

METROSTANI IDENTITY: A STUDY OF H. M. NAQVI'S *HOME BOY*

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Abstract

Unlike Indian English literature, Pakistani English literature has vulnerable history of English literary production as it is being the nation. Post 9/11 readers from all over the world eagerly waited and read Pakistani fictions, and many writers from Pakistan responded creatively to the demand. H. M. Naqvi's *Home Boy* also resonates the ongoing acceptance of writers of Pakistani origin. The paper looks at various levels of identity representation of the protagonist of the novel, and argues that the author assimilates the relationship between identity and difference.

H. M. Naqvi's debut novel, *Home Boy* (2009) is entirely settled in the US. The narration is focused on three friends, Chuck, AC, and Jimbo. Chuck, nick name of Shehzad, is the narrator who is a Pakistani expatriate, travels to the US for college (Naqvi 4). AC, short form of Ali Chaudhry, is the only official immigrant among the three friends who holds a green card (Naqvi 4). Jamshed, who is called as Jimbo, is the only "bonafide American" who was "born and bred in Jersey" (Naqvi 3). On the city's scene they style themselves as "Metrostanis" (14). In an interview Naqvi describes the characteristics of Metrostani:

Metrostanis populate many cities in the world, from Karachi to Hong Kong to Oslo to Houston, Texas and their personae fuse this and that and the here and there into coherence. They might, for instance, read *Dawn* as well as *The New York Times*; they can take you to the best watering hole in town or cook you a plate of phenomenal *nihari*.¹

The narration of hard partying and consumption of drugs denote that they are living in pre-9/11 New York City. After the attack of September 11, 2001, the three friends go to Connecticut in search of their missing fourth friend, Mohammad Shaman, whom they don't have any contact since the attack. Out of panic and anxiety, they break into his house and finds that Shaman is not home. Alerted neighbors blow alarm, FBI arrives and the friends are arrested on

¹<http://www.dawn.com/news/923264/home-boy-comes-home>

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suspicion of terrorist activity. They were taken to Metropolitan Detention Center in New York City and have been imprisoned separately. Eventually two friends, Chuck and Jimbo are released, but AC is charged on drug possession not on terrorism. Chuck accidentally finds that Shaman is one of the victims who were killed at the World Trade Center. Finally, Chuck irretrievably loses his former club-hopping world, his visa expires and plans to return to Pakistan.

The novel highlights the life of young Pakistani Muslim immigrants in post 9/11 domestic life of the US considering racial profiling and doubtful attitude towards the brown skinned. The novel begins:

We'd become Japs, Jews, Niggers. We weren't before. We fancied ourselves boulevardiers, raconteurs, renaissance men, AC, Jimbo and me. We were self-invented and self-made and certain we had our fingers on the pulse of the great global dialectic.(Naqvi 1)

The opening sentences denote that the young Pakistanis were attracted to the US as part of the American Dream. Since the end of II World War, America has been considered as the Promised Land for political exiles and migration. Yet, post World Wars history shows that the Jews, Japanese and Black Americans had undergone difficult situations to integrate within the Promised Land. By the end of twentieth century Jews and Japanese successfully claimed their position in the US. The third group, Black Americans are still sidelined and live in the margins. Naqvi's thought provoking beginning sentence expresses that Chuck would be speculated as a Japanese soon after the Pearl Harbor attack. Being a Pakistani Muslim, he may be looked down as Jew or Black American. His association of the self with the marginalized people of the history is continued throughout the narration of the novel.

Chuck, the first person narrator of the novel prefers to present the US responses to migrant identities and brings to light the 9/11 discourses. The opening lines of the novel suggest the changing of his attitude. Chuck complains about American life and other trajectories indicate the pre-dates 9/11 American domestic relations with immigrants. At the same time, the friends and availability of care free enjoyment open in the American life make them believe that they can construct their own identities in America. Arguably, these pre-9/11 Pakistani identities are inserting a new take on the background. In the beginning, before the attack, Chuck, AC and Jimbo enjoy American life colorfully spending glamorous life in clubs in contrast with their original identity. There is another group of Pakistani immigrant community who are called as "puppies", Pakistani Urban Professionals(Naqvi, 170). This group has a great resemblance with the early waves of sub continental immigrants to the US. They were working hard for economic security in the migrated country. The word "Metrostanis" coined by AC denotes their hard partying and club dances. They differ in the social scene and shows apparent disregard to the "coveted careers for able Pakistani men" (Naqvi 35). The distance between the "Metrostanis" and "puppies" is very significant. Because, it expresses how Chuck and his friends alienate from the more traditional immigrant Pakistani community who are established and settled in the US.

