

# TRANSNATIONAL LITERATURE

## Global Citizenship in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

Adnan Mahmutovic

'What is the purpose of your trip to the United States?' she asked me.

'I live here,' I replied.

'That is not what I asked you, sir,' she said.

– Mohsin Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

As a response to socio-political developments in the US and its global actions since September 11, 2001, a number of new and established authors from Muslim backgrounds – such as Mohsin Hamid, Michael Muhammad Knight, Khaled Hosseini, and Mohja Kahf – have reviewed American civic life through the lens of social imaginaries of a heterogeneous minority whose very identity has been under critical scrutiny since the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.<sup>1</sup> This scrutiny of American civic life is very much tied to a particular sense of globalisation, and an emphasis on what Amartya Sen<sup>2</sup> has called the global, rather than the merely Western, roots of democracy. Unlike Masao Miyoshi and Harry D. Harootunian<sup>3</sup> and David Harvey,<sup>4</sup> these writers do not define globalisation as a break with modernity. Rather, like K.A. Appiah,<sup>5</sup> their writings also harken back to what Alex MacGillivray (2006) calls 'archaic globalization,'<sup>6</sup> which includes the history of Muslim colonialism and its economic and cultural impact on the world and the notion of Muslim *Ummah* as an early form of planetary consciousness.

Citizenship, by definition, requires a state's legal recognition of a person as its subject, whether native or naturalised. There is no doubt that social contracts bind citizens together and to their nation, as Joseph Stiglitz argues,<sup>7</sup> but these writers seem to circle around the idea that there are flexible forms of citizenship, in times of accelerated globalisation, which entail more of a planetary consciousness of rights and duties. In their works, citizenship entails that everyone can, even if only abstractly, come to participate in the rewriting of social contracts and contribute to governance itself. In this essay, I will take a closer look at citizenship in Mohsin Hamid's global success, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*.<sup>8</sup> This success shows that many issues at stake in this novel resonate across a diverse number of ethnoscaples and mediascaples, to use

<sup>1</sup> Mohja Kahf: *E-mails from Scheherazad* (2003) and *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* (2006); Khaled Hosseini: *The Kite Runner* (2004) and *Thousand Splendid Suns* (2008); Michael Muhammad Knight: *Blue-eyed Devil: A Road Odyssey Through Islamic America* (2006), *Journey to the End of Islam* (2009), *Taqwacores* (2004), *The Five Percenters: Islam, Hip Hop and the Gods of New York* (2009), and *The Impossible Man* (2009).

<sup>2</sup> Amartya K. Sen, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (New York: Norton, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> Masao Miyoshi, and Harry D. Harootunian, *Postmodernism in Japan* (Durham: Duke UP, 1989).

<sup>4</sup> David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), and *Justice, Nature, & the Geography of Difference* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).

<sup>5</sup> Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Ethics of Identity* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2007)

<sup>6</sup> Alex MacGillivray, *A Brief History of Globalization* (London: Robinson, 2006) 15.

<sup>7</sup> Joseph E. Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontents* (London: Allen Lane, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> Mohsin Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (London: Penguin, 2008). Subsequent references will be included in the text as page numbers.

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Arjun Appadurai's terms.<sup>9</sup> By casting 'Muslims as an interruptive presence on the global stage',<sup>10</sup> Hamid's novel adds complexity to the emerging field of post-9/11 fiction.<sup>11</sup> It problematises popularised ideas about fundamentalism, globalisation, and what Mahmood Mamdani calls 'culture talk,' a discourse on culture in political and territorial terms.<sup>12</sup> Building the narrative around the terrorist attacks on New York, Hamid's contribution to post-9/11 fiction may be, as most critics have pointed out, an allegorical discourse on global capitalism (with America as its core). In my view, this discourse is but a basis for a deeper inquiry into the notions of civic life and citizenship. Put in the context of Ali Behdad's critical historicism, since the novel describes 9/11 as something that takes place on both a national and a global stage, it shows how 'the project of national identity in the US perpetually returns to the figure of the alien by way of defining itself and promoting a normalized notion of citizenship that itself is a symptom of historical amnesia'.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, the treatment of Muslims after 9/11 is a continuation of anti-democratic governmental practices of curtailing citizens' civic rights, which have stood in contrast to the 'Jeffersonian myth of immigrant America as a haven of democratic pluralism'.<sup>14</sup> What is different in the post-9/11 era is that there are, as Peter Morey shows, increasing 'proposals to strip Muslims in western nations of their citizenship in the event of their being connected to terrorism,' which are examples of 'nations suspending the due operations of the laws by which they are supposed to be defined'.<sup>15</sup> This call for deterritorialisation of citizens suspected of terrorism seems more and more common. These citizens are in a sense deemed worse than other types of criminals for whom even prison would be too good. To deprive them of their citizenship seems more akin the practice of banishment.<sup>16</sup>

A concern with the meaning of citizenship in a changing, increasingly globalised world lies at the core of Hamid's tale. For this reason I find it most important that besides fulfilling some demands<sup>17</sup> on post-9/11 fictions in Michael Rothberg's argument, it also seems to answer

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<sup>9</sup> Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

<sup>10</sup> Anna Hartnell, 'Moving through America: Race, Place and Resistance in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 46.3-4 (July-Sept 2010) 341.

<sup>11</sup> Richard Gray, 'Open Doors, Closed Minds: American Prose Writing at a Time of Crisis', *American Literary History* 21.1 (2009); Georgiana Banita, *Plotting Justice: Narrative Ethics and Literary Culture after 9/11* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012).

<sup>12</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, 'Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: A Political Perspective on Culture and Terrorism Author(s)', *American Anthropologist*, New Series, 104(3) (September 2002) 766.

