

## Interstitial liminality, Assimilation and Alterity in H.M. Naqvi's *Home Boy*

Zafar Iqbal<sup>1</sup>

Malik Ajmal Gulzar<sup>2</sup>

Lubna Umar<sup>3</sup>

Ubaidullah Khan<sup>4</sup>

### Abstract

*In the wake of 9/11 catastrophe, the 'Muslim identity' came under serious suspicion and investigation that suddenly captured the consciousness/conscience of both the reader and the writer of the East and the West. Especially, it caught the attention of Pakistani writers because Pakistan had (largely) to bear the brunt of this tragedy. This study has a socio-political punch in the wake of 9/11 phenomenon that has seriously affected psychology of the Pakistani Muslim community in general and youth in particular. This paper also examines pre-9/11 conditions of the Muslims who feel and find themselves assimilated, integrated because of the interstitial liminal space which give them allowance for appropriation. I argue that post-9/11 scenario they not only find themselves physically displaced but also psychologically unsettled. The moment, they land into the new-land, find themselves gripped in a psychological limbo coping with new culture, people and customs. Sometimes they feel that they belong to both the cultures and at other times to the neither. It closely studies hegemonic role of state apparatus: Federal Bureau of Investigation and Metropolitan Detention Centre and the dominant role of American media, especially CNN which had been a source of (mis)representation of Islam and Muslims. They remain under strict surveillance of the invisible eye that reduce them to mere object position. Textual analysis has been used as a research method to read H. M. Naqvi's *Home Boy*. I have invoked specific theoretical concepts of Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha, Frantz Fanon and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak for the analysis of my primary text.*

**Keywords:** identity, 9/11, liminality, alterity, colonial discourse

---

<sup>1</sup> Assistant Professor, Islamabad Model Postgraduate College of Commerce, Islamabad

<sup>2</sup> Associate Professor, Department of English, AIOU, Islamabad

<sup>3</sup> Lecturer, Department of English, AIOU, Islamabad

<sup>4</sup> Lecturer, Department of English, AIOU, Islamabad

## 1. Introduction

To be in Pakistan does not necessarily guarantee to be a Pakistani and to be in America doesn't make one American. Diasporic experiences (ambivalence) can involve multiple displacements. They become the victim of nostalgia, missing their home, family and native land. The very pull/push (for economic gains, educational opportunities and cultural freedom, especially for love making) to stay in host country at times makes them nostalgic, psychologically alienated and socially marginalized. Moreover, their exclusion on the bases of color and creed makes them further estranged and bewildered. They feel and find themselves rootless and homeless. These conditions spell out their serious crises of identity which this paper tries to explore in H. M. Naqvi's *Home Boy*. Since 9/11, it has been conventional for Western popular writers to portray and stereotype Muslims in general in an unflattering light as terrorists or supporters of terrorism in the West. This slanted treatment has led to a sense of insecurity amongst the Muslims, particularly in the United States of America. This article has a political punch because it is discussed in the background of 9/11 phenomenon that has changed the world scenario.

Furthermore, this research talks about globalization and its impact on the identity of diaspora. It highlights the hegemonic role of Western media, especially American media which played a vital role in formulating the world opinion and adversely hit the politics, economy, language and culture of the third world Muslim countries like Pakistan, Iraq, Afghanistan and Middle East. The study also mentions postcoloniality, homelessness and unhomeliness along with the issue of diaspora double consciousness. The very pull for the native country and the strong desire (push) to stay in the host country complicates the issue of true allegiance which raises issue of identity. Last but not the least, the catastrophe of 9/11 proved as a final nail in the coffin to marginalize, alienate and dehumanize Muslims in the world of comity.

### 1.1 Objectives the Research

The objective of this research is to investigate to what extent interstitial liminal space helps the protagonist and other characters in assimilating in America and what are those factors that lead to alienation and made the protagonist compelled to revisit his notion that America is a "dream land" with reference to *Home Boy*. It intends:

- to explore how the larger political and social forces (FBI, MDC and media) caused ‘alienation/Othering’ and put the protagonist into trauma of consuming crises of identity after 9/11
- to investigate how well-integrated and assimilated pro-American protagonist was transformed into non-American/anti-American and home boy in post- 9/11 scenario

## 1.2 Research Questions

The study seeks the answers of the following questions:

- How has the concept of assimilation/integration changed (for the Muslims) from pre-9/11 to post- 9/11 times in America?
- How are the Muslims alienated/othered at the hands of social and political forces and thrown into consuming identity crisis in post-9/11 scenario?

The first question deals with the physical condition of Chuck and his companions, and second question refers to the psychological, and emotional bearing of the protagonists and his companions.

