Abstract
Following the 9/11 attacks, it was said that all Americans and those in the West underwent a cultural shock. White people's sorrow and pain were used to maintain a regressive concept about Muslims, as fear of the unknown arose and surrounded them. The succession of violence meted out on vulnerable people of colour (POC), especially those belonging to a faith affiliated with Islamist terrorist groups, is explained by their purposeful removal from an ideologically created collective imagination. Trauma of the minority did not figure in the mainstream concerns of Western society. Every act of resistance was surgically decimated to keep alive the irrational fear of the Other. What a culture identifies as ‘living beings’ is always conditioned by social norms and these norms are especially manipulated during the times of crisis. We, as is known, are products of our social and material conditions. The attempt at generalizing an entire community and fleshing out totalizing narratives rests on the dominant power structure. The increase of Islamophobia in the West and other areas of the world, as well as the widespread idea that all Muslims are violent in the aftermath of America's invasion on Afghanistan and their alleged 'radicalization,' have all contributed to Muslim fear psychosis. By exploring two post-9/11 books, Mohsin Hamid's The Reluctant Fundamentalist and Ali Eteraz's Native Believer, this paper will discuss the subject of Islamophobia, its ramifications, and the formation of a Muslim consciousness.

Keywords: Islamophobia, Muslim, Trauma, Self, Other

Introduction
It rarely escapes our consciousness how some lives are deemed more vulnerable than most. We are aware of their precarious existence as victims of the surveying eye of military check posts and immigration offices; they are often placed on the negative side of the binary between good and evil, and vilified as the ever hateful, vindictive enemy with a human face. The 9/11 attacks in America transformed the already prevalent imagination of Muslims as ‘regressive’ and ‘backward’. It catapulted an active anti-Muslim campaign which was subsequently adopted by other European and Western societies. Australia, Italy and Britain further contributed to the
making of an ‘insufferable victimhood’ which is said to be the by-product of the so-called Islamicization/Islamization (the process through which a society converts to Islam and becomes a Muslim, as seen in the Levant, North Africa, the Horn of Africa, Iran, Pakistan, Malaysia, and Indonesia) of its masses. The continuous scapegoating of Islamic individuals, groups, and even nations accused of supporting terrorism have led to second hand trauma on the psyche of Muslim population. The rise of Islamophobia in the West and other parts of the globe, the palpable belief about all Muslims subscribing to violence in the wake of America’s attack on Afghanistan and their supposed ‘radicalisation’ have justly contributed to fear psychosis in Muslims. This paper shall address the issue of Islamophobia, its effects and the making of a Muslim consciousness after the 9/11, by examining two post 9/11 texts, Mohsin Hamid's The Reluctant Fundamentalist and Ali Eteraz’s Native Believer.

Islamophobia can be defined as the “essentially negative though ‘cognitive, affective, and conative posturing of individuals towards Islam and/or Muslims” (Zafar 94). Anti-Islam polemic has been peddled across historical time periods to limit the growth of Islam as a power threatening the West. Homi Bhabha presents binary schematization like centre-margin, civilized-savage, enlightened-ignorant to be the driving force behind West’s colonizing/dehumanizing ventures. Islamophobia is more than hostility, it is a well orchestrated, concerted propaganda against a “contra-religio political force” (Zafar 88) which stood to challenge the West theologically, culturally and politically. The “crusades” against Arab nations were instrumental in the making of a politically active Muslim subjectivity. The framing of racial prejudices into “us versus them” aggravated the situation and contributed to the increasing unrest and rise of ‘jihadi’ movements across the Muslim world. Islamophobia is the face of these micro-aggressions which evolved into globally sanctioned violence and psychological harassment. No material difference was seen to exist between fundamentalism and moderate and secularized Islam. All Muslims were conceived as potential terrorists. It was hardly acknowledged how forces of modernity in the West were partly responsible for the rise of Islamic Fundamentalist nationalism in the Middle East. Islamophobia was not a “product of abstract discursive or ideological processes, but of concrete social action undertaken in the pursuit of certain interests” (Massoumi et al 3). It was imperative to acknowledge the institutions and policies which excluded the Muslims, combat the ideological and cultural industry that produced racist outcomes, remain cognizant of the social, political and cultural action undertaken which put the ‘infrastructure of subordination’ in place. Neo conservative movement, parts of Zionist movement, the counter jihad movement and the far right, and elements of liberal, left, secular and feminist movement played a motivating role.