<sup>13</sup> Ali Behdad, 'Critical Historicism', *American Literary History* 20(1-2) (Spring-Summer 2008) 290.

<sup>14</sup> Behdad 288.

<sup>15</sup> Peter Morey, "'The Rules of the Game Have Changed': Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and Post-9/11 Fiction', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 47.2 (May 2011) 137.

<sup>16</sup> Even in my country of residence, Sweden, the neo-Nazi party called Sweden Democrats, which has 13% of seats in the parliament, have openly proposed cancelling citizenship for selected types of criminals who also belong to certain ethnicities and/or religion while in comparison no such proposals were made about the Swedish citizens who went to aid the Serbian aggression on Bosnia.

<sup>17</sup> Rothberg wants fiction to for instance deal with the 'centripetal' globalisation, and to produce 'a complementary centrifugal mapping that charts the outward movement of American power,' that is, 'the prosthetic reach of [the US] empire into other worlds' (153). For Rothberg, this entails 'mapping America's extraterritorial expansion; exploring the epistemology, phenomenology, and impact of America's global reach; and revealing the cracks in its necessarily incomplete hegemony' (158).

Rothberg's call for 'fiction of international relations and extraterritorial citizenship'.<sup>18</sup> For Hamid, as he tells Amina Yaqin, America seems to be a perfect springboard for his allegorical tale of citizenship:

In Europe, there is still a lingering sense that there are the original tribes of Europe and the Muslim immigrants to Europe – including Pakistanis – are something other than those original inhabitants. ... It's almost as if the American founding myth confirms that, by virtue of being born here, you are one of us, whilst the myth in Europe is one of tolerance: we will allow you to be here and we will tolerate your presence.<sup>19</sup>

In the novel, Changez was not born in the US. He merely comes there to study and then work. He is not a citizen, but there is no doubt that he wants to be, or at least to be able to act, as one. And yet, it is not American citizenship as such that is most important or the only desirable one. Changez's goal is to look at more global, transnational forms of being a citizen. Hamid tells Yaqin:

Part of the struggle we face now is that nations all over the world are trying to assert that they exist, but they remain basically imaginary concepts. ... Why can't a Somali person come and live here [Pakistan]? There is no real reason except that we have decided to believe in a fiction of a country and that fiction is used to say that some people can't cross certain lines. So, where that takes us to is a series of global events that we have all been part of. Human beings are coming to recognise the illusion that nations are out there as empty spaces, they are beginning to work against those illusions, whether it's migration of people across places, terrorists who strike across countries, whether it's global capitalism, whatever it is. The US is in the same boat.<sup>20</sup>

Here, Hamid questions the ability of a nation to be a stable regulator of human affiliations and affairs. Yet, in his novel, he cannot unproblematically divorce the notion of citizenship from the nation. A nation's gravitational pull must be dealt with. As Leerom Medovoi argues, 'America serves as the novel's geopolitical *raison d'être* and as the object of its *rhetorical design* rather than as its generative cultural ground'.<sup>21</sup> While Hamid's novel may be both showing problems with modern citizenship and looking for positive modes and models of global civic engagement, one must not forget that terrorists too operate transnationally. The leaders of Al Qaida may be Saudi citizens but they have been working globally with bases in other sovereign nations. Furthermore, due to their claim on Islam as a global ideology, they also denationalise the supposed threat to America (and other nations). They attempt to make Muslim citizens of different countries imagine affiliations with a global, borderless, and imaginary *Ummah*.<sup>22</sup> The

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<sup>18</sup> Michael Rothberg, 'A Failure of the Imagination: Diagnosing the Post-9/11 Novel: A Response to Richard Gray', *American Literary History* 21.1 (2009) 154.

<sup>19</sup> Amina Yaqin, 'Mohsin Hamid in Conversation', *Wasafiri: The Magazine of International Contemporary Writing* 54 (Summer 2008) 48.

<sup>20</sup> Yaqin 48.

<sup>21</sup> Leerom Medovoi, "'Terminal Crisis?': From the Worlding of American Literature to World-System Literature", *American Literary History* 23.3 (Fall 2011) 646, emphasis mine.

<sup>22</sup> This *Ummah* is not an imaginary homeland like in Salman Rushdie's argument. See Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* (London: Penguin Books, 1991). It has no political reality like a nation. It could be, however, an

important contribution Hamid makes is an attempt to reclaim this notion of global affiliation and to rework it in the face of all manner of fundamentalist threats to healthy civic life. By civic life, I mean that which generally pertains to the rights, duties, and social activities of citizens of a modern nation state. I define 'fundamentalism' as a movement that seeks to gain political and economic power by restricting plural ways of understanding and being in the world. Such movements frequently employ selective and decontextualized readings of holy books of diverse religions as the fundamentals for entire communities. Changez's narrative rests on the fact that fundamentalism of any kind has historical provenance, which has nothing to do with premodernity and its supposed clash with modernity. As Mamdani explains, even when fundamentalism 'harnesses one or another aspect of tradition and culture, the result is a modern ensemble at the service of a modern project'.<sup>23</sup> Corporate fundamentalism, evoked in the novel through Changez's complaint that Underwood Samson always wanted him to focus on the fundamentals (175), consists of a set of rules that govern the company's global expansion, which takes no interest in anything but economic gain.