## 2. Research Method and Theoretical Concepts

This inquiry is qualitative, interpretative and library based. Textual Analysis has been employed as a research method because the researchers are involved in dealing with the critical reading of the cultural and historical text. Textual analysis is a useful method for the researchers working in cultural and media studies, mass communication, and even in sociology and philosophy. The study is exploratory in purpose, following the holistic content-based mode of analysis. For the very purpose, I employ Catherine Belsey (2005) “Textual analysis as a research method” for the analysis of my text. She argues that it tries “to attend to all the quotations that make the text, the traces by which it is constituted” (p. 162). She further contends that interpretation is not mere subjectivism; it means “something exists in its difference” (p. 163). This article aims to critically address the diasporic identity in H. M. Naqvi’s *Home Boy*. This research discusses Said’s *Orientalism* in which he highlights that Muslims and Islam are misrepresented. Said contends that Islam, Muslims and East are not fairly represented in Western writings. They have been portrayed as inferior “Others”. Farrell draws binary opposition for the benefit of colonialism and to disenfranchise the natives; Albert Memmi’s employs the terms of the colonizer and the colonized “if the colonizers were deemed civilized, then

the colonized were declared barbaric: if the colonizers were thought rational, reasonable, cultured, learned, then the colonized were dismissed as illogical, awkward, naïve, ignorant” (qtd. in McLeod p. 2). Kennedy (2000) agrees with Said and calls it an “Institutionalized Orientalism” (p. 19). Edward W. Said (1993) has suggested “culture may well normalize, legitimate and encourage European colonialism: [. . .] the vocabulary of classic nineteenth-century imperial culture is plentiful with such words and concepts as ‘inferior’ or ‘subject race’, ‘subordinate peoples’, ‘dependency’, ‘expansion’ and ‘authority’” (p. 8). He observed that through European electronic and print media Islam is presented as a religion of fanatics and irrational people. It shows that “most of the pictures shown through media represents mass rage and misery, or irrational (hence hopelessly eccentric) gestures.

Lurking behind all of these images is the menace of jihad. Consequently, there is a fear that the Muslims (or Arabs) will take over the world” (Said, p. 278). Terry Eagleton has endorsed Said’s argument regarding misrepresentation of Islam. The latest fiasco in Iraq generated Islamophobia in the West, as if Islam will take over the world. I analyse the text in the light of these notions. It can be said that *Orientalism* serve as a mirror to both the Occident and the Orient. Bayoumi and Rubin (2000) have pointed out “Continued investment made Orientalism, as a system of knowledge about the Orient, an accepted grid for filtering the Orient through the western consciousness” [. . .] “American Orientalism is a kind of intellectual authority over the Orient within Western culture” (pp.73, 86). Said’s *Orientalism* is written to explore the anti-Arab and Anti-Islamic prejudice in West and especially in American Jews.

As we have used the term liminality, it becomes imperative to explain the term for the reader. It means threshold. It is useful with reference to postcolonial theory. Bhabha contends that before the creation of third space, liminality occurs which means an interstitial or ‘in-between’ space, a threshold area, in which cultural change may take place. Bhabha tries to explain the term quoting the art historian Renee Green’s example of a stairwell as a “liminal space, between upper and lower areas, which was annotated with plaques referring to blackness and whiteness” (p. 4). He further argues that “the liminal is important because liminality and hybridity go hand in hand.

This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (p. 4). In other words, “third space” allows us to discuss cultural differences within which the process of self and other constitutes. When the colonized mimics colonizer, colonizer feels anxiety or somewhat threatened. Mimicry is not mere blind imitation but it leads to assimilation (adoption and adaptation) to the dominant culture with difference. Mimicry brings indeterminacy that ruptures colonial discourse. This very ambivalence and mimicry transforms the colonial subject as a ‘partial’ presence. During the process of mimicry and ambivalence, one does not remain the same but becomes recognizable Other. We invoke the very concepts of Bhabha’s as theoretical lens through which we analyze our text. Bhabha (1994) states:

Colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*. Which is to say that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry continuously produces its slippage, its excess, its difference. (p. 86)

Another important postcolonial theorist is Spivak, her importance in postcolonial theory can hardly be overemphasized. She is convinced that there are clear cut signs of epistemic violence in imperial history. The history presented by the colonial world needs to be re-read critically. In this regard she refers to Foucault who has helped her understand how through colonial discourse, subjectivity of the colonized is undermined and misrepresented. This means that the life of the protagonist (Chuck) has been brought under the microscopic lens so that the varying patterns of identity crisis may be traced. Spivak coins the term “other” by which imperial discourse creates its ‘others.’ Othering describes the various ways in which colonial discourse produces its subjects. In Spivak’s explanation:

othering is a dialectical process because the colonizing *Other* is established at the same time as colonized *others* are produced. The ambivalence of colonial discourse lies in the fact that *both* these process of ‘othering’ occur at the same time, the colonial subject being both a ‘child’ of empire and a primitive and degraded subject of imperial discourse. (qtd. in Ashcroft et al., 171)

Furthermore, Spivak critically examines that politics of representation, socialized capital, imperial law, ideology of the West, and systematic application of knowledge power are the key factors that

undermine the subjective sovereignty of the colonial subject. Under these compelling conditions it becomes difficult for the subaltern to speak. I have invoked the above mentioned concepts of her as a theoretical lens to read my text.