The disconcerting spectacle of the Twin Towers engulfed in flames and people jumping to death (immortalised in the form of photographs and videos) resulted in the instant registration of a version of trauma in the American collective. The question then asked - what constitutes or who represents an American identity should confront us now and then. What should have issued forth a greater understanding of life’s precariousness across continents and borders, made way for the deaths of innocent lives in Afghanistan and Iraq, thus revealing the mechanisms through which certain lives are deemed invaluable at the expense of others. The disposable, nondescript existence of Muslims became a reality after September 11, 2001. This
‘Otherization’/’Othering’ of Muslims became a norm, where Islam was labelled as a monolithic enemy at war with the West. Even though it rattled the Muslim population too when the Twin Towers received a blow, they were forced to prove their loyalty to America at every juncture. The characters of both these novels provide a mirror to the changing society. They undergo a series of trials and tribulations necessitated by the state because of their identity. The narratives chronicle the distinct lives of the Muslim characters, and reads like an insider’s account of the mini struggles against oppression and marginalization. There has been a surge in the tendency to categorize minority communities into an all-encompassing, stable, homogenized selfhood. Both Eteraz Ali and Mohsin Hamid challenge these systematic efforts of the hegemonic power structure at heaping everything under one broad label.

A Pakistani novelist, Hamid traces the trajectory of the Muslim in their home country and abroad, illustrating the various shades of failure, disappointment and tragedy that characterised their lives at various stages. Much has been executed by the author in the attempt to highlight a private perspective of trauma, both first and second hand experiences of it by Muslim individuals. A “half-outsider” and pan-international figure, Hamid spent a quarter of his life oscillating between New York, London and Pakistan. His fiction strives for the emergence of a global community who will celebrate the differences that are enshrined in our lives. It marks a move towards the idea of a shared future and the responsibility it entails. Thus, Hamid, in Judith Butler’s words “make grief itself into a resource for politics” (Butler 30). Eteraz Ali borrows and employs the same formula in his fictions. By delineating the unique situation of his characters, Ali illustrates the power dynamics between groups, and exposes the ‘validity’ of sectarian politics endorsed by the dominant majority. Both these authors endow a certain sense of dignity and agency upon its characters by way of detailing, exposing and challenging the myriad forms of oppression.

Undocumented Trauma
Both these novels challenge the idea of ‘belongingness’ entrenched in the imagination of “national communities”. The characters traverse the lengths of the landscape in the subconscious hope of arriving at an understanding about one’s position in this fractured society. Changez, the protagonist of The Reluctant Fundamentalist has difficulty oscillating between his Pakistani and American identity at a go. His consciousness is demarcated between the one, singular life transforming event of the 9/11 and its aftermath. An employee of the elite New York valuation firm Underwood Samsons, Changez abandons his opulent lifestyle for a more politically informed life in Pakistan. The development ushered by the September 11 attacks reveal the problematic US policy in South Asia and the selective ostracization of Muslims in First World countries. The attacks on the World Trade Centre and Pentagon (symbolic of America’s dominant hegemony) laid exposed the venerated self-image of liberal democratic societies as immune to destruction. The general public, steeped in amnesia failed to internalize the inconceivable onslaught on America – the “dominant cultural imaginary.” The incessant reproduction of the disturbing visuals (plane crash, people jumping to death) by the media cancelled the most crucial proposition of psychoanalysis, in that it ignored or ‘forgot’ everything that Freud proposed regarding fantasy and wish fulfilment. Fantasies linked to disorder and transgression, followed by invincibility and domination mobilized by some films
of the Western movie genre such as “War of the Fathers” were not realised, or carefully deleted from memory.

The trauma inflicted on people, as Changez ruminates “and you acted out these beliefs on the stage of the world, so that the entire planet was rocked by the repercussions of your tantrums, not least my family, now facing war thousands of miles away” (Hamid 168) is juxtaposed with the collective trauma felt by Americans. The possibility of a catastrophe plagued the minds of individuals like Changez, both in Pakistan and America. Many suffered from vicarious psychological trauma arising from killings in other countries in the name of terrorism. These types of trauma are experienced through hearing stories of others, or witnessing spectacles of danger or hearing reports through media. Vicarious trauma can also be caused by contact with others who have been traumatized and by association (when people are linked by race, religions or other characteristics to others who have been involved in violent events). The lifelong consequences of traumatic episodes extended across generations.

