

The Journalistic Concerns in Mohsin Hamid's *Moth Smoke* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

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Abstract- The article critically evaluates journalistic concerns in Mohsin Hamid's novels *Moth Smoke* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. It aims to investigate how social and political realities are journalistically fictionalized. Literary journalism means a piece of nonfiction that contains verifiable content, embraces narrative and rhetorical techniques associated with fiction and transforms it into a story. Mark Kramer views literary journalism intrinsically political, democratic, pluralistic, pro-individual, anti-cant, and anti-elite style of news reporting. Norman Sims determines immersion (deep research), structure (organization of the storyline), accuracy (verifiable content), voice (author's viewpoint), and symbolism to be the salient features of literary journalism. *Moth Smoke* historically construes the political issues of Indo-Pak animosity about the Kashmir dispute and the race for nuclear deterrents. Consequently, this political rivalry caused corruption, poverty, and political instability in Pakistan. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* interprets immigration, refugee crisis, and polarity between the eastern and the western civilizations in the wake of the 9/11 incident bringing out the reasons for fundamentalism and civilizational clashes. Hamid novelizes journalistic concerns and produces fictionalized reportage of social and political issues of the contemporary world, a literary and subjective style of fiction writing, and uses allegory and symbolism to reveal various aspects of human nature and bring out the complications caused by events of mass importance.

Index Terms- Journalistic concerns, literary journalism, accuracy, immersion, voice, fiction

I. INTRODUCTION

Mohsin Hamid reflects on journalistic concerns of social, cultural and political realities in *Moth Smoke* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. These concerns are the critical issues of the postcolonial world caused by politics, religion, gender, immigration, globalization, and terrorism. He employs the techniques of literary journalism to highlight multicultural setups with their drawbacks like identity crises and meritocracy etc. His

work exhibits the characteristics of literary journalism like accuracy, voice, complicated structures, character development, symbolism, presentation of political events like Indo-Pak tension, nuclear explosions of India and Pakistan, the 9/11 incident, the clash of civilizations, immigration and refugee crises in the contemporary world. These themes in his writings are centred on ordinary people; thus, the building blocks of his novels are contemporary issues. In *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*, Thomas Bernard Connery defines the genre literary journalism as "it is nonfiction printed prose whose verifiable content is shaped and transformed into a story or sketch by the use of narrative and rhetorical techniques generally associated with fiction." (xiv).

Literary journalism also known as narrative journalism is viewed as creative nonfiction that covers accurate, well-researched and critical information. It is associated with immersion journalism therein an author pursues an incident, a theme or a subject for a long period and elaborates on it from the deep and personal perspective of an individual's experiences. Kramer views literary journalism as "journalism that doesn't assume the reader is a robot that acknowledges the reader knows lots, feels, snickers and gets wild." Literary journalism is a complex literary genre and it embraces multiple layers of a compelling story or its context with a particular arrangement and a personal point of view that can reform the newspaper and magazine versions of an event or incident. Therefore, the plot of a novel based on literary journalism is considered more than storytelling and contains an intriguing and private story of human emotions and real situations behind the public story. A writer as a literary journalist narrates the reportage of facts in the style of fiction writing. Whitt considers the focus of literary journalism an essential element in that literary journalism explores the lives of those who are affected by the institutions rather than emphasizing the institutions (4).

According to Sims, "Literary journalists follow their own set of rules. Unlike standard journalism, literary journalism demands immersion in complex, difficult subjects. The voice of

the writer surfaces to show readers that an author is at work" (2). Kramer suggests that "There is something intrinsically political—and strongly democratic—about literary journalism—something pluralistic, pro-individual, anti-cant, and anti-elite" (34). The genre itself facilitates readers to "behold others' lives, often set within far clearer contexts than we can bring to our own" (34). Lane writes, "Common to many definitions of literary journalism is that the work itself should contain some kind of higher truth; the stories themselves may be said to be emblematic of a larger truth" (3). The unification of daily experience with extensive information, real events, immersion, the voice of the author, symbolism and characterization are the prominent characteristics of literary journalism.