Another important postcolonial theorist is Frantz Fanon, without him postcolonial theorizing remains incomplete. He underscores how gaze affects the physiology and the psychology of the colonized. His work *Black Skin, White Masks* is a canonical work that serve as a frame of reference to make his point of view clear to the Western world. The very thought of racism and Eurocentrism in *Black Skin, White Masks*, and his struggle to make white man realize that “the gaze” and “the other” generate in black, and [non-White] a sense of inferiority, a pathological dis[ease]—asymptomatic syndrome which really affects their performance, efficiency and personality. I employ the following concept as a theoretical lens. Fanon (1986) argued in *Black Skin White Masks*:

I had to meet the white man eyes. An unfamiliar weight burdened me. In the white world, the man of color encounters difficulties in the development of his body schema. . . . I was battered by totems, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects. . . . I took myself far off from my own presence. . . . What else could it be but an amputation, an excision, a hemorrhage that spattered my whole body with black blood? (pp. 110-12)

In Sartre’s views the gaze of the other is alienating. Fanon’s work mainly talks about alienation and racial discrimination of the colonized. This kind of treatment breeds retaliation and alienation in the hearts and minds of the colonized. Though the protagonist Chuck feels that he has become fully assimilated in the host society and culture but in post 9/11 scenario he is given constant and strong impression that he is “other and different”.

### **3. Analysis of *Home Boy***

This paper examines the social and the psychological impact of the 9/11 on the lives of the Muslim community in general and youth in particular. It also discusses pre-9/11 conditions of the Muslims who feel and find themselves assimilated, and well placed. It throws light on the post-September 11 condition of the Muslims as well, who feel themselves discriminated, humiliated, silenced and alienated. The study revolves around the main postcolonial themes of interstitial liminality/interstitial

space, assimilated, ambivalence, mimicry, racism, globalization and alienation. A detailed textual analysis of the novel *Home Boy* is conducted. Situating itself within postcolonial discourse, Naqvi identifies himself with the colonized and demonstrates the dilemma of those who have been stereotyped as terrorists, fundamentalists and home boys.

Naqvi asserts that the characters of the novel *Home Boy* re-form their names and re-model themselves to look 'Euro-American, recognizable other and civilized'. Huntington (1993) has affirmed that diasporic people normally try to re-define their identities the moment they cross the borders as a sign of civilizational and cultural change to experience assimilation and integration (p. 24). They are constantly contending for different fashions to become Americans. This can be termed as a form of cultural translation and a mark of global impact. From Shehzad, Ali Chaudhry, Jamshed Khan, Aamna Khanum, Mohammad Shah they have become Chuck, AC, Jimbo, Amo, Mo'Shah, respectively to be acceptable on this sides of the globe where they reside now.

They are of the view that America is a 'melting pot' that appreciates cultural diversity. To Chuck and company, America is a society where anyone can become American irrespective of his race, culture and religious background. The protagonist and his comrades consider themselves educated, (from Stanford and Princeton) enlightened, literati, self-invented and are regular reader of the *Times* and the *Post*. They go through the *Voice* weekly, examine publications like *Tight* or the *Big But* that speaks volumes of their liberal outlook. They have become multicultural, transnational and metropolitan product. Another interesting feature in postcolonial discourse where diaspora feel pulled towards host country for its liberal culture, educational opportunities, economic prosperity, social security and better living standards. But the most dominating one is economic gains to establish personal and material identity. To them, America is a dreamland as Naqvi (2010) narrates "America, the land of the free, from sea to shining sea" (p. 216). It's the land where they have human rights, constitutional protection, no discrimination at all, all are equal in the eyes of law; racial discrimination is a matter of generations old in New York. The writer depicts their healthy and peaceful state of mind before 9/11 incident. They are the men of their own will, as free as birds, New York's weather is pleasant, and people are warm. Naqvi (2010) states that New York is their home and they are its original settler (p. 15). To their fancy notion America is a gold mine where they can mint money and enjoy life. It has become their creed to make heap



of money. Naqvi (2010) describes their urge for material identity and their pursuit of happiness is material “nice car, nice digs, a yacht, a girl that was in the glossies, and then boom—’ (pp. 7 & 28). This very exposure of material identity is the boon of multiculturalism.

On the 9/11 catastrophe they express their deep felt concern in loud and blunt manner. Naqvi (2010) has articulated when AC gives vent to his feelings in the following words, “I care about this city. Those bastards have fucked up my city! They have fucked up everything!” (p. 23). In post 9/11 scenario they feel pained when diaspora’s loyalty is questioned. Already their identity is hyphenated, like Pakistani-American which they were least conscious. They are now constantly being reminded that they are not what they think of themselves. They are different on the basis of race, color, religion, origin and language. They belong to different part of the world and their history and language is not the same but quite opposite.