The docile and subservient attitude of M’s parents was transferred to him in due course;

They had come to America through luck, by having their name called in the immigration lottery. Because it was chance that brought them here, they always lived in fear of chance turning against them. The first job my father got, he held it, and the first role my mother had, that of raising me, she held that. Every now and then they would talk, in quiet tones, about launching business, or aiming for another job, or getting financing for a house, but would veto themselves. “That’s risky,” my mother would say. “It’s chancy,” my father would add. That would be that. (Ali 51)

He refused to be seen as a whole, as a Muslim, as a vulnerable individual suffering from intergenerational trauma. Instead, he submitted to the dominant order’s ideal version of a Muslim.

Insider/Outsider

While both the novels tread along similar paths, it strays in terms of its treatment of the subject matter at hand. The Reluctant Fundamentalist delves into the aspect of ‘coming home’. Changez enrols himself in a scholarship programme in a premier institution like Princeton University. The succeeding recruitment at Underwood Sampsons further solidifies future plans. Changez ‘s ambitious self-envisions an unification with the grand American dream which is emblematic of individual freedom and vertical mobility. Fuelled by pragmatism and aspiration, he rehearses the importance of merit in that country of unrestricted capital. Despite the growing tendency to prove his merit, Changez signals the awareness of the positioning of Third World sensibilities in a developed, capitalist society. It is thus striking how he navigates the boundaries of the novel with a self-reflexive habit in play. He is conscious about the country’s not so inconspicuous tendency at categorizing people according to their religious, ethnic and racial locations. He knows that he is an “exotic acquaintance” to his friend Chuck from the Ivy League, and is aware about the appealing charisma of his mannerisms serving as a contrast to the popularly conceived notion of Muslims as “backward”;

Perhaps it was my speech: like Pakistan, America is, after all, a former English colony, and it stands to reason, therefore, that an Anglicized accent may in your
country continue to be associated with wealth and power, just as it is in mine. Or perhaps it was my ability to function both respectfully and with self respect in a hierarchical environment, something American youngsters - unlike their Pakistani counterparts - rarely seem trained to do. Whatever the reason, I was aware of an advantage conferred upon me by my foreignness, and I tried to utilize it as much as I could. (Hamid 42)

Changez rarely displayed an ambiguous stance on his growing fondness for America and its nationalities. He exhibited exemplary skills on the financial firm, completed each project with finesse, and excelled in casual rendezvous. But the bombings altered his perception of inclusivity owing to the vicious glint in the White gaze.

Ali Eteraz negotiates similar vicissitudes heralded by the public’s reaction to 9/11. Countries to the East loomed in the collective consciousness as a symbol of pre-modern ‘savagery’. They were the anomalous, imperfect, abnormal Other to the West’s ‘intellectually’ refined and progressive Self. The discursive formation of these derogatory pejoratives (abnormal vs normal) were narrativized and disseminated among the general public as part of colonial strategies. Negative traits were attributed to populations who were not Christian or White. Like Changez, M is aware of his positionality within the American framework. It is not unbeknownst to us that a name acts as a referent to one’s cultural dispositions and religious belief. But such a mode of gauging information about one’s allegiance/ servitude through a name is dodged and rejected time and again. We are never endowed with the knowledge of his entire name. Rather, we witness the protagonist’s active rebellion against any labels associated with heritage or religion. Thus his confusion at being called a “residual supremacist” introduces multitudinous dimension to question of ethnicity and religion. M proclaims himself to be an atheist, bereft of any yearning for the Prophet, bereft of loyalty to his Muslim fraternity. He compromises by adopting a neutral ground:

Maybe it would have been better if there were actually walls around us. Clear demarcations between the ones free to be anything and the ones limited to being “Muslims”. That way we would not have grown up thinking there were no walls. We never would have been mistaken, the way I was mistaken, and so the scar that came with getting herded wouldn't have been as bad, as ugly. Perhaps that was my role: to tell the next generation that there were walls, and for the most part they were impenetrable, and before insanity completely takes hold of you, you must find little pools of darkness around you… (Ali 106)

The characters earn their ticket to visibility through a ritual forsaking of roots, thus highlighting the illusion of inclusion which obscures structural inequalities and racism.

