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Islamophobia: The Formation of Image

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Ca' Foscari
Dorsoduro 3246
30123 Venezia

Supervisor:

Prof. Shaul Bassi

Graduand:

Muhammad Abdul Wahid
Matriculation No: 850677

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Abstract

This dissertation conducts a literary analysis to address the contemporary issue of Islamophobia in the Western world. While less interest will be taken as to whether the given profiles are true psychologically or whether some writers can present them well sociologically; sociological and political investigations will have to come into play. Referencing Edward Said's orientalist perspective and the aftermaths of the Rushdie Affair as a context for this analysis, I intend to investigate how these landmarks have influenced scholarship on the modern day social phenomenon of Islamophobia and, whether attempting to understand Islamophobia from a narrative point of view is productive. In pursuance of this aim, I have chosen three English novels with different geographical settings and periods in order to elaborate the evolution, development and the present concerns about Islamophobia in Western social and political circles. The three novels examined – *The Black Album* by Hanif Kureishi, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid, and *Submission* by Michel Houellebecq – will provide strong examples of how literature deals with this issue. Kureishi's work presents its South Asian protagonist Shahid as he endures a socially isolated life in Britain; becomes part of an Islamist group but he oscillates in his identity as a secular-liberal and a radical Islamist. The novel demonstrates how Muslim fundamentalism evolved in the period soon after the Rushdie Affair. Hamid's work addresses the issue of Islamophobia in a relatively direct manner when its character Changez is victimized for his Muslim identity in the US. In addition to the unique structural change in its narrative, Hamid's novel introduced an intellectual debate in academic arena after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. I ask whether this has affected the ways in which these migrant literatures were written. Houellebecq's work, set in the future, still further reflects upon Islamophobia in a much different way. Relying on prevailing concerns about Islamophobia in French society,

Houellebecq's work demonstrates an inversion in approaching this issue in which depicting France as governed by a Muslim political party, he mourns the decadent values of the European culture. The key argument of my analysis is that racial attitudes, preexisting in Western societies, are affected by the *geopolitical circumstances of the present day* (emphasis added), which present a new layer of hatred and otherness wrapped in religious terms. This creates an admixture of a politico-religious form of racism commonly known as Islamophobia, which is contrary to the racial attitudes in the past that were governed by aspects such as skin color and cultural difference.

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Author

Muhammad Abdul WAHID

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Introduction

Literature written on “otherness” has long been part of the literary tradition, including English literature. Despite Jews’ expulsion from England in 1290—who, according to the edict, were not allowed to live in the country until the expulsion was revoked by Oliver Cromwell—they had been an important corpse of literary depiction in Medieval and Middle English literature. The recurrence of the portrayal of Jews as “other” is found in almost every age in the history of English literature. Similarly, a conflict of otherness has long been in existence between Muslims and Christians. Although the schematization of this conflict has a long history that dates back to the Muslim-Christian encounters in the medieval period, this present work aims at limiting its focus on representation in English literature. During the trading presence of English merchants in the Middle East, North Africa and other parts of the Ottoman dominions, a perception among English people to define themselves in relation to “other” developed. Muslims have since been an inevitable part of representation in English – particularly medieval and early modern – literary depiction. As time went on, the initial views of otherness based on the idea that Muslims were heathens, and that Islam was a political threat, evolved to encompass a wide range of other forms. Examples of this alienation include skin colour, and the negative connotations that come with it, such as the idea that people who are black are more likely to be licentious rapists. The various terms used to denote people of a different skin colour, including Moors, Blackamoors, Negroes and Saracens have been included in a variety of literary works in English history. Major figures among authors included Chaucer, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Milton, Byron and Shelley. Conforming to this literary tradition, the contemporary period has witnessed a concrete revival in the portrayal of Muslim characters. The difference, however, is that depictions in past were nourished extensively from a range of unique cultural standpoints whereas now the emphasis is

more focused on the Muslimness of their characters. Islam is depicted as a monolithic faith that is seen as being based on violence and repressive laws and customs. This new form of stigmatization is commonly known as Islamophobia.

Islamophobia is generally believed to have originated after the Runnymede Trust Report in 1997. The report was published in light of the racial profiling of Muslims and their emergence as a political entity after the Satanic Verses Controversy in Britain. However, occasional references to the concept of Islamophobia through the lens of oriental characterization were present in Anglophone literature. How strongly articulated was literary criticism in this context, how has literary criticism grounded this theme for the works hereafter, can be illustrated if we turn to Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978). In his critique, Said sheds light on the centuries-old divide between the Orient and the Occident from a cultural viewpoint. The historical aspect of the critique, reveals that Orientalism is a corporate institution that deals with the Orient by "making statements about it, authorizing views about it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (Said 3). Islam's place in this Western hegemony was "typically Oriental for Orientalists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries" (103) and Muslims, particularly Arabs, had been part of the orientalist discourse. The very word "Orient" – before its generic use for the distant and exotic – was understood as implying Islamic Orient for the past memories of "the fall of Constantinople, the Crusades, and the conquest of Sicily and Spain" (75). Renowned historians such as Leopold von Ranke and Jacob Burckhardt had taken Islam in a way as if "they were dealing not so much with an anthropomorphic abstraction as with a religio-political culture about which deep generalizations were possible and warranted" (208). Other important Orientalists that were highly tendentious in their views about Islam included

Ignaz Goldziher, Duncan Black Macdonald, Carl Becker, C. Snouck Hurgronje and Louis Massignon. Said points them in Waardenburg's *L'Islam dans le miroir de l'Occident* and argues that despite the different methodologies employed by these authors in their dealings with Islam, there seems an overt consensus, and that is "their Oriental consensus on Islam: latent inferiority" (209). To the extent that Islam had been taken by Orientalists as the virulent part of the Orient. In their dealings with Islam, the authors did not view Orientalist culture as an alternative to their culture. They simply disregarded it as "other" through their biased, preconceived notions about it. Commenting upon this layer of otherness of Orientalism, Said has this to say:

Rather, their [Islamic Orientalists] estrangement from Islam simply intensified their feelings of superiority about European culture, even as their antipathy spread to include the entire Orient, of which Islam was considered a degraded (and usually, a virulently dangerous) representative. Such tendencies – it has also been my argument – became built into the very traditions of Orientalist study throughout the nineteenth century, and in time became a standard component of most Orientalist training, handed on from generation to generation. (260)

This image of the Islamic Orient indoctrinated the Orientalists of the posterity. They could not delve deep in search of actualities, and it became a standard intellectual operation that has continued till the present day. The abstractions of Orientalism about the civilization of Islam have been taken for granted in subsequent ages. Consistently taken as a monolithic religion, modernity in Islam is assumed to be "less of a challenge than an insult" (261). This mindset in turn has left considerable impacts on the cultural, political, religious and social spheres of the two "others" (Christians vs. Muslims) that has further widened the polarity between them. Additionally, beyond the particular attitudes of the Orientalists, the geo-political situations have

also contributed in creating an outlook to deal with Islam in the Orient. If we look at this issue through the imperialistic lens of the Western colonizers, excluding Islam, “the Orient for Europe was until the nineteenth century a domain with a continuous history of unchallenged Western dominance” (73). Islam and the Arabs had been an “unresolved challenge” (74) which is why Orientalism “carries within it the stamp of a problematic European attitude towards Islam” (74). Defining Oriental cultures as majorly dominated by religious and mystic devoutness, these discourses common in the 19th century have certainly contributed to the present stereotyping of Islam. Said analyses this point and, taking the role of media into account, argues that “standardization and cultural stereotyping have intensified the hold of the nineteenth-century academic and imaginative demonology of “the mysterious Orient”” (26) in the postmodern electronic age. This, he believes, is “nowhere more true than in the ways by which the Near East is grasped” (26). By Near East, he certainly means the countries of the Middle East (a predominantly Arab region), and his thesis vigorously testifies the present turmoil in this region in the name of Islamic fundamentalism.

Following the conceptual framework laid down by Edward Said, the reception of Islamism in the present English literary sphere came to the forefront during the aftermath of Rushdie Affair, also known as The Satanic Verses Controversy in the late 1980s. The repercussions left by this event revived the inescapable preoccupations regarding Islam, and - contrary to the past, as I said earlier, when cultural issues were rather more appealing – English literary authors took keen interest in depicting Muslim characters in their works in a religious context. Depicting the real characters of the prophet Muhammad, the caliphs Abu Bakr and Omer etc, *The Satanic Verses* (1988) and its ensuing aftereffects “recycled to crystallize the trend of Islamophobia in Europe” (Al-Olaqi 1772). Those days, hostility towards immigrants was

steadily rising. The presence of a large number of immigrants in European countries from the past colonies had been looked upon by the native Europeans as people of alien cultures and customs. They considered them as not compatible with European culture. The hostile sentiments against immigrants - majority of whom, in the British context, were from the Indian subcontinent - also had its base, less than a decade ago, in the Iranian Revolution, which had openly declared the West as their enemy. Not only did it have an effect on a domestic level, it had also been an ingrained concern at a diplomatic level. For instance, a year before the publication of *The Satanic Verses*, a former foreign minister of Belgium said: "We run the risk of becoming like the Roman people, invaded by Barbarian peoples such as Arabs, Moroccans and Turks, people who come from far afield and have nothing in common with our civilization" (Palmar qtd. in Asad 240). The reason why this gap was realized is that Muslim immigrants wanted to live their lives in the framework of their own core values. However, they also wanted to become an equal part of the wider social and political sphere in Britain. They were seeking freedom to practice their rituals in their own way. All of this was alarming to the people of the British Isles, believing that the change could bring major institutional changes in the future. The post-Enlightenment belief that religion was to be a private, individual matter was problematized. The modern state acquired that "the population of a modern nation-state must be committed to 'core values', an essential culture that must be shared by all if society is to hold together" (Asad 240). On this account, a vacuum within British society existed that was bound to have its ramifications.

During the days when this clash was rampant, anything written - related to this issue - automatically took a political dimension. *The Satanic Verses*, essentially a work of literature, became a political book due to the political milieu of the period. However, the book left enormous impacts in subsequent literary works, enveloping all these debates within the corps of

literature. Upon the publication of Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* - and the subsequent fatwa issued by Ayatollah Khomeini calling for the assassination of the author - postcolonial English literary works witnessed a shift in focus. It was a change from the primarily focused issues of migrations and racial aspects of the British multicultural society to a new dimension to depict *Muslim* Diaspora living in Britain. Since this is not part of the present discussion to set forth the political implications of Rushdie Affair - especially with reference to Communism that had recently collapsed - this analysis emphasizes this event as a literary landmark upon which a new wave of scholarship in British migrant writings coherent to the political climate of religious manichaeism and intolerance was sparked. In addition to themes of ethnicity, nationality and race, authors--specifically postcolonial English authors--had by now developed an interest in Muslim characters in the context of their affiliation with religion. Earlier, they mostly tended to define young characters living in Diaspora, and the experiences they faced in a different cultural set-up in Britain. Similarly, fiction would represent characters of Indian, Pakistani, Arabian and African origins in their national context. Treatment of themes in this vein, before the controversy, may well be seen in the works of Farrukh Dhondy and David Dabydeen or most importantly in the works of Salman Rushdie himself and Hanif Kuresishi; the two most prominent literary authors of South Asian origin. In the aftermath of Rushdie Controversy, this trend shifted and writers were then more tended to identify characters in the context of religion, particularly those who were affiliated with Islam. In other words, beyond the national attributes given to them prior to Rushdie Affair, the characters were now represented as "Muslim" rather than as a Pakistani, Indian or of any other nationality.

Ironically, the novel that escalated this trend and prompted British Asian Muslims to start identifying themselves with a religious identity is not populated itself with British Muslims. In

his novel, the majority of characters are of South Asian origin, who are quite secular and non-religious. For instance, in the novel, Muhammad Sufyan is a Haji (a Muslim who has performed Hajj) who could “quote effortlessly from Rig-Veda as well as Quran Sharif, from the military accounts of Julius Caesar as well as the revelations of St John the Divine” (Rushdie 245). That is to say; he is essentially a secular person, not limiting his thoughts and knowledge to Islam exclusively. If the wife of Muhammad Sufyan is religious, she is not explicitly expressed as a religious woman. Rather, she is depicted as someone who has opted to choose religion due to the disappointments she has in her life. Hence, the work that created controversy on religion is itself mainly set on other issues such as race, ethnicity and gender, etc. Even Rushdie’s later works do not treat religion as a theme except in *Shalimar the Clown* (2005) and *Joseph Anton* (2012). The point of irony is that *The Satanic Verses* does not directly deal with religion—or, in other words, with Islamism—but it did leave its effect and others demonstrated it. Whilst *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1989), Hanif Kureishi’s first novel, primarily deals with racism and ethnicity, his second novel *The Black Album* (1995) is “perhaps the first literary work to register the profound transformations in identity amongst British Asian youth that had been set in motion by the Rushdie Affair” (Mondal 32). Published in 1995 and set in 1989, the novel depicts Shahid, a British Asian, who is on the one hand, drawn to an Islamist group, but on the other, is attracted to secular pleasures. To satiate his worldly pleasures, he gets involved with his teacher Deedee Osgood but, at the same time, looking at the deprivations he feels as racially isolated citizen, he tends to constitute his identity with his religion. The double stranded motivation in his character sets up the whole framework of Kureishi’s work whereby he keeps the foundation of a new argument in the background of Rushdie Affair. This new argument consists of “Kureishi’s characterization of the problem as a fundamental and irreconcilable opposition between two

contradictory forces: secular-liberal individualism on the one hand, and radical Islamism on the other” (32). The sense of exclusion among the characters in the novel – originated both from the country they live in and the country their parents belong to - reinforce them to seek their refuge in belonging to their religion. This is why, the racially excluded characters in the novel find an appeal in Riaz; the leader of the Islamist group. And they are helped by him when needed. As portrayed in the novel, a Bengali family, living in a building, is racially abused by the racists for they were the only non-white people living in that building. In order to protect this family, the Islamist group watches outside their apartment with knives and other weapons. Portrayal of these details shows how Kureishi aims to portray an ideological appeal:

[N]ot without sympathy for, and understanding of, the political appeal of Islamism in the context of a highly racist social context, its ideological appeal is somewhat more problematic for him. At the heart of this problem lies a wariness of the ideological appeal of religion itself – not necessarily Islamism, but Islam, too. (33)

The key point in this discourse is that Rushdie Affair left a sentimental factor among the Muslim community. This event gave a setback to the “core values” as a result of which, secular-liberalism and Islamism came into being among the British Muslims. *The Black Album* as a literary work of the postcolonial fiction is, therefore, regarded as:

[T]he first literary representation of the British Muslim social environment after the Rushdie controversy, and therefore the first to register the shift in identity amongst British Muslim youth [wherein] Kureishi established a representational

paradigm that has largely defined subsequent representations of young British Muslims in contemporary British literature. (35)

A number of other authors subsequently took interest in this trend and they represented, through their works, not only concerns of race and ethnicities of the migrants living in British multicultural society but conflicts of secularism and Islamism. Equally important in the following years was the geopolitical situations and the parliamentary legislations that made this issue more prominent. It was in the year 1997 that the NGO, known as, Runnymede Trust - realizing Islamism a growing concern - had to produce a report "*Islamophobia: A Challenge for us All.*" Upon the publication of this report, this issue received a formal attention. The trend in writing is, however, further maintained and is reflected not only in Kureishi's *My Son the Fanatic*, but a number of other works, such as Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000), Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003), Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004), Leila Abouleila's *Minaret* (2005), Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), Robin Yassin Kassab's *The Road from Damascus* (2008), Ayad Akhtar's *American Darvesh* (2012) and Michel Houellebecq's *Submission* (2015).