Chuck's and his friends' attraction towards the American cultural life in the pre-9/11 New York did not extract them from their cultural sameness with their Pakistani Muslim identity. Chuck comments about his host city of New York, "I'd since claimed the city and the city had claimed me" (Naqvi 3). The American life cannot uproot completely from the identity sameness of him with Pakistan, the homeland. The narrator says:

We listened to Nusrat and the new generation of the native rockers, as well as old school gangsta rap, so much so that we were known to spontaneously break into *Straight outta Compton*, . . . *From a gang called Niggaz With Attitude* but were overwhelmed by hip-hop's hegemony . . . Though we shared a common denominator and were told half-jokingly, *Oh, all you Pakistanis are alike*, we weren't the same. (Naqvi 2)

In the process of gaining an American identity, he is drawn back to his ethnic identity when he mingle with Pakistanis. The above statement shows that Chuck did not agree the sameness of Pakistani identity. Identity theories of Castells and Woodward emphasize diverse identity positions of individuals. Castells infers "the process of construction of meaning on the basis of a cultural attribute, or a related set of cultural attributes, that is given priority over other sources of meaning. For a given individual, or for a collective actor, there may be a plurality of identities" (Castells 6). Within the plurality of identities, Chuck faces identity crisis also. Naqvi deals with the identity crisis of the Pakistani immigrants in the US. Post 9/11 American life faces difficulty in the integration of Pakistani identities. Quoting from British sociologist Anthony Giddens, Castells states, "[I]dentities are sources of meaning for the actors themselves, and by themselves, constructed through a process of individuation" (Castells 7). Chuck introspects the "process of individuation" after the 9/11.

AC's older sister, Mini, helps Chuck as a "pillar of the city's expatriate Pakistani community" and more personally as "a foster mother" (Naqvi 22). In the late 1990's when Chuck arrives in the US as an expatriate, he leans on Mini before both AC and Jimbo meets her, and she stabilizes him after his initial expatriate disorientation. As the friendship between three young men strengthen and the narration moves forward, their central concentration shifts to the community of Jimbo's girlfriend Dora (Naqvi 22). Dora belongs to an elite community where culture is entirely different from Pakistani community. Therefore, three young men get an entrée into the party scene where they take on their "Metrostanis" identities. In this self-proclaimed identity in pre 9/11 New York City, Chuck finds himself a place where, "you felt you were no different from anyone else; you were own man; you were free" (Naqvi 20). Due to the absence of difference feel from the city's pluralism, Chuck dares to compare the US and the UK. The US, seems to Chuck more welcoming along with the "premise of the nation, the bit about your bruised and battered" but the UK is "habitable if not always hospitable" (Naqvi 19). In the narration of the novel as Chuck feels it, a pre-9/11 immigrant identity identifies with optimistic pluralism common to much postcolonial discourse. Hence, Chuck finds that difference can be the basis for solidarity.

Post 9/11 immigrant identities experience a sharp shift with which Chuck opens the novel. From the position of migrants they morphed into the list of maligned 'Others'. Chuck narrates his experience:

You could feel it walking down some streets: people didn't avert their eyes or nod when you walked past but often stared, either tacitly claiming you as their own or dismissing you as the Other. (Naqvi 45)

Edwin Thumboo in her study, "Conditions of Cross-Cultural Perceptions: The Other Looks back" discusses the formation of the Other and argues that the Other is the result of "inequalities, and one-sided understanding, compulsions, urges, preferences, and judgments" (11). Chuck and his friends face all of these issues in the post 9/11 America. Thumboo further argues that all of these will be reflected in "a fundamental *difference* that defines the Self as

content . . . a metonym for national identity, sustaining the ‘us’ and ‘we’, as distinguished from ‘them’ and ‘they’, respectively subject and object; put another way, it is a difference between locations that enquire and location enquired into” (emphasis original, 11).