Symbolism, as a prominent feature of literary nonfiction, shapes political events into stories. Through literary symbolism, an author novelizes the political realities and adopts an allegorical style that liberates the writer to say what he cannot say as a journalist. Literary language adds to his communication and widens his meaningfulness. Since literary journalism is neither purely journalism nor it is purely fiction literature. It produces a complicated structure and a lot of experimentation. This praxis of experimentation presents it as a new genre in literature or journalism. The author is free to use his talents, and his art to make his reader keen for whatever he writes. To achieve the interest of his audience, he needs a convincing storyline and attractive characters. Mere reporting may depict shallow characterization with no potency to catch the attraction of the audience; therefore, he immerses himself in the subject and researches it extensively to produce attractive, real and fictional characterization which is not bigger than life (Kramer 7). It does not mean that he induces only objective facts like a journalist. In fact, like a literary artist, he puts his voice and his perspective into the story. Therefore, the voice of the author is an essential ingredient of literary nonfiction.

A literary journalist is often not a robotic reporter, filters the objects through consciousness and produces essentially literary nonfiction. A pure journalist reports events as they happen. His reporting is generally objective. Nevertheless, a literary journalist cannot be alienated from his piece of work. His voice has to be there to make the work literary and subjective. Hence, his piece of art glimpses politically important events and brings out his likes and dislikes and his immersion is obvious in the text. Generally, ordinary people are the characters in the text based on literary journalism. In his writing, the writer democratically probes the lives of ordinary people fighting against institutions (Sims 8). Journalism is essentially attached to the actual and the confirmed. It does not put before people something which is merely imaginary. On the other side, a literary journalist maintains accuracy as a rule but creates imaginary characters and their life

details to avoid being called a journalist. He mingles facts and fiction to create literary nonfiction or literary journalism.

Kramer considers that literary journalism "unites daily experiences with the wild plenitude of information that can be applied to experience" (34). A piece of literary journalism provides its readers with an opportunity to observe the lives of others to develop some sort of exposure, compassion and wisdom. Conversely, traditional reporting cannot achieve what literary journalism does by capturing the attention of its audience through the description of real events. Literary journalists achieve this outcome through dramatic storytelling. They profoundly explore events and incidents and stay close to their subject's world. This immersion leads them to win the audience's approval. Accuracy is still another necessity for them but the portrayal of facts does not restrict them from expressing their voice. This "allows warmth, concern, compassion, flattery, all the real stuff that, when it's missing, makes writing brittle and larger than life" (Sims 17).

Mohsin Hamid's novels *Moth Smoke* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* selected for this study are constructed on plots coming from socio-political realities and their issues. True stories provide him with the raw materials and he amalgamates fictional aspects with them to produce fictional effects and reports the issues without attempting to provide solutions to the problems. The plight of individuals confronting the institutions and the political circumstances is the contention in *Moth Smoke* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. The stories are emblematic of the larger truth and make readers witness the lives of others. While creating fiction, Hamid uses real situations, information, socio-political facts, geopolitical realities, and historical events to weave the plots of novels. He situates reality to achieve the fictional effect in his creativity. Using literary devices like symbolism not only exposes such characteristics as are essential to human nature but also diversifies and adorns their nonfiction. While delving into Hamid's novels under discussion, it is found that his work certainly has such characteristics as a piece of literary journalism.

II. A REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Truman Capote's novel *In Cold Blood* is termed a piece of journalistic writing as it construes a contemporary event in detail. The novel describes a true story of murders in a narrative form. *In Cold Blood* is the story of the four murders 1959 of a Kansas family. Lewis observes "The work does not only give a broad panoramic description of the world of the victims and their killers but also captures the image of a society standing on the verge of unknown challenges and threats" (3). Capote went through extensive research and a series of interviews to deduce factual details about the Kansas family and the catastrophic murders and then novelized the information using literary

techniques. Capote called *In Cold Blood* the first novel in nonfiction. It was perhaps the first time that a journalist used the “stream of unconsciousness” technique to narrate altogether true news (Lewis3-4). Capote supposed that his *modus operandi* provided him with such liberty to put factual and fictional events together for having dramatic effects in his reportage. He didn't hesitate to put in his creative imagination by recreating dialogues and imagining the thought process going on inside his characters.

