

**Conditional Inclusion: A Comparative Study of Hybrid Identity in Post-9/11 Fiction
(Ayad Akhtar's *Homeland Elegies* and Amy Waldman's *The Submission*)**

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ABSTRACT

*The article proposes a new framework, Conditional Inclusion that expands and transcends Homi K. Bhabha's theory of the "third space" to consider hybrid identity in post-9/11 American fiction, comparing Ayad Akhtar's *Homeland Elegies* (2020) with Amy Waldman's *The Submission* (2011). The study adopts the notions of third space, mimicry, ambivalence, and unhomeliness of Homi K. Bhabha. It examines how cultural background, religion, and nationality contribute to one's personal identity in a space of fear and prejudice. In this paper, instead of Bhabha's third space being a generative space of negotiation, it is a space that leaves the terms for a hybrid subject undertheorized. Conditional Inclusion names those terms: belonging is granted only while a Muslim American subject performs non-threatening. In this article, Generational Hybridity, this cycle is tracked across a succession of generations in both novels. The comparative reading demonstrates instead the cycle compounding rather than helping to resolve across generations, based on the securitized logic of the American national discourse of post-9/11. The essay concluded that the novels demand that hybridity be taken as a necessary part of American identity instead of an exception to it, conditionally tolerated.*

Keywords: Post-9/11 Fiction, Hybrid Identity, Homi K. Bhabha, Conditional Inclusion, Generational Hybridity, Islamophobia, Muslim American Literature

INTRODUCTION

Kamila attacks of September 11 fundamentally changed the political, social, and cultural environment of the United States and particularly among Muslim American communities. The events triggered a heightened form of state surveillance, racial profiling, institutional suspicion, and exclusion from civic life. Post-9/11 fiction is both a space of surveillance and exclusion for Muslim Americans, as well as a response to dominant political narratives in acts of self-representation. Similarly, the political rhetoric began to portray Islam as somehow incompatible with American values of freedom and democracy, furthering the separation between "insiders" and "outsiders" of the nation (Brunet, 2013). As a result, a body of post-9/11 fiction has come to the fore as a major literary reaction that goes beyond retelling the attacks to explore broken identities and the precarious nature of belonging for Muslim Americans. The purpose of this article is to account for this body of fiction as an important, but under-theorized, literary archive of negotiating, experiencing, and inheriting conditional belonging.

This study conducts a comparative textual analysis of two contemporary works that articulate post-9/11 Muslim American subjectivity differently. On the one hand, Ayad Akhtar's *Homeland Elegies* (2020) highlights psychological dimensions of the hybrid identity, while Amy Waldman's *The Submission* (2011) explores its institutional and political manifestations. Despite their differences, however, these two novels share key thematic affinities that become immediately evident when they are considered together rather than in isolation an analytical strategy employed in much existing scholarship.

The hybridity and Muslim identity in the post-9/11 fiction have been studied quite a lot. However, the scholarship has largely assumed that the hybrid space is an emancipatory site of cultural negotiation. This assumption was made on Homi K. Bhabha's (1994) theory of the Third Space. Despite engagement

with one's culture, employment in a professional area and participation in civic organisations, belonging remains unstable. This paper tries to fill this gap by proposed Conditional Inclusion, a theoretical extension of Bhabha's Third Space which highlights the conditions of inclusion and exclusion. It develops Generational Hybridity as an analytical tool of how these conditions get transmitted and reinforced across three generations of characters.

The value of this article lies, then, in two aspects. First, it is a theoretical development of Bhabha's Third Space, in which it details the conditions of belonging that the original model does not account for. Second, it creates Generational Hybridity as an analytical lens through which the comparative analysis is organized across three generations of characters, which alone or in single-generation or single-novel studies can be difficult to prove. In sum, these essays explore a question which is yet to be directly addressed by existing scholarship – not only how hybrid identity appears in post-9/11 fiction but why its instability has survived and re-emerged in the face of cultural negotiation, assimilation, and belonging.