Naqvi questions Chuck’s national identity also in the narration. Post 9/11 witnesses alterations in social determinations and cultural structures of the US. It not destabilizes the social and cultural order of the country but also invoked complexity in individual relationships and insecurity in social life. Chuck’s date with the “Girl from Ipanema” (Naqvi 11) and their conversations indicate the importance of their national identities. The unnamed girl confirms that she is a political exile from Venezuela and announces, “[T]hey take all Papa’s houses. We are leaving. We are American” (Naqvi 13). Her proclamation reinforces American openness to foreigners. Chuck dreams his marriage with her, and imagines that after the marriage he “too would become a bonafide American. In a sense, we were peas on a pod, she and I, denizens of the Third World turned economic refugees turns scenesters by fate, by historical caprice” (Naqvi 13). Their relationship ends when she realizes that he is a Pakistani and not an Italian. An Italian national identity is preferred to a Pakistani national identity even though both Venezuela and Pakistan are part of the Third World.

Chuck and his two friends, AC and Jimbo undergo the most extreme example of the change in the custody of the FBI. The incident represents their inability to claim belonging to the US. In the interrogation, Chuck demands his right to make a phone call to which the officer shouts “You aren’t American! . . . You got no fucking rights” (Naqvi 135). Here, he realizes that how far away he is belonging to the US. Finally, they really feel that their presence in New York City itself is different from other Americans. In another moment, they are called as “*Arabs*” by two brawlers of the bar where they usually sit together and drink. The encounter is altogether a different kind from their usual barroom scuffles. Chuck explains:

Repeating the word in my head, I realized it was the first time I’d heard it (*Arabs*) spoken that way, like a dagger thrust and tuned, the first time anything like this had happened to us at all . . . This was different. ‘We’re not the same,’ Jimbo protested.

‘Moslems, Mohi-cans, whatever,’ Brawler No.2 snapped . . .

Then for some reason that remains inscrutable to me, I rose as if I had just been asked to deliver an after-dinner speech . . . with uncharacteristic chutzpah, proclaimed, ‘Prudence suggests you boys best return to your barstools _ ‘Then there was a flash, like a light bulb shattering, a ringing in my ears, the metallic taste of blood in my mouth. I didn’t quite see the fist that knocked me flat on my back. (Naqvi 24)

In Chuck’s perspective the post 9/11 New York City also changes. The familiar places like, Roosevelt Avenue and Little Pakistan formerly a place where “every other shop seemed shuttered and sidewalks were mostly abandoned by the night patrols (Naqvi 229). This part of the city itself becomes a kind of haunted city for terrorists and absence of people because of the “sweeps following 9/11, many had fled across the border” (Naqvi 229). Descents of Pakistani immigrants cannot claim their roles or their localities in the same way as before. Regular police patrolling and barricades remind them with the message that they do not belong to the city of New York. This displacement hits more violently to the three friends when they return their own locality they once left behind for their Metorstani identity and club scene. Chuck explains this subtle response and the increased silence of these communities:

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After 9/11 we heard not only from family and friends but from distant relatives, colleagues, ex-colleagues, one night stands, neighbors, childhood friends acquaintances, and in turn we made our own inquiries, phone calls, dispatched e-mails.(Naqvi 27-8)

This statement reinforces the insularity feeling of immigrant identities as outside of collective US national identity. At the same time, the immigrants' community from Pakistan pose the Pakistani Muslim identity by default. Therefore, the Metrostanis engagement with the US and efforts to claim national identity of the three young Pakistani men appear as naivety of belief in such self determination.

Chuck narrates very little information about the particular day of 9/11, September 11, 2001. For all the strong influence the attack makes on immigrant identities, the vague references to the events of the day. Chronologically, 9/11 appears early in the novel. Chuck says simply, "two, may be three weeks later we assembled at Tja! Because we were anxious and low getting cabin fever watching CNN 24-7" (Naqvi 7-8). This sentence appears soon after the atmospheric references of the club scene. The beginning of the sentence, "two, may be three weeks later", seems as if it merely refers to some social events. Surprisingly, the later reference of CNN in the same sentence confirms that the denotation of the statement is 9/11. As the narration moves on, after more than twenty pages, the narrator says about another incident occurred on the same day night. The confrontation between the three friends and bar brawlers happened on the same day of 9/11. Moreover, Chuck omits any direct narration of the events of 9/11 even when he is describing his whereabouts of the same day morning. On the same day Chuck goes for a job interview at Midtown. He enters the office lobby and finds "no palpable signs of life on the fifty sixth floor" (Naqvi 120) and he think that it may be because of his late coming. After some time, a "wheezy sob" leads him to discover "ten fifteen people gathered before a window facing south" (Naqvi 120). Chuck joins with them, look over the window:

stood there for a long time, dazed and a little dizzy. I would have remained there for longer had the building not been evacuated, and though I found myself on the street afterward, safe and sound, in brilliant sunshine, I remained in a daze for weeks.(Naqvi 121)