Joan Didion is another name among the new journalists (literary journalists) who illustrated the disorders they had observed and lived through during the 1960s 1970s world around them. Her writing approach “is ‘the camera eye’ with her lens constantly zooming into the minutest details, and then panning out to expose the vast panorama of her cultural landscape, exposing the intricate web of influence exerted on her subjects” (Houston and Lombardi 7). Didion is a distinguished new Journalist as she makes herself an apt representative of the social setup. Weingarten comments that Didion immersed herself in some of her journalistic works restricting her role to a mere unemotional onlooker (122). She never assumed a character or personae for herself and avoided recording “her impressions in Maileresque fashion, leaving that for her essays” (122). In times when journalists focused on institutions, Didion, along with other New Journalists focused on the individual amid the social chaos of the 1960s and 1970s.

Regeneration is a war novel written by Pat Barker. It was published in 1991 and recorded the background of World War I. The novel is a blend of fiction and reality born out of war indicating the influence of war on literature. It appeared about 75 years after World War I and still retains the atmosphere that prevailed during the war having neurasthenia as an essential theme. *Regeneration* presents many nonfictional major characters like Rivers, Sassoon, Robert Graves, and Wilfred Owen. It also portrays many fictional patients to consolidate mental illnesses not relatable to Sassoon. The novel creates a combination of fictional and nonfictional elements. The dialogue between the patient and the doctor is an invented one and the general impression of the novel seems to familiarize the reader with war-produced neurasthenia and its treatment along with pointing out the grave consequences of war on the individual as a basic unit of social set up. Nonfictional characters Sassoon and Rivers form a relationship central to the novel in the context of war neurosis, but other fictional characters like Billy Prior also contribute to the efficacy of the novel as a study of war outcomes. What distinguishes the novel from post-war works is the treatment of subjects considered taboo at that time like homosexuality, the depiction of physical effects of neurasthenia, and graphic pictures of wounds inflicted on the battlefield (Wilson).

Pakistani literature in English also reflects journalistic concerns related to contemporary issues. Sorayya Khan's first novel, *Noor*, is a dominant and heart-breaking story of memory, family, tragedy, and tolerance. Set in Islamabad, Pakistan, the novel describes an extraordinary child who enables her mother, Sajida, and her grandfather, Ali, to face the pasts they have preferred to suppress. Through *Noor's* painting, her family members revisit their preoccupied memories of the 1970 cyclone that claimed the lives of a million people and the violent massacres of the 1971 conflict between East and West Pakistan that ultimately produced the independent country of Bangladesh. As *Noor's* drawings bring to life sights, sounds smells, and sensations from the past, her family is enforced to confess the betrayals and disillusionment that they thought had been repressed with time. Moving, distressing, and unsettling by turns, *Noor* is a novel about the terrors of war, the power of tolerance, and, most important, the power of the human spirit (Diwan).

The 9/11 incident influenced both American and non-American writers and intensified the themes of identity, terrorism and immigration. As far as American novelists are concerned, generally “the 9/11 novel looks at 9/11 the day itself, in New York – think of the most acclaimed novels in that genre: Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*, Claire Messud's *The Emperor's Children* or Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*” (Shamsie). She extends her viewpoint, “just as the day itself is only one part of the genre of 9/11 nonfiction books, so it should be with fiction” (Shamsie). The American novelists, with only a few exceptions, provide an American self-centric view of September 11 and do not try to look at it from the outside. “Our novelists continue stubbornly to insist on turning their gaze inward, bizarrely searching for the answer to the question of 9/11 in America rather than at its global source” (Franklin). It may not be an appropriate fictionalization of a Muslim after the 9/11 fiction by American authors and considers Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* to be the “best fictional portrait of a Muslim in post-9/11 America” (Franklin).

III. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

a) Literary Journalism in *Moth Smoke* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

Mohsin Hamid states that his objective is to present what he sees; he takes the news and attempts to re-complicate the simplified facts (Interview with Razia Iqbal). The coordination of news, facts, geopolitical realities, and socioeconomic datum with fictional prose written in literary style is what we call literary journalism. Journalism “is the mother of literature and the perpetrator of crap. In many cases, it is the only history we have, and yet it is the tool of the worst men. But over a long period and because it is the product of so many men, it is perhaps the purest

thing we have” (Steinbeck 256). “Literary journalism informs at a level common to fiction” (Connery 408). Sims, in *The Literary Journalists*, determines immersion (entering and living in the life of the subject—a lot of research), structure (organization of the storyline), accuracy (verifiable content), voice (author’s view), and symbolism to be the salient features of literary journalism (8). According to Mark Kramer, literary journalism captures the attention of its audience through the description of real events (34).

Literary journalism is profoundly accommodative of the composition of fact and fiction. Hamid’s work presents historical, geographical, political, social, and economic facts through fiction. Nevertheless, his fiction is not completely fictional or imaginative in terms of the information it conveys; it is fictional only in terms of the plot it pursues and the story it develops. He situates the events – real and verifiable ones, to produce a storyline. The verifiable facts provide Hamid with the foundation to build his fiction, as a result, his work does more discovery and less invention as far as realities are concerned. Hamid uses allegory and symbolism to make facts, realities and political events look like fiction. At times, his novels present political events running in the background. The nomenclature in *Moth Smoke* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is indicative of historical and political realities. Moreover, symbolism in his novels reveals various aspects of human nature and brings out the complications caused by events of mass importance.

b) *Moth Smoke*: An Allegory from Mughal Dynasty to Kashmir Dispute

Moth Smoke has diverse symbolic elements. It presents historical facts in the guise of fiction placed in the late 90s. The happenings in the dynasty of Shah Jahan, the emperor of India in the 17th century, are an indelible part of Indian history and these facts are camouflaged in this fiction. Hamid attempts to make it prominent by beginning the novel with a glimpse into the past. *Moth Smoke* reports Shah Jahan’s consultations with a saint about the future of the Mughal Empire. The saint dismisses the chances of succession to the throne for Dara, Shuja and Murad but approves the chances for Aurangzeb. Dara, the favourite son, is beheaded by the youngest one. “The truth of the saint’s words became apparent. Aurangzeb has crowned Emperor, and he obtained from the theologians a fatwa against his defeated brother, charging Dara Shikoh with apostasy and sentencing him to death” (*Moth Smoke* 1). Preceding the first chapter of the novel with such historical and political facts is indicative of Hamid’s intentions to novelize the past into a contemporary political scenario. “The struggle between Ozi (Aurangzeb) and Daru (Dara Shikoh) in the novel is set up to mirror the historical struggle between the intolerant Islamist son

(Aurangzeb) and the more sympathetic, secular, pantheist son (Dara Shikoh)” (Jay 54).

Symbolism serves as a very effective tool for writers who aim at exposing socio-political realities. A literary journal is a realist at heart who mixes facts with fiction to attract his reader. Hamid uses symbolism in *Moth Smoke* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* to achieve such amalgamation. His *Moth Smoke* is replete with rich symbolism. The self-destructive proclivity of the Mughal rulers in pursuance of the throne has been drawn in the central characters who walk towards destruction through a remarkable ruin in the novel. The main characters in this novel can be taken as countries and the conflicts between them can be symbolic of political conflicts. Darashikoh Shezad, for example, can be seen as Pakistan. While exploring his roots in the novel, we, firstly, relate him to the Mughal dynasty wherein he is superseded by his younger brother Aurangzeb who charges him of apostasy and gets him killed (*Moth Smoke* 1). Hamid carries forward this political contention from the 17th century to 20th and 21st centuries.

