from the missing Muhammad Shah's home:

*I also want to speak directly tonight to Muslims throughout the world, We respect your faith... Its teachings are good and peaceful...The terrorists are traitors to their own faith, trying in effect to hijack Islam itself... After all that has just passed, all the lives taken, and all the possibilities and hopes that died with them, it is natural to wonder if America's future is one of fear. Some speak of an age of terror... this country will define our times, not be defined by them. As long as the United States of America is determined and strong, this will not be an age of terror, this will be an age of liberty, here and across the world (Naqvi 97-102).*

While the FBI arrests AC, Jimbo, and Chuck for being at their friend's house, the irony becomes more pronounced because as the arrests are put in effect, both AC and Jimbo are drunk and merely fooling around. So while the impact of George Bush's speech stands nullified by the irrational, even paranoiac, Hollywood style arrest of three Pakistani youngsters, it would become a major stimulant, compelling Chuck to re-define his Self vis a vis "the notions of collective identity" (Naqvi 103). Knowing that he wasn't the only Pakistani being subjected to such political harassment, since the media reported such events with great frequency, he realizes that being Pakistani "no matter what [he] did, [he] couldn't change the way [he] was perceived" (Naqvi 103). This realization becomes the fulcrum that tilts the lever of his identity. The open hypocrisy of the American promise of religious freedom and the exploitation of expatriates in the name of the "Material Witness Statute" (Naqvi 106) makes the pointer of his identity slide further towards a more religion-affiliated pole as the following diagram indicates:



However, a close reading of the text indicates that this transition is not abrupt. The narrative up to this point is peppered with subtle reminders of Chuck's affiliation with his religion and these reminders are noticeably filtered through Chuck's own consciousness. For instance, at the beginning of the novel, when he makes a cigarette for himself and smokes it, he "nodded to the heavens as if in prayer" (Naqvi 8); Amo, who is AC's sister, dons a hijab and although Chuck understands its import, he "did not care to wear [his] identity on [his] sleeve" (Naqvi 55). Moreover, when Old Man Khan uses the word "jihad" (Naqvi 54) in the context of "doing God's work, making Heaven on Earth", Chuck can understand the deviance of this connotation of Jihad from the post-9/11 connotation of Jihad that had "entered discourse with a bang" (Naqvi 54). In addition, when AC's father recites "*In the name of God, the Beneficent and Merciful*" (Naqvi 51), it resonates throughout the novel, since this is the paradigm to which Chuck's conception of his Self will return as he resists the American hegemony, not by destroying it, but by discarding it.

The interrogation to which he is subjected in prison catalyses the development of a resistant form of identity, which is entirely different from the identity of a terrorist. The terrorist, according to Baudrillard functions in the following paradigm:

And to see in terrorist action a purely destructive logic is nonsense. It seems to me that their own death is inseparable from their action (it is precisely what makes it a symbolic action), and not at all the impersonal elimination of the Other. Everything resides in the challenge and the duel, that is still in a personal, dual relation with the adversary('The Spirit of Terrorism').

Yet, Chuck's identity for resistance, nevertheless, is also unequivocally antipodal to the stereotyped identity construct imposed upon him by his interrogators during

detention. The interrogation itself reflects the dual relation with the opponent which Baudrillard has referred to.

Grizzly: You are a terrorist?  
Chuck: No, sir.  
Grizzly: You a Moslem?  
Chuck: Yes, sir.  
Grizzly: So you read the Ko-Ran?  
Chuck: I've read it.  
Grizzly: And pray five times a day to Al-La?  
Chuck: No, sir. I pray several times a year, on special occasions like Eid.  
Grizzly: Drink?  
Chuck: ... Yes, sir  
Grizzly: Won't Al-La get mad? ... What's important to Him...?  
Chuck: (...) Well, I suppose... that I'm good... to people  
[...]  
Grizzly: I want to know does the Koran sanction terrorism?  
Chuck: I've read it. I'm no terrorist  
Grizzly: Then why do Moslems use it to justify terrorism?  
Chuck: It's all a matter of interpretation... I mean take the Bible. It's interpreted differently by, like, Unitarians and Mormons, Lutherans, Pentacostals ...  
Grizzly:... Look. All I want to know is why the hell did they have to blow up the Twin Towers?  
Chuck: Your guess, sir, is as good as mine.  
Grizzly: Can't you put yourself in their shoes?  
Chuck: No, can you? (Naqvi 113-117)