Background of the Study

Post-9/11 fiction is a sustained, literary reaction to the cultural and psychological effects of the September 11 attacks. Earlier stories emphasized the pain of white American protagonists, while later stories began to focus on Muslim and South Asian American characters who were impacted by the War on Terror's surveillance, oppression, and Islamophobia. These texts redirected focus away from the attacks to the ongoing impact of suspicion on identity, citizenship and belonging.

Winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, *Homeland Elegies* follows the story of the first-generation immigrant father and his second generation American son, through the fragile and conditional experience of the American Dream and Muslim American belonging despite cultural integration. In *The Submission*, Amy Waldman explores the political conflicts over the design of a Muslim American architect, Mohammad Khan, for the memorial to commemorate 9/11, highlighting the entanglement of religion, national identity and public memory in the democratic framework.

The novels are complementary in the way they are phrased, though different in story format. While Akhtar's autofiction attempts to look inward into his hybrid subjectivity, Waldman's journalistic stance and omniscient voice reveal the institutional structures that govern Muslim subjectivity. Their comparative reading then establishes a link between the personal and the political and cultural, offering a useful point of analysis in the consideration of Conditional Inclusion under the analytical framework of Generational Hybridity.

Research Questions

1. How do *Homeland Elegies* and *The Submission* represent the negotiation of hybrid identity in post-9/11 America?
2. How does post-9/11 Islamophobia shape hybrid identity across generations of Muslim American characters?
3. How does **Conditional Inclusion** extend Bhabha's concept of the third space in explaining the instability of Muslim American belonging?
4. What do the two novels collectively reveal about the possibilities and limits of Muslim American belonging?

Objectives of the Study

1. To analyze how hybrid identity is negotiated, contested, and conditionally withdrawn in *Homeland Elegies* and *The Submission*.
2. To examine how Islamophobia, trauma, and institutional exclusion fragment Muslim American identity across generations.
3. To compare how the two novels represent the possibilities and limitations of Muslim American belonging.
4. To develop Conditional Inclusion as an extension of Bhabha's third space and examine conditional belonging through Generational Hybridity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Current understandings of hybridity and Muslim American identity are explored after a review of the existing scholarship on *Homeland Elegies*, *The Submission*, and post-9/11 diasporic fiction. It then examines the constraints of this research as the foundation for the present research and the gap that this article tackles.

Initially, Busyeiri & Ruslianti (2022) employ Said's concept of Orientalism to the differences between generations of Sikander's and Ayad's; because of their narrow family context. The results indicated that migration and cultural adaptation were experienced differently by each generation. Solangi et al. (2023) Scholars have critically studied identity in the American diaspora, especially after 9/11 and directly reference Bhabha's work of hybridity when they write, "Fatima proclaims, "It's not our home... No matter how many years we spend here, it won't ever be our home" (Akhtar, p. 49). As an example of the loss of culture.

In his reading of the novel, Hassan reads the novel as a story of cultural crisis and unhomed displacement, while Muhammad (2024) uses Hall's model of identity as fluid becoming to read Ayad's negotiation between American belonging and Muslim faith. Every reading gives light into a part of Ayad's or Sikander's internal wholeness, but no reading reaches beyond the inner psychological state of one family to examine if the same pattern can be found institutionally. The other half of the field is dedicated to institutional, not psychological, dynamics in the research of *The Submission*. Fakhruddin et al. (2023) cite theories of cultural imperialism to demonstrate that, despite his professional prowess, Mo's Muslim identity incites social rejection and Eikonsalo (2017) places the novel within a transformation in the post-9/11 literary landscape from political trauma fiction to political stereotype fiction, in which the latter actually promotes dominant ideas.

In Foucauldian discourse theory, Abderrazag & Serir (2021) read the novel, claiming that Waldman addresses popular misconceptions about Islam by depicting Mo as not easily stereotyped, but not considering his resistance to succeed. Mezouani & Medini (2023) compare *The Submission* and *The Meursault Investigation* using Hall's Self/Other framework, finding that identity is not fixed nor inherent but is socially constructed, while Zabihzadeh et al. (2017) analyze Claire, Asma and Eileen Gallagher through psychoanalytical trauma theory. These readings are richer in their social mechanism, however, they cannot see interior, self-narrated experience of hybridity, which Akhtar's reading of the novel can, as it is contained within one novel, one narrative.