The advent of September 11 terrorist attacks in 2001 on the soil of the United States further highlighted Islamic fundamentalism and it became a popular debate in electronic and printed media around the globe. This event left immense impacts upon the global politics. Henceforth, fighting terrorism was declared the foremost challenge to ensure peace in the world. Countries across the world passed legislations to combat terrorism. Tension among Muslims and non-Muslims around the world increased. Muslim immigrants, specifically those belonging to the Middle East, living in Western countries, became victims of harassment and hate crimes in the days after the attacks. In the same ratio, young Muslims - partly because of the segregation

they faced and partly the US invasions on Muslim countries - turned to militancy. Fiction, in the aftermaths of the attacks and the public response highlighted above, became *de rigueur* for literary authors. Terrorism, identity politics and religious affiliations of people became themes of interest to English authors, particularly postcolonial English writers. While some have taken a stance in narrative to depict the Islamist picture of Muslims, others have tried to show the ensuing social and cultural problems in their works. Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is an outright reflection upon the Islamophobic concerns in American society. It shows how Changez, the protagonist of the novel, is victimized for his Muslim identity in the US. It portrays the change in the narrative before and after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Others such as Sherry Jones have depicted Islamic narratives in the form of love stories, for instance *The Jewel of Medina* (2008) and *The Sword of Medina* (2011). Michel Houellebecq's *Submission* (2015) as a literary piece is written to approach the contemporary Islamophobia in a uniquely different perspective. Set in the guise of Islamophobia – in which France is ruled by a Muslim political party – the author uses an astute literary strategy and brings awareness in French society. The seeming advocacy of Islamic rule, in the novel, is an effective tool through which he stokes the fears of Islamic rule in France in the future.

In order to properly understand and elaborate upon the literary works of *The Black Album*, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *Submission* from an Islamophobic point of view, a critical look on the historical, sociological or political background of the theme in question helps in understanding the contents. To properly redress the critical imbalance, a historical look at Islamophobia in the world is required.

Knowing Islamophobia in a Historical Context

Islamophobia or anti-Muslim hatred, a phenomenology, refers to the prejudice, hatred or bigotry towards Muslims or the religion of Islam. It is generally believed as “anti-Islamic rhetoric” in the post September 11 era. However, unlike this perception, Islamophobia and its underlying concept traces back to history. Therefore, in order to understand the issue at length, the concept has to be studied in a broader historical context when Islam and Christendom were in confrontation centuries ago on the upheavals of Crusades, Spanish Reconquista, Spanish Inquisition and later during the imperialist efforts made by the Europeans until the present day United States.

The term Islamophobia was first used by the Orientalist Etienne Dinet in 1922 to define the age-old hostility between Christianity and Islam, but it came into common use in 1990s, especially after it was formally defined in the Runnymede Trust Report *“Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All”* in 1997. According to the report, it is an “unfounded hostility towards Islam, and therefore fear or dislike of all or most Muslims” (Schenker and Zayyad 1). The phenomenon has engendered on the basis of the belief that all or most Muslims are fanatics, keep violent views about non-Muslims and that they do not accept democracy and equality. Consequently, the Muslim population in the West faces hostility that features “verbal and physical attacks . . . in public places . . . attacks on mosques and desecration of Muslim cemeteries” (2). These negative attitudes towards Islam and its followers are conceived by many as deeply embedded psyche – manifested through religion, scholarship, literature, and particularly through media in the present age – in the Western culture. This mindset has created a rift between world’s two largest civilizations where Muslim immigrants, stretched in almost all parts of the world, are seen as “an enemy within” or a “fifth column” (4).

Islamophobia is not a completely new phenomenon. Anti-Islamic sentiments did exist centuries ago. However, unlike the present, the context and nature of hostility was different. Though considered as a “modern epidemic of an age-old prejudice towards and fear of Islam” (Sheridan and Gillett 192), this view cannot be totally agreed upon. This would be an oversimplification to say that the present hatred towards Muslims is due to the clash between Muslims and Christians in the middle and medieval ages. For instance, Tartar Muslims’ occupation of the parts of Europe or the Ottomans’ intervention in Europe is of no much interest for the lay Europeans today. Of course, sections of the European society may have this psyche, but to say simply that this is a straight forward continuation of the past clashes; it would be an unwise understanding. The difference in the present age is because of the geopolitical situations - most specifically the imbalance of power of the contemporary world – that this phenomenon has come to prominence. The present world is lopsided as Europe is prosperous and East – majority of which is populated by Muslim countries – is backward. The world is unipolar in the sense that European culture – having undergone ideological changes - is regarded as superior than the rest and thus holds an upper hand over others. In this case, the blame game of one side dominates the other. In the past, likewise Christians, Muslims were powerful. They were a political force and had rather been a threat to Europe. The conflict in the past, in this vein, was based on the expansion of territorial control of the empires. To gain this motive, proliferation of religious ideologies had always been used as mere pretexts. The present stand-off is more a cultural and sociological conflict, yet religion has been the pivotal cause. Following the Age of Enlightenment in Europe, secular values were honoured and this attitude to life brought enormous changes in the life style of the societies in Europe. Religious values were marginalized and liveableness of life was given priority. Thus, the constitution of European societies

underwent revolutionary changes. Muslims – not necessarily influenced by the Islamic law but rather their regional cultures - found these secular values in clash with religious and cultural values and could not confide with them. Secular system promulgated a different scale to test morality, ethics and other approaches to life. Consequently, a vacuum was born between the two big civilizations. If the status of women in Islam is taken an example, it comes to view that prohibition on free mobility of women or the veil issue is more a cultural issue than an issue rooted in Islam. Women veil from head to toe, for instance in Afghanistan, is more a cultural issue than an Islamic issue. As a result, this element of culture has not been compatible with secular values of European societies. However, concerns about Islam as a religion and the identity of “Muslimness” do matter a lot. Whatever the period and context is this issue taken in, it remains that “the phenomenon that Islamophobia describes is not uncommon, and is as old as Islam itself” and the term “is just like that of anti-Semitism, where discrimination against and the persecution of the Jews took place for many centuries before the term “anti-Semitism” was coined” (Schenker and Zayyad 21). A glance into the historical facts in this context might be helpful to clarify how this antagonism emerged and evolved during the course of time.

Islam is generally associated with the East and Christianity with the West. In effect, the formation of this categorization is truly misleading as all the big monotheistic religions have emerged in the Middle East. To think so would be to negate the contributions made by the Muslim scientists and intellectuals in the West and vice versa. Yet the use of these words symbolically stands to refer to Europe as a place where Christians had a strong hold and East as a Muslim majority populated area. The historical context shows that Europe had its first encounter with Muslims – nowadays called as the Muslim world - when after less than 80 years of the death of the prophet Muhammad, Tariq Bin Ziyad conquered Visigothic Kingdom of Hispania in

AD 711 and established the Islamic Al-Andulus that lasted 770 years as a whole. Earlier to this encounter, Muslims had besieged and occupied Jerusalem in the reign of Caliph Umar in 637 AD. The occupation of Hispania – which marked the first Muslims’ advance in Europe - stamped a fear of Muslims and Islam in the minds of the Westerners. Those days Christendom was facing many other challenges, such as combating paganism and heresy. To cope with these issues, religious wars named as “Crusades” were formed by the Christian Europe. Crusades, in the context of Muslims, were a series of encounters that highlighted European antagonism to Islam. Views on Crusades, however, are controversial and the true motives behind these wars are perplexing as “after nearly a millennium of interest and centuries of academic study, very few people have any clear idea of what crusade was” (Riley-Smith 11). Initiated by the Latin Church, they “were a series of wars inspired by religion but not . . . just about creed and religious belief; they were about power and politics too” (Bartlett 263). Undoubtedly, its main objective was political ambitions and expansionist motives but an impartial look on the history of crusade wars may reveal that whether its objective was to recover the holy lands or to fight for the rights of Christians (living in the reign of Muslim rulers), it lasted for more than 200 years and the threat lurking around the Christian world was the expansion of Islam. As such, combating Islam was one of the main reasons included in this movement of wars. Use of the epithets “infidels,” “vile race,” “accused race” and “slave of the demons” by the Pope Urban II demonstrates how a religious agenda was being driven behind these expeditions (Drakulic 234). A counter view may, however, reveal that crusades were defensive measures on part of Christians against an enemy who had not only occupied an almost two-thirds of the Christian world but their culture and faith were at stake. Whatsoever were the true objectives, the fact remains that these encounters have heightened hostility towards Islam and Muslims in subsequent ages. They have been

contributory in provoking Islamophobia not only in the medieval period but its repercussions have been reverberated through succeeding ages. For instance, after the capture of Jerusalem in 1917, General Allenby is accused of saying “only now have the Crusades come to an end” (Hillenbrand 604). Further evidences show that the ceremony in honour of fighters, after the occupation of Jerusalem, held in Temple Church in London proclaimed: “the city was [is] back in Christian hands” (Bartlett 267). Thus, as opposed to the interests of the Christians in Jerusalem in medieval period – after several centuries - the Christian world of the 21st century does not have that interest but the mindset against Muslims, created by crusades, does exist, and is revealed as the events necessitate.

Continuity in Islamophobic concerns had not yet ceased when, centuries later, on the occasion of Spanish Reconquista in 1492, Christians recaptured al-Andulus and took back the territories occupied by the Umayyad dynasty in 8th century. An initiation of the image formation as “other” soon followed when the Christian occupants began to depict “the expelled Arabs and Jews . . . as peoples with the wrong religion, the indigenous people on the new continent as people without religion” (Taras 419). Consequent upon this encounter, a formal dividing mark came into existence and the very idea of “otherness” was conceived at this point of history. Spanish Inquisition, those days, is another chapter on the face of history that has reflected Islamophobic concerns. Whilst inquisition in the past “was one of the most powerful and polemical institutions used by the Roman Catholic Church to eliminate heresy and protect the unity of Christendom,” Spanish Inquisition was primarily meant to maintain Catholic Orthodoxy of those Jews and Muslims who had been forcibly converted to Christianity (Rowlings 1). Converts from Judaism were called Conversos and those of Islam were known as Moriscos. A large number of instances show that Jews were being checked upon as to whether they still

followed their original beliefs. In the case of Moriscos, they were carefully being checked upon suspecting that they, on the basis of their affiliation with Islam, may form a connection with Ottomans – a major enemy of Spain – and provoke rebellance. Muslims too has a history laden with forced conversion but to say that they converted people for an impending threat of Christianity seems a wrong perception. Muslims had expansionist motives since long. They were expanding the newly born religion and did not have a phobia of Christianity. Their goal was to convey the message of Islam to believers (of any religion) and non-believers, irrespective of emphasis on Christians. On the contrary, the Christian world did have a phobia of Islam and that is why their forced conversion of Muslims was aimed at putting a hurdle in expansion of Islam.

Another aspect that has regulated Islamophobia in the Western history is “power factor.” Whenever Islam was in power or, in other words, Islamic empires were in their sky-high morale, Europe has felt Islam as threat. Islam was threatening to Europe in the very outset and the succeeding centuries when it was growing fast. With this ratio, European literature is laden with the fear of Islam when Ottomans emerged. On the other hand, when Muslim empires, predominantly Ottoman and Mughal, were on their decline, there is little to observe about anti-Islamic sentiments. For instance, despite European Imperialism; a seminal event in European history in 19th and 20th centuries, the fear of Islam seems not strikingly fascinating to Europe. Interestingly, Muslims in turn have taken advantage of Islamophobia on such occasions as “Islam in decline needed an icon to boost morale and lead the fight-back against colonial interlopers” (Bartlett 267). This is why “it was the later nineteenth century in particular that saw Saladin become the most prominent Muslim hero” (Bartlett 267). Saladin and his successful conquests have been used as catalyst, and thrusting the Islamic phobia of the West upon Muslims by the Muslims, defense of religion is made a pretext to combat the colonial powers. As regards

Imperialism, it was basically advances of the European nations to other territories to maintain their cultural, political and material superiority. Christian missionaries did proliferate Christian ideologies in their colonies and there had been forced conversions, but its main objective was to maintain material interests and cultural-cum-political domination. As a matter of fact, Islamophobia has considerably increased with American Imperialism in the present age. The emergence of Islamism, American response to Islamic fundamentalism and American vested interests in different parts of the Islamic world has certainly contributed to a dramatic increase in Islamophobia. Invasions on Afghanistan and Iraq have fostered a perception among Muslims around the world that American's involvement in Muslim countries aims at weakening the societal system of Islam. These crises are interpreted by Cockburn as "The Tenth Crusade" of the present age. As example, George W. Bush himself in his speech on 16th September 2001 in White House said that "this crusade, this war is going to take a while." Using the word "crusade" in the present scenario of the world is interpreted by many as the nightmarish Islamophobia or Muslimophobia that was hovering the president's head. Nonetheless, terrorism and war both monger Islamophobia in the present context. Halliday opposes the correlation of Islam with the present crises. He argues that:

Islam as a religion was the enemy in the past: in the crusades or the reconquista. It is not the enemy now . . . The attack now is not against Islam as a faith but against Muslims as a people . . . especially immigrants, who might be covered by the term. (898)

He understands that Islam was enemy in the past and that the present hostility is outright towards Muslims, especially Muslim immigrants. This seems a rich argument but, applying this thesis to

the present scenario, one can find that Islam is a crucial element used in discrimination against Muslims. Runnymede's 2004 follow-up commission bears witness that:

They [Islamophobes] do so when they appear 'conspicuously Muslim' more than when they do not. Since this can result from wearing Islamic attire, it becomes irrelevant – if it is even possible – to separate the impact of appearing Muslim from the impact of appearing to follow Islam. (Meer and Modood, 342)

To say that Islamophobia is aimed at mere "Muslims" seems misleading as there are two basic components, namely "Islam" and "Muslims" involved, and each defines the other. "Islam" and "Muslimness" are two sides of the same coin. These two elements are intertwining and they overlap each other. Among the variant attacks - including verbal and physical - the main reason, presented by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, shortly after the 9/11 attacks, was found in the visual appearance that was related to Islamic identity. For instance, the report published that "one overarching feature that emerged in all the fifteen European Union countries was the tendency for Muslim women to be attacked because the hijab signified an Islamic identity" (342). Hence, Islamophobia is modified by new occurrences but it cannot be taken as a completely new phenomenon. Islamophobia has historic bases. The hatred against Islam recycles with the turn of the age and is supplemented by the old logic of religious adherence to Islam.

Islamophobia in the Context of Racism

Islamophobia, as a term as well as its different connotations, is deemed controversial for its overlapping with racism. While scholars had been working on matters related to racism before the upheaval of 9/11, this global event opened up further fronts and set in place to give greater legitimacy on research to deal not only with racism but also how race and religion inform each other. Using the long-established concepts on studies related to race and racism, this essay aims to provide an overview of how religion aligns within the concept of racism, and demonstrates its connection with Islamophobia in the current as well as the historical context.

Can Islamophobia be called racism? In order to begin to answer this question, it is important to make a distinction between race and religion, on the one hand, and racism in relation to Islamophobia, on the other. Race as a lexicon word has entered English since 16th century and the definitions given by Oxford Dictionary, so far in use, define it as: “The offspring or posterity of a person; a set of children or descendants” ; “A limited group of persons descended from a common ancestor; a house, family, kindred” ; “A tribe, nation, or people regarded as of common stock” ; “One of the great divisions of mankind, having certain physical peculiarities in common” (Rodreguez 2). Scholarly discourses, however, show that racialization, that is to say, ascribing racial identities to a relationship, cannot be taken into a single form. They show how it could be a meta concept and “boasts a long pedigree, even if the term itself does not” (Meer 5). As a social construction, race is determined by the social actions and political systems: based on the division of human beings by way of their social behavior and innate abilities that leads to inferiority and superiority among them. Though a biological perspective shows that all human beings, genetically, belong to the same species, human beings - affected by environmental influences - have diverse physical appearances. Regardless of these definitions

and perspectives, race is ambiguous enough and gives a number of potential meanings. In their elegant thoughts on racism in relation to physical appearance, Meer and Modood suggest to:

guard against the characterization of racism as a form of single “inherentism” or “biological determinism,” which leaves little space to conceive the ways in which cultural racism draws on physical appearance as one marker among others, but is not solely premised on conceptions of biology in a way that ignores religion, culture and so forth. (344)

They take into account the manifold aspects that the process of racialization premises. Referring to cultural racism, they see little correspondence of physical appearance. Other aspects such as religion and culture, among others, stand more than physical appearance in their relationship when taken into the context of cultural racism. While other accounts - such as one presented by Omi and Winant - have focused on the relationship of race with culture, law and economics; we would limit the discourse to their views on the relationship of race with religion:

[T]he hostility and suspicion with which Christian Europe viewed its two significant non-Christian “others” - the Muslims and Jews – can not be viewed as more than a rehearsal for racial formation, since these antagonisms, for all their bloodletting and chauvinism, were always and everywhere religiously interpreted. (Qtd. in Meer, 3)

The “racial formation” thesis set forth by them shows the far-ranging relationship of racial attitudes with religious intolerance of Jews and Muslims. Similarly, James Shapiro (1996) and Nabil Matar (1999) have extensively written on the characters of Shakespeare’s “Shylock” and

“Moor” to argue the religious grounds as bases of racial categorization in Elizabethan English society. Religion as a co-constitutive of race is thus of utmost importance in the process of racialization.