**Home and the World**

The epistemic violence inflicted by Western discourse on practitioners of Islam has not escaped M’s consciousness. He views himself as product of America, his life, his partner Marie-Anne and his aspirations are attuned to its paradigmatic shifts. But the disaster brought about by George Gabriel, the ex-boss who evicted M from work for placing the undistinguished Holy Quran (the religious idiom of Islam) above Nietzsche (apogee of Western wisdom) in a bookshelf punctured a hole in the latter’s selfhood. The unanticipated
stint at unemployment further introduced new angles to questions of “home.” It aggravated every bit of antagonism he felt towards devout followers of Islam, in his country or otherwise. But it was not so much repulsion that he fostered. Muslims figured in verbal vocabulary as the “fascist” of the current world order. You cannot be a ‘Muslim’ and squeeze through the so called composite culture of America. Erasure of one’s past lives guaranteed entry into the corporate rich lifestyle, to ultimate visibility and power. But the Quran vs Neitzsche episode hijacked his thoroughly designed plan. It handicapped him mentally, forced him to a state of isolation and alienation until he met Ali Ansari who introduced M to different concepts of “home”. His initial introduction to a group of believers (Brother Hatim and Sister Saba) and subsequently “transgressors” (Gay Commie Muzzies – suburbanite Muslim society) opened a promising avenue of opportunity for knowing oneself. This casual dip into the melting pot exposed the fragile lifelines of Muslims all over the world. As Ali writes:

If you’re Indian, pissed off about Pakistan complaining about your occupation of Kashmir? Hey, just call them Muslims and get them declared a terrorist state. If you’re Israeli and you don’t want to release an inch of the West Bank to the Palestinians? Hey, just call them Muslims and you don’t have to move your tanks. If you’re Russian, struggling with a bunch of Chechens telling you to stop raping their women? Hey, just call them Muslim and blow them to bits...

(Ali 121)

M’s careful distancing from the entity called Muslim runs counter to Changez’s treatment of his interior and exterior societal make up. When Changez exclaims “I was looking about me with the eyes of a foreigner” (Hamid 124) he alludes to the particular type that M has metamorphosed into – an “entitled and unsympathetic American” (Hamid 124).

However, despite M’s concerted effort at living an obscure life, the manoeuvring into a familiar yet strange territory rouses his interests, thus issuing forth the act of remembering, of his roots and native culture. “The restoration of memory through technologies designed to get the patient to remember by restoring the “pathogenic secret” to awareness is one of the major goals of therapy” (Ruth Leys 2). Ansari substituted Richard Konigsberg, the man who sponsored M “through the gauntlets of profession” and helped him unearth his complex, suppressed emotions in this transference of emotions. In the United States, Muslims have been included in an immigration ban, harassed on college campuses, and experienced racial profiling. In 2015, hate crimes against Muslims and Arabs rose by 78% to an all-time high. In 2015 and 2016, assaults against Muslims in the United States surpassed the modern peak reached after 9/11. This racialization of religion invoked perennial discomfort in individuals belonging to Islamic heritage forcing individuals like M to relinquish their roots. Islamophobia is a social and mediated construct, it depends on the visual and literary narrative like cinema, books and the media. The preposterous, morally defeating “truths” these peddled gave an impetus to writers like Mohsin Hamid and Eteraz Ali to bring politics into the literary medium.

Us vs Them: Contrasting Categories
Weaponization of terms like ‘fanatical’ against dissenting voices was sanctioned by influential ‘think tanks’. The ‘War on Terror’ campaign fanned hate politics by incorporating into the usual linguistic register terms like ‘terrorism’, ‘extremism’ and ‘radicalisation’ vis a
vis the Muslims. The US government’s violence was thus condoned and normalised. Islamophobia is not an isolated episode of aggression but a cluster of micro aggressions with racist overtones. Like any other racism it beckons our conscience to dissect the ways in which it is produced and reproduced. Analysing Islamophobia as a form of structural racism broadens the understanding of the process of racialisation. It is a concept which refers to the process by which racial meanings are attached to social groups or actions. Its anti-essentialist character focuses on the “reductive identitarian formulae, which tend to see ‘Islam’ and ‘The West’ as deep, stable, ongoing cultural entities rooted in distinctive moral principle” (Kundnani 38). It emphasizes “on the dynamic and historically contingent nature of ‘race’ and offers a clear solution to the unnecessary analytical confusion which still surrounds questions of Islamophobia and ‘race’” (Kundnani 5). Albeit their shared roots in Islam, both Changez and M’s resolution stand diametrically opposed to each other. The former severs ties with the hegemonic centre’s jingoist politics, whereas M surrenders to America’s pressing demands for respectability and impeccability. We also witness other characters in Native Believer whose idiosyncratic posturing on political matters exposes the varied standpoints of Muslim demographic. The characters, Candace and Leila are poles apart in terms of their morals and beliefs despite their link to Islam. While Candace (a convert) unapologetically espouses her Muslim identity, Leila (an Afghan American) attempts to make up for the wrong deeds of the terrorists by turning into a reformist. M iterates, “She needed to believe that there were Muslim peacemakers, because to not be a reformist would mean that she would have to be terrified of being a Muslim” (Ali 189).