Being a postcolonial writer, Naqvi addresses the important issues of colonial discourse, hegemony, racism and stereotype through which a relationship between the colonized and the colonizer and ‘the orient’ and ‘the occident’ is established. America pursued its national agenda through educational institutions, mass media and other state institutions. Naqvi attempts to bring the issues and the people into center who are marginalized and silenced. Moreover, with the help of powerful political and administrative forces and institutions like, FBI & MDC (Federal Bureau of Investigation & Metropolitan Detention Centre) the political and economic rights of Muslims are usurped and they have been assigned new identities. The state machinery comes into action and dealt high handedly. The role of FBI has become extremely aggressive and repressive. It unleashed the wave of violence and terrorism in MDC that sowed the seeds of disappointment, reaction, retaliation and alienation in their hearts and minds of the protagonist and the others. Their identity is transforming from pro-American to non-American and non-American to anti-American through oppressive state operatus.

FBI agents make the lives of young Muslim Pakistanis miserable. This violence extends from individuals to groups and groups to community. Through community dwelling, diaspora try to form a home away from home to have a sense of home. Few young innocent Muslims were missing and had to undergo physical torture and mental anguish for their undone. Moshman has (2011) highlighted that the major disappearance program of



abduction to the secret 'black sites' commenced in the early part of the twenty first century by US though American people had seen them but nobody bothered to take notice or raise voice because Americans were told that they are the subhuman 'Islamic Terrorists', therefore, the principle of basic human rights doesn't apply on them (p. 928).

The text as a historical document represents the true picture of events that took place in post 9/11 America. FBI agents made the lives of young Muslim Pakistanis miserable. This violence extended from the individuals to the groups and groups to the community. Through community dwelling, diaspora try to form home away from home, so to have a sense of home. Few young innocent Muslims were missing and had to undergo physical torture and mental anguish for their undone. Chuck is not free anymore and has become captive. His feelings are not reciprocated through mirror images of the mother and is now being Othered by the (M)other and the home has turned into [w]home?

The torture and imprisonment affected Chuck's self. Now the self-image of his stable identity underwent transformation and reduced to a mere self-delusion and of performativity subject. When his self, collided with other culture(s), it revealed to him that the reality of his self is highly unstable and fragmented. He does not possess a stable identity, under the pressure of powerful and larger forces his identity has become multiple, conflicting and full of anxieties and fears. His identity splits through various thoughts and memories that made his soul kaleidoscopic. He could never imagine himself of being a terrorist but what has happened made him psychologically disturbed and emotionally unstable.

Naqvi (2010) has narrated that it was first time Chuck felt infuriated and wished if he were a terrorist! Naqvi gave the description of a typical American torture cell to the readers who are unfamiliar to the kind of inhuman culture prevailing there. At this point of time pro-American Chuck has changed to a non-American and from non-American to Anti-American, because he was now fully convinced that he had been discriminated, humiliated and alienated on religious, regional and racial grounds. Second, state control machinery committed atrocities and excesses deeply affected the psychic configuration of the protagonist. His low self-esteem, insecure and unstable sense of self scares his personal identity. Chuck's psychological state of mind can be analyzed through Lacanian psychoanalytic lens. He is in the mirror stage, through which he gets the

sense of his own and wants to get union with his M(other) i.e. America. Lacan (1977) explains his point of view in these words:

Lacan's claim of the Mirror Stage initiates what he calls the Imaginary Order by which he means the world of images rather than through words. And it is a world of fullness, completeness, and delight because with the child's sense of itself as a whole comes the illusion of control over its environment, of which it still perceives itself an inseparable part, and over its mother, with whom it feels it is in a union of mutual satisfaction: my mother is all I need and I am all my mother needs. (qtd. in Tyson 2006, p. 27)

When his Desire of M (other) is not reciprocated and is Othered, Lacan refers to this lost object of desire as *object petit a*. The experience is highly personal and regressive. Now the sense of fullness, completeness, and delight is replaced with sense of loss and emptiness. Though this was not the end of the game; he still had to go through TDT (Terrorist Diagnostic Test) for further screening to prove or disprove his identity as a potential terrorist.

Naqvi employs Foucault's concepts of power and discourse. Bhabha (1994) has critiqued Said's use of Foucault's concepts of power and discourse that "Subjects are always disproportionately placed in opposition or domination through the symbolic decentering of multiple power relations which play the role of support as well as target or adversary" (p. 72). Naqvi (2010) has narrated that the two guards dragged Cucked to another room, they were constantly abusing, thrashing and shouting at him, 'You pissed yourself, pencil dick!' the other guard pinned him with a knee. 'You liked that?' he inquired. 'Get the fuck up!' Shackled, he could barely move [. . .] the journey of torture seems unending, persecution of unimaginable magnitude, techniques of scientific torture made him shudder and the threats of systematic brutality stirred in him a profound sense of panic.

Postcolonial theorists like Said (1978) and Spivak (1988) have different point of views that do not comply with Western ways of seeing and representing East, Islam and Muslims. To them, it is misrepresentation of reality and its recording. To Said, especially, representation of the Muslims, Arabs and Islam is a flawed one. Said's *Orientalism* is written to explore the anti-Arab and Anti-Islamic prejudice in West and especially in American Jews. This study fully agrees with Said's contention in which he cross-examines and dismantles Eurocentric codes and approach towards

Islam, Muslims in general and the Muslims of Middle East in particular are stereotyped as backward, sneaky, cruel, evil and immoral. It is used as a model for the analysis of western construct of other. Said highlights another important feature of *Orientalism* that demonstrates the role of media: print and electronic media portray Arabs and Muslims of South Asia as terrorists and evil doers, especially in the backdrop of 9/11. Furthermore, the writer draws attention of the reader to the hegemonic role of American media—a very effective and productive tool of propaganda for Eurocentric values.

