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(Un)tolerated Neighbour: Encounters with the Tolerated Other in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *The Submission*

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Abstract: The rapidity with which discourses on respect for otherness were replaced after 9/11—almost on a global scale—by those that come close to fascism puts the validity of the idea of liberal tolerance in question. As the image of the Other is defined in increasingly radicalized terms, it becomes equally difficult for the subject, that considers its self as liberal, and the "tolerated" Other to place themselves within the shifting parameters. Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and Amy Waldman's *The Submission* expose the existing problematics in the nature of liberal tolerance and the difficulty of maintaining this attitude after 9/11. In an attempt to understand the underlying implications of the disintegration of the idea of liberal tolerance, this essay uses Slavoj Žižek's concept of the Neighbour as well as Judith Butler's ideas on grief to point out how aesthetic engagements with the world of the tolerated Other may provide a critique of the current condition. At the same time, this article seeks an alternative to the discourse of tolerance.

Keywords: tolerance, Neighbour, 9/11, Mohsin Hamid, Amy Waldman

The time will soon come when we will not be able to remember the horrors of September 11 without remembering also the unquestioning technological and economic optimism that ended that day.

Wendell Berry, *In the Presence of Fear* 1

Wendell Berry opens *In the Presence of Fear* by announcing the end of liberal optimism. The accuracy of this statement manifested itself in the aftermath of 9/11 and the ensuing "war on terror." Discourses on respect for otherness and liberal tolerance were immediately undercut by voices that come alarmingly close to fascism not only in the United States but in nations around the globe. State discourses of security over freedom are promoted by government officials as well as mainstream media to justify even the use of torture. However, the more the characteristics attributed to otherness are defined in radicalized terms, the more difficult it becomes for the subject, that considers its *self* as liberal, and the "tolerated" Other[1] to place themselves within the shifting parameters. Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and Amy Waldman's *The Submission* differ from several post-9/11 works as they expose the intricacies of contemporary representations of liberal selfhood and otherness in a post-9/11 context.

Though reactions to 9/11 take various forms in different media, literary responses are often in the form of trauma narratives dealing with the event as the author's personal and protagonist's individual trauma to be worked through or a collective catastrophe to be commemorated.[2] Others treat 9/11 as an opportunity for oblique social satire. Most of these texts are indifferent to how the image of the Other gets radicalized.[3] In *After the Fall: American Literature since 9/11*, Richard Gray argues that such works "assimilate the unfamiliar into familiar structures. The crisis is, in every sense of the word, domesticated. . . . Public events are measured purely and simply in terms of their impact on the emotional entanglements of their protagonists" (30). I argue that Hamid and Waldman's texts attempt to diverge from this domesticating attitude and locate the crisis in what Gray calls "an interstitial space" (65). In a post-9/11 world in which the Other is increasingly seen as a radical in the perception of the host community, these writers create a space in which "[binary] oppositions are contested: a site where a discourse founded on either/or distinctions is interrogated and even subverted" (Gray 65).

By framing the narrative as the dramatic monologue of a Pakistani "reluctant fundamentalist" and placing the silent American listener

under his gaze, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* challenges easy assumptions about who is the victim and who is the assailant. *The Submission* assumes a similar stance in delving into the problematics of American perceptions of the Other after the attacks and revealing the hypocrisy of claims about liberal tolerance in America. Focusing on public reactions to the finalist design of a fictive 9/11 memorial contest allows Waldman to reverse familiar perspectives on victims and mourners as well as the ideal of American multiculturalism. Although Waldman's novel focuses more on "the home front" than Hamid's, each work reveals the illusory nature of the liberal discourse of tolerance and the impossibility of maintaining that illusion in emerging representations of self and Other after 9/11.

In an attempt to understand the underlying implications of this illusion and its disintegration, Slavoj Žižek's concept of the Other as Neighbour is particularly useful. In *Violence*, he explains how the adoption of an attitude of "liberal tolerance"—a respect for otherness—in late-capitalist societies creates an uneasy relationship between the host society and what he calls the Neighbour.[4] The position of the Neighbour is tolerated at best. This politically correct tolerance is hypocritical as it could potentially turn into hostility at any time. Because the Neighbour is close to the self, it poses a threat to the internal psyche and the very core of personhood.