My analysis will revolve around three particular forms of citizenship because those are contrasted in the novel: economic, political, and social citizenship. They are not really different citizenships, as Bryan S. Turner and Engin F. Isin show, but rather major ways in which the field of citizenship studies has approached its subject.<sup>24</sup> Using Hamid's allegorical tale, I will discuss Changez's role in his company (and its global aspirations) in terms of economic citizenship, or that which Aihwa Ong calls 'flexible citizenship',<sup>25</sup> which stresses the way global capital calls for disrespect of national borders and laws. Unlike Ong and other major figures in citizenship studies (Gran, Woodiwiss, Roche, Lister, Cairns, Miller, Joppke, Sassen, Curtin, Linklater, Turner, Isin, etc.), I will look at the way a novelistic imagination takes on this subject through a rather extensive employment of what has been discussed, from Fredric Jameson on, as national allegory.<sup>26</sup> I argue that the novel problematises the conflict between economic, political, and social citizenships and that it looks forward to the emergence of a new understanding of citizenship as something defined in terms of global rights and duties, something achieved through transnational osmosis (which is allegorised though an intimacy between Changez and Erica).

### **Allegories of Allegiance**

*The Reluctant Fundamentalist* has indeed been read overwhelmingly as an allegory of Pakistani-American relations (Esterino, Elia, Hartnell, Hawley, Kiran, Lasdun, Morey, Munos, Neelam, Moore-Gilbert, Roy, Waterman). To begin with, Changez may be assumed to stand for his homeland, Erica for America (as a nation), and the company Underwood Samson for the global,

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imagined community not unlike that in Benedict Anderson's notion, which seeks a territory and political borders like those of a nation state. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, (New York: Verso, 1991).

<sup>23</sup> Mamdani 767.

<sup>24</sup> Brian S. Turner, and Engin F. Isin. Eds., *Handbook of Citizenship Studies* (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2002). Depending on what aspects of civic life are of greatest concern, one can speak of sexual, ecological, cultural, multicultural, post-national, denationalised, and cosmopolitan citizenship.

<sup>25</sup> Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logic of Transnationality* (Durham & London: Durham UP, 1999) 6.

<sup>26</sup> Fredric Jameson, 'Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism', *Social Text* 15 (Autumn 1986).



corporate power of the US. I intend to push allegorical readings of this novel a step further by looking more closely at the way the allegorical discourse constitutes a ground for a discussion of the notion of citizenship. Before I present my interpretations, I need to contextualise my reading in terms of Jameson's famous discourse on national allegory. Jameson's starting point, like Paul de Man's, is that allegory is a mode of reading and as such it requires no intent on the part of the author. This has indeed been true in the plethora of readings of third world novels as national allegories, as Neelam Srivastava argued. Jameson is really drawn to the great potential of allegorical reading, which he finds has been 'long discredited in the west' because 'the allegorical spirit is profoundly discontinuous, a matter of breaks and heterogeneities, of the multiple polysemia of the dream rather than the homogeneous representation of the symbol'.<sup>27</sup> Taking the well-known polemic with Jameson as a point of departure (from Aijaz Ahmad's early response in *Social Text* and *In Theory*, and on),<sup>28</sup> in this paper I follow Srivastava's argument and find that many elements of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* seem to be in dialogue with Jameson's arguments. Rather than being the result of a deep, symptomatic reading, 'Changez's almost relentless allegorisation ... is an explicit and *conscious* function of the text'.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, 'its allegorical elements ... stubbornly refuse to conceal themselves'.<sup>30</sup> For instance, at the very beginning Changez uses the trope of the beard to allegorise the fear of Muslim fundamentalism. Then he sees the collapse of the Twin Towers as the wound in the heart of American imperialism. Erica, for him, becomes America. Her nostalgia for Chris reflects the American post-9/11 nostalgia, and her grief for him a sense of complex national grief for what and who was lost in the 9/11 attacks. Their love affair is an allegory of the international political and social relations. Underwood Samson (US) stands for global corporate power in contrast to local enterprises. There is hardly any element in the novel that does not train 'an allegorical gaze on America'.<sup>31</sup> Though it may be read as a 'story of the private individual destiny,' which serves as 'an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society',<sup>32</sup> the novel is in my view both a first-world national allegory and an allegory of global citizenship.<sup>33</sup> The story of a Pakistani citizen works better as an allegory of the American nation and global citizenship than an allegory of Pakistan (though it does that as well). Why? Changez is the

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<sup>27</sup> Neelam Srivastava, 'Reading after Terror: *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and First-World Allegory', in *Postcolonial Audiences: Readers, Viewers and Reception*, edited by Bethan Benwell, James Procter, and Gemma Robinson (New York: Routledge, 2012) 173.

<sup>28</sup> Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nation, Literatures* (London: Verso, 1992), and 'Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the "National Allegory"', *Social Text* 17 (Autumn 1987).

<sup>29</sup> Srivastava 176.

<sup>30</sup> Srivastava 172.

<sup>31</sup> Srivastava 174.

<sup>32</sup> Jameson 69.

<sup>33</sup> While hardly any critic fails to at least mention Hamid's use of allegoricity, many find it off putting. In his review in *The Guardian*, James Lasdun identifies it as the core weakness, because it 'gives the story a slightly abstracted, thin-blooded quality' and 'it has a stiffening effect on the narrative, shifting it from the dramatic to the essayistic' (1). James Lasdun, 'The Empire Strikes Back', *The Guardian*, Saturday, 3 March 2007. One cannot but be reminded of Jameson's point that allegory appears 'alien to us at first approach, and consequently, resistant to our conventional western habits of reading' (69). Though my own first instinct was similar to Lasdun's, I find it detrimental to read Hamid's allegories in terms of certain default aesthetic preferences, such as Lasdun's idea that '[t]he nature of fiction is to make one distrustful of any character who lectures and castigates' (1). Hamid shows how allegoricity is good vehicle for problematising both abstract political and social notions.

embodiment of the American dream, an immigrant with an H-1 visa who climbs the career ladder, but his disillusionment with this dream leads him to the position of a more transnational subject.