Naqvi (2010) demonstrates this through the portrayal of Chuck during his investigation by the powerful forces, FBI and American media. If the questions are closely examined, they are designed [through knowledge-power alliance] in a way as if to establish a link between Islam and terrorism. They are framed in a manner that Islam sponsors terrorism and is an ideology that triggers clash of civilization (see Naqvi, pp. 113-114). The subtext of the novel seems to be unaware that Christianity is a religion of peace, civilization and epitome of universal values, whereas Islam and Muslims set standards of barbarity and terrorism. A new debate of ‘Radical’ and Peaceful Islam’ is initiated in media to dichotomize and dehumanize Islam and Muslims. Islam is deliberately bifurcated and maligned with a clear cut intension to serve American purpose and save their ‘ways of living’ and promote their own political and economic interests through powerful tool of media and other state institutions. Naqvi (2010) masterfully knits discourse in a subtle manner through a dialogue to demonstrate hegemonic role of neo-colonial and imperial America. Here is a glimpse of it: “You are a terrorist? You read Ko-ran? Pray five times a day to Al-la? You keep the Ram-a-Dan? Do you eat pork? Drink? Ko-ran sanctions terrorism? Why do the Muslims use it to justify terrorism? And why the Muslims terrorize?” (p. 113). The Muslim Arabs were accused and (ab)used ‘Moslems, Mo-hicans and A-rabs, Fucking Arabs’ (pp. 23-24). Asia is shown as backward, evil, poor and ugly in comparison to West that is advanced, good, rich and beautiful.

This research successfully awakens the consciousness and the conscience of the reader to view history critically in its true perspective, especially the period of post 9/11. Naqvi has placed the protagonist to state the facts right. Chuck and his comrades are educated and well aware of world’s history, geography and politics. They feel grieved that through powerful media they are being projected and portrayed negatively and are systematically stereotyped, dichotomized, dehumanized and marginalized

in the name of civilization, modernity and globalization. The protagonist and his friends are of the view that America itself is a part of problem instead of its solution. America's hegemonic designs have disturbed peace, prosperity and balance of the developing and under developed world, due to its policies based on so called 'national security'. Third world countries and especially Muslim world is greatly affected—its culture, economy, politics, language, social structure and moral values. America's coercive policies are bent to enforce its own World Order through state instrumentalities like military, police, intelligence agencies, judiciary, religious and educational institutions, political systems and organizations and most importantly influential and vibrant media which is used as a valuable and effective tool to thrust its narrative to influence world's opinion and re-formulate pro-western and pro-American perception round the globe. The superpower has power and influence to install or topple governments—of dictators and democrats both, but only those can survive who serve its purpose. In Iraq Weapons of Mass Destruction was a myth, a pretext to deprive Iraq from its oil resources and create chaos.

America's most influential news channel, CNN churns news day in and day out to influence the world's opinion. Their experts' views and opinions are framed in a way that project the half-truth or partial facts that suit to their purpose. This kind of maneuvering is a professional manipulation of world order propaganda. As Naqvi (2010) has reported American media mania, in this regard the role of CNN is very negative and misleading. Chuck is sick of news channel CNN which is biased in its reportage and analysis. The people have no real knowledge of ground realities have become experts to misguide American people (p. 90). The role of American media in post 9/11 is to flare jingoism, power-play and discourse of American hegemony. Chuck was going through the dailies and weeklies newspapers; there he found some compelling readings. Naqvi (2010) has noted a columnist who wrote in the *Post* in these words:

The response to this unimaginable 21<sup>st</sup> century Pearl Harbor should be simple and swift—*kill the bastards* [ . . . ] as for the cities or countries that host these worms, *bomb them to the basketball courts*. In *Time* I came across a piece "The Case of Rage and Retribution" that began: 'For once let's have no "grief counselors" standing by with banal consolations....no fatuous rhetoric about "healing"....we need is a unified, unifying pearl harbor sort of purple American fury—a ruthless indignation that doesn't leak away in a weak or two,

wandering into Prozac-induced forgetfulness....or into corruptly thoughtful relativism. . . .’ (my emphasis, p. 41)

The cornerstone of American policy is to protect its interests that is political and economic, even at the cost of what may come to the rest of the world. Huntington (1993) has contended that it is done through other international economic institutions like IMF and World Bank to protect and promote its political and economic gains that it feels appropriate (p. 39) America alters its colors (policies) like a chameleon to trap and camouflage its ulterior motives in the name of humanity, civilizing mission, democracy and national security. Here is one of the illustrations to demonstrate, how smartly they move, act and react. It is America who trained, equipped, sponsored Muslims, and Arabs from all over the world to wage (Jihad) against Red Army at that time. Naqvi (2010) narrates the facts that “they were called rebels, freedom fighters—Mujahideen—the Holy Warriors. They fought with World War II rifles till Americans armed them with AK-47s and stringers. We invited them to Washington and, ah, compared them to Founding Fathers” (p.10).