No direct explanation about what he or office workers actually see through the window is given in the narration. This scene would have been a chance to give an eye witnessing account of the incident. But omission of such a narration would be more striking than the narrators' own personal experience. At the same time, the mere mention of the time of the event "two may be three weeks later" is mentioned to express the differences going to happen from the pre to post 9/11 era. Chuck's narrative technique without mentioning any direct engagement with events of 9/11 can be read as his aloof from spectacularizing of representing the violence. Otherwise, these deflections may consider as representational insufficiency to foil expectations and deliberately giving chances for other perspectives. Meanwhile, Chuck's narration includes instances of trauma; for instance, his own humiliated condition and the bar brawl, along with the missing of Shaman and the death of his father.

Three friends set out to find Shaman leads them once again to the transplanted Pakistani community. It also illustrates how the abstract noun enemy of "war on terror" targets the material life of brown skinned men who look like Muslims. Soon after 9/11 attack, the locality of Pakistani community has turned into a place for potential terrorists. As the mystery unfolds, the friends arrive at the place of Shaman. The illegal entry to the house of Shaman at Connecticut

leads to more anxiety to the narration. Chuck comments on the odd situation at the house, “something weirder, instead of cereal boxes and mineral water, the shelves were stocked rows of cigarette cartons” (Naqvi 105-6). Chuck thinks that Shaman is leading a terrible life after seeing all the messy and unhealthy situation of his house.

When they cannot find Shaman at his home, the friends spend their time watching TV. The narrator describes two programs on television in detail. The first program is about a Pakistani immigrant who is in police custody accused of terrorism. The accused was arrested when he had asked by “*a passerby to photograph him against Hudson*” (emphasis original, Naqvi 115;). A kind of uncertainty falls around the three friends and the news story anger and panic them. In the second story, President George Bush addresses the nation and the program airs, “*Our grief has turned to anger, and anger to resolution. Whether we bring our enemies to justice, or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done*” (emphasis original, Naqvi 118). The US has utilized the involvement of media in the post 9/11 narration of ‘war on terror’ and they have been relied for the mass dissemination of their message. Jean Baudrillard contends the media intervention in the post 9/11 world in his essays, “The Spirit of Terrorism. He states:

The spectacle of terrorism imposes the terrorism of the spectacle. . . . Any slaughter would be forgiven them if it had a meaning, if it could be interpreted as historical violence – this is the moral axiom of permissible violence. Any violence would be forgiven them if it were not broadcast by media (“Terrorism would be nothing without the media”). But all that is illusory. There is no good usage of the media, the media are part of the event, they are part of the terror and they are part of the game in one way or another.(13)

The new broadcast that the friends watches illustrate what Baudrillard argues. The media news bulletins propagate the official responses and dilute all other version of the same story. Chuck has been really stirred by the words of the president, “[M]y sense of grief, however, had not quite turned to anger, and anger had certainly not turned to the stuff of resolution (Naqvi 118). And he recites the *Quranic* verse literally crying “*We come from God and return to God*” (Naqvi 121). Muslims used to recite these words when they hear or face drastic incidents. Chuck foresees the treacherous disaster going to happen in the world in the words of Bush. At the same time, the President Bush’s response to the attack is taking a critical distance from Chuck’s response. His emotional ambivalence and his recitation of *Quranic* verse show the inaction and inability of a common man to react. Yet his weeping in the beginning of the program when Bush speeches, remains unclear.