The dialectical opposition between “us and them” plagued their minds. Internalized racism and self-censorship were troubling outcome of Islamophobia and geopolitical conflicts. The subhuman treatment, fear of having to give up one’s citizenship or ultimate ostracization forced those perceived as ‘Muslims’ to tread carefully. M is cautious about his place in society. His relationship with his wife, Marie Anne (a White, Liberal, Christian woman) complicates after the Quran fiasco. The autonomous “I” suffers under the weight of having to prove his loyalty to his wife, in the form of helping her expand her business of surveillance drones in the “terrorist hubs” of Afghanistan and Iraq. In a similar vein, his co-conspirators, Leila and Mahmud introduce themselves as Moderate Muslims – the “civilized” allies of the West. They set themselves between the West and East, run their bridge building exchange program with Muslim communities in other countries to highlight the tolerant composite culture of America. Their privileged class positions prevent them from acknowledging the presence of Islamophobia. This categorisation of Muslims into ‘moderate’ and ‘extremist’ is probably where racism is most evident. How does one differentiate between these two terms? Clothes, body movements, speech etc all became a markers of identifying one from the other.

Kundnani throws light on this anxiety, “To be classed as ‘moderate’, Muslims must forget what they know about Palestine, Iraq, and Afghanistan, and instead align themselves with the fantasies of the War on Terror; they are expected to constrain their religion to the private sphere but also to speak out publicly against extremists’ misinterpretations of Islam” (Kundnani 110). Ali Ansari acts as a foil to M. Candace and Ansari partook in similar ways of looking at the world; they both challenged the surveying eye of America. In a similar vein, Changez developed subversive tools to combat Islamophobia. His return to Pakistan is
informed by the growing tension at home. A politically motivated decision, it sets in motion a protest championed by him;

I made it into my mission on campus to advocate a disengagement from your country by mine. I was popular among my students – perhaps because I was young, or perhaps because they could see the practical value of my ex-janissary’s skills, which I imparted to them in my courses on finance and it was not difficult to persuade them, of the merits of participating in demonstrations for greater independence in Pakistan’s domestic and international affairs, demonstrations that the foreign press would later, when our gatherings grew to newsworthy size, come to label as anti-American (Hamid 176).

We encounter different categories of Muslims, who despite their contradictory inclinations are struggling under a pall of dread and anxiety, just for a chance at survival.

Conclusion
The negative notions about Muslims far outweigh the positives. Individual subjective conscience or call to action against Islamophobia are often downplayed and ignored in mainstream media. Mass media affect all levels of human attitude development, and the construction of social realities. What followed in America was sincerely emulated by other countries to the West. Blatant rejection of practicing Muslims from the public forum, mindless torture of innocent civilians in Afghanistan, Iran and Palestine attests to the flourishing tendency of hate speech and crime. This essay has attempted an analysis of the meanings or nature (of Islamophobia) and its many dimensions. The unwavering fidelity to the Muslim world on the part of Ali Ansari and Changez, M’s dubious stance and the unpremeditated murder of George Gabriel at the close of the novel illuminates the uncertain fate of certain vulnerable groups. Racial prejudice takes a prominent place in instances of negative framing of Muslims. Islamophobia is inextricably bound to the highly moralized rhetoric of good and evil. The rise of ‘moral entrepreneurs’ like George Gabriel in the Western scene confirms our claim.

George Gabriel’s edict, “You are all American jihadists” (Ali, 229) to a group of moderate Muslims and Marie Anne invoke unfathomable frustration. Gabriel eliminated M from the workplace because of prejudiced notions, but the attack on ‘Americanism’ for the group’s complicity in the War on Terror campaign exposes his misplaced sentiment regarding issues of morality. The role of the ‘moral entrepreneur’ to ‘eradicate the evil which disturbs him’ piques the likes of M who were never awarded with a voice to channel their likes and dislikes. Thus his eventual death by murder gestures the rebellious act of minority groups who failed to bridge the perennial chasm between the West and Islam owing to the reluctance of Western society to see beyond stereotypes.

Works Cited