Historically viewed, the relationship between religion and race traces to the first crusade in 1095. Pop Urban II, in order to urge his coreligionists on joining war against Muslims, proclaims to “exterminate this vile race from the lands of our brethren” (Drakulic 234). This shows how human categorization was prone to interpretations in racial terms centuries earlier in a time when wars were fought in the name of religions. In other words, race had a potent role and its correlation with religion has been in existence since medieval period. As Thomas puts:

Most scholars still conceive of race as a post-Enlightenment ideology built upon the Atlantic slave trade, hinged upon observable phenotypical human differentiation . . . Yet, discourses of modern racism not only antedate the social taxonomies arising out of nineteenth-century scientific thought, but it was Christianity which provided the vocabularies of difference for the Western world . . . (Qtd. in Meer, 4)

Racialization in its religious tint did exist well before the generally believed post-Enlightenment period and its subsequent Atlantic slave trade narrative. While people limit race and racialization to the slave trade period when the difference was based on skin colour, its conception and association with religion existed long ago. As alluded briefly to Shakespeare above, *The Merchant of Venice* (1599) and *Othello* (1603) are the two most significant pieces that are reflective of religious discrimination in Elizabethan English society. Shylock, one of the greatest examples of religious discrimination ever, becomes victim of Antonio, a Christian, in *The Merchant of Venice*. Despite the rightful demand of Antonio’s flesh (which they agreed upon in a

signed bond), he becomes an object of racism. On the very occasion of this transaction, Shylock argues with Antonio:

In the Rialto you have rated me
 About my moneys and my usances.
 Still have I borne it with a patient shrug,
 For sufferance is the badge of all our tribe.
 You call me misbeliever, cutthroat dog,
 And spet upon my Jewish gaberdine—
 And all for use of that which is mine own. (Shakespeare, 1.3.105-112)

“For sufferance is the badge of all our tribe” and “You call me misbeliever, cut-throat dog, / and spit upon my Jewish gabardine” show a clear sense of racial profiling running through these lines. Shylock was living a life of hatred (directed against him) in the Venetian society on the basis of his Jewishness. Whilst there were no transactions between Antonio and Shylock in the past, Antonio used to speak against him in public sphere. Not only Shylock but even his daughter Jessica betrays him. She loots him and runs away with a Christian gentleman Lorenzo. In a way, Shakespeare has used every effort to humiliate Shylock thereby implying “sympathy” with him. The remark made by Lorenzo about Shylock’s supposed presence in heaven “If e’er the Jew her father come to heaven, / it will be for his gentle daughter’s sake” (2.4.33-34) clearly demonstrates Christianity’s superiority over Judaism. This shows the lack of power in Judaism as a religion whose followers don’t have a place in heaven. Another racist manifestation may be found in the character of Portia. She is visited as suitor by the Prince of Morocco. Portia’s remark “If he have the condition of a saint and / the complexion of a devil, I had rather he should / shrive me than wive me” (1.2.129-131) shows how “devil” implies a religious connotation of a

person from another land of a definite “other” creed. The word “devil” basically implies “evil” which refers to the prince’s association with his Muslimness. Black-skinned Muslims of North Africa have been named as “evil” in popular Christian culture. This embedded psyche was appealing to Shakespeare “no less than his audiences [as] these ideas of the Moor and the Jew had achieved traction as corporeal shorthand for non-Christian difference” (Meer 4). These were powerful metaphors and had, therefore, been alluring to him; the most celebrated author of the Elizabethan period.

By the time of Shakespeare, the word “Muslim” was not in use. Instead, Muslims were generally known as “Turks.” It was a period in which Ottomans were at the peak of their colonization and imperialism. The memories of the recently passed crusades and Christian Reconquista were yet fresh in Europe. The hostility towards Muslims and “the fear of the Islamic bogey was well established in the European consciousness” (Vitkus 147). European medieval and early modern literature is taxed with the negative portrayal of Islam as religion of violence and bestiality. These portrayals have maintained “a long-standing tradition of anti-Islamic polemic [that has] denounced the religion of Mahomet as a system based on fraud, lust, and violence” (156). The stereotyping and bias against Islam is widely shown through the use of the word “Turk” in popular literature. As evidence, this deeply embedded element in his audience is demonstrated in Shakespeare’s *Othello*. It demonstrates the racial dimension against Muslims and Islam. Othello, a Moor, is an accomplished Venetian general in the play, but to the audience of Shakespeare “he is a hybrid who might be associated, in the minds of Shakespeare's audience, with a whole set of related terms - Moor, Turk, Ottomite, Saracen, Mahometan, Egyptian, Judean, Indian - all constructed and positioned in opposition to Christian faith and virtue” (160). His choice of Moor as protagonist of the play is not at random. It is deliberate and covers a

whole array of sociological and political tensions that was prevailing about Muslims. One of these fears about Islam and Muslims is accomplished through the depiction of sexuality and violence in the character of Moor. The Moor, in the play, undergoes emotional fits when Iago, through his artful manipulation, arouses his jealousy for Cassio's supposed sexual relationship with Desdemona. Othello responds and utters: "My *bloody thoughts* with violent pace / Shall ne'er look back, ne'er ebb to humble love" (emphasis added; Shakespeare 11. 458-59). In the meantime, while he converses with Iago, Othello undergoes an epileptic fit. This "epileptic fit is a kind of sexual swoon" that shows the violence and bestiality inherent in Othello for being a Moor (Vitkus 155). That is to say, this depiction shows the bestiality in Moors; people of North Africa, predominantly Muslims. Epileptic fits in Elizabethan period were taken as symbolic of a person being in demonic possession or prophesy. In the background of this perception, John Pory's authoritative translated work of *Geographical Historie of Africa 1600* (by Leo Africanus) had mentioned Muhammads' claim to have "conuersed with the angell Gabriell, vnto whose brightnes he ascribed the falling sicknes" (Vitkus 155). Christian polemics in Elizabethan period twisted this divine revelation and propagated that "Mohammed was an epileptic who falsely claimed that his seizures were ecstasies brought on by divine possession" (Vitkus 155). A flash of this demonization is seen in Othello's swoon. Just as Othello's love for Desdemona was false - void of lasting tender feelings - and the swoon is shown as caused by his sexual urgency, similarly; Mohammad's epileptic fits were believed by Christian polemics to have been unreal; aimed to claim divinity. Polemics such as Leo Africanus claimed that Muhammad's religion "looseth the bridle to the flesh, which is a thing acceptable to the greatest part of men" (Africanus qtd. in Vitkus 157). Engaged with these contentious issues of the age, Othello's sexual swoon is parodied with Muhammad's ecstatic condition. In another instance, describing

the violence in the character of Muhammad and his religion, Kellett calls him “a bestiall people-pleaser . . . which Mis-beliefe he hath established by the sword, and not by Arguments; vpheld by violence and compulsion; or tempting a llurements of the world; forcing, or deluding the soules of men, rather than perswading by euidence of verity” (Kellet qtd. in Vitkus 156). This notion on Islam and Muhammad may be interpreted as Othello’s lack of wisdom to understand the double-faced Iago. He is violent and does not have the ability to stay calm and evaluate Iago’s accusations. Views common on Islam stated that it spread through violence and repressive laws. Islam is believed to have spread by Muhammad through sword than by virtues. These episodes in *Othello* are reflective of the popular European mindset about Islam.

The phobia of Islam or Muslims in the modern sense, called as Islamophobia, has somehow similar connotations. Islam; onto which the concept is founded, is not a race, yet it partakes of racist characteristics. The current flow of hatred against Muslims in political and social circles seems an outgrowth of the cultural racism evolved in 1980s. The core issue being differences in cultures; cultural racism legitimized exclusion that was based on racial notions. The ensuing geopolitical circumstances, however, brought a new wave of racial formation which took its shape and expression in politico-religious terms. Hatred against Muslims and Islam has been identified as:

[A] new form of racism whereby Muslims, an ethno-religious group, not a race, are, nevertheless, constructed as a race. A set of negative assumptions is made of the entire group to the detriment of members of that group. (Schenker and Zayyad, 2)

Racism takes different forms and expressions during the course of time. Differences, interpreted in skin colour, and racist notions on cultural superiority in the recent past, transformed and a “religious group” became its subsequent target. The root of Islamophobia - as alluded briefly to crusades above - lies in the past. Its racialized dimension “draws from a historical anti-Muslimism and anti-Islamism, and fuses them with racist ideologies of the twentieth century to construct a modern concept” (Allen qtd. in Taras 419). A critical glance on the historical perspective may help to show some manifestations of racial formations on the re-occupation in Reconquista in 1492. This conquest “constituted the internal and external imagined boundaries of Europe related to the global racial/ethnic hierarchy of the world system, privileging populations of European origin over the rest” as a result of which “Jews and Arabs became the subaltern “Others”” (Grosfoguel and Mielants 2). Owing to this categorization “Islamophobia had taken its place as a form of racism in a world-historical perspective” (Taras 420). Similarly, Frederickson (2002) argues over the conduct of the newly formed state of Spain (after the Reconquista) that the “othering and ethnic cleansing of Jews and Muslims is paradigmatic of European racialization” (Meer 5). In the present context, Muslims constitute one of the world’s largest populations with a large number of ethnicities. However, there are things – such as stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination and persecution – that coincide with racism, which is alarming to the peace and solidarity of world’s communities in the present as well as the future. Particularly in the present day Britain, Islamophobia is:

[O]ften mixed with racism – violence and harassment on the streets, and direct or indirect discrimination in the workplace. A closed view of Islam has the effect of justifying such racism. The expression of a closed view in the media, for example, gives support and comfort to racist behavior. Islamophobia merges with crude

colour racism, since most Muslims are perceived to have black or brown skins, and also anti-immigrant prejudice, since Muslims in Britain are perceived to have alien customs, specifically Asian. (Schenker and Zayyad, 9)

A closed view of Islam and judging Muslims as people with an “imposed will” is indeed racism. Added with this problem is the perceived black or brown skin colour and prejudice against Muslim immigrants which further ignite Islamophobic sentiments. The word “race” was not used in the negative sense in sixteenth century; the period in which this word came into common use. Attitudes by that time were more politicized than racialized. For instance, the word “barbarian was less a racial than a political and cultural concept” (Taras 420). Racism is basically a modern idea that has caused anti-Semitism and Anti-Negritude (Taguieff 243). With the turn of the millennium, the phenomenon of racism enveloped a further dimension of prejudice due to which “the two racist ideologies have been joined by anti-Arabism, frequently fused with anti-Islamism, in other words, Islamophobia” (Taras 420). Religious markers related to Islam have become a ground to outburst racial prejudices. Same as stigmatizing by cultural otherness carried out in the past, “Islamophobia can be characterized as a cryptic articulation of the concepts of race and racism even if overtly it appears as a form of religious-based prejudice” (Taras 422). A critical evaluation of the term and its underlying meaning brings to mind that the existing hatred goes more to Muslims than Islam itself. Others may take Islamophobia in the anti-immigrant context, or, in the present wave of militancy and fundamentalism. For example, Matti Bunzl (37) said that “migrants became Muslims, and Europe’s Right wing found its target.” Whatever is contextualized, Islam altogether stands the core issue. It is an “other” that cannot be tolerated cohesively. Shedding light on religion, a dominant factor in his discourse, Bunzl notes:

What does stand at the heart of Islamophobic discourse is the question of civilization, the notion that Islam engenders a world view that is fundamentally incompatible with and inferior to Western culture. (13)

It is this incompatible view of Islam that is often exploited for personal gains. Because of the Western interests in oil and the political instability in many Islamic regions, the West often seems to conflate these specific issues with Islam overall. These political rhetorics have often inflated this issue, and unlike the past, “adjectives like communist or nationalist are less likely to be associated with an army, a terrorist group, or a peacemaking team than words like “Jewish militant,” “Muslim fundamentalist,” or “Christian Coalition” common in the present day politics (Marty 10). Whether it was anti-Negritude, anti-Semitism or cultural racism, there has always been a political force that drives these tendencies. Donald Trump’s Islamophobic rhetoric is the freshest example to demonstrate how a political rhetoric is being driven to demonize Islam and Muslims in the US today.

Hanif Kureishi's *The Black Album* and the Emergence of Muslim Fundamentalism

A large number of literary works have been written to depict Islam and Muslims in the past. These portrayals were mostly aimed to depict the traditional animosity between Christians and Muslims. The portrayal of the present day Islamic fundamentalism in English literature may be believed to have come to prominence after the 9/11 attacks, but contrary to this perception, however, it dates back and its glimpses are found in Hanif Kureishi's *The Black Album*. The novel is a founding work that has reflected Muslim characters who – victimized by the racial categorization in British society – find refuge in and define themselves with reference to their religion. Written in British context in a period when controversy over the publication of Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* was at a height, *The Black Album* portrays how Muslim fundamentalism evolved out of racial discrimination faced by the Muslim community, and how Rushdie Affair triggered fundamentalism.