Moth Smoke revisits this war of succession in the present-day scenario by fictionalizing the historical as well as geographical facts. Within the frame of the novel, Daru exhibits certain facts related to Pakistan. He comes from a family which holds boxing as its tradition. The novel reveals that Daru is also a boxer who “never won any championship” though he “won more fights than he lost” (*Moth Smoke* 37). These Boxing fights are symbolic of Pakistan’s wars fought against India about which the national media in Pakistan claims the country to be victorious in most of them. Daru’s interest in Mumtaz symbolizes Pakistan’s interest in Kashmir. Mumtaz’s full name is Mumtaz Kashmiri and her character symbolizes Kashmir. Daru trains Mumtaz in Boxing (*Moth Smoke* 141). It can be symbolic of the accusation laid on Pakistan by India that Pakistan trains militants — the Kashmiri freedom fighters. This symbolic similarity is further affirmed when Daru meets Mumtaz behind Ozi’s back (*Moth Smoke* 174). India has time and again accused Pakistan of infiltrating Kashmir through militants (“India claims striking suspected rebels in Pakistan” 2016).

Daru’s economic condition is also symbolic of Pakistan’s economy. The country faced international economic pressure during the late 90s in the wake of its nuclear tests in 1998. It faced international economic sanctions (Morrow “The Economic Impacts”). The novel presents this condition in the shape of Daru’s bankruptcy. He is having a severe financial crisis with a loss of his job and no real opportunities for substantial earning resources (*Moth Smoke* 137). Daru depends on the rich around him for his survival and resultantly his freedom is at stake (*Moth Smoke* 178). It symbolizes Pakistan’s condition after May 1998 scenario. Daru

tries to live on bootlegging. He buys heroin from Murad Badshah at a cheaper rate and sells it to elite customers for profit. He receives thrashing for selling heroin to Shuja and receives 71 stitches on his body (Moth Smoke 228). This figure of 71 can be seen as an allusion to the 1971 war between India and Pakistan. When in trouble, he attends family meetings. He returns to his grandmother and uncle but doesn't depend on them and expects nothing substantial from them but a meal or a few hundred rupees and as a result, he feels depressed (Moth Smoke 63). These futile meetings can be an allusion to the futile OIC (Organization of Islamic Countries) meetings on the Kashmir Dispute.

Hamid symbolizes the unequal distribution of resources by the British who partially allotted a lion's share of the subcontinental wealth and business to India. The deprivation made Pakistan suffer economically, socially and politically. Daru and Ozi share the same background. Both are brought up by Ozi's father until they are ready to face the world on their own. Ozi has all the resources of his father to back on whereas Daru has almost none. This is a symbolic interpretation of the economic condition of India and Pakistan at the time of Independence in 1947. "90% of the subcontinent's industry and taxable income base remained in India, including the largest cities of Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta" (Bates). Similar is the case with Ozi and Daru in the novel. Daru says, "I pull up to a big gate in a high wall that surrounds what I think is Ozi's place. His new place, that is. His old place was smaller. I'm a little nervous because it's been a few years, or maybe because my house is the same size it was when he left" (Moth Smoke 9).

The character of Mumtaz symbolizes Kashmir in the novel firstly because Hamid names this character "Mumtaz Kashmiri" who is a significant cause of conflict in the novel. It is important to note that Mumtaz retains the surname "Kashmiri" even after being married to Ozi. She introduces herself to Daru. She says, "Mumtaz Kashmiri. It still is. I didn't change it" (Moth Smoke 84). The identity crisis that she faces marks Kashmir's dilemma of its identity. India has annexed a part of Kashmir while the rest is claimed by Pakistan. Indian efforts to annex Kashmir were doomed right from the start as Kashmiris have always resisted Indian attempts at modernization in Kashmir. The Unmotherliness of Mumtaz indicates Kashmiri sacrificing its youth for freedom (Moth Smoke 162). "Having once been betrayed by an AC, she branded them all traitors and avoided their use except under circumstances of egregious warmth. And so it was that the marriage between Aurangzeb and Mumtaz was doomed from the start" (Moth Smoke 129).