A third collection of scholarship focuses on diasporic fiction in general after 9/11. As for the general context, Khan & Awan (2017) confirm that Islamophobia, for the Pakistani American immigrants, is an othering that limits their social involvement, even if they attempt to do so, while Mansoor (2012) demonstrates how racial suspicion in Naqvi's *Home Boy* forces his protagonist to abandon his hybrid

identity for a defensive one, a pressure that is paralleled by Dr. Latif in *Homeland Elegies*. Ahmad (2013) posits the post-9/11 “global citizen” to be stuck between the “mobility globalization” that he/she is promised and/or propelled toward and the visa regimes and suspicion that limit or even prevent his/her mobility, while Falik (2019) suggests that immigrant identity after 9/11 is actually hybrid – neither one culture nor the other – but both.

In his study of post-9/11 fiction, Versluys (2009) demonstrates how the post-9/11 novel is often transformed into a fragmented mode of storytelling as a way to respond to trauma, while Duvall (2011) notes how the best post-9/11 fiction deals with the tension between personal suffering and the larger social identity in its work. Iqbal et al (2020) discuss the suspended belonging of the protagonist, Changez, in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, while Rashid et al (2025) note that non-Western experiences of that trauma have been largely ignored by Western post-9/11 fiction.

The in-betweenness and identity crisis reoccurs throughout the broader diasporic field, as Saranya (2019) and Ghilzai & Shahnaz (2023) demonstrate, and *Home Fire* (2017) by Shamsie takes the pattern with its protagonist being assessed for her associations, not her actions, revealing how precariously citizenship hangs for hybrid subjects in a securitized state. The same trend of suspicion can be traced over the course of a decade in American cinema as documented by Bayraktaroglu (2016) and is implicit in post-9/11 American literature, which has increasingly attempted to rewrite the racialized narrative imposed on Muslim communities from the outside, as argued by Ahmed (2021).

The common thread that links almost all of this scholarship is an underlying premise that hybridity is a space of thirdness, an emancipatory place that is negotiated upon entry. This precariousness of belonging, which endures despite successful cultural negotiations, career success, and civic engagement, has been largely ignored, although the novels make it explicit through the expulsion of Sikander, the revelation of Mo’s identity, and Asma’s silence. Nor has any study compared the readings of both novels, while at the same time engaging with a generational reading that extends

over three generations of persons in each novel. Below I will show how Muslim migrants and their children survive personal, cultural and social problems after 9/11 and propose Conditional Inclusion and Generational Hybridity, which were developed in full below this article.

Theoretical Framework

This work is based on the notions of hybridity, the Third Space, mimicry, ambivalence and unhomeliness, which can be found in the work of Homi K. Bhabha (1994) *The Location of Culture*. Hybridity is created by the process of cultural contact, new identities through cultural contact, and identity in the Third Space that involves negotiation of meanings and reconstruction of identities. This space offers the “ground on which strategies of selfhood are elaborated, that generate new signs of identity” as Bhabha (1994) puts it (p. 2). Hybridity is also said to subvert fixed cultural binary by Ashcroft et al. (2007). The concept of mimicry is that of partial assimilation (“almost the same, but not quite”), while ambivalence means simultaneous acceptance and rejection, and unhomeliness means psychological displacement. These concepts constitute the main framework for the analysis of hybrid identity.

Bhabha's notion is supplemented by Stuart Hall's (1990) concept of identity as “becoming” rather than “being” (p. 225), which stresses the ongoing process of historical, cultural and social construction of identity.

In this study, based on these theories, Conditional Inclusion is proposed as an extension of Bhabha's Third Space. It takes culture-negotiation and social and political recognition as bases of belonging. Although integration is achieved, belonging is not, it is a recurring phenomenon of hybridity, assimilation, conditional acceptance and withdrawal.