The Black Album is written in 1995 and is set in 1989; the period when racism had enveloped British society and Muslims' sensibilities were challenged by the Rushdie Affair. The very beginning of the novel gives thrilling details when Riaz meets Shahid in an odd manner. He is unknown to Shahid, yet he develops friendly relations with him in an instant. Within no time, he decides to take him along on a walk. Shahid feels both "pleased that someone was taking an interest and also a little exposed and tense" (Kureishi 2). While walking, Riaz discloses to him that "I [Riaz] have observed you before" which arouses Shahid's curiosity (2). This alarms Shahid and he becomes conscious of his conduct. Shahid finds that Riaz doesn't take interest in his surroundings but he does make remarks about him. Riaz avoids throwing direct glances and asks Shahid that he seems a hard-working person and that "you [Shahid] are also dedicated to something serious" (3). This attitude certainly strikes Shahid and "what surprised him was the

intimacy of the remark” made about his person (3). The break in sentences and the questioning attitude of Riaz creates a suspicious environment. Turning the pages of the novel, the reader gets curious and expects something would unfold ahead. It seems like some jihadist’s effort is under way, according to which, Shahid’s past life has been screened and is further being observed for recruitment. Unlike recruitments in other organizations, jihadist organizations take keen care in choosing their members. They pick up their recruiters from common public whose motivations match the agenda of the organization. A similar touch is felt in this dealing between Riaz and Shahid which haunts readers on something unusual in the plot of story. Also, the surroundings contribute to creating this impression of the story. Walking with Riaz to an unplanned destination, Shahid had to:

avoid charging into the Irishmen who gathered outside the pubs, . . . had to jig on and off the pavement. This was a road he was becoming familiar with . . . during the day it was well known for its second-hand shops and lined with rotten furniture. Miserable proprietors would sit out in arm chairs with damp, blistered tables in front of them, reading the racing papers beneath the tasseled shades of 1940s standard lamps; stained mattresses with puddles on their plastic covers would be piled up around them, like sandbags. (2)

The surrounding adds to the story and provides a depressing environment. Readers expect some uncertain events in the story. Portrayal of this environment is yet to continue when Shahid happens to see another odd business. Riaz takes him to an Indian restaurant. Inside the restaurant, Shahid can see “a brass plate inscribed with Koranic verses” (4). Riaz goes near the encounter and enquires from the owner’s son about his brother. To his enquiry, the boy “glanced at his father, as if to ensure he wasn’t listening” before saying that he is studying upstairs and is “not

allowed out to night” (4). Afterwards, Riaz discusses about Shahid’s uncle Asif who was once jailed by General Zia-ul-Haq for “writing against his Islamization policies” (5). Riaz’s focus on Shahid’s personal life and his family made him doubtful as though “he were trying to find out about him for some ulterior purpose. But what purpose could that be? Who was this man who could put such questions?” (7). However, during the course of their discussion, Shahid gets motivated and he shares much of his personal life with him. The depiction of these details shows as if the author wants to create a situation which occurs step by step. Just as the jihadists, working on an agenda, find the weak niches of the bereaved and socially frustrated people, similarly, Riaz reaches to a point where Shahid finds confidence and discloses all his feelings. Shahid discloses that he is a victim of racism and is extremely hounded with those feelings. Referring to racism in British society, Shahid shares his past that “I began to get terrible feelings in my head . . . I thought I was going mad” (8). Consistent to the argument raised above, Riaz seems like urging him to speak. Each time Shahid speaks, Riaz puts forward a question. For instance, as soon as Shahid says that he was going mad, Riaz asks “In what way,” to which Shahid replies that “I had been kicked around and chased a lot, you know. It made me terrifyingly sensitive. I kept thinking there was something I lacked” (8). To make the situation more terrifying, the author, at this stage of the story - when the readers are pretty involved - introduces Chad. He enters the restaurant in a rush as if police were chasing him. He is “hushed by Riaz with an authoritatively raised finger” to which (gesture) “immediately he obeyed Riaz and sat down, quivering” (8). The meeting, however, continues and Shahid pours out his emotional feelings spontaneously. This meeting perfectly presents a real-life situation when an Islamist group looks for the frustrated people and - taking advantage of the victims’ bereavements - they are enticed to the cause of the group. Shahid continues that:

Everywhere I went I was the only dark-skinned person . . . I began to be scared of going into certain places. I didn't know what they were thinking. I was convinced they were full of sneering and disgust and hatred. And if they were pleasant, I imagined they were hypocrites. I became paranoid. I couldn't go out. (8)

Shahid shares all his personal feelings with Riaz, accompanied by Chad. Instead of solacing him, he is left at his own to outburst his emotions. Occasionally, Chad mutters to "open your heart" (9). In the end, while they depart, they shake hands and Riaz "smiled as if he had passed some kind of test" (10).

The story of the novel reveals that Riaz is a charismatic person and leads a group of young students who struggle for the rights of Muslims in British society. He offers free consultation to people of distress and assist them when needed. Sitting in his room, Shahid hears some noises outside. He goes out and, to his surprise, sees a herd of people in queue waiting for their turn outside Riaz's room. Shahid enters the room and sees a grief-stricken old man crying his heart out of the undue interrogation and charges made against his son by police. The man also informs him about some racists in his area who bother his family. He is weeping and telling him that "these boys . . . are coming to my flat and threatening my whole family every day and night. . . they have punched me in my guts" (30). Shahid sees all this and senses how discrimination against immigrants is a progressive issue. The undercurrents of racial profiling are existent in British society because he himself had been its victim. The other aspect of Shahid's personality shows that he is impelled by his secular-liberal propensities. He cannot restrain his sexual inclinations and is in love with his college lecturer Deedee Osgood. Deedee, in the novel, symbolically stands for liberalism. Thus, Shahid is hung between the two forces of liberalism and fundamentalism. Occasionally tempted to Deedee and temporarily affected with Riaz's

views, Shahid is sketched a character in the novel who hangs between two alternatives. In his discussion with Chad, Shahid tells him that “Riaz is dangerous, too radical . . . some of those guys go into a supermarket and if music playing, they run out again” (58). Living in their company, Shahid happens to hear the ideals of this company. Chad, in his discussion, reveals his ideologies to him when he says “we are slaves to Allah . . . He is the only one we should submit to! He put our noses on our face . . . How can you deny his skill and power and authority?” (66). Chad continues his advisory speech and asks Shahid if he is not impressed with the speeches Riaz made in the mosque previously. Shahid who “had to say he was” though in reality, as the words show, he has not been impressed. He does not say “yes” from the core of his heart. Riaz delivers speeches to public in mosque and the themes of these speeches consist of “Rave to the Grave?”; “Adam and Eve not Adam and Steve”; “Islam: A Blast from the Past or Force for the Future?” and “Democracy is Hypocrisy” (67). During his talks in mosque, he would switch to other matters that would lead to fundamental views. For instance, he would arouse aggression when talking about the “persecution of Muslims world-wide, the state of Israel, gays and lesbians, Islam in Spain, face-lifts, nudity, the dumping of nuclear waste in the Third World, perfume, the collapse of the West, and Urdu poetry” (67). The novel, thus, sketches characters that are imbued with fundamentalist views. These characters are not mere sketching; it is an actual reflection of British society. It was a period when racial profiling was on its way out. Added to it was the reaction to the publication of Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* which stirred motion in the Muslim community. As such, the sense of bereavement, existing in the Muslim community due to racist treatment, was added by the religious zeal and its members became conscious of defending their social rights and faith.

One of the thrilling scenes in the novel that perfectly demonstrates the argument made in this essay is when Chad, accompanied by Riaz and his group, asks Shahid to go with them on an errand. To his surprise, Chad asks him that “there’s an emergency on. Defence required. Our people under attack tonight” (68). The words “our people” show how far this group had become sensitive to feel segregation in this society. Shahid, as always confused, utters “But I” to which Hat responds “many others from college have also agreed to join us” (68). To Shahid’s enquiry, Riaz says that “we are not blasted Christians . . . we don’t turn the other cheek. We will fight for our people who are being tortured in Palestine. Afghanistan, Kashmir! War has been declared against us. But we are armed” (68). Compatible to the slogans often made by jihadists, Chad adds that “anybody who fails to fight will answer to God and hell-fire!” (68). He “picked up the bag of weapons, extracted the machete and put it under his coat” and leaves altogether with the group for the venue (73). On their arrival, it becomes clear that this was the home of the old man who had once been in a miserable condition in Riaz’s room. The old man’s family and he himself:

had been harried – stared at, spat on, called ‘Paki scum’ – for months, and finally attacked. The husband had been smashed over the head with a bottle and taken to hospital. The wife had been punched. Lighted matches had been pushed through the letter-box. At all hours the bell had been rung and the culprits said they would return to slaughter the children. (74)

Though on the one hand, it seems aggression in these characters that take law in their hands, on the other, it would be injustice to say that Riaz and his group is fundamentalist. Anyone whose honour and life is at risk must take these initiatives whether they are Muslims, Christians or any of other faiths. A critical glance on the present situation, presented in the novel, clearly

demonstrates that it is the close-mindedness of British society which does not tolerate foreign people. Irrespective of who is wrong and who not, fundamentalist conduct becomes the necessity of Muslims living in British society of the then period. As regards its portrayal in English literature - which is also the aim of this analysis - it has been masterly reflected in the literary genre of novel - *The Black Album* being one of the foremost among them. Literature is generally believed to be the reflection of life. This is why, taking this issue into account, the novel has powerfully reflected upon it and is, therefore, now useful in analyzing and understanding the present day hot issue of Islamophobia in Western societies. If we turn back to the episode in the novel, Riaz has taken this responsibility to “guard the flat and seek out the culprits, along with Hat, Chad, Shahid and other boys and girls from the college” (75). If on the one hand, the author speaks of militancy of the Islamist group when he says Hat “tipped up the green bag and out clattered cricket bats, clubs, knuckle-dusters, carving knives and meat cleavers donated by the butcher,” on the other hand, he has presented pitiful details of the family who have been harassed by the racists of the area (75). The residents of the flat, a Bengali family, had locked themselves inside the flat “with its busted furniture, boarded window . . . lit by only the TV and one shaded lamp . . . enemies to think the family had been fled” (75). The family, for fear of being attacked by the racists, lives inside home like a cave. The doors are locked and the lights switched off to give them an impression that they have fled away. The overall effect, the novel conveys, is thus an understanding of the issue in question. If he speaks of militant behaviours, he also speaks of the causes. In this way, he does not seem to take side or condemn one side. He inspects it as a problem. The militant aspect of the group is highlighted when they are eating “on the floor like guerrillas” (77). Despite carrying books to prepare for their studies alongside this mission, they

did not open them for, “there was much to be avenged: no books were opened” (77). To the suspense of readers, there happens to be a heavy knock on the door. In response:

armed, everyone rose . . . Riaz hefted a sort of scimitar, not looking as if he could hoist it over his shoulder, let alone crack apart a skinhead’s skull. Chad was already in the hall and at the front door. He was bear-like, but he was a swift mover. Meaning business, he turned back his sleeves, revealing his thick arms.

(77)

These sensational details are presented to measure the depth of the issue of racial marginalization of immigrants that might lead to further segregation in future. And it did prove with further events in future. As example, Rushdie’s controversial work left an enormous effect upon the sensibilities of British Muslims. They turned more conscious of their identity as Muslims. The immigrants, finding that they are not being accepted in the land where they are born, nor do they belong to the country of their ancestors, become frustrated. In this state of frustration – when abused racially - they turned to religion as the only identity in which they could unify themselves. They began to defend themselves as well as their faith. In their debate on the conditions of people in the Third World, Riaz shares with Brownlow how people in the West “have housing, electricity, heating, TV, fridges, hospitals nearby! They can vote, participate politically or not. They are privileged indeed, are they not?” (78). Riaz further argues with Brownlow:

[D]o you think our brothers in the Third World . . . they dream of having fridges, televisions, cookers! And are the people racist skinheads, car thieves, rapists?

Have they desired to dominate the rest of the world? No, they are humble, good, hard-working people who love Allah! (78-79)

The remarks show how discrimination of a society not only has made them sensible of their own conditions but they sense the miseries of the entire Muslim community. To this point, I say in this analysis, religious fundamentalism is an outgrowth that has emanated from the racist categorization of British Muslims. If they were enjoying equal prestige, they would not have been seeking after uniformity, which, in this case, they found in religion. And this, in turn, fostered fundamentalism. The situation further worsened when conflicting events happened and Muslim identity was targeted. This happened, specifically, when events such as Rushdie Affair, took political dimensions. Getting affected by the then politically confronted Iran and the fatwa issued by Khomeini, Rushdie Affair stirred up fundamentalist views in British Muslims. It is given enough representation in *The Black Album*. Chad refers to the book (*The Satanic Verses*) as “been around too long without action. He insulted us all – the prophet, the prophet’s wives, his whole family. It’s sacrilege and blasphemy. Punishment is death” (140). It represents that the publication of book further ignited Muslims with fury. Muslim immigrants developed a mindset as though a planned scheme against Muslims is in operation that is manifested in its forms of racial categorization and now by the representation of literary works. Fundamentalism and geopolitics, in the succeeding years, have had interdependency. Specifically, the wave of fundamentalism has spread after the political interventions of the Western powers in Muslim countries. Shahid, as always confused, consults other members of the group and finds that the “feeling was unanimous” as “Riaz had informed Chad they were rejoicing in the Ayatollah’s action” (141). On Shahid’s direct enquiry, Riaz reveals to him that “stone dead. That is the least I would do to him [Rushdie]” (143). Riaz has strict views and does not believe in free imagination

at all. He calls free imagination as the product of one person's mind who tries to impose it upon others. On Shahid's definition of free imagination as "looking into itself [which] illuminates others," Riaz responds that "we are discussing here the free and unbridled imagination of men who live apart from the people . . . these corrupt disrespectful natures, wallowing in their own juices, must be caged as if they were dangerous carnivores" (153). Riaz may presumably believe in free imagination because he himself is a poet but his range of imagination is limited to physical human beings. In his remark, above, he may possibly refer to the magical realism of Rushdie which he denies and calls it as something unreal.

Kureishi, throughout the novel, does not straight away contradict Riaz's views (though exercised on certain occasions), he presents a situation to compel reader to develop his own insight. For instance, he makes Riaz question "if a character comes into your house and spits out that your mother and sister are whores, wouldn't you chuck him from your door and do bad things to him?" (153). This logic in his speech validates Kureishi's astute art that urges readers on thinking. Nevertheless, Riaz responds to the book as "indulgence" and compares it to the "profound and satisfying comforts of religion" (153). To negate the belief of millions of people, he believes, is equal to "believe [in] nothing! We are animals living in a cesspool, not humans living in a liberal society" (153). As a result, the book issue is taken to task and the Islamist group makes the determination to burn it in a public demonstration inside the college. Members of the group, including Shahid, arrange different articles that include petrol, speakers and microphones to be used in demonstration. Leaflets are distributed in canteen, common rooms and outside the class rooms. As soon as students leave their rooms for lunch, Chad "strung the book on the pole and thrust it into the air" (186). Riaz, as leader of the group, steps forward, makes a

brief speech about the “crimes committed by whites against blacks and Asians in the name of freedom” and then pointed towards Chad (188). Chad:

tilted the book. Its pages quivered in the breeze like birds’s wings. Hat thrust a lighter into them. At once, Sadiq and Tahira jumped back. Smoke hugged the volume before bulging away into the air. People hooted and clamoured as if they were at the fireworks display . . . Fists were raised at the flaming bouquet of the book . . . Chad . . . laughed triumphantly. (188)

This demonstration evidences how a religious element, backed by fatwa issued by a revolutionary political figure, is lifted up and adds to resurgence in Muslims. Religion, involved in this whole play, produces a sentimental response in a community that suffers from racial segregation in England. The portrayal represents the event as a turning point upon which fundamentalist views become associated with the Muslim community. To show the intensity of this movement, the novel further portrays an incident in which using a petrol bomb, the shop “had been attacked by fanatics” (228). Equally important at this point is also the response of the Western social and political circles in the real world in the late 1980s. They sensed this conduct in Muslims’ attitude as violent and the germs of Islamophobia came into existence. The after-effects of the event brought a new trend of representation in literary arena among which *The Black Album* holds the first place.