Mumtaz's first meeting with Ozi on October 31 is Hamid's anachronism of Kashmir's accession to India on October 27. Mumtaz's marriage with Ozi symbolizes Kashmir's accession

to India, and her dissatisfaction with Ozi symbolizes Kashmiris' struggle for cession. As BBC news puts Kashmir's quest for freedom, "But for many of the majority Muslims living in the valley, freedom is the only way to get their pride back" (Biswas). It is evidenced in the novel how Mumtaz Kashmiri, in the novel, seeks freedom by becoming a freelance journalist. She tells Daru, "It was because I wanted to create a life that he knew nothing about. But as soon as I began, wings that had been growing for years stretched and pushed and I found myself flying. I was home again, and there was so much I wanted to say" (Moth Smoke 193). She symbolises the suppression Kashmiris suffer from under Indian rule. Whenever she finds a way to give vent her feelings, she feels better; it is like the catharsis the Kashmiris have through Kashmir Media Service. She says, "And the more I wrote, the more I loved home. I was back, I was finding myself again" (Moth Smoke 193).

Like Kashmir, Mumtaz's desire for freedom is a complex one. It includes financial, emotional and moral independence. She says, "The income was important to me ... but the idea of taking pocket money from my husband had begun to grate on me. So, I managed to earn some financial independence" through writing (Moth Smoke 191). The feeling of freedom of expression gave her unprecedented satisfaction. She began to feel "new muscles growing in [her] back, wing muscles, the kind that means you're learning to fly" (Moth Smoke 191). Notably, the land is considered a mother in the subcontinent. Therefore, Oz's marriage with Mumtaz signifies Indian authority in Kashmir whereas Daru's love affair with Mumtaz stands for Kashmir's affiliation with Pakistan. Thus, the whole triangular affair is illustrative of the Kashmir dispute between the two sibling countries i.e., India and Pakistan. Mumtaz's struggle for economic independence from Ozi symbolizes Kashmir's desire for independence. Like Kashmir, she detests being suppressed and desires to break free. She tells Daru, "I'm not allowed to smoke when he's in the room" (Moth Smoke 13). One of the core reasons for enmity between the sibling countries is the Kashmir dispute.

c) Symbolism in The Reluctant Fundamentalist

The Reluctant Fundamentalist is a work of fiction based on indelible facts. It is, in fact, a fictionalization of social, geographical and political realities. Immigrants in America face typical circumstances and Hamid has fictionalized it well so as nothing seems unreal. It presents some realities through symbols to retain the status of fiction. Like Moth Smoke, most of its characters have symbolic implications. Their names not only give them individual identity but also signify them as symbols at a larger scale. Changez, the protagonist of the novel, is the reporter of the events in the novel. The reader sees everything through his perspective. The name "Changez" represents the East, particularly

Pakistan and Islamic world. The word “Changez” is Pakistani form of Genghis the great Mongol ruler of the 12th and 13th centuries. According to Babur Nama, the founder of Mughal empire in the subcontinent, Zahir-ud-Din Babur was descendent of Timur Beg from his father’s side (Hiro vii). Whereas, on the maternal side, he belonged to the lineage of Genghis Khan. Babur describes the family tree of his maternal grandfather Yunus Khan in Babur Nama. Yunus Khan is the 14th generation of Genghis Khan according to this family tree (Hiro viii). Mughals were Muslims and ruled the subcontinent till the mid of 19th century leaving lasting impressions on the culture and religion in the area. Thus, Hamid deliberately takes “Changez” as his protagonist in the novel which has Muslim fundamentalism among major themes. It represents the eastern civilization in the present world. The name “Erica” is the feminine form of “Eric” which etymology defines as: “masc. proper name, from Old Norse Eiríkr, literally “honoured ruler,” from Proto-Germanic *aiza- “honor” + *rik- “ruler,” from PIE root *reg- “move in a straight line,” with derivatives meaning “to direct in a straight line,” thus “to lead, rule.” The German form is Erich” (“Online Etymology Dictionary”). The name “Erica” is a part of the word “America”. Erica represents a part of western civilization in America in the novel. She is a symbol of the power-wish of America. Since America is a multicultural amalgamation, its identity has a variety of shades. Erica’s character represents a trauma resulting from this multiculturalism. Her inability to love Changez and remain submerged in Chris is symbolic of American culture’s inability to embrace eastern individuals. Changez comes to know about Chris when Erica tells him about the shirt she is wearing belonged to Chris (The Reluctant Fundamentalist 26).