Despite the transnational impulses in the novel, it is important to keep in mind the notion of *national* allegory exactly because the notion of citizenship cannot be unproblematically divorced from the notion of the nation state even as we may enter the territory of flexible global citizenship as a new way of relating to globalisation and the development of capitalism. For Morey, Hamid engages in

destabilizing the reader's identification through hyperbole, strategic exoticization, allegorical layering and unreliable narration, but also defamiliarizes our relation to literary projects of national identification, forcing us to be the kind of deterritorialized reader demanded by the emerging category of world literature.<sup>34</sup>

The enmeshing of allegories of the nation, state affairs, traditions, and the market is perfectly captured in Hamid's choice of the setting for the very act of storytelling. Changez and his interlocutor meet in the district of Old Anarkali, in a marketplace named 'after a courtesan immured for loving a prince' (2). The allegorical story of Anarkali, within Changez's own allegory, is only one aspect of Changez's lecture to the American,<sup>35</sup> whose purpose is to put 'the present into much better perspective' (51-2). What further puts this small market into perspective, and with it Pakistan-US relations, is also the fact that there are no alcoholic drinks there, but there are familiar 'carbonated soft drinks' (70), which signals, to use Ong's words, that 'capitalism is no longer centered in the West but distributed across a number of global arenas'.<sup>36</sup> The soft drinks represent the capitalist economy as much as the silent American interlocutor is assumed to stand for his nation's foreign policy. Whatever his true identity may be (businessman or agent), he is there because the American national interests are at stake due to Changez's teachings. When Changez then suggests that the mysterious American is there to find 'the perfect cup of tea,' he is not only using this old expression to forge a sense of a business transaction between politically and economically unequal partners. This hyperbole is also a way of indicating that all of the values being performed by them are at play, theatrical.

The international relations between the US and its allies are too much based on interest and services, just as Changez himself was sourced and given American education in order to contribute his 'talents' (4) to 'the most technologically advanced civilization our species had ever known' (38). What is more, Changez constantly describes business, politics, and being-a-national-subject in terms of prostitution: 'Princeton raised her skirt for the corporate recruiters who came onto campus and – as you say in America – showed them some skin' (5). The image of a sex-worker – 'I was a perfect breast' – seems out of place given that the corporate people are after the student's 'talents,' but sex-worker entails the idea of turning a citizen into service

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<sup>34</sup> Morey 136. I also follow Medovoi in his argument that 'Jameson's point could be applied equally to world-system literature, which differs from the category of the 'third world literature' primarily in that the geopolitical relationships that it avails allegorically.' For this reason, 'the emergence of a world-systems literature about US power that is not itself American literature can be read as the textually complex symptom of a world-system in transition, a global hegemon's empire writing back at the very moment of its destabilization' (657-8).

<sup>35</sup> Behdad 290.

<sup>36</sup> Ong 31.

provider. If, for Jameson, ‘one of the determinants of capitalist culture’ is the ‘radical split between the private and the public ... between what we have come to think of as the domain of sexuality and the unconscious and that of the public world of classes ... in other words, Freud versus Marx’,<sup>37</sup> then Hamid’s sexualised political allegory marries Freud and Marx. I do not want to rush into arguing that this synthesis is somehow presenting an accurate picture of how global capitalism works. Rather, I argue that the novel draws attention to ‘flexible economic citizenship,’ which according to Ong ‘demands accountability not from governments but from global firms and markets or planetary organizations.’ Indeed, ‘the issue is no longer one of state ‘losing control’ but rather one of the state taking an active role in refashioning sovereignty to meet the challenges of global markets and supranational organizations’.<sup>38</sup> Such a flexible notion of citizenship

refers to the cultural logics of capitalist accumulation, travel, and displacement that induce subjects to respond fluidly and opportunistically to changing political-economic conditions. ... These logics and practices are produced within particular structures of meaning about family, gender, nationality, class mobility, and social power.<sup>39</sup>

From the moment Jim tells Changez, ‘Sell yourself’ (7), this fundament of the corporate world is repeated ad nauseam throughout the novel as ‘a testament to the systematic pragmatism – call it *professionalism* – that underpins your country’s success in so many fields’ (41). Changez is ‘a self-consciously transnational subject’ who ‘leaves Lahore in search of the Subcontinental holy grail, an Ivy League education and a high paying job with coveted H-1B visa status,’ and, assimilating into ‘the corporate elite ... even succumbs to the postpolitical language he later detests as the taint of market-led imperialism’.<sup>40</sup> But upon returning to America, ‘he is challenged by an immigration agent, who quashes any hope that membership in the corporate elite trumps race or citizenship’.<sup>41</sup> Changez’s sense of economic citizenship, which he adopted from his colleagues, is working in some spheres of life, but the freedoms and privileges it carries does not translate into the civic life of his adopted nation, which is exactly what, as the story unfolds, becomes an ethical issue for him. If to be a citizen entails all three elements I mentioned earlier (political, economic, social), Changez cannot but be confused by the fact that one of these works in some places and at certain times as if completely divorced from the other two.

Changez, as the modern janissary of capitalism (173), is both an agent in this the ‘ferocious struggle of capital and labor’ that gives the world its unity,<sup>42</sup> and an allegory of it. All Changez’s ways of acting, which he learns from his observations of Erica and the other young Americans’ behaviour abroad – as though they were its [the world’s] ruling class (24) – are examples of a sense of global economic citizenship. Later on, he becomes suspicious of this kind of citizenship only few benefit from. But, rather than being a complete rejection of it, his narrative seems to suggest that there is a need for another type of global citizenship, one which enables each human to engage productively in the civic life of any nation by utilising resources from other cultures or

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<sup>37</sup> Jameson 69.

<sup>38</sup> Ong 215.

<sup>39</sup> Ong 6.

<sup>40</sup> Hart and Hansen 507.

<sup>41</sup> Hart and Hansen 508.