A close reading of this dialogue reveals the Islamophobic forces at play that make Chuck's later reversal towards a religion he keeps at the periphery significant. The criterion that defines a terrorist in the eyes of the American order is brought to the fore through this conversation. A terrorist reads the Quran and prays five times a day, and being a Muslim makes one privy to the plans of all other Muslims. The conclusion that the investigator draws is noted down by him as: "*Boy's excitable... Defended Islamic religion, terrorism*" (Naqvi 117). Chuck's subsequent thought becomes a manifest explication of his version of identity for resistance that develops not just a harder crust, but a harder core as well: "I didn't really mean to but didn't mean to apologize for myself either (Naqvi 117). Taking up Baudrillard's explanation, again we notice that Chuck is simply taken as an 'adversary' and the conversation is more like a 'duel' in which the individuality

of the Other (Chuck) has to be eliminated, submerged in an inhuman, unjust stereotyped heterogeneity. The reason for this is:

It is the power of the adversary that has humbled you, it is this power which must be humbled. And not simply exterminated... One must make (the adversary) lose face. And this cannot be obtained by pure force and by the suppression of the other. The latter must be aimed at, and hurt, as a personal adversary. Apart from the pact that links terrorists to each other, there is something like a dual pact with the adversary. It is then, exactly the opposite to the cowardice of which they are accused, and it is exactly the opposite of what Americans do, for example in the Gulf War (and which they are doing again in Afghanistan): invisible target, operational elimination (Baudrillard "The Spirit of Terrorism").

Since Chuck is taken to be the opponent, he has to be humbled, locked up in a cell whose toilet is choked. He must be made to lose his respect and, therefore, not merely insulted collectively, but individually. Yet, this scared boy is not accused of cowardice, but of something more contemptible, i.e. defending Islam. Ironically Islam is manifestly being taken as a synonym for 'terrorism'. A close analysis of this binary pattern reveals that it is not merely Chuck who is made the Other of the USA; Islam is, too. If one were to apply the algebraic patterns of syllogistic equation, one would get the following mathematical equation:

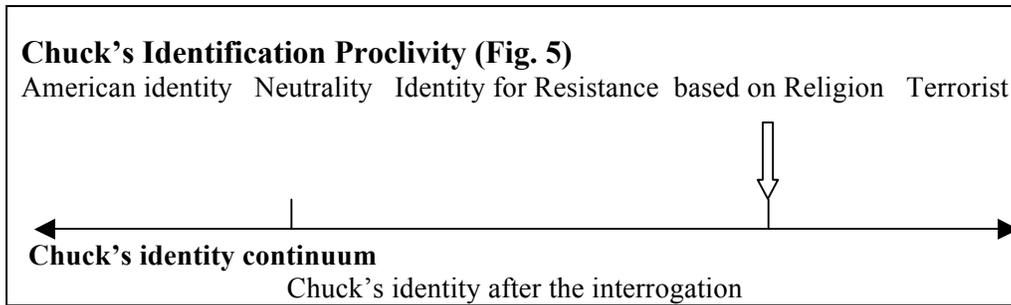
If Terrorist = Muslim, then

$\Rightarrow$  Chuck = Muslim, so

$\Rightarrow$  Chuck = Terrorist

It is this realization that causes Chuck's identity to slide along the identity continuum towards a more expressive and manifest form of identity for resistance.

A diagrammatic portrayal of the alteration in Chuck's identity would be as follows:



However, subsequent events indicate the reconstructed identity of his Muslim Self will display a polarity from the identity of a terrorist who uses his religion as the dominant signifier. Thus, the concepts of both the Other and the Self display a unique refraction, as H.M Naqvi in particular and Pakistani fiction writers in general highlight in their compositions.

### **Hybridised or Unified Identity?**

The earlier sections have essayed to throw light upon the concepts of identity and identity crisis vis-à-vis Chuck's placement in New York at the time of the collapse of the Twin Towers. I have also dealt with the idea of identity for resistance and explored how this notion metamorphoses Chuck's awareness along with the articulation of his Self. This concluding section evaluates the next stage of this meiotically modifying identity. While Chuck's identity sheds its pro-Western chromosomes, it takes on Islam as the most manifest index of his 'Selfhood' to maintain its constitutional balance. Yet, this identity does not translate itself through some destructive course of action; rather it manifests itself through a symbolic reversion, so that the imparity induced in his awareness of his Self attains equipoise.