Huntington (1993) has stated that at present West and especially America is enjoying extraordinary power and has become the mighty civilization of the world. West is enjoying dominant position in terms of relations with other nations and cultures. The armed conflict within European powers is unthinkable for their advanced technology and warfare equipment (p. 39). After defeating USSR, they (Afghan war lords) were left to their own, bullying and killing, but who cares! Naqvi (2010) claims that ‘Tens of thousands died, Kabul was raised to the ground, and something like four million refugees left for Pakistan. Afghanistan, in effect, ceased to be a state’, and American administration termed it ‘the obscure Afghan civil war’ (p. 10).

It is through media hegemony, Muslims are scarred and Islam is maligned, we are told that the Mujahideen’s progeny has become barbaric and uncivilized. There was a time when they were garlanded and were taken as heroes and equated with forefathers. Through binary opposition, a significant shift has taken place, they have become Taliban now, the Bastards of War! —a new coined identity. Naqvi (2010) has expressed his point of view in these words:

They outlawed music, TV, fun. They hacked off limbs, shot women, blew up the godman Buddha of Bamiyan! Now they have ah,

transmogrified into the villains of modern civilization, but you know, they are not much different from their fathers—brutes with guns—except this time they’re on the wrong side of the history. (pp. 10-11)

Through Chuck, the reader does realize America’s double standards. America itself is the root-cause of violence, because of its injustice and interference in the affairs of other nations of the world. As Derrida (1993) has asserted that America has become a destabilizing factor instead of becoming a stabilizing one. It has totally reversed “the system of interpretation, the axiomatic, logic, rhetoric, concepts, and evaluations that are supposed to allow one to comprehend and to explain something like ‘September 11’” (93).

The novel *Home Boy* depicts how the human rights are violated and the liberty of the individuals and minorities especially Muslims are curbed in America in the wake of 9/11. How they had to suffer in the hands of powerful forces—FBI and their state institutions, like MDC—a scar on the face of ‘democracy’, ‘champion of ‘human rights and liberty’. American’s criterion for justice is different for Americans and non-Americans. To Americans, the Muslims are niggers and sand niggers—wretched of the earth! In this regard, Fanon can hardly be overlooked; he is the one whose work is frequently cited, almost always approvingly, throughout the field of postcolonial studies.

Fanon had psychiatric training. He tried to examine the impact of colonization and racism on the physical and psychological performance of the colonized people. Fanon (1952) in *Peau noire, masques blancs* (trans. *Black Skin, White Masks*) powerfully exposes and critiques the invidious process whereby “the colonized come to regard themselves as ‘other’, not fully human, and opened up the beginnings of a philosophical and existential critique of European humanism . . .” (qtd. in McLeod, 2007, p. 212). This work highlights, how a non-white feel in the world of white. The very gaze “look a negro scenario,” is a killing one for the colonized both physically and psychologically—a traumatic experience. According to Fanon (1952) the very gaze of the white man splits black man’s [sandy man’s] frame of body and reference and completely blurs his field of vision (qtd. in Bhabha, 1994, p. 42). Fanon contends that the Negro is subject to inferiority complex and the white man is puffed with pride and behaves like

a master, consequently a new psychological relationship of power evolves that is master/slave relationship.

M. H. Naqvi has raised voice in his writing to document the pain and suffering of his community which had been excluded from being recognized as human beings. He cites an example of 'the American gaze' in the novel. Especially when Chuck comes from the cell, the world had changed from inside out and vice versa (see Naqvi, 2010, pp. 121-122). The reader of the novel can fully appreciate the pain Chuck was going through the following lines of Fanon. Here if we interchange the word Negro with the word Muslim in the background of 9/11, it makes sense:

Look a Negro . . . Mama, see the Negro! I'm frightened . . . I could no longer laugh, because I already know where there were legends, stories, and above all *historicity* . . . Then, assailed at various points, the corporeal schema crumbled, its place taken by a racial epidermal schema . . . It was no longer a question of being aware of my body in the third person but in a triple person. . . . I was responsible for my body, for my race, for my ancestors. (Fanon p. 112)

We come across similar situation with Chuck, when he was put into cell, he felt no different from that of the black man, Naqvi (2010) has given a brief description of the torture cell and this experience was nothing less than a nightmare. After crossing through heavy gates, he was solitary confined in a cold room and made to sit on a metal chair that was fixed to the ground, door slammed shut, hood fastened tight, pitch dark, sweat trickling down, and he was reduced to a squirm (p. 106).