<sup>42</sup> Ahmad 10.

political systems. Following Ong's points that 'flexibility, whether in strategies of citizenship or in regimes of sovereignty, is a product and a condition of late capitalism',<sup>43</sup> it is clear that Changez, as a senior businessman who has adopted the kind of economic citizenship from his colleagues, feels more entitled to shape American civic life than a working class citizen. After all, Changez tells the American he was 'meant to be ... entering in New York the very same social class that [his] family was falling out of in Lahore' (97). Changez describes how on his trips: 'I attempted to act and speak, as much as my dignity would permit, more like an American. The Filipinos we worked with seemed to look up to my American colleagues, accepting them almost instinctively as members of the officer class of global business – and I wanted my share of that respect as well' (65). Although he has only a work permit in the US, Changez behaves as if he were an American citizen.

One might suspect a change to take place already early in the book when Changez reacts to Erica's father's dismissal of Pakistan as a corrupt nation ridden with fundamentalism (63). The father implies that these Non-American peoples, albeit long-standing allies of the US, have no proper selfhood. Like previously mentioned sex-workers, they are incapable of transforming themselves and are in need of salvation from the outside. They are neither fit to be American citizens, nor can they be proper citizens in principle.<sup>44</sup> This 'typically *American* undercurrent of condescension' angers Changez because he sees clear parallels between the class history of Europe and Pakistan, the downfall of nobility as well as inherited money and 'the rising class of entrepreneurs' (11). Despite this sentiment, Changez, as the product of Princeton and Underwood Samson, continues to desire an engagement with both American corporate and civic life more than with Pakistan, where he should, by virtue of being a citizen, have more rights as well as greater duties.

Despite the fact that Changez came to the US to regain the wealth his family was losing in Pakistan, he slowly changes from someone who is climbing the American class ladder to someone who more and more feels like a prostitute. The prostitute metaphor, which he uses early on to describe Princeton, also points to the move from production to services. Though Changez's boss Jim argues this move as the evolution of American economy (109), the implication is that eventually modern nations will lose 'to global trade in terms of its control over the affiliations and behaviors of its subjects'.<sup>45</sup> In his meetings with people who are either just barely surviving or succumbing to capitalism (the deli owner, the people in Manila, Juan Bautista), Changez shows, to use Ong's words, 'the misleading impression that everyone can take equal advantage of mobility and modern communications and that transnationality has been liberatory, in both a spatial and a political sense, for all peoples'.<sup>46</sup> The first reason Changez – as an Other with strong American imaginary – cannot transform is his loss of selfhood. Hamid does

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<sup>43</sup> Ong 240.

<sup>44</sup> Hamid tells Yaqin how the novel 'is written in this tone ... because it resonates with many Western preconceptions about Islam, or about people from the Muslim world that they belong to something that is anachronistic, which is from the past, something overly formalised' (46).

<sup>45</sup> Ong 3.

<sup>46</sup> Ong 11. Also, as Ong puts it, 'transnationality also alludes to the *transversal*, the *transactional*, the *translational*, and the *transgressive* aspects of contemporary behavior and imagination that are incited, enabled, and regulated by the changing logics of states and capitalism' (4).



not suggest Changez should know he is truly a Pakistani, but rather that he has not made a conscious decision about what sort of agency he wants to have.

Hamid constantly invites the reader to consider what constitutes a viable civic imaginary and civic engagement, especially among the people who are not deemed proper Americans despite the fact that they work for the global economic benefit of America (and this may apply to people in other countries). Given that Changez keeps his job despite his negative experiences after 9/11, and that he chooses to leave America when he is denied participation in civic life (which is seen in his allegorical relationship with Erica), it can be argued that the novel is articulating a need for transnational influences in terms of ethics and social imagination as the proper core of any national belonging. This core is the heterogeneous process of transnational crosspollination, or what Changez names osmosis towards the end of his narrative (160). Such osmosis on all levels of social life and economy is a plural form of affiliation that ought to have an impact on the global (postcolonial) indirect rule.

If a healthy economy is the prerequisite for a healthy civic life, Changez is deeply disappointed that his contributions to the US economy in a time of crisis do not open more doors for him to act within the American society. In this case, again, this desire is shown mainly through his allegorical intimacy with (Am)Erica.

### **Global Citizenship as Intimacy and Osmosis**

In order to examine the relationship between national and global citizenship, Hamid turns the story of a monogamous romantic relationship into an allegory of transnational civic engagement. Hamid states:

I believe that the personal and the political are deeply intertwined ... People and countries tend to blur in my fiction; both serve as symbols of the other. ... The countries in my fiction are far from monolithic and are capable of envy, passion, and nostalgia; they are ... quite like people.<sup>47</sup>

The allegoricity of romantic love, which stands in contrast to the previously discussed economic citizenship, highlights the importance of allegiance and deep loyalty. According to Harleen Singh, 'the novel provides a variation on [Richard] Gray's theme of 'emotional entanglements' as the sole viable representation of 'cataclysmic public events' by recasting the love affair as a failed mediation between cultures, countries, religions, race, and politics'.<sup>48</sup> Changez's desire to help Erica heal is a desire to help America heal after 9/11, despite the fact that 'their love ... was, after all, a religion that would not accept me as a convert' (129). Although he is talking about Chris and Erica, he is really alluding to different spheres of civic life. Hamid's conflation of sexual relationships with civic life shows how fundamentalism of any sort always demands absolute monogamy in terms of social contracts.<sup>49</sup> In this way, he performs and plays with what

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<sup>47</sup> Quoted in Adriano Elia, "'My Split Self and My Split World': Troping Identity in Mohsin Hamid's Fiction', *Metaphor and Diaspora in Contemporary Writing*, edited by Jonathan P. A. Sell (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) 73.