### **Identity Conundrum of Expat Muslims in the West**

In the world of "policing terror" (Baudrillard "The Spirit of Terrorism"), the major dilemma faced by Muslims living in Western societies was to reconcile their Muslim identities, sympathies and Pan-Islamic allegiances with their fidelity and devotion to their host countries. In this scenario, most of the Muslim youth, in particular, had to reconstruct their communal identities in some visible, non-aggressive but vocal form. Nasar Meer, while tracing the evolution of Muslim consciousness in post-7/7 United Kingdom, highlights this point as below:

As a 'demonization of Islam' took place in local and national press, ... the youth perceived their *communal* identity to be under threat and 'closed ranks' ... And yet, throughout the same period in the same school, no more than two or three students prayed in an area set aside for prayer. The fact that their grievances did not translate into prayer, but instead heightened their sense of an 'associational' identity (Modood, 1997), supports the distinction between Islamic and Muslim identities in my account of Muslim-consciousness... This is informed by 'the feeling of "otherness" powerfully generated by western racism and orientalism. In this context it is likely that the images of Muslim civilians seen to be dying and suffering in various hotspots around the world ... will impact upon the emotive ties inherent within identity construction' (Greaves, 2007: 22) (qtd. In Meer 81-82).

The same feeling of Otherness dictates Chuck's reversion towards Islam, but stops there and continues to function and develop. This is unlike the protagonist of Mohsin Hamid's *Moth Smoke*, whose identity awareness functions through a practical resistance instead of a symbolic one. Chuck's resistance is of a symbolic order, functioning within a more personal domain. He turns away from what Baudrillard calls the practices of "'Western traditionalism' [which] are more hypocritical, forever pretending to be something they are not, forever claiming their opposites (superstition, religion, tribalism) to be radically different from themselves." (Almond 170). In his study, Ian Almond states that "Baudrillard goes on to suggest that the Western traditionalist is more willing to commit acts of violence than his Islamic counterpart: 'it is always the Enlightenment fundamentalist who oppresses and destroys the other, who can only defy it symbolically' (p 80). The West's insistence on reifying the reality around it – on imposing signs and images onto everything it meets – leads to it paranoically losing touch with that reality" (Almond 171). It is this hypocrisy and severance from reality that Chuck experiences on a more personal level and it compels him to establish a redefinition of his identity since his pro-Western consciousness of his Self has been placed precariously on a ridge. Fighting a nervous collapse, Chuck feels as if he "was teetering on the ragged edge of the universe. One misstep, one slip, and I would totter, I would fall" (Naqvi 199). This can be paralleled with the condition of the Muslim youth in post-9/11 British society. Highlighting this condition, researcher Tahir Abbas writes in his article "After 9/11: British South Asian Muslims, Islamophobia, Multiculturalism, and the State" that

Internally, young Muslims are increasingly found in the precarious position of having to choose between one set of loyalties in relation to "the other" (Islamic

verses British; liberal verses radical), and being impacted by radical Islamic politics on the one hand and developments related to British multicultural citizenship on the other. This creates tensions and issues, which encourage some to take up the “struggle” more vigorously, while others seek to adopt more western values, for example (33).

Chuck’s situation in New York parallels the condition of his compatriots in Britain. However, the choice he makes is mid-way between the two choices defined by Tahir Abbas. He does not adopt a more pro-West approach (an approach highlighted through the placement of the American flag on cabs by Pakistani cab drivers on the streets of New York in *Home Boy*); neither does he opt for a radicalized Islamic identity. His identity construct is less volatile, yet that does not in any way attenuate the symbolic significance of his reversion. An event highlighted in *Home Boy* that substantiates this element is the time when Chuck’s frenzied mind contemplates springing AC from prison, “like ninjas” (Naqvi 195). Chuck was driven to contemplating this extreme action because he had found out that

[...] although the terrorism charges against AC were dismissed \_\_ the bomb-making manual and the sinister Arabic literature turned out to be *The Anarchist Cookbook* and *Ibne Khaldun’s Muqaddimah*, respectively \_\_ the authorities found a and a half grams of cocaine *on his person*. ‘The penalty for possession in New York is the same for second-degree murder (Naqvi 193).