The study builds on its analytical lens of Generational Hybridity to explore how this cycle works across three generations of Muslim American characters. The core of Bhabha's theoretical framework is further complemented by Hall's conceptual input, Conditional Inclusion the original theory developed for the study, and Generational Hybridity the framework used to juxtapose *Homeland Elegies* and *The Submission*.

METHODOLOGY

The research method used in this research is qualitative, interpretive method of literary analysis as proposed by Creswell (2014) account of qualitative research as concerned with meaning-making within its social and historical context, and with Denzin and Lincoln's (2018) description of qualitative inquiry as an interpretive engagement with the constructed nature of identity. Adopting a qualitative close reading approach is justified since conditional belonging is a context specific phenomenon which cannot be adequately captured in quantitative approaches.

The two main texts are *Homeland Elegies* (2020) and *The Submission* (2011), analysed using the Jahn's (2005) narratological approach to characterization, dialogue, narrative voice, temporal sequence and organization of plot, this approach distinguishes how a story is told from what it depicts. The Conditional Inclusion cycle is used to organize textual evidence generational. Secondary data was drawn from the published scholarship, texts, and books compared in the Literature Review, used here to corroborate rather than merely support each interpretive claim.

Analysis

This chapter examines how hybrid identity is negotiated through psychological and socio-cultural tension in post-9/11 fiction, using Conditional Inclusion and Generational Hybridity alongside Bhabha's third space, mimicry, and unhomeliness. Akhtar dramatizes this through Ayad and his family in *Homeland Elegies*; Waldman through Mo Khan, Asma Anwar, Claire Burwell, and Sean Gallagher in *The Submission*. Across five threads trauma, negotiated belonging, Islamophobia, generational transmission, and narrative form both authors treat identity as continuously made by trauma, perception, and circumstance, never secured once and kept.

Post-9/11 Trauma and Hybrid Identity

The trauma experienced by both novels is neither a single event nor a one-time trauma but is instead a condition that questions and reconstructs identities over time, in which psychological injury from the attacks was never a one-day attack or a one-generation attack. This change is marked by the direct observations of the collapse of the towers in *Homeland Elegies*: "Soon enough, the second tower just disintegrated. Right there. Right before my eyes. A column of smoke and powder falling and falling, like some terrible black flower collapsing in on itself" (Akhtar, 2020, chp. 6). Trauma here not only tears Ayad's sense of stable American belonging asunder with the buildings, but it also, indeed, makes it asunder: Ayad is plunged into a liminal, unstable hybrid state that is the novel's final shape. This trauma was not just in the wake of grief, but a sustained one for Muslim and South Asian communities. The Homeland Security Act of 2002 and the resulting climate of surveillance and paranoia extended Muslim and South Asian trauma beyond mourning to psychological distress and social exclusion.

Asma's trauma in *The Submission* is mediated, rather than sensory: it is something that she has witnessed on television, and something she has seen, heard, read, and seen again, from afar, as a Muslim woman outside the dominant narrative of victimhood. This is a good example of the social process that Butler (2004) refers to as unequal grievability, in which some losses are deemed suitable for mourning, and others are rendered unseeable. But the other extreme is represented by Claire Burwell, a white American widow (who chairs the memorial jury), whose grief is socially capitalized and institutionalized, while Asma's is equally "real" but yet unlegible because belonging in post-9/11 America is granted by the

virtue of being racial and religious that is socially acceptable, not personal experience. Asma's search to turn individual sadness into national sadness might gain her acceptance as a mourner, as well as a citizen, but she is not accepted by the same community of mourners she is seeking, and her rejection serves as a means of communication about who America deems grievable. Kanwal (2012) argues that post-9/11 literature connects individual trauma and memory with collective consciousness, transforming private mourning into a broader experience of national and communal grief.