As part of the overall scheme of the novel, there has also been representation of another force; secular-liberalism. Whilst some immigrants do not compromise their identity and culture – which fostered fundamentalist conduct – others have compromised but they still live in a state of confusion. Shahid is a living example who is torn in his two identities as religious zealot and

secular liberal. Being in the company of Riaz and a support to his cause, he feels that he “has passed the point when he could question Riaz about the fundamentals” (79). He seems as appreciating the cause initiated by Riaz when “observing the mosque, in which all he saw were solid, material things, and looking along the lines of brothers’ faces upon which spirituality was taking place, he felt a failure” (79). Similarly, on the eve of book burning, one aspect of Shahid shows that he “wanted to witness every page in flames” (186). However, on the contrary, he is hesitant and “the stupidity of the demonstration appalled him [thinking] how narrow they were, how unintelligent, how . . . embarrassing it all was! . . . This isn’t right . . . what’s happening to our community” (188). He is in a state of confusion. Furthermore, Deedee Osgood is an outright liberal voice that echoes throughout the novel. To the extent that she tries her best to stop the demonstration but she could not stop. Also, the novel has given enough space to intellectual debates that shed light on conflicting views about secular liberalism and religious extremism of a society in the year 1989; the year when fatwa against Rushdie was issued. These debates are on purpose and are coherent to the issue in question. As evidence, Riaz and Brownlow have a debate in which Brownlow asserts that he could be religious, but since he has read Bertrand Russel in his 14 years of age, it is impossible for him to become a religious person. He continues and names the religious scriptures as mere “magic realist tales from distant centuries . . . trading on infantile dependence” (80). Brownlow advocates liberal thoughts free from the bondages people have been carrying along since centuries. He further advocates that “people must decide good and evil for themselves” to which Riaz comments that “man is the last person I would trust to such a task!” (81). Riaz further responds that his “liberal beliefs belong to a minority who live in northern Europe . . . you want to dominate others with your particular morality, which has – as you also well know – gone hand-in-hand with fascist imperialism . . . This is why we have to

guard against the hypocritical and smug intellectual atmosphere of Western civilization” (82). Riaz contradicts Brownlow’s views as one belonging to a minority whilst the rest of world believes in God and religion. Referring to the worse imperialist designs of the West in the past, Riaz calls the Western intellectual atmosphere as mere hypocrisy. In response, Brownlow contends that this intellectual atmosphere has brought us “literature, painting, architecture, psychoanalysis, science, journalism, music, a stable political culture, organized sport – at a pretty high level” (82). Mentioning the European core ideas as governed by reason rather than emotions, Brownlow calls ideas as being “the enemy of religion” (82). This debate prompts reader on critical thinking to understand the present day religious extremism and secular-liberalism. The two viewpoints are not something that has been in existence with the turn of the millennium. This conflict had been in existence long ago and its germs are found in the 1980s British racist society. As a matter of fact, racial categorization has led to fundamentalist views but it is further worsened by the geo-political situations of the upcoming world.

The Black Album is a prophetic work that speaks about the present issue of Muslim fundamentalism. This issue went hand in hand - added by the political interventions and state interests - and became a severe issue. The novel is an insightful account of the struggle between the ideals set by one’s culture (defined by religion) and one’s adherence to the land where he is born. As opposed to other forms of representations, it is the beauty of literature, perfectly achieved by *The Black Album*, to create events and characters within which contemporary age is reflected.

Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and the Problem of Islamophobia

The advent of 9/11 has left considerable impacts upon the sensibilities of Muslim minorities living in the West. Since then, they live in the background of day to day Islamophobia. Written in the US context, Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* highlights the rhetoric that associates Islam with terror and Muslims as a threat to the United States and Western values. I argue, in this chapter, that Hamid's work is a counter literary response to this popular rhetoric, and a departure in fiction written in this connection in the post-9/11 scenario of the world; wherein he sheds light on integration of Muslim immigrants and their belonging to the US. It shows how the sensibilities of genuine Muslim immigrants are affected and failing to accept "other" how this attitude rather leads to radicalism which, in turn, mobilizes Islamophobia. I would also argue that the novel has didactic purpose and exposes: if the marginalization of immigrants continues, it would lead to the disintegration of the multicultural American society.

The Reluctant Fundamentalist is written in 2007 in the backdrop of 9/11 terrorist attacks. Considered as one of the pioneering works, the novel deals with the modern day issue of Islamophobia in an effective way. It is a departure in English fiction written after 9/11. By departure, I mean the ways of representation when English writers; specifically those of Western origin, before the publication of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, were different. They were more tended to the negative portrayal of Muslims in the background of 9/11. This mindset was mobilized by the globally dominant politics that "promoted the idea of America as a victim and a defender of freedom, not only in its official discourse but also in the vast cultural production ranging from Hollywood films to the pop fiction and even photography" (Awan 522). As a result, representation of Muslims was mostly negative which would lead to mar their identity.

Some of the novels were based on movies whilst others were based on specific incidences. The distorted images of Muslim characters in these novels would – on purpose or unintentionally – lead readers to believe that Muslims are terrorists, militants and fanatics, to mention a few. Undoubtedly, certain parts of the Muslim world do have serious issues of religious fanaticism, however, to depict specific incidences in a certain way as to hold the whole Muslim world responsible is to widen the gap between Muslims and the West. Some of these authors include John Updike, Don de Lillo, Ian McEwan and Sherman Alexie. Raising a voice to hear Muslim issues humanely soon after the 9/11 could probably have been difficult because of the American influence on world's politics; specifically in media. Jacques Derrida criticizes this aspect and takes into account the mistakes made by the US in the aftermaths of 9/11. He avers:

9/11 introduces a deconstructive critique that is sober, alert, vigilant, attentive to everything that, through the best-substantiated strategy, the most justified politicking rhetoric, media powers, spontaneous or organized trends of opinion, welds the political to the metaphysical, to capitalistic speculation, to perversion of religious or nationalistic influence, to sovereignist fantasy... Therein lies my interpretation of what should be what was named yesterday, according to the White House slogan, “infinite justice”: to not exonerate oneself from one's own wrongs and the mistakes of one's own politics even when one has just paid the most horrific and disproportionate price for it. (Jacques Derrida qtd. in Awan, 524)

Derrida implies the present day unjust wars and the subsequent turmoil in the Middle East. He mourns the “consequences of ignoring the causes of terrorism [that] is as significant today as it was right after the 9/11 attacks. The imperial hubris that has been the cause of horrific tragedies

since 9/11 continues to threaten world peace and communal harmony” (524). Similar to Derrida’s observation, literary response after the 9/11 event was not fair enough to create productive works and research upon its fair implications on Muslims around the world. However, some sane voices have produced literary works in which they have explored Islamophobia as a contemporary reality and have tried to bridge the gap that has widened with the 9/11 attacks. Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is one of the foremost works in this regard wherein he presents a counter literary response. It introduces Changez, the protagonist of the story. Originally an immigrant from Pakistan, Changez enjoys a successful career in the United States. The novel is, furthermore, set in the wake of 9/11 terrorist attacks and has introduced an intellectual debate in academic arena after its publication. Before proceeding in discourse to detail the events, it is noteworthy to mention that beauty of the novel lies in its unique structural departure in narration. Using the narrative technique of dramatic monologue, commonly used in poetry, the novel has achieved its goal in an innovative way. The protagonist Changez is sitting in a Cafe bar in a food street in Lahore and addresses an imaginary American character. The entire speech is carried out by Changez. Even if there are interruptions on part of the American, it is Changez who speaks for his part. Changez assures the American – in the very second line of the novel - to “. . . not be frightened by my beard: I am a lover of America” (Hamid 1). This ironical comment is a perfect representation of the stereotyping attitude against Muslims. The element of beard is of particular interest here as whoever belongs to a Muslim country and has grown beard, he is labeled as fundamentalist. In the same vein, while talking to him, after a while, Changez asks: “You seem worried. Do not be; this burly fellow is merely our waiter, and there is no need to reach under your jacket, I assume to grasp your wallet, as we will pay him later, when we are done” (6). This portrayal shows how the American gets afraid while

sitting in an open street in Lahore in a cafe. On seeing the waiter, the American's reaction is astounding as this enthralls readers' attention. Readers get in suspense and expect as if he is about to withdraw some weapon out of his jacket, although in reality, he searches for the wallet to pay for the bills. The depiction of this picture, however, in the very beginning of the novel is not at random or by chance. This is on purpose and is a reflection on the ongoing hatred of the US, or the West in general, towards the Muslims. It shows how Americans feel uncomfortable in a Muslim country. It is a representation of the broader global phenomenon of Islamophobia. After the waiter brings tea, Changez requests the American, ah, "do not look so suspicious. I assure you, sir, nothing untoward will happen to you, not even a runny stomach. After all, it is not as if it has been poisoned. Come, if it makes you more comfortable, let me switch my cup with yours" (13). This refers to the mistrust between the Muslim world and the West. The kindly attitude of Changez to the extent that he offers him the change of cup stands for clarification and a kind of assurance to mend this mistrust. Also, worthy to note is the one-sided speech of Changez. The technique of dramatic monologue in the novel implies that it is Muslims' time to speak and clarify their position to the West. Since the advent of September 11 attacks, the geopolitical situation of the world has created an environment in which Muslim identity is being tarnished. Following the misdeeds of a few militant organizations in a few Muslim countries, all Muslims are taken for granted as fanatics and terrorists. They are all painted with the same brush. Since beard is generally considered as the most controversial element in the actual Western world – as anyone of Muslim heritage with a beard is suspected as militant - the element of beard is repeatedly brought under discussion in the novel in different contexts. During the course of their discussion, Changez notices uneasiness in the American. Changez points "that bearded man – who even now, sir, continues from time to time to attract your wary gaze – is himself unable to

stop glancing over his shoulders at those girls” (29). Beard is commonly taken as a mark of Muslim identity. Based on the perception that militants are usually bearded people, people in the West usually discriminate people of beards. Interestingly, the mistrust is not single-handedly dumped upon the Western world. There are echoes in the novel that demonstrate Muslims’ preoccupation of Western hegemony in the world. Changez is equally serious in finding to know about the American. For instance, Changez asks him, “I am increasingly curious as to the nature of your business” (73). Similarly, pointing to his phone, Changez stirs and curiously asks: “But what is that? Ah, your mobile phone? I have not previously seen its like; it is, I suspect, one of those models capable of communicating via satellite when no ground coverage is available” (37). It might generally refer to the populist rhetoric, existing in the Muslim world - particularly in Pakistan - about the CIA operatives in their countries who orchestrate destabilization. According to this perception, these operatives provoke resurgence or, in some cases, even sponsoring militant groups. The tricky formation of the human characters by mere symbolism throughout the novel leaves a great space and the responsibility is left upon the reader to derive meanings. Thus, the framework of the novel is set in such a way that it supports the events in the story. The readers assimilate the meanings of the story in a much easier way. This treatment of narration goes along the story and, on each point, reminds readers the focus of the message hidden in the contents of the novel.

Changez shares his story with the American that he was a student on scholarship in Princeton University. He would think as if “this is a dream that has come true. Princeton inspired in [him] the feeling that [his] life was a film in which [he] was the star and everything was possible” (3). The story, he shares, shows that he enjoys the best privileges of life and studies in the influence of teachers who are titans in their fields. Living in this environment, he considers

himself as “a young prince, generous and carefree” (12). Above this, he avails a chance of recruitment in Underwood Samson. His entire life-style changes and lives with abundant facilities. Changez is attached so much so to his profession in Underwood Samson that “he did not think of [himself] as a Pakistani, but as an Underwood Samson trainee, and [his] firm’s impressive offices made [him] proud” (38). He has devoted himself to this country and has formed his identity as New Yorker. Thinking of his achievements, he would “feel happy in that moment . . . bathed in a warm sense of accomplishment. Nothing troubled [him]; [he] was a young New Yorker with the city at [his] feet” (51). In addition to a successful career, he also enjoys happy moments in the company of Erica whom he loves passionately. In other words, he lives his life in the United States to the fullest possible conveniences he could imagine. Important to mention, here, is the fact that he also contributes to the US in his own right. He has been highly educated in Lahore. Being competent, he wins a scholarship and migrates to the US for pursuing his further studies. He has got the talents to compete in Princeton and is chosen for the highly competitive post in Underwood Samson. The society he lives in is a cohesive society and both, Changez and the American society, are benefiting from each other. As part of his job, the company requires to send its employees on out stations on different business projects. He is assigned Manila where he has to go with a team. Having reached there, he is highly excited as “[he] had flown first class . . . clad in [his] suit, as [he] was served champagne by an attractive . . . flight attendant” (72). While he is in Manila, he considers himself more a New Yorker than a Pakistani. Therefore, he would “speak, as much as [his] dignity would permit, more like an American” and the “Filipinos [they] worked with seemed to look up to [their] American colleagues, accepting them almost instinctively as members of the officer class of global business – and [Changez] wanted [his] share of that respect as well” (74). To this extent of the

story, Changez is a fully merged immigrant in the US multicultural society. He works hard and is paid in return for his efforts. He enjoys all the privileges in the same way as his other counterparts enjoy. In the meantime, as the company business comes to an end in Manila and he is preparing for his departure from Manila, the incident of 9/11 happens. He sees as “one – and then the other – of the twin towers of New York’s World Trade Centre collapsed” (83). This event plays a turning point in Changez’s life. He no more remains the previous Changez. From now onwards, he is discriminated not only in the social circle of the United States, but even in his own office, he faces discrimination on the basis of his identity. On coming to New York, “at the airport, [he] was escorted by armed guards into a room where [he] was made to strip down to [his] boxer shorts” (85). In addition, he is “the last person to board [their] aircraft” (85). Changez becomes conscious of his identity. Despite the efforts he makes with himself to appear calm and relaxed, he would feel it as “[he] was aware of being under suspicion; [he] felt guilty; [he] tried therefore to be as nonchalant as possible; this naturally led to [his] becoming stiff and self-conscious” (85). Consequently, he now holds a spoiled identity. His identity is spoiled not because that he is from Pakistan but it is because he has got a Muslim identity. This element would now be reflected in his social contact with people. He would personally have psychological effects upon his own sensibilities. In return, he would lose the faithfulness he used to carry in his mind for the United States. Also, this conduct would equally prove harmful to the multicultural society. Just as Changez, a well-integrated person, loses his integration, it may; if this marginalization continues, would prove for the disintegration of the much boasted integrated multicultural society of the United States. Above all this, he would now turn into a fundamentalist in his own right. All these changes would now occur as the story goes on. In fact,

Changez cannot be held responsible for all these changes. It comes forth due to the geopolitical situations.

As soon as Changez arrives in the United States from Manila, he is detained in the airport and is subjected to numerous questions about his stay in the US. He is “separated from [his] team at immigration. They joined the queue for American citizens; [he] joins the one for foreigners” (86). The officers; not being satisfied, sends him to another inspecting team. As said earlier, Changez is discriminated even by his own colleagues; left alone by them in the airport. Changez is victimized for his identity, and as soon as he gets free from the airport, he “rode to Manhattan that evening very much alone” (86). In response to these changes, Changez no longer remains intimate to the US. His own culture and country becomes a matter of more importance to him. Addressing the American in the cafe, Changez tells him that “the mighty host I had expected of your country was duly raised and dispatched – but homeward, towards my family in Pakistan” (106-107). Islamophobic riots have broken in the US at a large scale. He would hear news that “Pakistani cabdrivers were being beaten to within an inch of their lives” (107). This raging attitude was found not only in public but also the government manifested this same attitude. FBI was “raiding mosques, shops, and even people’s houses” (107). A wave of Islamophobia spread around the country and Muslims were harassed in one way or the other. People - belonging to the faith of Islam - began to disappear, “perhaps into shadowy detention centers for questioning or worse” (107). Arguably, it can be said that Changez couldn’t face the rage of the public or the compulsory investigations of the government or we can say he loses heart and quits immediately his job irrationally. He should have accepted the intensity of the problem those days and should have cooperate with the conditions. But this seems inaccurate because Changez did not believe in these news abruptly. In stead, he “reasoned that these stories were mostly untrue” (107). He

did remain rational and “clad in [his] armor of denial [he] was able to focus – with continuing and noteworthy success – on [his] job” (108). He is still passionate about his job and is busy in another assignment in New Jersey. To his dismay, in the coming days, he watches a newscast in which:

American troops dropping into Afghanistan for what was described as a daring raid on a Taliban command post. My reaction caught me by surprise; Afghanistan was Pakistan’s neighbor, our friend, and a fellow Muslim nation besides, and the sight of what I took to be the beginning of its invasion by your countrymen caused me to tremble with fury. . . The next morning I was, for the first time, late for work. (114)

But all the while, Changez, certainly, is affected by the geopolitical situation of the world. The incidences in world’s politics show how the sensibilities of genuine Muslim immigrants are affected. The so far diligent and dedicated Changez now transforms and, as a result, he goes late for his job. As far as his interest in job is concerned, he “found it difficult to concentrate on the pursuit – at which I was normally so capable – of fundamentals” (114). Changez becomes the reluctant fundamentalist. The tricky use of the title (of the novel) comes out of a broader perspective of fundamentalism which is the core interest of the book. The shrewd coinage of the title, on part of the author, is an irony on the underlying meaning of how innocent American Muslims turn to fundamentalism when they are discriminated unnecessarily. This attitude would further show, through the character of Changez, how discrimination causes radicalism and the dissociation of the long-established and well-integrated multicultural American society. In order to comment upon the conduct of American government’s attitude and to persuade American audience to realize the mistakes made after the advent of the 9/11, the author compares Erica’s

nostalgia with America's nostalgia. Erica is sick for her ex-boyfriend and "longed for her adolescence with Chris, for a time before his cancer made her aware of impermanence and mortality" (130). The more she would go in nostalgia for Chris, the more she would get emotional stress. Chris's nostalgia has broken her mentally. In the same way, the author comments upon the present US which acted in a way as was in a period of World War Second., The author comments, America 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 honor. I had always thought of America as a nation that looked forward; for the first time I was struck by its determination to look back. Living in New York was suddenly like living in a film about the Second World War. (130-131)

The point of interest is; instead of looking forward to cope with the challenges, the American government, by its weird acts, is further igniting the issue of fundamentalism which is not in the interest of the US and the Muslim world. This comment is replete with a huge discussion on the issue in question. If the US continues invading Muslim countries, the gap between Muslims and the US would widen. Secondly, instead of combating radicalism, this response (that is to say; invading Muslim countries) would further lead to radicalization. On the other hand, the United States has got a huge population of Muslims who have been living there generations after generations. In other words, the US has got Muslim citizens of its own. So, the more they are stretching this issue, the more they are sparking insurgencies in their own citizens. And it did

prove with the passage of time. A number of incidences are evident, especially in the wake of the recent burst of mass shootings in the US in this regard. As example, in the very recent past, Omar Mateen, a US born Muslim citizen opened fire in a gay nightclub in Orlando (Florida) and killed 49 innocent people. Thirdly, the US has got a huge number of Muslim immigrants and they are contributing to the US in different sectors. Changez himself in the novel is a living proof who is efficient and gets disheartened. He was wholeheartedly working for an American company and preferred his stay in the US over his own country Pakistan. Discrimination against Changez changes his mindset. Further in this analysis, we would see that the more he faces discrimination, the more he would incline to his own country. In the end, he quits all his engagements in the US and goes back to his country for ever. Thus, this is not in the interest of the United States to go back to the past.