<sup>48</sup> Harleen Singh, 'Insurgent Metaphors: Decentering 9/11 in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows*', *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature* 43.1 (October 2012) 31.

<sup>49</sup> Hamid's conflation of sexual politics, capitalism, and civic life are not entirely new. We need to bear in mind at least two things: the role of sexual politics in Islamic civic life and Edward Said's *Orientalism*. Edward Said,

Doris Sommer has called ‘the marriage between Eros and Polis’,<sup>50</sup> in which ‘the desire keeps weaving, or simply doubling itself at personal and political levels, because the obstacles it encounters threaten both levels of happiness’.<sup>51</sup> Changez’s split identity seems to necessitate multiple social and political allegiances, and global civic engagement. By splitting the representational foci of his adopted nation into Underwood Samson (US) and Erica (America), that is corporate capitalism and the American nation, Hamid reverses the act of ‘penetration’ he sees in *Heart of Darkness*.<sup>52</sup> Hamid’s America is not mother America. It is not a matriarchal protector and caregiver, but an object of desire. It is a young traumatised woman with an unhealthy nostalgia and historical amnesia, which are aggravated but not caused by 9/11 (see Behdad). This split of America allegorises that which Carmen Sirianni and Lewis A. Friedman identify as the increased risk of citizens becoming disjoined from public life by the market:

America has been a vital civic republic only to the extent that it has always been a vital commercial republic. ... But in recent years, corporations have pushed decisions upwards, to national and global headquarters, and executives have fewer incentives to build relationships with particular communities. ... The market can thus rend the very fabric of civic life upon which it once depended. And as some of our public institutions go through difficult struggles to restructure themselves, the metaphors of the market become increasingly dominant and threaten to turn nearly every public good into a consumer choice. Even our attempts to reinvent government invoke the language of ‘serving the customer’ more often than ‘engaging the citizen’ as a vital coproducer of public goods in a commonwealth.<sup>53</sup>

Erica and Changez both share the experience of industrial capitalism and globalisation, but not in the same way. Changez, who suffers because ‘not an insubstantial component of her [Erica’s] appeal – was out of reach’ (25), wants to show that he is ‘a fellow bearer of a conflicted postcolonial legacy’.<sup>54</sup> Even though he will often feel ‘ushered into an insider’s world’ (64), whether in the sense of being let in on the secrets of the corporate world or Erica’s psyche, what remains true, albeit obscure until the very end, is that he, as the foreigner ‘observing Erica’ (66), can notice how this ‘crack inside her’ provokes in him ‘an almost familial tenderness’ (68).

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*Orientalism* (London: Penguin 2003). As Fatima Mernissi argues in *Beyond the Veil*, there is a ‘link in the Muslim mind between sexuality and *shari’a*’. Fatima Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Muslim Societies* (London: Al Saqi Books 1985). Said claimed that the political discourse and relations between Western countries and the Eastern Others, have always been sexualised. The Islamic countries were once considered sexually liberated and immoral compared to Christian Europe. And let us not forget Jameson’s emphasis on allegories of sex in what he calls third-world literature: ‘the classical sex manuals are at one with the texts that reveal the dynamics of political forces’ (72).

<sup>50</sup> Doris Sommer, *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press. 1991) 32.

<sup>51</sup> Sommer 48.

<sup>52</sup> The most direct reference to Conrad is in his words, ‘I have felt rather like a Kurtz waiting for his Marlowe’ (208).

<sup>53</sup> Carmen Sirianni, and Lewis A. Friedland, *Civic Innovation in America: Community Empowerment, Public Policy, and the Movement for Civic Renewal* (Ewing: University of California Press, 2001) 12. As Medovoï argues, ‘Changez’s sentimentality suggests how both emotional life and finance capital in this novel operate according to a common logic of investment’ (650).

<sup>54</sup> Hartnell 345.

(Am)Erica's wound produces in him a desire to establish a deep intimacy with her and become her healer. After the attacks on the World Trade Center, Changez comes to have even more contradictory feelings about the country in which he has invested his talent. It is here, as Hartnell puts it, that '[p]aradoxically, Changez's rejection by Erica engenders resentment not about America's expansionist tendencies but almost the reverse: an isolationist streak that turns its gaze away from the rest of the world'.<sup>55</sup> Later on in Manila, when he meets the gaze of a local whose 'dislike was so obvious, so *intimate*' (76), he feels like an American. This meeting of gazes makes Changez reevaluate his sense of entitlement that comes with the assumed flexible citizenship inculcated by Underwood Samson. Slowly, as he becomes disillusioned with his role as a capitalist janissary, he comes to realize his desire for transnational forms of civic engagement. Changez's allegorical story shows that plural affiliations, if they were ever really possible within the confines of nation states, were brought to crisis by 9/11. Seeing the planes crash into the Twin Towers, Changez smiles. He is 'remarkably pleased' (83), and this feeling is both genuine and perplexing for him because he 'was the product of an American university' and 'infatuated with an American woman' (84). He cannot grasp why he would find America's pain satisfying except that he 'was caught up in the *symbolism* of it, the fact that someone had so visibly brought America to her knees' (83). Changez tries to distinguish between the symbolic violence and the real tragedy. In fact, it is only when he thinks of Erica as a New Yorker that he can start sharing 'in the anxiety of [his] colleagues' (85). But then, even New York, which previously 'felt – so unexpectedly – like coming home' (36) is now invaded by the American flag. Here we can see the dialogic relationship between (Am)Erica and the US enter a disturbing phase. What is lost is the possibility of a deeper relationship with American civic life. Changez becomes even more diffident and cautious about engaging with (Am)Erica after she succumbs to a dangerous nostalgia that prevents her from properly understanding the problems of the present: 'I was afraid any movement on my part might dislodge our connection' (92).