This is overlaid by institutional trauma. In Dr Latif's professional life in *Homeland Elegies*, the FBI's surveillance and the erosion of collegial trust slowly unravel the threads of structural trauma even for integrated Muslim Americans. But Sean Gallagher's loss over his brother fireman is not just grief; it's weaponized; directed against Muslims as a whole enemy. During the public hearing on his design, questions change in intensity from architecture to faith and allegiance, as Mo's own institutional trauma is exacerbated by the condemnation of his garden as "a martyr's paradise" and "a jihadi playground" (Waldman, 2011, p. 189), and as his "Judeo-Christian heritage" is considered "an assault on America's Judeo-Christian heritage" (Waldman, 2011, p. 116) while he argues that it "conveys the experience of loss and the passage of time," and calls on "traditions beyond Islam" (Waldman, 2011, pp. 216-217). Another parallel is seen in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*: though Changez is successful in his career, his identity is being shaped by a hostile social environment. The consequences of trauma are consistent in all three stories: instability of self, fragility of belonging, and a self-made by others and not by oneself.

Negotiating Hybrid Belonging

Ayad Akhtar occupies Bhabha's third space directly, a successful, secular, second-generation Muslim American whose inability to answer the question "I didn't know where or who I was" (Akhtar, 2020, p. 115). His attempts to fit in, suppress his heritage, consider the implications of his skin colour and his faith upon his reception, suggest a hybrid subject, a product of his own will and others, a subject that exists at the intersection of assimilation and cultural inheritance, the process of which Woodward (2003) calls the 'general condition of identity formed through ongoing contestation between fixed cultural poles'.

His father, Sikander, represents the immigrant's struggle to make the American Dream, James Truslow Adams's phrase "a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunities for each according to ability or achievement," come true. A good, successful doctor and later a personal physician of Donald Trump, Sikander is stripped of his license and follows Trump's anti-Muslim policies back to Pakistan to tell his son, "I had a good life there, so many good years... I am grateful to America... I am glad to be home" (Akhtar, 2020, p. 333). Most importantly, Sikander was a first-generation immigrant and had a place to return to when America reared its ugly head. Fatima's negotiation of belonging is different; she is able to maintain Pakistan in her mind, her home and traditions, through food, rather than assimilation; similarly, in Hussain's short story *Sweet Rice*, whose protagonist also carries cultural identity as resistance to assimilation, a similar refuge is found.

The negotiation becomes particularly unstable because in a world after 2001, identity can only exist and is only negotiable between two poles in culture, and there isn't a lot of room for a flexible sense of self. Belonging becomes oppositional, and the questions of who belongs to which group are never resolved but are asked over and over again all the time. In his negotiation of belonging, Ayad's relationship with Asha, a rich white American woman fascinated by his Pakistani background, caps the intimacy of the negotiation. Initially, the acceptance turns into cultural exoticization: At first, Asha desires a definite, legible Muslim 'Other' instead of his real hybrid identity. Akhtar's words, "She wanted the East I carried inside me, the East I carried was confused and contradictory" (Akhtar, 2020, p. 163), sum up this chapter.

The Submission is an institutional parallel negotiation in which a jury of thirteen New Yorkers, including Paul Rubin, will vote for one of two designs for a Memorial: "The Garden" and "The Void". Until his

name is discovered and he is no longer a member of the family, but an outsider, Mohammad "Mo" Khan feels no conflict that becoming an author means harmony between his identity and the place he belongs, until it is discovered. This is different from Ayad's crisis, which is almost self-reflective, a fluctuating self that needs to be constantly questioned; it is a crisis of self that is not selected but imposed upon Mo's selfhood, which is stable and secure until the social world, from the outside, confounds it. Two secondary registers of the same negotiation are provided by Riaz Rind and Mike Jacobs, both of whom demonstrate belonging as mediated by economic power rather than actual social mobility: Rind demonstrates belonging through his wealth, Jacobs simply reformulates the Dream as "*the goal of being rich instead of being equal*". Asma Anwar's request to belong is most strikingly rebuffed: when she tells Mo's supporters that she likes his design, he is interrupted, patronized, and dismissed; he does not get the recognition as a mourner and citizen that his loss is due.