Changez further informs the American that, in the post-9/11 period, he would consider himself an inferior person. He “found [himself] staring out at a set that ought to be viewed not in Technicolor but in grainy black and white. What your fellow countrymen longed for, was unclear to me – a time of unquestioned dominance? of safety? of moral certainty?” (131). In a way, Changez means, there was some kind of perceived dominance to be noted in the attitudes of American people. Not to speak of outside, even in Underwood Samson he becomes a target of hatred. On heading to his car in the parking space, he is approached by a man who “made a series of unintelligible noises – “akhala-malakhala,” perhaps, or “khalapal-khalapala” – and pressed his face alarmingly close to [his]” (133). Thinking that he might be mad or drunk, Changez avoids him but, to his surprise, another person appears; looking fiercely at him and holding the previous man, begins calling “Fucking Arab” (134). I would, arguably, say here that, as opposed to the past periods (before 9/11), street abuses were, most of the time, directed at

one's skin colour. Details on Changez in the novel reveal that he didn't have a fair colour to be called Arab. He might be addressed as "Paki" or "dark skinned," predominantly used in the past, but since the issue of fundamentalism was at a height these days; people were tended to abuse immigrants with the Arab identity. As to why Arab, the reason might be; Arab is the major race in Islam or due to the fact that 15 perpetrators out of 19 in September 11 attacks were Arabs. So much so is his sensibilities affected by the ongoing situation that Changez begins to doubt over his performance in Underwood Samson. He "had heard tales of the discrimination Muslims were beginning to experience in the business world – stories of rescinded job offers and groundless dismissals – [he] did not wish to have [his] position at Underwood Samson compromised" (137). Though everything went well, yet he had a concern over his performance before December review. Although, he stands first in the rankings made by the company in the end of the year. The emphasis here, again, is on the disintegration of the immigrants who, despite their contribution to the well-being of the US, suffers at the hands of unjust policies; policies that lead to hate crimes. Earlier, Changez considered himself more an American than a Pakistani. He was well-integrated in the American society and was proud of it. Following the discriminatory attitudes on different levels, Changez is now more prone to his own country. On his visit to Lahore, he revitalizes and wonders, "how [he] could ever have been so ungenerous - and so blind – to have thought otherwise, and I was disturbed by what this implied about myself: that I was a man lacking in substance and hence easily influenced by even a short sojourn in the company of others" (142). Thus, a sense of belonging to his own land develops in Changez. This change in his approach is, of course, not in the interest of the American society and this is the element Hamid's critique provides to the United States.

In order to be in utter conflict with the American values, Changez is now more prone to go against them. During his stay at home in Lahore, Changez grows his beard. Despite the insistence from his mother and:

his knowledge of the difficulties it could well present [him] at immigration, [he] had not shaved [his] two-week-old beard. It was perhaps, a form of protest on [his] part, a symbol of [his] identity, or perhaps [he] sought to remind [himself] of the reality [he] had just left behind . . . [He] knows only that [he] did not wish to blend in with the army of clean-shaven youngsters who were [his] coworkers, and that inside me, for multiple reasons, I was deeply angry. (148)

Now that Changez has grown a beard, he faces racial abuses more and more. The more he faces it, the more he becomes radical in his views and conduct. This is why “more than once, travelling on the subway – where [he] had always had the feeling of seamlessly blending in – [he] was subjected to verbal abuse by complete strangers, and at Underwood Samson [he] seemed to become overnight a subject of whispers and stares” (148). If Changez had not grown his beard and had compromised with the situations, he might not have been become an object of attention. But contrary to it, he becomes a radical and intentionally goes for the beard. His views become radical to the extent that he holds the US responsible for any mess around the world. These days, Pakistan and India has a military standoff on Kashmir. Keeping in mind the US invasion on Afghanistan, he considers it as “legitimizing through its actions the invasion of weaker states by more powerful ones, which India was now proposing to do to Pakistan” (149). Later, in an official assignment in Chile, Changez is surprisingly stricken with the idea of modern day Janissary in his discussion with the owner of the publishing company. Similar to the popular belief of Janissaries in Christians in the past, Changez takes himself as “a modern-day janissary,

a servant of the American empire at a time when it was invading a country with a kinship to mine . . . Of course I felt torn” (173). Christians, in the past, believed that Turks of the Ottoman Empire kidnapped their children, would grow them up and would use them as warriors against their own ancestors. Changez is now occupied with the conception that he is being used by the American empire for its own benefits. The more this empire is benefited with our contributions, the more it is getting stronger. This description is touchy to Islamophobia in the sense that, earlier, he had mentioned Afghanistan as mere neighbor whilst now he speaks of kinship with Afghanistan. In a way, he has rather strongly started to feel the US invasion on an Islamic country than a neighboring country. In a way, his mindset is more bent to issues related to Islam or Muslims. After having undergone changes of radicalism in his views, he responds aggressively and leaves the assignment in Chile. Unable to face the discrimination he encounters, and unable to concentrate on his job, Changez makes a determination to go back to his country. The more he gets affected, the more a phobia against him increases in his colleagues. Changez himself confesses that he:

had engendered in [his] colleagues over these past few - bearded and resentful – weeks; only Wainwright came over to shake [his] hand and say farewell; the others, if they bothered to look at [him] at all, did so with evident unease and, in some cases, a fear which would not have been inappropriate had I been convicted of plotting to kill them rather than of abandoning my post in mid-assignment.

(181)

Changez gets affected with the otherness he faces in the American society. As a result, he becomes stern in his views. This leads him to become more and more suspicious in the eyes of the people around him. On the other hand, people around him get scared of him for the global

slogan of terror associated with Islam and Muslims. This attitude on part of people adds to the slogan against Muslims, and Islamophobia becomes more and more prominent. He shifts to Lahore and becomes a university lecturer. His radical nature prompts him on a “mission on campus to advocate a disengagement from your (the American’s) country by [his]” (203). His anti-American orations are much applauded by the students. During his lectureship, he organizes protests along with his students. The first among which was one when they:

surrounded the building in which he [the American ambassador] was speaking, chanting and holding placards . . . Effigies were burned and stones were thrown, and then we were charged at by large numbers of uniformed and plain-clothed police. Scuffles broke out, [Changez] intervened in one, and as a result [he] spent the night in prison, nursing a bloody lip and bruised knuckles. (203 – 204)

Changez; the one who was once feeling a home-like or rather more than a home-like in New York has now turned against the US. In a time, he was more a New Yorker than a Pakistani and would feel proud of the gorgeous offices of Underwood Samson and in the company of Erica. Whilst now, he advocates that “no country inflicts deaths so readily upon the inhabitants of other countries, frightens so many people so far away, as America” (207). He quits his high-profiled life in New York. He chooses for demonstrations and protests where he is insulted and is beaten. It is because he has become a fundamentalist. He has become a radical in his views.

Unlike the previous novels, produced after the 9/11, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* exposes and redresses the development in the modern-day phenomenon of Islamophobia. The portrayal of these details reflects upon the American society in the post-9/11. It shows how the geopolitical situations are responsible for fostering Islamophobia, and exposes how

Islamophobia contributes in the expansion of fundamentalism. Changez loses his concentration in job after he is unduly interrogated in the airports, and is subjected to racial abuses for being a Muslim with beard. These details are representative of ground realities when Muslims in the US (or elsewhere in the West) live in the day to day Islamophobia. They are representative of the actual undue detentions, physical violence, racial abuse, desecration of the Islamic scriptures and a number of other hate crimes. Furthermore, it is also a didactic novel that sets out to expose the unjust policies of the United States. It reinforces that “you should not imagine that we Pakistanis are all potential terrorists, just as we should not imagine that you Americans are all undercover assassins” (209).

Michel Houellebecq's *Submission* and the Question of Islamophobia

Houellebecq's construction of *Submission* as a literary piece is written to depict contemporary Islamophobia in a uniquely different perspective. In the novel, set in the future, France is ruled by a Muslim political party. However, the text frequently shifts and speaks of the protagonist Françoise, an alcoholic and lustful French professor, who is portrayed as the very antithesis of the charismatic Islamic leader Mohammed Ben Abbas. Based on the connotation hidden in the text, I argue that the author – obsessed with the increased Muslim presence in France - exposes the populist fear of possible Islamic rule in the future. The seeming advocacy of Islamic rule in the backdrop of François is, in fact, Houellebecq's astute literary strategy to mourn the decadent values of European culture. As a result, he attempts to bring awareness in French society by stoking the fears of Islamic rule in France in the future.

Submission is a deeply challenging novel. It is a literary response to the ongoing collective anxiety; a fear of the expanding radical Islam, existing in French society. In order to bring to light this anxiety, the author begins with a similar context existed in France in the past. He shifts in retrospection to the 19th century Huysmans; a French literary figure who considered the 19th century post Enlightenment French society as decadent, and himself converted to Catholicism in the end of his life. Through his books of *À rebours* or *La Cathédrale*, Huysmans has presented Catholicism as possible solution to the decadent French society in the then period. Similarly, the *Submission* takes into account contemporary clash between the two largest civilizations; the Western world and the Muslim world. One civilization promotes liberalism and the other is based on religious adherence. To deal with this theme, the author has caged this whole theme in the frame of a story. He could resort to history, journalism, et cetera, but fiction could do it in a more promising way. Aware of the complications in this theme, the author

chooses both the protagonist Françoise and his ideal Huysmans; literary figures in whom he conveys his message to French audience. Alongside them, the novel echoes a voice; the voice of Muslims presence in France. It is a reflection on the commonly founded concern of Muslims' presence in Europe, particularly in France. The increasing Muslim population in France has created a perception of potential Muslim rule in the future. This existent concern - I call it in this analysis as "collective anxiety" - has been widely portrayed in the novel. The author details the present European culture, which he thinks, is on its decay. To portray this aspect of the European society, the author has developed Françoise, the protagonist, who stands for the deformed European values. In contrast, the political crises in France have been depicted with the emergence of a newly formed Islamic political party, named as Muslim Brotherhood. Since Islamic and European civilizations are two opposites, this problematic constitutes the whole framework of the novel, wherein he sheds his satirical remarks on the decadent European culture.

Françoise, the protagonist, is a professor of literature in Paris III. The author uses him as fictional vehicle through whom he brings to light the fate of European civilization. He lives an unmarried and erotic life. The effect of modern Western secular culture is reflected in the isolated and deserted life of the protagonist. The pessimistic mood of the novel begins from the very first line when he refers to Huysmans whom he thinks as the only company "through all the years of [his] sad youth" (5). He criticizes his own life, and begins his reflections from his youth when he says "mostly I had mistresses – or rather, as people said then (and may be still do), I had girlfriends, roughly one a year" (11). These relationships would begin with the academic year "with a seminar, an exchange of notes, or what have you, one of the many social occasions, so common in student life . . . plunging most of us into a stupefying and radical solitude" (12). This picture of the protagonist's youth is representative of the author's satire on the present day

secular culture of Europe that seems a matter of keen concern to him. Eroticism and purposeless life would lead in a radical solitude of which the protagonist himself is an example. People would not form a family of their own and thus the deranged life would continue, even if they would reach their middle ages. Françoise himself is evidence, who, in his later years, is a professor, yet he runs after mistresses with no solidly founded family of his own. Not only has the reference been made to him but his mistresses – whom he had illicit relations in his youth – have also been mentioned one after the other. A meeting with Aurelie shows that she “had never managed to form a long-term relationship, that casual sex filled her with growing disgust, that her personal life was headed for complete and utter disaster . . . From the sour and bitter way she talked about her male colleagues . . .” (13-14). In his meeting with Sandra, he thinks of her as relatively better than Aurelie, but he assumes that she would soon be condemned to a “lasting solitude” (15). Françoise turns to his own life when he was newly appointed as lecturer and “kept sleeping with students, and the fact that we were now teacher and student didn’t change things much at all” (15). However, he thinks that the only thing different from his student life was that “now I was usually the one who broke it off when the academic year began” (15). It has now been a while that Françoise has left Myriam and has not replaced her. In order to check as to whether he has been passing through andropause, he decides to “spend [his] evenings on YouPorn” (17). As a result, he would get a “hard-on . . . sitting in front of [his] twenty-seven-inch iMac, and all was well” (18).

Having given a glimpse of the weak foundations of French society - in which meanness has gone to the extent that teachers sleep with their students - the author shifts to open up a parallel episode in the novel. He brings forth Muslim population of France. The image of Muslims is introduced in such a powerful way that it gets imposed upon the mind of readers. The

very first portrayal of some Muslim guys, whom Françoise encounters before entering class, is dubious. These guys, “two of them Arabs, one of them black [were] standing in the doorway. They weren’t armed, not that day. They stood there calmly” strike the attention of readers. To say that they were not armed, “not that day” immediately captures readers’ attention. This scene, in a story, so far hanging around sexuality and free liberal exchanges, is, certainly, worthy of consideration, and it means something deep to the writer. These guys were waiting for their sisters, who were two North African girls “both in black burkas” (24). The reflection of Muslim guys standing alert and the two girls covered in burkas focalize the polarity existing in a society that is shown as based on moral laxity. It seems that the author is intentionally building a plot underneath which he implies some purpose. Soon afterwards, student unions in Paris are described: “the youth division of the Muslim Brotherhood had opened new branches, here and there, across the city” (24). All this description in the beginning of the novel prophesies a tension that is soon going to be in clash in this society. Thus, weaving the threads together skillfully, the writer embarks on a panorama of events in which Muslims’ emergence as political power in the ensuing political crises in France becomes the core interest of the writer.