The mysterious circumstances that lead to the missing of Shaman and his friend’s quest for him explore how the three friends are placed outside the national belonging in the post 9/11 America. The novel shows the interrogation of the FBI agents and makes the immigrant identities vulnerable to state sponsored brutalities. The FBI agents knock at Shaman’s front door and informs that they received calls of “suspicious activity in this house” (Naqvi127). AC question’s their authority to break into their house, asks FBI agents to show a search warrant and finally refuses to answer their question regarding their national identities. When the events of this scene goes naturally out of control, Chuck the narrator of the novel decides to cut short the detail as with his eye witnessing events of September 11. The narrator says:

The sequence of discrete incidents that led to our arrest remains somewhat fuzzy, partly because it all happened so fast, partly because the adrenaline coursing through my head

blinded me, but whatever happened, happened with the momentum of inevitability ... I think [Holt, one of the agents], was the first to draw ... Instead of raising my arm, however, I instinctively cowered, holding my head between my hands. I remember praying, *Allah bachao*, God save us. I remember Trig [the other agent] instructed us to *sit-the fuck-down* and *shit-the fuck-up*. (Emphasis original, Naqvi 128)

Eventually, Chuck realizes that he is in the opposite column of Bush's dichotomy, "with us or against us". His conflicted state of mind places him in the "against" camp. The arrest and detention of the three friends occur only because of their unlawful entry to the Shaman's house. Trig, the FBI agent employs the threat of violence to defend the accused person's right based procedures and protocols. Yet the particular circumstances stand against the predisposition of the FBI agents to convict the three friends. Chuck calls the course of action as the "momentum of inevitability". His Urdu language prayer to save them and the recognizable Arabic word *Allah* assert his foreignness and the troubled agent abusively asks him to stop talking. After separated from his friends, Chuck has been taken to "America's Own Abu Ghraib", Metropolitan Detention Center, where he undergoes many painful experiences. He is being asked to "(T)ake off everything, sand nigger" (Naqvi 137) and he has been locked into a lonely cell with backed up, overflowing toilet. (Naqvi 138). When Chuck loses his track of days, he becomes horrified and return to his own realization that his life:

seemed routine, the invective the casual violence, the way things are, the way things are going to be: doors would open doors would close, and I would be smacked around, molested, hauled back and forth between cells and interrogation sessions. (Naqvi 138)

Later Chuck realizes that his experiences are less in comparison with that of Jimbo and AC. AC suffers even worse experience, "pink welts on his rounded shoulders" (Naqvi 227). Chuck comments that the evidence of the violence Jimbo endured is a "jarring display. Tracing the outline of a lash just above the shoulder blade, it occurred to me that if Jimbo had been beaten, AC would have been left for dead" (Naqvi 227). The FBI agents and the government find a breakthrough in their case when they cannot find any evidences of terrorist activity from the part of the young men. AC's drug possession provides the government an escape route. They decide to drop the alleged terrorism charges and prosecute AC for drug possession with which they can claim a sentence of fifteen years of life (Naqvi 245). With the help of sufficient supporting mechanism in its favor, the government does not need to worry about the weakness and insufficiencies of its reasoning, the problems in racial profiling and the continuous violence that resulted.

Chuck mentions that his father had died during the soviet invasion to Afghanistan, but he does not know how he died. Literally, Chuck is without father, and he is uncertain over how or why his father died. There is one more event in the novel where his father's absence becomes a metaphor. When he leaves for the US, his mother gifts him a suitcase, tying together migration and uncertainty the suitcase denotes the missing narrative of him: "There was some story [in the suitcase] but I didn't know it. I didn't know anything about anything" (Naqvi 160). Chuck did not ask anything about the importance of the suitcase to his mother. He confesses that he did not know anything, in other words, he is not interested in the past of his parents. He moves to the US and would be settled there. Chuck's indifference towards the history of his parents is expressed in another statement in which he along with his friends try to achieve the "Metrostanis" identity in the US. They "realized that we hadn't been putting on some sort of show for others, for

somebody else. No we were protagonists in a narrative that required coherence for our own selfish motivations and exigencies” (Naqvi 7). Chuck and his friends strongly believe that American identity could be acquired while they forget their past and incorporate with the life of “Metrostanis”.

The novel does not comment directly on the Soviet invasion to Afghanistan. But in the beginning of the novel, AC delivers little bit long speech about the formation of Taliban and the involvement of CIA in its formation. In the speech AC presents a short history of mujahideen who turned from “Holy Warriors” into the “Taliban, the Bastards of War!” after the 9/11 attack (Naqvi 10). Recalling the Regan administration, AC says, “invited them to Washington and, ah, compared them to the Founding Fathers ... Osama B. was one of them” (Naqvi 12). In AC’s opinion, the Taliban were “all transmogrified into the villains of modern civilization, but you know, they’re not much different from their fathers – brutes with guns – except this time they’re on the wrong side of history” (Naqvi 11).