Chris symbolizes western civilization in the novel. The name “Chris” is a short form of Christ, Christopher or Christian. In the novel, Chris never appears but only through Erica’s memories. Erica clads herself in Chris’s dress and is unable to detach herself from Chris even after his death. Erica’s state of mind symbolizes America’s dilemma of identity as a nation. The question of whether American civilization is a modern one – secular, humanist, progressive or it is a western Christian that participated in the crusades, is still unanswered. The nostalgia she bears is symbolic of America’s inability to forget its past which is closely attached to Christianity, and move forward with a complete secular bearing. Although the US constitution does not require any sort of religious qualification for the candidature of the US president yet no non-Christian has ever become the president of the US. Hamid symbolically argues Erica is inseparable from Chris and thus predicts the trauma she is going to suffer. Erica tells Changez about her late boyfriend Chris who was a “good-looking boy” with “an Old-World appeal” (The Reluctant Fundamentalist 27).

Erica’s behaviour with Changez after 9/11, for Hamid, is the reaction of a segment of American society toward Pakistani Muslims. Changez reports, “Her lips were pale, as though she had not slept—or perhaps she had been crying. I thought at that moment that she looked older ...” (The Reluctant Fundamentalist 80). Her refusal to leave the terror-stricken city and her resolve not to be alone again marks the US political condition in the world as she remarks, “The attacks churned up old thoughts in my head” (The Reluctant Fundamentalist 80). The love triangle of Changez-Erica-Chris symbolizes a socio-political reality. Changez loves Erica, Erica loves Chris, and Chris has died, yet Erica is unable to make love to Changez. After an unsuccessful effort to make love, Changez asks her, “You do not like it?” she replies, “I don't know” and then with eyes filled with tears, she says, “I just can't get wet. I don't know what's wrong with me.” Then she tells Changez that he “was the first man she had been with since Chris—indeed, other than Chris” (The Reluctant Fundamentalist 90).

Despite his efforts, Changez could not touch her soul which is already occupied by Chris. Erica lives in past and is not ready to acknowledge the present. The two civilizations, somehow, cannot become one despite the modern outlook of American culture. Thus, Changez concludes that “her body had rejected” him (The Reluctant Fundamentalist 90). This rejection is symbolic of America’s rejection of so-called Muslim Fundamentalists, especially after the 9/11 incident. It indicates the reality that American civilization cannot accommodate citizens of the eastern civilization. The argument that America is a completely modernized civilization with its all open-heartedness for all the nationals around the world was exposed after 9/11. The American dream of equality and opportunity for all was shattered again with 9/11. Changez-Erica affair presents this debacle symbolically. The dead Chris symbolizes America’s past which was well affiliated with Christianity. This dead body comes to life now and then and influences the American collective outlook on political and cultural matters. This is what Hamid implies through symbolic characters in the novel. “It did not matter that the person Erica was in love with was what the nurse or I might call deceased; for Erica, he was alive enough, and that was the problem” (The Reluctant Fundamentalist 133).