Furthermore, as Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin argue, an immigrant such as Changez poses another problem for 'national versus international modes of identification, such as the way in which the transnational community of believers (*Ummah*) problematizes the very idea of the sovereign western nation-state'.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, '[t]ensions between national and transnational allegiances have been played out in different ways in western countries according to their preferred strategies for accommodating incomers.' In the novel, a particular religious aspect might be visible in Changez's desire for a global sense of citizenship. The national is constantly bothered by the fact that Muslim *Ummah* has always been conducive to some form of globalisation. Although Muslims are obliged by their religion to follow the laws of any given country they live in, their identity is always supposed to be subsumed to the *Ummah* and Islamic ethics.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Hartnell 344.

<sup>56</sup> Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin, 'Introduction: Muslims in the Frame', *Interventions* 12.2 (2010) 151.

<sup>57</sup> The notion of Muslim *Ummah* is based on Muhammad's declaration that Islam creates a bond between believers which overshadows all other types of social bonds. In everyday civic life, a sense of allegiance to *Ummah* entails that although Muslims are required by their religion to obey the laws of the country they reside in they are also called to civil disobedience if the laws of the country are fundamentally against Islamic principles. It is quite uncommon that such action takes place. For this reason, the legacy of civil disobedience and Western secular

It is not only in the US that Changez feels a 'desire' for (Am)Erica (98), and 'to serve as her anchor in these moments, without being so vulgar as to make known to her that this was a role [he] felt she needed someone to play' (99). His entire narrative is a confirmation of his intimate engagement. The consummation of their love should be read beyond the allegorical relationship between two nation states. The intimate act itself is suggestive of the character of global civic engagement: caring, passionate, intense, daring. Although (Am)Erica seems to care for what Changez represents, she rejects him. Despite 'the growing wound this inflicted on [his] pride' (102), Changez desires to 'console her, to accompany her into her mind and allow her to be less alone' (103). He desires an intimate 'commingling of identities' (104), which is a willingness to change together. The more (Am)Erica rejects Changez, the more she loses her own self. Knowing that she needs something he 'was unable to give her' (129), Changez says,

My attempts to communicate with her might have failed in part because I did not know where I stood on so many issues of consequence; I lacked a stable *core*. I was not certain where I belonged – in New York, in Lahore, in both, in neither – and for this reason, when she reached out to me for help, I had nothing of substance to give her. Probably this was why I had been willing to try to take on the persona of Chris .... But in so doing – and by being unable to *offer her an alternative* to the chronic nostalgia inside her – I might have pushed Erica deeper into her own confusion. (168, emphasis mine)

Pointing out his complicity in her deterioration, and his inability to produce an alternative social imaginary, Changez simultaneously exposes the depth of the relationship between America and its people, and its relation to the world. The allegorical rhetoric of love and desire seems to show that global civic engagement, which should affect that flexible economic citizenship I discussed first, is an intimate sharing that contaminates all parties. The word 'sharing' is frequently repeated throughout the narrative and is used in the final sentence addressed to the American as a way of putting an emphasis on the relationship between two political agents: 'you and I are now bound by a certain shared intimacy' (209). The intimacy, established after one man has related something of a personal nature to the other, is meant to say that political and business exchanges need to be grounded in a certain sharing of civic rights and just economic interest.

The problem for Changez is that he never wanted to simply choose between America and Pakistan, and yet, after 9/11, there was no way of choosing both. He has to prove at the firm that his 'loyalties could [not] be so divided'. In choosing only America, Changez feels a 'coward' and 'a traitor' (145), but in choosing Pakistan, he feels he is betraying America. Given that 'in this constant striving to realize a financial future, no thought was given to the critical personal and political issues that affect one's emotional present' (165), he moves back to Lahore, stating:

America was engaged only in posturing. As a society, you were unwilling to reflect upon the *shared pain* that united you with those who attacked you. You retreated into the myths of your own difference, assumptions of your own superiority. ... Such an America had to be stopped in the *interests* not only of the rest of humanity, but also in your own. (190, emphasis mine)

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universalism, that Changez most likely learnt about at Princeton, might be synchronised with a sense of belong to the *Ummah*. This, however, is not clear because religion is written out of this novel and can only be read as implied.



The critique of America's global policies and economic expansion is scathing, but in this act of 'betrayal' there is an immense sense of care, a desire for intimacy. The proof of this is his inability to completely divorce himself from (Am)Erica, politically and emotionally. For him, the political engagement becomes inextricable from the emotional engagement and economy. In other words, he has adopted his allegoricity to the extent of actually living by it:

I had been raised in an environment too thoroughly permeated with a tradition of shared rituals of mysticism to accept that conditions of the spirit could not be influenced by the care, affection, and desire of others. ... I had failed to penetrate the membrane with which she guarded her psyche; my more direct approaches had been rejected, but with sufficient insight I might yet be welcomed through a process of osmosis. (160)

Since 'at the level of human beings, [Changez and Erica's] connection was nil' (164), Changez's rejection of capitalist fundamentalism relegates him to one of the possible spaces already established by various discourses on the progress of modernity. The way the novel portrays the corporate world seems on a par with Marshall Berman's argument that economic and political developments have gained a momentum impervious to genuine care. And it is care that arises from these intimate moments of osmosis, of deliberate porousness of national identity that in Hamid's novel constitutes the basis of global civic engagement (131-2). *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* shows that to foster global civic imagination and participation will do more to support national democracies than to endanger them. It would, as Sirianni and Friedland argue, 'mobilize social capital in new ways, to generate new institutional forms, and to reinforce these through public policy designed for democracy'.<sup>58</sup> Finance may be 'a primary means by which the American empire exercised its power' and 'domination' (177), but there are counter-movements that involve global osmosis, which are real, both politically and emotionally: 'I had, in my own manner, issued a firefly's glow bright enough to transcend the boundaries of continents and civilizations. If Erica was watching – which rationally I knew, she almost certainly was not – she might have seen me and been moved to correspond' (207). Not *respond*, but *correspond*.