AC was thus put away for fifteen years. While Chuck was contemplating his plans, an epileptic seizure at the sight of a policewoman articulated his embedded fear of the US authorities: “The authorities gave me existential heebie-jeebies. They had become what scarecrows or clowns were to some kids, avatars of the Bogeyman. At that moment, however, I realized I couldn’t take a walk in the park, much less walk into a prison... (Naqvi 197). This epiphanic moment becomes the final contouring factor defining his non-violent Islamic identity.

### **The Prayer Motif**

As mentioned earlier, the prayer motif finds recurrent expression in *Home Boy*. The daily prayers offered five times a day are an identifying marker for Muslims. However, as Chuck’s re-evaluation and re-configuring of his identity is catalyzed by his arrest and subsequent release, the prayer motif recurs with greater frequency. While prayer may be taken as a symbol of communal association

(Meer 81-82), for Chuck, it was more of a spiritual anodyne and hence, as the dilemma acquires greater intricacy, the prayer motif tends to stimulate clarity. For instance, when Old Man Khan suffers a heart attack, owing to his son Jimbo's arrest, Chuck prays

I raised my hands and bowed my head and mumbled a prayer that began, 'Allah Mian, please help Khan Sahab get back on his feet. His family needs Him.' ... Before I could complete the plaint, God dispatched a doctor (Naqvi 169).

Similarly, when Khan Sahab is on the point of recovery on the same day, Chuck assures him:

'I'll pray for you, Khan Sahab,' I said before heading out,  
'I am alive because of your prayers, Shehzad Beta'(Naqvi 179).

Prayer, (pronounced as 'brayer' in the Arabic world and hence carries a humorous pun) binds Chuck to the Moroccan who empathetically tells him

'I brayed for you... You bray too. Allah looks after His children' ... I was reminded that we shared the same rituals, doctrinal vocabulary, and eschatological infrastructure, even if we did not read the same books, listen to the same music...(Naqvi 203)

### **Chuck's Reversion to Islam**

While prayer functions as a binding agent, the common experiences of the Muslims in the USA after 9/11 also knits them together. Just as Chuck has no idea about the whereabouts of his friend AC, similarly, one of the Moroccan's acquaintances has also been taken away by 'them'. AC, Shaman and the Moroccan's acquaintance become corporeal symbols of the hypocrisy and injustice that was percolating through the American system, owing to its hyped up security concerns. The hybridity, evinced by both the linguistic features of the text of *Home Boy* and the name of the protagonist, is finally discarded when a little girl questions him:

'Chuck,' she chuckled. 'What kinda name is Chuck?'

‘Well ... I suppose, it’s American.’

‘Are you American?’

‘Um, no ... I’m actually Pakistani.’

‘Why’d ya have an American name when you’re Pakistani?’ (Naqvi 188)

This conversation impels Chuck to establish a sort of a “reactive Muslim consciousness” (Meer 200) in which he reframes his idea of his Self. Since the Self reveals itself during the process of social interaction, especially as the actor begins to experience his or her own behavior in connection with others, his social interaction with American society and with the Muslim community, in comparison, indicates his predilection for a return to Pakistan. His reversion was indeed reactionary, yet it burgeoned from roots ingrained deeply within his being. Chuck’s discarding of his hybrid Self was, in effect, a re-awakening of his dormant, inherent Self that had been anchored in the substratum of his religion.

### **A Unified Self**

Chuck’s journey, however, is not so simple as to be encapsulated within a few terms; neither was this reversion merely an emotional reaction. Had it been as flimsy as that, Chuck would not have discarded the opportunities to remain in America and become a bona-fide American citizen, as he had so ardently desired at the beginning of the novel. For a person who has had such an intimate brush with the American War on Terror policy, he refuses to avail any such opportunity to be reintegrated into a system that was rapidly morphing into an exploitative mechanism. Just as he comes to a decision about returning, Chuck gets a call notifying him that he has qualified for a vacant position in a prestigious institution. He does not even care to listen to the whole message and hangs up.