It became impossible for America to maintain harmony between both civilizations (Christian and Muslim) in harmony in the US after 9/11. It could not see beyond its sight. Therefore, “it was difficult for Erica to be out in the world, living the way the nurse or I might, when in her mind she was experiencing things that were stronger and more meaningful than the things she could experience with the rest of us” (The Reluctant Fundamentalist 133). After 9/11, America’s anti-muslimism dominated its secularism at least in the US society. There was not much possibility for America to treat countries like Pakistan in the usual way. The novel symbolically highlights the fact through Erica’s trauma; she loses herself to the dead Chris and is unable to accept

Changez; similarly, the US bluntly reshaped its treatment of Pakistan and the Muslim world after 9/11. "Suffice it to say that theirs had been an unusual love, with such a degree of the conflation of identities that when Chris died, Erica felt she had lost herself; even now, she said, she did not know if she could be found" (The Reluctant Fundamentalist 91). Like Erica, America gave itself away to nostalgia, a sort of war hysteria. Hamid looks at this disposition through Changez thus: "America, too, was increasingly giving itself over to a dangerous nostalgia at that time. There was something undeniably retro about the flags and uniforms, about generals addressing cameras in war rooms and newspaper headlines featuring such words as duty and honour" (The Reluctant Fundamentalist 114-15).

"Underwood Samson", a corporate firm, can be abbreviated as "US" which also stands for the United States. In the novel, Underwood Samson symbolizes America which is regarded as a great political, military and economic power in the world of the present age. America's ability to enforce its decision in the world, particularly in the countries under its influence, is well established. The novel presents Underwood Samson as a firm that has a very effective influence on its client firms. Changez describes one of the ventures of Underwood Samson about a CD business firm. As a part of Underwood Samson, he says that they worked hard to find out the real value of the client firm, they "interviewed suppliers, employees, and experts of all kinds; [they] passed hours in closed rooms with accountants and lawyers; [they] gathered gigabytes of data" (The Reluctant Fundamentalist 66). The immaculate research work of Underwood Samson symbolizes US secret organizations and NGOs working in other countries to collect important data. Changez points out his job at the firm. He did a lot of research work on the computer as well as in the field comparing indicators of performance to benchmarks to build complex financial models with numerous variations. He "felt enormously powerful on these outings, knowing [his] team was shaping the future. Would these workers be fired? Would these CDs be made elsewhere? We, indirectly, of course, would help decide" (The Reluctant Fundamentalist 66).

"Underwood Samson" symbolizes the international reality of American political and economic influence in the world. This American capability is further explained by Changez's remarks on the demeanour of the American guest, "Ah, I see that you have detected a scent. Nothing escapes you; your senses are as acute as those of a fox in the wild" (The Reluctant Fundamentalist 77). Business enterprises in the US hire talent from around the world to profit from them. These employees are well-paid and well-respected as long as they are useful. Therefore, Jim tells Changez, "Your performance is what counts, as far as I'm concerned, and you are the best analyst in your class by a long way" (The Reluctant Fundamentalist 137). The US hires the best talent around the world and utilizes it for its profit. Moreover, the US has

been one of the largest weapon manufacturers and sellers in the world. According to a peace research institute, from 2001 to 2007, the US exported weapons worth \$ 45335 million and topped the ranking (SIPRI). It indicates how America disrupts the peace in the world for its profit. Juan Bautista's remarks further strengthen this argument. He asks Changez, who is working for Underwood Samson and thus representing the US if it troubles him to earn his living by "disrupting the lives of others" (The Reluctant Fundamentalist 151).

IV. CONCLUSION

Hamid's *Moth Smoke* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* are works of literary journalism that are based on fictionalized and novelized news reportage. Hence it is subjective and has the voice and the immersion of its author in the theme or subject. Moreover, journalistic fiction is the invention of its author; therefore, it is subjective, and democratic and the author is hardly detachable from it. Thus, literary journalism falls somewhere between fiction and fact. Hamid's work, though it does not tell true stories, is fabricated with the thread of real events, verifiable facts, and social, economic, geographic and political realities. This verifiability makes his work journalistic, yet he remains audible in his work and voices his opinion at length. While observing these literary characteristics, he situates the realities and consequently produces work which presents more discovery and less invention.

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