These days election is under way in France and political parties are mobilizing their campaigns. Among the parties in France, Muslim Brotherhood has been expressed as come into existence after the previous election, held in 2017. Earlier, there “had been one attempt to form an Islamic party, the French Muslim Party, but it soon fell apart over the embarrassing anti-Semitism of its leader” (40). However, following the examples of Muslim Brotherhood in Arabic countries, a party has now been established by youth contributions and charities. The situations in France have been depicted worse when “gripped by ever more widespread unemployment,” whilst the Muslim Brotherhood is shown as spreading rapidly (41). The party – mobilized by

worse political conditions in France – is shown as taking advantage of the situations, and this “strategy broadened the Brotherhood’s reach far beyond strictly observant Muslims” (41). This depiction attributes a kind of “design” in Muslim Brotherhood who, acted in a deceitful way, has emerged a major political power and “was now polling just behind the Socialists: at 21 versus 23 percent” (41). Concerns over the presence of Muslims in French society were already in the air. The novel utilizes and records those details to bring force in its depiction. It is assumed, such as that of “Cassandras who predicted civil war between Muslim immigrants and the indigenous populations of Western Europe” (43). Similarly, Francoise and his colleague professor, Lampereur, discuss the problems of atheism and monotheism in European societies. They believe – in light of the article “*Get Ready for Civil War*” in their hands – that followers of the three religions of Book produce more children compared to atheist and agnostics. They believe that values of patriarchy transform to their children because the new generations follow what their ancestors have done. They put it as:

In the vast majority of cases, people stick with whatever metaphysical system they grow up in. that’s why atheist humanism – the basis of any “pluralist society” – is doomed. Monotheism is on the rise, especially in the Muslim population – and that’s even before you factor in immigration. European nativists start start by admitting that, sooner or later, we’ll see a civil war between the Muslims and everybody else. They conclude that, if they want to have a fighting chance, that war had better come as soon as possible – certainly before 2050, preferably sooner, if possible . . . ? (56)

France, fundamentally a secular country, is haunted of a possible threat to its ideological laïcité. This prevailing concern - that France might have serious problems with Muslims in future – has

been introduced in the novel before he brings forth the rest of the plot. It helps the author in exposing Muslims as threatening that might overtake if European values stay stagnant as he presumes them. Interestingly, before heading to the main plot, the Parisian society has been made compatible to the present day geopolitical issue of Muslim fundamentalism. Unlike the real Parisian society, it sounds like a city somewhere in Iraq or Syria in the grip of troubles.

Francoise, Mariam Francoise and Lempereur are on a roadside when they hear some gunfire. After a while, they “heard a new round of gunfire, this time quite distinct, as if nearby, and a much louder explosion” (48). This representation in the novel, I call this the geopolitical situations (the major argument in this thesis), shapes the modern day racism into religious-based racism, commonly known as Islamophobia. As far as the writer’s intention with this specific issue, in this novel, is concerned, he seems using Islamophobia a tool with the ultimate goal to reform French society. He uses these images to remind French people of the complications that might be their destiny in the ages to come. The French setting, in terror, is further widened when they reach the venue of the fire and see that:

Place de Clichy was completely enveloped in flames; we could see the burned-out husks of cars and a bus. The statue of Marechal Moncey, black and imposing, stood out in the middle of the blaze. There was no one in the sight and no sound but the repetitive wail of a siren. (50)

The question of Muslims’ threat with reference to extremism in Europe, particularly in France, is further highlighted when Francoise - in his discussion with Lempereur - outlines as to whether a military or political solution would be decided to deal with Muslims. Francoise remarks that “every country in Europe is more or less equally hostile to Muslims, but France is a special case because of its military” (56). They are concerned that “if young extremists – and they’re almost

all young – enlist en masse, it won't be long before they seize ideological control" (57). The novel voices the issue of Islamophobia not only in French context, but the entire Europe's fate is addressed to help them realizing the growing fear of Muslim extremists in their lands. It particularly speaks of Northern Europe and apprehends that:

[T]heir multiculturalism is even more oppressive than ours here in France, plus you have lots of seasoned extremists, and a negligible military. Yes, if there's going to be general uprising any time soon in Europe, look to Norway or Denmark, though Belgium and Holland are also zones of potential instability. (57)

The novel is replete with ideas of Muslim extremism. Instead of making effort to bridge the gap - as is carried out in the previous novel by Mohsin Hamid – the author's central stance seems to revive Western values in Europeans. He does does present Islam as a societal force but that depiction seems more provocative than cohesive. This is why readers have to see the frequent descriptions of Françoise who is a characteristic figure of the European culture. Readers' attention is repeatedly thrust upon the desperation in his life for his alcoholism and his overindulging life. We are made to notify that:

[H]is father lived in a chalet in the Massif des Ecrin. He had just moved with someone (at least, I'd just found out about her). My mother was living out her depression in Nevers, alone except for her bulldog. These two baby boomers had always been completely self-centred, and I had no reason to think they'd willingly take me in. Occasionally I found myself wondering whether I'd ever see my parents again before they died, but the answer was always negative, and I didn't think even a civil war could bring us together. They'd find some pretext for

refusing to let me stay with them. They never had any shortage of pretext. I'd had a handful of friends over the years, kind of, but we weren't really in touch. There was Alice. I supposed I could call Alice a friend. All in all, now that Myriam and I had broken up, I was very much alone. (59)

The weaker the society, the weaker would become the foundations of France. This is how we see in the character of Françoise, who is a member of French society. A historical glance on French history reveals that France's war against the Catholic church concluded in the end of 18th century. It was the period when France became victorious over the authority of Pope. People of France were liberated and freedom of thought was proclaimed. The quotation above laments the distorted form of freedom and defines an external religious enemy – something like the extremist Islam. Despite an academic, Françoise has been unable to form a proper family to live in a graceful manner. It suggests that the fate of laymen would be worse than him. His parents are divorced and they have no contact with each other. None of them would be accepting him in case he needs them. He is not hopeful even to see them when they die. He doesn't have friends either. His overindulgent life in sexuality and alcoholism does not allow him to maintain constant relationship with a single woman. The above extract comments upon the deformed secular culture and the Muslim theme warrants a warning of the enemy within.

As part of the overall scheme of the novel, the election results declare and “Mohammed Ben Abbas, candidate of the Muslim Brotherhood, had come in second with 22.3 percent of the vote” (62). Following the success in election, Muslim girls in university walk in a confident way. It seemed as if “walking down the very middle of the hallway, three by three, as if they were already in charge” (63). The novel, now almost completely focused on the question of Islam and Muslims, describes the policies of Muslim Brotherhood. Marie-Françoise's husband, Tanneur,

working for a spy agency, shares some political details with Françoise. He becomes a source of disclosing secret information. He mentions: “What they [Muslim Brotherhood] care about is birthrate and education. To them it’s simple – whichever segment of the population has the highest birthrate, and does the best job of transmitting its values, wins” (66). A populist Islamophobic rhetoric propagates that Muslim families procreate many children to increase the number of Umma (Muslim world) with an intention to spread the religion of Islam. Moreover, more important at this stage of narration, is the introduction of clash between secularism and Islamic culture. It warrants of the dissemination of traditional Islamic values. This description - as well as the one that follows - clearly helps in the formation of image, though not positive, of Muslims. Muslims are supposed to change the modern secular face, after having obtained power in political sphere in France. Tanneur continues:

They [Muslim Brotherhood] want every French child to have the option of a Muslim education, at every level of schooling. Now, however you look at it, a Muslim education is very different from the secular one. First off, no co-education. And women would be allowed to study only certain things. What the Muslim Brotherhood really wants is for most women to study Home Economics, once they finish junior school, then get married as soon as possible – with a small minority studying art or literature first. That’s their vision of an ideal society. No exceptions. School would observe Muslim dietary laws and the five daily prayers; above all, the curriculum itself would have to reflect the teachings of the Koran.

(66-67)

Portrayal of these details alarms French people of possible Islamic rule and their policies. It is Islamophobic in the sense that it shows a clash of Islamic values with European secular values;

consequently provokes people on hatred of Islamic values. As I said, in the beginning of this chapter, *Submission* is a deeply challenging novel. The author seems as if he hunts two birds with a single arrow. He talks of Muslim marriage, thereby connoting Muslims' influence in France. Alongside, he brings forth Francoise, his desolated life (without a family), meaning conjugal life in general in France. For instance, the text talks about the Islamic government's policy on marriage "which will maintain civil marriage as a union between two people, men or woman, but will also recognize Muslim marriage" (67). Contrary to it, the author propels Francoise, a desperate character who – not able to enter a proper conjugal life - feels the happy moments of others. Francoise mentions Bruno, a previous classmate, who "was the only one on our course who'd ended up with a normal family life. The others drifted around, with a little online dating here, a little speed dating there, and a lot of solitude in between" (74-75). Then, in a while, he murmurs that "Bruno and Annelise must be divorced by now. That's how it goes nowadays" (76). It shows the weak foundations of the societal system in France. The author mourns these decadent values and recalls that "certainly, in an era when a wife brought and peeled the vegetables herself, trimmed the meat and spent hours simmering the stew, a tender and nurturing relationship could take root" are bygones (77).

There are traces, in the novel, that demonstrate how – after Muslims take control - rich Islamic countries would support the newly formed Islamic government in France. It alludes to an empire building process in Europe, which is later expressed in the determination of Mohammed Ben Abbes for an empire. In fact, these episodes are mere factionary tales and have nothing to do with reality. At times, it seems like funny to think over these descriptions. However, the author's goal seems to provoke fear in French audience. It speaks of the imposition of Muslim education on Christian children and the support of Saudi Arabia to French

universities. Marie-Francoise speaks of Sorbonne that it “would be a huge coup – Saudi Arabia is ready with an almost unlimited endowment” (68). Meanwhile, flashbacks of Francoise’s life repeatedly follow to make the audience realized of their dead values. Francoise imagines himself with nothing save his sexual agility. He explains that “my cock was the one organ that hadn’t presented itself to my consciousness through pain, only through pleasure. Modest but robust, it had always served me faithfully” (80). A number of episodes with his Jewish girlfriend Myriam - who is only 22 compared to his 44 years of age - shows that drinking and sexuality are the two pursuits of his life. Muslims presence and their influence is also shown harmful for other communities in France. As soon as Myriam comes to know about the impending Muslim rule in France, she gets scared and determines to leave France. She tells Francoise that “my parents are leaving the country . . . they are emigrating to Israel . . . they’re not even waiting for the run-offs” (83). The point is, the author tries his best to create situations after situations in the guise of Islamophobia. In response to Myriam’s concerns, Francoise consoles her that “he [Mohammed Bin Abbas] is still allies with the Socialists, he can’t just do whatever he wants” (84). The word “he” is important to note here. However, Myriam, unconvinced, tells him that “when a Muslim party comes to power, it’s never good for the Jews” (85). Muslims are not depicted, in the novel, as feasible for the whole constitution of the society. The author is of the view that Muslim dominance is risking the multiculturalism of the country. They are considered like venoms that would spoil the land of France. It is repetition in attitudes when Jews were discriminated at a large scale in the past. Jews were considered as poisons, and were not permitted to mix with Christians in 15th and 16th centuries Europe. Tanneur, in his discussion with Francoise, informs him of the jihadists’ struggle in France. France is described in the grip of Salafist jihadists for whom “France is a land of disbelief – Dar al-Kufr” (117). However, there is no connection

shown between the Salafists and the Muslim Brotherhood. Salafists are shown as believing God the only authority. He informs Françoise that “still, even if they’re obsessed with global jihad, the young extremists do want Ben Abbas to win” (117). This point of the story shows the possibilities that may incur in French politics. It warns of the Islamist movements and their affiliations with Muslim political parties in future. Wondering at certain points of the story are the details which urge to accommodate Islam. For instance, the Tanneur, in his discussion with Françoise, informs him that unlike the past – when Islam and Christianity were at wars with each other – it is now the time “with Islam, I think, the time has come for accommodation, for an alliance” (122). In my analysis, this remark shows Islam as this much powerful that - contrary to the battles in the past – it can not be fought with now. It shows that Muslims have now become legal French inhabitants and a political power in France. As example, Muslim Brotherhood is narrated throughout the story.

Ben Abbas is pictured in such a clever manner that readers are left with a number of interpretations. However, a keen analysis of the text shows that the writer, using his astute strategy, depicts him too shrewd to be desired. Occasionally, he praises his genius but readers can understand that Abbas’ policies are clashing with secular values. All the time, readers are strongly notified of his propensities for traditional morality and patriarchal values. Tanneur informs Françoise that “he’s [Abbas is] a moderate Muslim . . . you can’t think of him as some kind of Taliban or terrorist. That would be completely mistaken. Ben Abbas has nothing but contempt for those people” (126). He does appreciate him but readers get in a dilemma when he calls him “the craftiest, most cunning politician France has known since Françoise Mitterand” (126). Use of the epithets “craftiest” and “cunning” again washes away his dignified status. This element is further evident when their discussion turns to Abbas’ inclination to Islamic

fundamentalism. Tanneur says that Abbas has been closely observed and “his plans had nothing to do with Islamic fundamentalism” (127). Sooner, he makes reference to far-right wing, who apprehend that “if Muslims came to power, Christians would be reduced to second-class citizens, or dhimmis” (127). To play on words, the writer associates dhimmitude as a firm characteristic feature of Islam. He says:

Now, dhimmitude is part of the general principles of Islam, it’s true, but in practice the status of dhimmis is a very flexible thing. Islam exists all over the world. The way it’s practiced in Saudi Arabia has nothing to do with the Islam you find in Indonesia or Morocco. (127)

Undoubtedly, the author plays on words. He supports Ben Abbas after which he immediately changes his stance and brings dhimmitude to readers’ attention. Then, in a moment, he tries to find how to defend dhimmitude. To this justification, he says Islam is around the world in its different forms. Some countries follow Islam in its strict sense and others not. In a way, he wants to convey that Muslim rule in France may not be strictly Islamic rule just as it is not in Indonesia and Turkey. One of the author’s concerns is also the restoration of Catholicism in Europe. He thinks that:

[F]or these Muslims, the real enemy – the thing they fear and hate – isn’t Catholicism. It’s secularism. It’s laicism. It’s atheist materialism. They think of Catholics as fellow believers. Catholicism is a religion of the Book. Catholics are one step away from converting to Islam – that’s the true, original Muslim vision of Christianity. (127)

The novelist's main concern is to defend and halt wiping away of secular values from French society. He uses every tool to demonize Muslims to avoid this impending risk. The text conveys that Europe has got rid of Catholicism; however, it says that Muslims dominance will revive it. While they are busy in their debate, Françoise is haunted with his past sexual plays with Myriam. He is occupied in her thoughts and thinks "the image of Myriam on my bed that last morning, in her T-shirt, with her little round bottom, flashed through my mind. I poured myself another large glass of Cahors" (128). A direct criticism on Abbas comes out when Tanneur says that "every once in a while he [Ben Abbas] may let the extremists act out, because even if he really hopes to convert Christians in massive numbers – and who says he won't? – he can't possibly have high hopes for the Jews" (128). Shifting, in this way, from one instance to another, the text emphasizes the undesirable picture of Abbas as ruler of France. His genius, sometimes charismatic personality, seems just an illusion into which the author binds the threads of his core ideas. Similarly, the text describes the reconfiguration of Europe as one of Abbas' ambitions. It talks of how he would bring other Islamic countries inside the EU. It is said that the "first countries likely to join up will be Turkey and Morocco, then later will come Tunisia and Algeria. In the long term, Egypt – that will be harder to swallow, but it would be definitive" (129). Since these countries are highly populated, it is assumed that this merger will help in Abbas' designs. The writer could have spoken of these countries as possible solution to bridge the gap existing in these two largest civilizations, but he is firm to demonize him and to show that "Ben Abbas's true ambition, I'm sure of it, is eventually to be elected president of Europe – greater Europe, including all the Mediterranean countries" (129). As part of his irony and play on words, it is further said that "we'll be one of the world's great economic powers. The Gulf will have to deal with us as equals" (129). Rather than saying that Ben Abbas is playing a game with Europe

– which is why he is depicted in that way - the text ironically says that “it’s a strange game Ben Abbes is playing with Saudi Arabia” (129). These tricky descriptions, thus, leave some clues to portray Ben Abbes’s evil designs.