Changez's moral dilemma makes him fall out with Capitalism – 'my days of focusing on the fundamentals were done' (175) – but it is ultimately (Am)Erica's rejection that results in his reluctant return to Lahore, where he remains the lover of America as well as its fierce critic. It is important to try and assume that Changez is not being ironic in his declaration of love: – 'If you have ever, sir, been through the breakup of a romantic relationship that involved great love, you will perhaps understand what I experienced' (179). This ultimate dissent is a part of his care and sense of global civic duty. Despite the smile on his face at the sight of the destroyed Twin Towers, and the fact that one of his students attempted to assassinate an American engaged in development work, Changez assures the American interlocutor that he is 'a believer in nonviolence' and that he is 'no ally of killers' (206). Yet, seeing 9/11 in symbolic terms, he

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<sup>58</sup> Sirianni and Friedland 13. However, not 'all forms of social capital lend themselves well to public problem solving, and some forms work in the opposite direction by fostering deep distrust of outsiders or fundamentalist beliefs that brook no compromise with adversaries. The world is filled with forms of social capital that promote ethnic hostility and erode capacities for democratic governance. It is also replete with social capital that lies relatively dormant as a resource for democratic politics or community problem solving. Thus, the organizational forms and strategies for mobilizing social capital matter a great deal' (14).

concludes that the corporate America must be stopped and the 'real' America (represented by Erica, New York, etc.) needs to be healed and brought back out of its depression. By implication, the same is valid for Pakistan. Dissent is in this case deeply tied to his love of America and Pakistan. If Changez shows dissent, and if this dissent is conceived of as violence, it is clear that for him it arises out of a deep love.<sup>59</sup>

## Conclusion

The test of democracies in multicultural societies is more and more dependent on the inclusion of minorities into governance, and allowing for global ethico-political and economic osmoses to take place. Hamid's novel, as Mathew Hart and Jim Hansen put it, asks us to consider 'how and why the state model of government and citizenship remains important for writers and scholars in an age of 'super mobility,' where the movement of populations across the globe is more hectic than ever'.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, the state may be important 'as a lens through which to discuss writers' investigations of justice and authority,' but the question is what is to be made of 'the changing nature of political economy throughout the world? Can an apparently rooted and territorial concept like the state be reconciled with new approaches to transnational and world literature?'.<sup>61</sup> As I have argued, it is important not to do away with the nation in an analysis that seeks to expand the notion of citizenship beyond its ties to a state. Indeed, as Hart argues, 'theories of globalization risk marginalizing those with just claims to make on national governments and citizenries' such as 'undocumented migrants or refugees who lack the right kind of citizenship papers in contexts "when the nation-state remains the chief mechanism for dispersing and regulating power, status, and material resources"'.<sup>62</sup> It is possible to read Changez's statement that he is a product of Princeton to mean that it formed him as an American citizen in every sense of the word, including the will to social reform and openness to more fluctuating global affiliations. If Princeton infused him with both a sense of Capitalism and this potentially revolutionary ethos of civil rights movement (though not explicitly stated), and yet the America he fell in love with rejected his right to behave accordingly, then his split self and his consequent frustrations are all the more understandable. The hub of the novel, which remains as a strong undercurrent within all the plays with national and transnational allegories, is that the osmosis that Changez advocates is a ground of global citizenship that relies on the belief that, as Behdad puts it, 'nation-states have become increasingly porous' even though 'national governments continue to exercise a great deal of power in planning and shaping the ways in which their countries are globalized'.<sup>63</sup> Changez works within an allegory of the American nation (the nation of immigrants, settlers, of economic prosperity, and deep sense of civic engagement), as well as, through an emphasis on transnational osmosis, an allegory of global citizenship.

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<sup>59</sup> There is, after all, a long tradition, as Slavoj Žižek claims, from Christ to Che Guevara, which deals with violence as a work of love. Slavoj Žižek, 'The Politics of Batman', *New Statesman* 23 (August 2012).

<sup>60</sup> Matthew Hart, and Jim Hansen, 'Introduction: Contemporary Literature and the State', *Contemporary Literature* 49.4 (Winter 2008) 494.

<sup>61</sup> Hart and Hansen 502.

<sup>62</sup> Hart and Hansen 504.

<sup>63</sup> Behdad 295.

Through an emphasis on multiple political and cultural affiliations and investments, Changez answers President Bush's post-9/11 ultimatum – 'Either you are with us, or against us' – with a Yes-No. To begin with, Changez's political allegiances seemed to shift between the US and Pakistan, and between different fundamentalisms, but a closer reading of the novel shows that plural allegiances have always already been taking place across the borders between the personal and the political, national and global, and that such crosspollinations are far more conducive to healthy civic engagement within nations as well as globally. In other words, Changez seems to ask for the freedom of the movement of capital to also apply to civic life. By using familiar allegories of the nation, Hamid puts his novel to the task of being both a responsive and a responsible form, a truly democratic form in which the extreme Other, the fundamentalist, can clash with other fundamentalists, and in the residue of this clash of fundamentalisms one may begin to discern new ways of looking at global civic life.

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**Adnan Mahmutovic** is a Bosnian-Swedish scholar and novelist. Besides postcolonial and post-9/11 literature, he has written on comics. His work includes *Authenticity and Community in Selected Works by Rushdie, Ondaatje and Okri* (literary criticism, 2012), *Thinner than a Hair* (novel, 2010) and *How to Fare Well and Stay Fair* (short-story collection, 2012). He is currently running an MA in Transnational Creative Writing at Stockholm University.