Even though Chuck doesn’t clearly connect his father’s death with the Afghan Soviet conflict, the narrator of the novel makes historical and political commentary, given by AC, which explicitly makes that link. In the beginning of the novel, AC speaks little bit long about the spread of Mujahideen and their making during the war against Soviet Union, recalling that the Regan administration “invited them to Washington and, ah, compared them to the Founding Fathers ... Osama B. was one of them” (Naqvi 12). Concluding his long history lesson, AC says that when the Soviet Union army left Afghanistan, the US government and army men washed their hands of the region. According to AC, the government referred to the last “great” conflict of the Cold War as “obscure Afghan civil war” (Naqvi 13). To AC, any long narrative of the involvement of CIA and the US in the Afghan war would not be complete and fair, without giving much representation of the Taliban. In the genesis of Taliban, they stand along with the US to depart Soviet army from Afghanistan but post 9/11 found themselves “on the wrong side of history” (Naqvi 14). AC’s narration clearly connects between the two historical moments – the 1980s and post 9/11. Moreover, the narration tries to find out the importance of Chuck’s ambivalences and uncertainties in his relationship and belonging to both the US and Pakistan.

In his “Metrostani” identity Chuck seeks another self to live in the US and he rebukes the same nation when he faces an opposite experience. His attitude towards Pakistan is also untrustworthy. Even though his “second-story walkup” apartment in New York does not have ample furniture, it does have a framed picture of “M. A. Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, playing billiards, biting a cigar” (Naqvi 32-3). Chuck may be drawn to the politician’s own migrant experience as his own, more than the love towards ‘the father of the nation’. In another moment, he expresses his wish to hear Musharraf’s speech and asks Chuck to change the channel when he watches pornography. Remembering the previous speech of President Bush, Chuck expects “there’ll be something about Musharraf’s speech” (Naqvi 113). AC refuses stubbornly, “[N]obody knows what’s going on, but everybody’s busy parceling myths and prejudice as analysis and reportage ... All I want to know is why I can’t get off on garden-variety porn these days” (Naqvi 113-4). AC’s refusal explicitly invokes as a political commentary. When he prefers pornography to Musharraf’s speech, he denotes the obscenity of the later. The comment shows that Musharraf’s dictatorship and his support for American version of ‘war on terror’ are immoral, violent and exploitation than pornography.

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The mystery in the missing of Chuck's third friend, Shaman concludes when Chuck reads an obituary note in a newspaper. The note states:

'Everybody thinks all Muslims are fundamentalists,' said Michael Leonard, a coworker. 'Muhammad wasn't like that. He was like us, like everybody. He worked hard, played hard.' . . . Mr. Shah was attending a conference at the World Trade Centre when tragedy struck. He called Mr. Leonard to ask him to cover for him. A plane had hit the building, he said. He was going to be late.

. . . The story was simple, black-and-white: the man was a Muslim, not a terrorist. (Naqvi 213-4)

Muhammad Shah had been suspected by the media and government officials that he was one among the terrorists who attacked the World Trade Centre. But the truth comes out, he has been celebrated and charmed as a hero. Chuck approaches the note in a different angle, and he reaches into the conclusion that Shaman had been suspected only because of his Pakistani Muslim identity. At the end of the novel, Chuck discard a job opportunity in a prestigious institution and emotionally avert his efforts to become a bona fide American citizen. His girlfriend, Amo, Jimbo's sister, asks, "[I]s there like, any way I can convince you to stay?" (Naqvi 211). He replies:

there's sadness around every corner? There are cops everywhere? You know, there was a time when a police presence was reassuring . . . but now I'm afraid of all the time. I feel like a marked man. I feel like an animal. It's no way to live. Maybe it's just a phase, maybe it'll pass, and things will return to normal, or maybe, . . . history will keep repeating itself.' (Naqvi 206)

Chuck feels that America has turned into a police state, he calls his mother, and tells, "I want to come home, Ma" (Naqvi 207). He turns away from the *land of the free* and tries to integrate his ethnic identity by leaving the post 9/11 US. HasanZayad observes, "the abandonment of New York City thus symbolically represents the abandonment of the Muslim middle class's utopian vision of the cosmopolitan metropolitan cities and its acknowledgment of the limits of first world cosmopolitan utopia" (71).

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