The second motivating factor which could have compelled him to cancel his return to Pakistan was Amo, Jimbo’s sister whom he always fancied. She does not want him to go away as she questions: “Is there like, any way I can convince you to stay?” (Naqvi 211), but it was an idea he could not consign himself to. This was because Chuck now saw America as a police state:

[...] there’s sadness around every corner? There are cops everywhere? You know, there was a time when a police presence was reassuring,... but now I’m

afraid of the, I'm afraid all the time. I feel like a marked man. I feel like an animal. It's no way to live. Maybe it's just a phase, maybe it'll pass, and things will return to normal, or maybe,... history will keep repeating itself (Naqvi 206).

The seeming endlessness of this form of persecution makes him turn away as he tells his mother: "I want to come home, Ma" (Naqvi 207). However, the process of unifying the Self does not end there. This re-integrated, unified Self is further consolidated through a startling, symbolically poignant obituary published for the Shaman who is revealed to have had died a hero's death in the collapsing Towers:

**Mohammad 'Mo' Shah**

**No Friend of Fundamentalism**

... 'Everybody thinks all Muslims are fundamentalists,' said Michael Leonard, a coworker. 'Muhammad wasn't like that. He was like us, like everybody. He worked hard, played hard.'[...] Mr. Shah was attending a conference at the World Trade Centre when tragedy struck. He called Mr. Leonard to ask him to cover for him. A plane had hit the building, he said. He was going to be late.

[...] The story was simple, black-and-white: the man was a Muslim, not a terrorist (Naqvi 213-214).

This obituary becomes the crux of the entire novel for it brings to the spotlight, with jolting clarity, the futility of the American exercise of arresting AC, Chuck and Jimbo. Muhammad Shah had been suspected of being a terrorist when all the while he had been working conscientiously, like any other American citizen and had died like many other Americans who had perished in the World Trade Centre. Rather than a being condemned as a terrorist, he was being celebrated as a hero. Moreover, another factor that registers itself on our awareness with the maximum impact is that it was his Muslim identity that made him a prime suspect. This overly simplistic generalization about all Muslims compels Chuck to turn away from the "*land of the free*" (Naqvi 215). Yet this turning away is expressed, again, in the symbolic gesture of a prayer.

[...] positioning myself generally east, toward Mecca, recited the call to prayer.

*In the name of God, I began, the Beneficent and Merciful. God is great ... God is the Greatest. There is no God but God.*

Raising my hands to my temple, I murmured, ‘Accept these prayers on behalf of Muhammad Shah.’

Then, when it was time to go, I left (Naqvi 214).

This conclusion of the novel articulates the complete formation of Chuck’s identity paradigm vis-à-vis his religious allegiance. This formation stems from two binary realizations, i.e. disillusionment with the American system and a feeling of vindication through Muhammad Shah. The schism that had cleaved his personality seems to have been rationally erased as Chuck finds a pragmatic course of action through re-embracing his religious identity. Moreover, just as the individuals from the Muslim community had reached out to him in his time of need, so does he become a source of deliverance for a martyred Muslim friend.

### **Conclusion**

Though Pakistanis have borne the brunt of the War on a Terror on both individual and collective levels, this has enabled them to devise a conception of their Self which does not demand the exclusion or the abandonment of Islam as a practical creed. Embracing their own Otherness, they have become engaged in intellectual debates about what it means to be a Muslim. The most important idea that has crystallized out of this study is the idea of Muslim-hood as a latent seed in every person of Muslim origin and that this seed can burgeon even in the most moderate of Muslims. This flowering may not get translated into destruction but it gives a solid sense of identity consciousness. Moreover, it breeds a signification of a completely concatenated identity instead of a hybrid one that had come out of an effort to blend into the American/ Western *weltanschauung*.

While this study concludes that the protagonist of this novel does indeed forge a unified identity, it also invites more studies to explore if individuals are able to erase internal fractures that result from compelling events like 9/11.

We find this theme of a unified identity and the efforts that pave the way for this sort of unification in numerous Pakistani writings in English, such as those of Kamila Shamsie and Mohsin Hamid. This element bears testimony to the idea that post-9/11 Pakistani fiction in English remains a vibrant ground displaying the real-life impact of this event on an average Pakistani and the choices he/she makes. In short, while this study has delimited itself to the exploration of one idea

(i.e. identity crisis in the post-9/11 scenario), more studies may be conducted to elaborate the multifarious impacts of this event and the myriad patterns through which it has been incorporated into Pakistani fiction in English.

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