Islamophobia and Conditional Inclusion

Bukhari et al. (2019) argue that Islamophobia is socially constructed through political discourse, media representation, and post-9/11 security narratives that portray Muslims as a threat. Works as a conditional inclusion system that gives and removes membership at random. It is what this article defines as conditional inclusion; it gives and takes membership at random. Dr Latif's case is typical: A doctor who establishes a free clinic for Americans of all backgrounds; his civic investment does not shield him. The longer he stayed, the more he felt he was becoming: "The longer we were here, the more I wondered, who I'm becoming? ... Latif was getting stricter, not only with his kids, but also with him. (Akhtar, 2020, p. 47) He later became linked with the Afghan Taliban, not radicalisation, but the final of a series of natural steps of a man Islamophobia turned into a stranger in every home he went into.

Ayad is subject to a double form of conditional logic, institutional surveillance and professional othering, subjected to extra airport screenings for no reason other than his skin and religion, and having his writing read as either dangerous propaganda or cultural exoticism. This double bind has been captured by Fanon's (1952) experience of being 'othered' and excluded from all of space without first being told he is an 'other'. This emotional labour carries over into his professional work, too, where anything he writes as a Muslim-American is doubly read: either as a potentially sinister and subversive political pamphlet or as a uniquely American cultural curiosity, and thus is subject to the same conditionalities attached to his identity. This generational divide is further accentuated because Sikander and Fatima always had Pakistan as a psychological second home and Ayad had none the latter was totally created by America, and when he is forced to conceal or question his identity by Islamophobic pressures, he lands in a psychological homelessness that his parents didn't experience.

Mo finds himself in the same trap as those who are Muslim, and his Muslim sounding name is enough to get him into trouble with airport security, even though his appearance did not look like a Muslim and is well assimilated; he is also sent to design an American embassy in Kabul, where the job is apparently based on his Muslim appearance, not his qualifications. His parents named him Mohammad to "state their faith in this country", but Islamophobia institutionalized is his most harmful attribute. Asma's fragmentation is exacerbated by the pressure from her own Bangladeshi Muslim identity, as well as by American Islamophobia, and she is never heard as herself, but rather as a token Muslim. Media coverage is the last ingredient in the process; as negative portrayals of Muslims measurably increase public hostility and support for discriminatory policy (Lajevardi, 2021), such coverage of Mo's design does not report controversy so much as manufacture it; Muslim identity is always a newsworthy and suspect factor, as is Islamic garden symbolism, regardless of his intentions. As an amplification system, the media reinforces the prejudices of a vocal minority and makes them appear as public opinion, generating the very atmosphere it reports (Ayloush, cited in Al Jazeera, 2022), a phenomenon which Islamophobic narratives have been fueling for more than 20 years since the attacks.

Generational Hybridity

Conditional Inclusion is not something that fades over time, it grows. America is a loss for Sikander and Fatima (first generation), as their exclusion is not an erasure of Pakistan. The second generation, Ayad and Mo, have no such respite: America is where they're from, and who they are; Islamophobia doesn't get them back down to who they were; it only gets them down to who they are. This pattern is confirmed by the empirical evidence of Giuliani et al. (2018), as they find that the presence of perceived discrimination reduces the sense of national identity and strengthens the sense of religious identity among the second-generation Muslim immigrants in particular, leading to depression and an overall drop in life satisfaction. Ayad's own slow disillusionment mirrors this pattern very well: his sense of American identity diminishes, while his sense of the imposed Muslim one grows, resulting in depression and a reduction in life satisfaction. The pattern persists into other generations, as Brown (2014) shows, with the collective trauma of September 11 leaving effects that linger long after the initial events on that horrific day, and as Verma (2006) reports, among Sikh Americans, who have experienced profiling and pressure to change their appearance and behaviour as Muslims, but were not Muslim themselves.

This compounding is worst in the third generation. At two years old, Abdul finds himself in Bangladesh after losing his father to the attacks and his mother to their aftermath, when they both die. His documentary testimony is the result, and his words reveal it: "Bangladesh is home, but America is all lost; I sometimes feel each place is the wrong place," the condition Bhabha calls unhomeliness, and of which he is unable to be at home in either cultural world. Abdul, unlike Fatima or Sikander, who have left America, in which they lived; unlike Ayad and Mo, who have at least a contested American identity; is not a free citizen, but a citizen of the inherited wound. Inscription, the writing of identity onto a subject, is a process that Asma embodies, as she is labelled as a Muslim, immigrant, and widow long before Abdul takes the consequences.