The last part of the novel is dedicated to Islamic rule and its control over educational institutions. According to the new system, only Muslims can teach in universities. This is why Françoise “is no longer permitted to teach” (148). This part of the novel also extensively deals with women, and the role Muslim rich countries, such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar, would have on educational institutions in France. The novel becomes really challenging at this point of the story and readers are left with enormous confusions in interpreting ideas given in the novel. On the one hand, the text leaves an impression that outsiders are taking control; and the very norms and culture is being swiftly changed. The Sorbonne with “gilded star and crescent above the door” or the offices decorated with “verses from the Koran” and the secretaries wearing veils, of course, demonstrate how a culture is effaced (149). About women, there is a lot to think in this part with lots of confusions. Women, according to the Islamic government, are not allowed to study except courses of home economics. They are supposed to maintain houses. Working men in universities, including converts, will be given opportunities to choose a maximum of 4 women out of their own students to marry them. In a way, it seems that the author strongly criticizes French society. This assumption is based on the speculation - I have made in the critical part of this project – which says: Islam is believed to promote sensuality to entice non-believers to conversions. Islamophobes in the past propagated that Islam allows 4 women to entice people of other beliefs. A lot of criticism is also made on the prophet Muhammad’s personal marital life in this connection. This present portrayal might be a continuation of this school of thought. In essence, the author mourns the values of the European culture – Françoise being an example – and

suggests going for Islam to quench their thirst of sensualities. This seems an irony and illustrates a continuation of demonizing Islam and Muslims. It bears some semblance to Shakespeare's famous line: "Are we turned Turks?" (*Othello* 2.3.133). Just as Shakespeare meant the extent of "savageness" – believed with regards to Turks in the renaissance period - and refers to Turks, in the same way, Houellebecq refers to sensualities in European culture. This argument is supplemented by the conduct of Francoise in subsequent pages of the novel. Having calmed down in his passions for Myriam, Francoise, in times of absence of girls, would watch porn sites. Ultimately, he finds Nadia "a girl of Tunisian extraction" whom he would pay to satisfy his sensual demands (155). Not long afterwards, he "went to see Slutty Babeth . . . [who] welcomed me into her pretty, slightly old-fashioned one-bedroom wearing nothing but a cut-out bra and a crotchless thong" (155). Amid these transactions of his life, his father dies and he doesn't come to know. Myriam leaves him, too, at which moment he has "even less desire to live and nothing to look forward to but aggravations" (162). Despite these incidences in his life, he remains dominated by his sensual inclinations. He surfs and finds two more girls, Rachida and Luisa, who promised "the enchantments of a wild and mischievous duo . . . I penetrated them and fucked them in the arse, one after the other, without fatigue or pleasure" (162). In subsequent pages, the author has created such a situation in which he mourns Francoise's decline. Francoise realizes his faults and the deadness in European life. He thinks that "the mere will to live was clearly no match for the pains and aggravations that punctuate the life of the average Western man" (170). He comes to understanding the faults he had in his life. He recognizes the beauty of establishing a proper family rather than un-controlled erotic life. This is why he comes to the fact that "I should have found a woman to marry. That was the classic, time-honoured solution" (171). It sounds that these frustrated people would finally find solace in Islam in future. Islam

provides strong familial system and just Huysmans “had taken another path, he had chosen the more radical exoticism of religion; but that path still left me just as perplexed as the other,” similarly; they might turn to the expanding Islam in future (171). And this is shown in the end of the novel when Françoise gets impressed with the wives of Redigers and decides to convert to Islam. Much of the writer’s lamentation is depicted through the character of Rediger in the very end of the novel. Referencing one of Rediger’s articles in which:

He [Rediger] hardly bothered with Western societies, since to him they seemed so obviously doomed (liberal individualism triumphed as long as it undermined intermediate structures such as nations, corporations, castes, but when it attacked that ultimate social structures, the family, and thus the birth rate, it signed its own death warrant; Muslim dominance was a forgone conclusion. (226)

The author deplores the weak societal system of modern secular culture. On the contrary, he considers Islam a lively religion, which is still stuck to its values. He gives a number of other points that show Islam as a truly living religion. This makes the interpretation confusing, especially when compared to the many anti-Islamic ironical episodes in the earlier parts of the novel, and one takes him as the promoter of Islamic culture. For instance, he also says that if “India and China had preserved their traditional civilizations . . . they might have remained strangers to monotheism and eluded the grasp of Islam. But from the moment they let themselves be contaminated by Western values, they, too, were doomed” (227). The rest of the novel consistently depicts Muslims’ domination not only in France but also Muslims’ expansion in other European countries.

Holluobecq's *Submission* is and is not Islamophobic. It becomes Islamophobic when it demonizes Islam, brings fear of possible Islamic rule in the people of France (or West in general) in the future. It seems non-Islamophobic when it considers Islam as a religion that promotes cohesive societal system. In fact, using Islamophobia as a tool, the author mourns the dead values of the present European civilization and attempts to make French society wary of an impending Islamic takeover in the future.

Conclusion

Regardless of time period, racism has always been present in one form or another. The Jewish community is often claimed to be inherently greedy, a common discriminatory stereotype that they have had to face in the past. Similarly, a clash between the Christian and Muslim world has been a long-standing issue. In the past, hostility between these religious groups was expressed by means of war, and the attainment of power on the global stage. In order to more effectively maintain power, the Western world attempted to demonize the Muslim image, claiming they are savages and less advanced than other western societies. To understand how literature has responded to these upheavals, Said's *Orientalism*, in contemporary theory, may be closest to accurately describing the phenomenon of discrimination against the Muslim identity. Said presents a number of sources in his work which demonstrates how an institutional mindset of the negative portrayal of Islam has become more standardized since centuries. Additionally, there are traces of orientalist characterization of Islam in Said's critique. It shows that the very word "Orient" implied "Islamic Orient" in the past. He has further raised this issue in the geopolitical context of European and American imperialism. His perspective also signifies how the present day media has been responsible in building an image about Islam or the Orient in general.

A large number of literary works are written to depict this aspect of Muslim representation. These literary works range all the way back from medieval to modern. The contemporary period has witnessed a revival in this representation. However, contrary to the past, the constitution of this issue has changed with the passage of time. Following the publication of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1989), Muslims around the globe reacted violently and it brought forth a new dimension in the representation of Muslims in English

literary works. Commenting on fatwa in *The Guardian*, Hanif Kureishi calls it as one of the most significant events in postwar literary history. These days British society was passing through a phase of cultural racism. Multiculturalism in Britain was under way, as a greater number of immigrants from the past British colonies, particularly of the Indian subcontinent, were living there. This intersection of British citizens and immigrants led to a conflict that manifested in cultural differences between them. While cultural racism was widespread, Rushdie Affair added a new wave of tension overlapped the British Muslim community. Victimized by the already existent racial profiling - in a society where they had been living generations after generations - they could neither define themselves as British nor Indian, Pakistani or whatever nationality they were lineage-wise. *The Satanic Verses* started a transition of identity in the Muslim population, after which they began to define themselves more so as Muslims rather than Pakistani or Indian, for example. The Muslim population became unified under Islam as a single force. In addition, this trend in Muslim community was in utter conflict due to the European Enlightenment's secular values and thinking. Hanif Kureishi's *The Black Album* is a representative novel of the period which recorded this change in attitudes of British Muslims. Although the work is written in 1995, it is set in 1989 – the year of fatwa. *The Black Album* demonstrates how Muslim fundamentalism evolved in the period soon after the issuance of fatwa by Ayatollah Khomeini. This work founded the reception of Islamism in English literary works. Since then, depicting Islamism in relation to secularism has become a trend in the literary circle, particularly in the context of postcolonial English writers. *The Black Album* presents its South Asian protagonist Shahid as he endures a socially isolated life in Britain; becomes part of an Islamist group but he oscillates in his identity as a secular-liberal and a radical Islamist.

Muslim fundamentalism and Islamophobia are two interdependent phenomena. While the former is the cause, the latter is the corresponding reaction to it. In other words, Islamophobia is the effect of fundamentalism. The ensuing period witnessed an increase in bigotry against Muslims; particularly from the West, in response to their perceived fundamentalist attitudes. Although all Muslims are not fundamentalists, Muslims in general are segregated in the name of fundamentalism. That said, Islamophobia against non-fundamentalist Muslims has risen due to Islamophobia, and it has become a core social phenomenon. Muslims are segregated simply because they are Muslims, and Islam is often stereotyped as a religion that promotes violence and repressive laws. It was in 1997 that an NGO, named Runnymede Trust, apprehended the increase in prejudice against Muslims and produced a report “*Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All.*” Just as racial attitudes were affected by the political intervention of Iranian fatwa, racial attitudes were further affected by the geopolitical issues of the time. The 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States were the most prominent geopolitical upheaval which brought forth fundamentalism to the forefront. With the same ratio, Islamophobic sentiments have been escalated on a full-scale. As a result, Muslims around the world face discrimination and harassment, and are mistaken for enemy. Muslim immigrants living in Western countries, are often labelled as militants, terrorists or religious fanatics. In order to deal with this emerging problem, Mohsin Hamid wrote *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Considered one of his most effective works Hamid attempts to bridge the gap between the two sides rather than to inflame this issue. In the novel, Changez, the protagonist in the story, is victimized for his Muslim identity in the US. It portrays a change in the narrative before and after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Hamid’s work proved a counter literary response as it showed the other angle of this issue. Fundamentalism and its side effects on Western values are given due attention, but to know how

non-fundamentalist genuine Muslims themselves suffer of this problem was a neglected area in the eyes of literary authors. John Updike's *Terrorist* (2006) and Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2007), for instance, did present the singular angle of Islamism. However, Hamid's work presented the other side of the story, not often portrayed. It is a departure in fiction and sheds light on the integration of Muslim immigrants and their sense of belonging in the United States. It attempts to solve the problem of fundamentalism and Islamophobia by proposing the idea that the more Muslims are discriminated against, the more likely they would be to turn to radicalism. And the more this community becomes radical, the more the US multicultural society denigrates.

Since 2005, there has been a dramatic increase in Islamophobia. The increase is witnessed due to the ongoing racist attitudes against Muslims, and their religion. Again, the racist notions mainly originate due to the geopolitical circumstances of the US-led invasion of Iraq. The invasion severely damaged the stability of the entire region, and in response, reactionary militant groups formed to fill the void. The ideology of Al-Qaeda and the Taliban spread, and culminated in the self-professed "Islamic State." In other words, ISIL is the continuation of Taliban and Al-Qaeda. Admitted in his interview with Shane Smith, Barack Obama said: "ISIL is a direct outgrowth of Al Qaeda in Iraq that grew out of our invasion, which is an example of unintended consequences." Similarly, Tony Blair in his response to the Iraq war to the Chilcot Report said: "I express more sorrow, regret and apology than you can ever believe." In the midst of all this, the Arab Spring also broke out, which further fueled the sectarian crisis; and thus started a new wave of fundamentalism. *The Guardian* quotes Blair who takes complete responsibility of the sectarian problems. The article said: "He had wanted to set the Iraqi people free and secure them from the "evil" of Saddam Hussein, but instead they had become victims of sectarian violence." Sectarian problems erupted and the brutal acts, carried

out by Muslim militant groups, widened the spectrum of Islamophobia. People in the West take these brutal acts for granted and associate them with the Muslim population at large. Another interesting point to note is the influence of ISIL in Europe, particularly France. France's population has a large number of Muslim immigrants. Surprisingly, a number of terrorist attacks by ISIL on France have been linked with French born Muslims. This concern of Islamism, and its clash with secularism, has become an ingrained issue in French society today. While some have dealt with this issue from a sociological point of view, others have approached it from a political standpoint. In contrast, authors like Michel Houellebecq have taken to literature to attempt to deal with the problem of Islamophobia. His work, *Submission*, is a literary piece written to depict contemporary Islamophobia in a uniquely different perspective. Set in the future, the novel portrays France as governed by a Muslim political party. It is a complicated work and can hardly be applied to a definite interpretation. However, there are traces, hidden in the text, which demonstrate that the author uses Islamophobia as a tool. Using his astute strategy, he takes advantage of fiction and places Islamophobia and secularism abreast. He attempts to bring reforms in French society. Relying on prevailing concerns about Islamophobia, he exposes the populist fear of potential Islamic rule in France in the future. Geopolitical factors - the main argument in this dissertation – are constantly involved and mould racial attitudes in regards to anti-Islamic hatred. The fear of Islam in French society, reflected in the novel, is triggered by the geopolitical situations of the contemporary world, as mentioned above.

A complex issue like Islamophobia can be well presented through the art of fiction. Fiction proves significantly productive with regard to didacticism. Islamophobia is so embedded in world societies that authors can use it to convey the didactic purpose of their works. Though apparently abstract, fiction produces characters that conform to everyday real human life.

Additionally, because Islamophobia is an interesting and hot topic for the common public, part of its beauty in literature lies due to suspense in stories related to this topic. Building a plot on Islamophobia - with an aim to teach and instruct the audience – proves remarkably useful when trying to send a message. With Islamophobia, a new dimension to identity; a commonly found theme in literary works, has been imported in works of literature. In *The Black Album*, as we have seen, Kureishi uses fiction as a framework for his views on fundamentalism in a racist society. His work helps to understand the evolution of this issue. Hamid's work, in addition to its unique narrative structure, proves extensively useful in addressing modern issues related to multiculturalism and otherness in the West. Houellebecq's work shows that this theme has now become an integral part in the literary circle, and may be used to redress other societal issues. All of the three aforementioned novels contribute to unearthing the self-directed approaches to Islam and Muslims in English fiction. Viewers of this document may be provided with sufficient knowledge of representation on Muslims in English fiction. Additionally, it gives a general idea that "outsiders" are more exposed to prejudices in foreign societies. Viewers may also come to understand that post-9/11 English fiction abound with "other cultures," specifically Muslim narratives.

Racism in regards to Islamophobia is a pretty controversial debate being that Islam is not a race. However, racism is a meta concept and envelops religion. Generally speaking, it is constructed by powerful members of a society, and is imposed by the application of political power. The dominated groups' behaviours, customs and abilities are made excuses to declare them inferior in society. Racialization has predominantly premised biological colour and culture in the past. Religion, as a co-constitutive of race, can not be separated from the process of racialization. Its novelty is striking because of the present Western contact with widespread

Muslims in a globalized multicultural world. Nevertheless, the racialization of religion has historical roots, too. In the case of Muslims, it goes back to the advent of Islam in 7th century - or the following crusades, Spanish Reconquista, Spanish Inquisition and European Imperialism - when racial formation was exercised in religious terms. Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* (1599) and *Othello* (1603) are significant pieces that are reflective of religious discrimination in Elizabethan English society. These plays show how the polemics against Judaism and Islam were active in the past. Although the roots of Islamophobia occurred much earlier—starting the very years of Islam's founding—it eventually becomes more prominent when racist ideas based on cultural superiority in the recent past (1980s) transformed. These ideas were mostly affected by the geopolitical circumstances of Iranian fatwa, the recent events of 9/11, and the subsequent interventions in the Muslim world. These present a new layer of hatred and otherness wrapped in religious terms. This creates a mixture of a politico-religious form of racism commonly known as Islamophobia, which is contrary to the racial attitudes in the past that were governed by aspects such as skin color and cultural differences. In order to delve deep into the narrative approaches to Islamophobia, we would need to re-analyze Said's *Orientalism* in a much broader perspective, added by his *Covering Islam* (1981). Shakespeare's *Othello* may provide a more concrete background of Muslims and Islam in the renaissance period, as well. The figural images of Othello depicted in Art History and its visual resemblance with the present day jihadists (particularly the Taliban) could provide scholarship on multiple lines. Moreover, American, British and French policies on immigrants and terrorism may be sufficiently useful to address Islamophobia more effectively.

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