The study foregrounds post- 9/11 scenario, the loss of patience and tolerance starts resurfacing through the attitude and behavior of American people. The White suspected South Asian Muslims and Arabs had some role in 9/11. They were being dissected under the White eye, the only 'real' eye. As a matter of fact, Chuck and his companions were equally upset on the event, they could hardly think and belief that an event of this magnitude may happen in US. After 9/11, Americans were reluctant to recognize Chuck and his company, the only option left for them was to 'return' to Karachi, Pakistan. Now the very feel and aura of being American or pro-American was evaporating and drifting away. Now he was exposed to the conditions where his identity was fragmented and defused. It was the point where the very pro-American essence was shifting to Anti-American. He was so disconsolate, disgruntled and eager to come back to Pakistan that the



time of five days stretched to five years. He even counted the hours and minutes—as long are the hours of waiting! The situation recalled him the maxim, ‘where and [why] do the ducks fly in the winter?’ (Naqvi, 2010, p. 193). He tried to seek its answer and got it!

The ducks do fly when the conditions become hostile, livelihood becomes scanty, when your freedom is checked, and you are harassed and pinned by one way or the other, when you are discriminated on ethnic, and religious basis, when you are made to realize that this time winter is prolonged. Naqvi (2010) has stated American government strategic posture that “Americans should not expect one battle, but a lengthy campaign, unlike any other we have ever seen” (p. 97). And there was no hope for survival, because he was non-American, non-White and, culturally humiliated and socially stigmatized—under these compelling circumstances one is left with no option except to fly with lugubrious and anguish soul with a strong sense of alienation.

Chuck experiences dehumanization and is conscious that the world is topsy-turvy—upside down and down side up. He could well- imagine the things happening to him. Naqvi (2010) states his condition, ‘I lay curled like a fetus on the floor [...] unable to stir, I lay for a long time—I don’t know how long—like a fish out of water’ (p. 201).

He had become indifferent to everything. Consciously unconscious! Though he was religiously dormant—‘a self-respecting Muslim atheist, just like any, ah, non-practicing Christian, secular Jew, or carnivorous Hindu—’ (Naqvi, 2010, p. 97). But even than he made up his mind to have a Christmas tree to share and celebrate with his American fellow friends, their cultural and religious festivities. It gives him warm and good feelings to participate all season of joys because he always considered himself part of the whole, a respectable member of the global culture. Now he consciously understood that he has been Othered/alienated—socially, culturally, racially and religiously. Naqvi (2010) states that for the first time ‘he did not really celebrate Christmas, he figured he could participate in the associated rituals’. Apart from the Christmas he was quite familiar and excited for the other occasions which were typically associated with the western culture: kissing strangers at midnight, Apple Drop festivity at Times Square, Super bowl Sunday Party, St. Pats Day and the Halloween Parade in the West Village (p. 202). The very knowledge of the parties is evident enough to exhibit his love for sensuous pleasures, his transnational

and multicultural exposure. But now the effervescent spirit has dried down to a shell where the pearl of joy is ever missing.

Chuck's journey was not so simple, had it been, he 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. Even the news of a job offer, for which he was hankering after, pleased him not; as he had reached to the saturated point, dead level—to commit suicide!

At this very point of time, the dictum of his mother reminded him 'When you fall, you get up, and when you fall again, you get up again' (Naqvi, 2010, p. 203). Under the magical spell of these words he wanted to escape for some kind of recreation to get out of the firm grip of frustration and depression which was taking him away from the orbit of life. Naqvi (2010) has depicted his state of mind "I felt I was teetering on the ragged edge of the universe. One misstep, one slip, I would totter, I would fall". To feel better, he wanted to take bath, but soon remembered that he didn't have soap to freshen himself, the urgent need was pressing, but on surveying the cabinets he came across many things, all wasted and rubbish—'spiky old toothbrushes, several cardboard rolls of toilet papers, a fat rusted can of Barbasol, and a blunt, hairy disposable razor' (p. 199).

The feeling of nothingness and emptiness has been replaced by psychological trauma. When he was fired from the post of an investment banker, AC gifted him a box of Ativan, Lexotonil, Klonopin, or something like that'. The very feeling of emptiness made him further unsettled. In order to get settled and kill time he started reading prescriptive literature that contains a warning that states like "Pre-existing depression may worsen during use. The drug is not recommended for use in patients with a depressive disorder or psychosis..." (Naqvi, 2010, pp.199-200).

The leaflet captured his attention and he went on further reading that made him realize that he has become psychologically sick, mentally

drained, emotionally crushed and physically paralyzed. He could perceive that he has all the symptoms of mild and serious cases (see Naqvi, 2010, p. 200).

Now he was left with no option, except to peel open twelve tablets and eat them like nuts of pistachios. He tried to 'locate' himself, his body and soul, to perceive something real, but found nothing real and tangible. He felt pathetic like a helpless child who finds himself in wilderness weeping and screaming, salty tears rolling over his cheeks and snout seeping into mouth, unconsciously conscious, tumbling and stumbling, lost, like a lost child! (Naqvi, 2010) states his true condition through the very punch line:

I felt numb, dead, like my father (p. 200).

He had lost his balance, no hope, no life—wants to commit suicide! This is the same man, with dreams, hopes and was full of life, who considered himself a renaissance man, self-invented and self-made, whose fingers on the pulse of the great global dialect, well versed in Russian and Postcolonial literature. Academically brilliant and an investment banker—now mere reduced to a maroon! The very assimilation had turned into alienation!