Mo's subsequent encounter with Abdul's video brings the series full circle: seeing a child without any kind of security changes Mo's perspective on the security he achieved with his own designs. Abdul's testimony reinforces his earlier doubts about whether he should stay in America or return to "home". Sikander, Ayad, and Abdul are three different aspects of the same intricate framework: a broken promise, an unfulfilled condition, an unconsented inheritance. This generational aspect also helps to understand how the first and second generations lose their dreams: while the first generation's loss is of his faith in the American Dream, the second generation's loss is of his identity, since his faith in wealth and status as the price of belonging is what falls apart, and his faith in his identity is what Islamophobia will not let him keep. The novel insists again and again, through the paths of Dr Latif and Sikander, that career climbing and civic engagement will not protect Muslim Americans from this crisis, and that achievement is null and void the moment Islamophobia considers an individual as a representative of a suspect community rather than as an individual.

Authorial Vision and Narrative Strategies

Each author's formal decision on who can be the narrator of conditional belonging is an argument for deciding who has the right to tell its story. Each author's formal decisions about who can be its narrator is itself an argument for who is entitled to tell its story about conditional belonging (Ahmed, 2021). The structural enactment of hybridity in Akhtar's autofiction is to tell the story of a character named and embossed with Akhtar's name and biography, a structuralization that draws from Ricoeur's idea that his self is constructed through the process of storytelling; the self is told by the story. The structural enactment of hybridity in Akhtar's autofiction draws on the idea that, according to Ricoeur, the self is constructed through the process of storytelling; the self is told by the story. The self and the story are structurally intertwined. In his retrospect/retrieval style, Akhtar is able to explore the long-term psychological impacts rather than the immediate reaction, and his personal and cultural familiarity with the experience allows him to explore and investigate disillusionment and the paradoxes of the American dream.

As she writes from the ten-year closer and also as a journalist reporting from South Asia and the Middle East, Waldman instead uses the objective, multiperspectival omniscient voice, giving equal time to Mo, Asma, Claire, and Sean, and providing a camera into competing points of view, the influence of the media, and the process of institutions. Akhtar's first-person voice invites empathetic identification, while Waldman's omniscient perspective provides analytical distance, tracing the social mechanism of exclusion, and not just its interior cost. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* further contrasts: it is second-person, which means we are directly at fault for Changez's judgment, and it reinvigorates the atmosphere of suspicion after 9/11, not just recounting it as fact. In other words, each text resists in its own way: Hamid resists surveillance with direct address, Akhtar resists internal identity by writing autofiction. Waldman resists social processes of judgment through multiperspectival omniscience.

These disparities extend to each author's suggested strategy to the future. The radical honesty of Akhtar's vision is that naming the problems with the American Dream is a fight against it, and that there is no way to become American through assimilation, performance, or repression of heritage. Institutional and civic, Waldman's vision is not only democratic, but personal, with the tragedy of Mo's rejected garden highlighting how American institutions fail to uphold their own stated values, and that the work of challenging the Islamophobic media narratives is a necessary prerequisite for inclusion. Both authors are rejecting assimilation and separation, and instead allowing hybridity to be a condition of American identity, one that is permanent and not conditionally granted or withdrawn. In the five threads that are explored in this chapter, trauma, negotiated belonging, Islamophobia, generational transmission, and narrative form, *Homeland Elegies* and *The Submission* converge on the same underlying claim: that post-9/11 American identity is still fluid, contested, and shaped by outside forces; that to belong is to accept cultural difference as integral to the nation rather than a threat to be managed or a status to be conditionally earned.

FINDINGS

In response to the research questions that guided this study, four findings come to the fore. First, the process of negotiating hybridity in both novels is not a simple negotiation open to the third space, but instead occurs through the four-stage Conditional Inclusion cycle: hybridity is inhabited, assimilation is attempted, acceptance is conditionally granted, and belonging is withdrawn once a character's Muslim identity becomes newly visible. Secondly, this cycle is not ended by the act of any one generation; the first loses a promise, the second loses a self, and the third loses a wound that it had no chance of avoiding, as Generational Hybridity shows. Thirdly, the narrative structures of Akhtar and Waldman are not coincidental, but formalizations of the very cycle that they show, respectively the inner price and the outer mechanism of the cycle. Fourth, both novels end up on the same unstated argument of the possibility of genuine belonging: Where national identity is organized around a securitizing logic of safety, rather than an unconditional logic of citizenship, the novels remain structurally incomplete for Muslim Americans. Together, they directly respond to the study's guiding questions, with each research question being addressed by one of the four findings above: negotiation by the cycle itself, generational fragmentation by the finding of "Generational Hybridity", narrative form by the finding of the formal claim, and the possibility of belonging by the diagnosis of securitized-logic.

A fifth finding comes from the literature review itself: while scholarship on these two novels and on other diasporic literature in the post-9/11 period consistently records cases of conditional belonging, of Sikander's expulsion, of Mo's unmasking, of Changez's suspended belonging, and of Shamsie's securitized citizenship in *Home Fire*, it has not yet identified the underlying pattern that connects these experiences to one another. The pattern is not exhausted even in these two novels, but can be identified across texts in the future by the naming and method provided by Conditional Inclusion and Generational Hybridity, as demonstrated by Bayraktaroglu (2016) and ЛЬНІЦЬКА (2024) respectively for the filmic and the cross-national representation. In addition to the two novels, the findings have a pedagogical implication: *Homeland Elegies* and *The Submission* are usually taught, if taught together at all, as complementary case studies (the interior and the institutional), thus providing a fuller account of how

belonging works in the post-9/11 world than either novel does on its own. The identical class or research pairing would also make the issue of generation apparent in the same way that a single novel course cannot do because the inheritance of displacement for Abdul is made fully clear in opposition to that of Sikander.

The study did have certain limitations, and further research is recommended because of the two novels studied and the qualitative close reading of text, and because Conditional Inclusion and Generational Hybridity do not seek to measure lived experience directly, but rather describe textual representation, there are certain limitations to this study. Conditional Inclusion and Generational Hybridity describe textual representation and would not claim to measure lived experience directly; the parallel findings presented by Brown (2014) and Verma (2006) outside of literary criticism would suggest that the pattern is not exclusive to fiction. A second constraint is chronological: both of these novels were written within about ten years of the attacks they are answering to, and that is a period of time during which it is difficult to evaluate if the Conditional Inclusion cycle has loosened or tightened, or simply continued, in newer Muslim American work, which is where future studies might find themselves. The analysis also focuses on characters with a South Asian and Bangladeshi Muslim background, though the applicability of the cycle to experiences of a different racial and religious background, such as those of Arab American, Black Muslim American, or convert Muslim American communities, is not assumed, but must be tested. Future research could include additional post-9/11 texts already mentioned in the literature review, such as Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, Naqvi's *Home Boy* or Shamsie's *Home Fire*, or a combination of literary analysis and empirical studies of the attitudes of American Muslim students and the general public to test whether the cycle described in this work of fiction can be replicated in the lived experiences of Muslims in America.

CONCLUSION

In this comparative study, I argue that *Homeland Elegies* and *The Submission* both represent hybrid identity in post-9/11 America as a state of negotiated belonging, but unstable. This study contends that Conditional Inclusion will enhance Bhabha's Third Space since even though the Muslim Americans succeed in culturally assimilating themselves, in having careers, and becoming a part of civic culture, their membership is tenuous. This instability, further illustrated through Generational Hybridity, also does not decrease from generation to generation. While Akhtar focuses on the psychological aspects of hybridity, Waldman focuses on its institutional regulation; both novels show that post-9/11 American pluralism is still operating through a securitized logic which serves to manage Muslim inclusion. This study will offer the first sustained comparative reading of both novels as well as a theoretical structure that can be applied in reading the instability of hybrid identity and membership in the post-9/11 and diasporic novel.

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