#### **4. Conclusion**

The findings of the study reveals that the protagonist and his company of *Home Boy* had to redefine, and reform their new signs of identity through mimicry of the natives. This appropriation helped him and others to assimilate into a new host culture for material gains. After the analysis of the text, it can be inferred that the protagonist had a great passion to become American without realizing his color and creed. But the overwhelming passion made him restless, to gain his ulterior motives he and his friends changed their names, appearances and frame of minds This research has successfully traced that after 9/11 event, the concept of identity had changed drastically (for the Muslims in particular) in America. Previously, their identity was hyphenated and compartmentalized into different ethnicities. The event of 9/11 has seriously affected and paralyzed their subject position. The role of the powerful larger forces: FBI and MDC handled the situation with iron hand. Moreover, the (ab)use of media did the rest to dislodge them, and made them feel humiliated, marginalized and alienated as if there is no room for them. Their religious and cultural identities were scared, misrepresented and dichotomized through colonial

and media discourse. The haunting memories of torture cells have seriously affected their bodies and souls to the extent that their pro-American demeanor turned into non-American rather anti-American. The very situation enabled them to re-devise/revisit a conception of their own Self. Embracing their own Otherness, they have become engaged in intellectual debates about what it means to be a Muslim. The study navigates how liminal interstitial space allows the protagonist and his comrades to be mimic men, but at the same time event of 9/11 pushed them to the serious crises of identity and led them to alienation. They had to think long and hard, who they are and where they are.

## References

- Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (2004). *Key concepts in post-colonial studies*. London and New York, NY: Routledge.
- Bayoumi, M., & Rubin, A. (2000). *The Edward Said reader*. New York: NY: Vintage Books.
- Belsey, C. (2005). Textual analysis as a research method. In Griffin, G. (Ed.), *Research methods for English studies* (pp. 157-174). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *Location of culture*. USA and Canada: Routledge.
- Clifford, J. (1994). Diasporas. Further inflections: Toward ethnographies of the future. *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 9(3) 302-338.
- Dayal, S. (1996). Diaspora double consciousness. *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association*, 29(1), 46-62.
- Derrida, Jacques. (2003). "Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Studies." *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogue with Jurgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida*. By Giovanna Borradori. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 85-136.
- Dittmar, H. (2008). Material and consumer identities: In Schwartz, S. J., Luyckx, K., Vignoles, V. L. (Eds.), *Handbook of identity theory and research*. (Vols. 1-2). (pp. 867-893). New York Dordrecht Heidelberg London: Springer Science & Business Media: DOI 10.1007/978-1-4419-7988-9\_37
- Fanon, F. (1967). *Les Damnés de Terre* (1961, trans. The Wretched of the Earth). Introduction. In McLeod, J. (Ed), *The Routledge companion to postcolonial studies* (pp. 1-18). London: Routledge.
- Farrell, J. G. (1984) [1978] *The Singapore Grip*, London: Flamingo.
- Hamid, M. (2007). *The reluctant fundamentalist*. Karachi: Oxford University Press.

- Holloway, D. (2008). *9/11 and the war on terror*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Huddart, D. (2006). *Homi K. Bhabha*. US: Routledge.
- Huntington, S. P. (1993). The clash of civilization? *Foreign Affairs*, (72)3, 22-49. Retrieved from <http://www.polsci.wvu.edu>. <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici doi: Mon Feb 4 17:45:49 2008>.
- Lacan, Jacques. *The Seminar. Book VII. The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959-1960*. Trans. Dennis Porter. London: Routledge, 1992.
- Moshman, D. (2011). *Adolescent rationality and development: Cognition, morality and identity* (3rd ed.) New York: Psychology Press.
- Memmi, A. (1990) [1957]. *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, trans. H. Greenfield, introduced by Jean-Paul Sartre, London: Earthscan Publications.
- Naqvi, H. M. (2010). *Home boy*. India: Harpers Collins Publishers.
- Radhakrishnan, R. (1996). *Diasporic mediations: Between home and location* (pp. 155-184). London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Redfield, M. (2007). Virtual trauma: The idiom of 9/11. *Diacritics*, 37(1), 54-80. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20204157> doi: 2013.03.17.
- Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. London: Penguin.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1993). *Culture and Imperialism*, London: Chatto and Windus.
- Spivak, G. (1985a). "The Rani of Simur" in Francis Baker *et al.* (eds) *Europe and its Others Vol. 1 Proceedings of Essex Conference on the Sociology of Literature*, Colchester: University of Essex.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1988). "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In In Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (1995). *The Post-colonial Studies Reader* (pp. 24-28). London and New York: Routledge.
- Stepick, A., Stepick, C. D., & Vanderkooy, P. (2011). Becoming American: In Schwartz, S. J., Luyckx, K., Vignoles, V. L. (Eds.), *Handbook of identity theory and research*. (Vols. 1-2). (pp. 867-893). New York NY, Dordrecht Heidelberg London: Springer Science & Business Media: DOI 10.1007/978-1-4419-7988-9\_37
- Tyson, L. (2006). *Critical theory today: A user friendly guide*. New York, NY: Routledge.