By utilizing Žižek's concept of the Neighbour, the first part of this essay explores how aesthetic engagements with the world of the tolerated Other, such as *The Submission* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, provide a critique of the current global social conditions. Since Waldman's novel is also interested in how the precarious image of the Neighbour operates in experiencing crisis and working through trauma, the second part of this essay introduces the concepts of mourning and memorial in addition to the idea of tolerance. My analysis of *The Submission* within the framework of Judith Butler's discussion of grievability aims to reveal how the change in the position of the Neighbour complicates the individual processes of grief and mourning. The final part of this essay analyses whether the endings of these creative texts offer an alternative to the liberal discourse of tolerance.

Žižek begins *Violence* by arguing that a direct confrontation with "the overpowering horror of violent acts and empathy with the victims" (4) would cloud our vision and prevent us from thinking. Instead, he favours what he calls "a sideways glance" (3) at violence.

Hamid's novel takes such a sideways glance by not focusing on the experiences of Western victims but the perspective of the Pakistani "reluctant fundamentalist," Changez. Tracing the protagonist's transformation from an up-and-coming executive in an American company to an anti-American political activist, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* tells the story of Changez's realization not only that he is the tolerated Neighbour but also that his sense of Americanness is the tolerated Neighbour in him.

Žižek, drawing from Freud's and Lacan's critique of the Judeo-Christian dictum "love thy neighbour," argues that the figure of the Neighbour is more problematic than it seems. The statement excludes those who are not identified as my neighbour from my love. In other words, I am not required to love the one who is not my neighbour. However, the statement denies this exclusion by focusing on the call for love as if it is universal. In a similar manner, Žižek also argues that "[t]he Christian [inclusionist] motto 'All men are brothers' . . . also means that those who do not accept brotherhood *are not men*" (*Violence* 54; emphasis in original). He concludes that "Christian universalism tendentiously excludes non-believers from the very universality of humankind" (55). According to Žižek, the seemingly universal empathy and compassion that is promised in these principles contains an inherent paradox since each one involves an exclusion of otherness yet focuses on the abstract possibility of universal love. Indeed, he claims that this paradox might be found in every set of ethics since all, in the end, rely on what he calls a "fetishist disavowal" (53)—forgetting or refusing to see suffering or ignoring otherness. He sums up this attitude as a kind of internal moral gymnastics: "I know, but I don't want to know that I know, so I don't know" (53). Among Žižek's examples of disavowal are the spectatorial position of the Western sympathisers of communism (51) and non-involved sympathisers of the French Revolution (52) who each ignore the atrocities involved in the respective regimes and celebrate them as philosophical ideals. Similarly, "fetishist disavowal" can also be found in

the forgetting employed by those who go on eating meat after visiting a slaughterhouse or continue living mundanely after watching torture (53). Žižek concludes that "an exclusion of some form of otherness from the scope of our ethical concerns is consubstantial with the very founding gesture of ethical universality, so that the more universal our explicit ethics is the more brutal the underlying exclusion is" (54).

In Hamid's novel, Changez, a twenty-two-year-old Pakistani educated at Princeton, is drafted by Underwood Samson, a multinational valuation company that claims to focus only on basic financial fundamentals. At the beginning of his employment, Changez willingly positions himself as what Juan-Bautista, the chief of a publishing company Changez later values in Chile, calls a "modern-day janissary" (Hamid 173). In a way, he is a janissary carefully sifted by a meticulously pragmatic system from among the best and brightest around the globe. However, this system of assimilation seems to work with mutual consent, at least to a certain degree. Changez initially embraces his success at Underwood Samson: "I felt bathed in a warm sense of accomplishment. Nothing troubled me; I was a young New Yorker with the city at my feet" (51). He felt he belonged to the "brotherhood" (Žižek, *Violence* 54). The liberal all-encompassing tolerance of the globalised capitalist economy presented opportunities for global inclusiveness. Accordingly, his fellow team members were a carefully selected, "diverse" (Hamid 42) group consisting of a woman, a Caribbean American, a Pakistani, and a gay white American. But Changez notes that in other ways the group was not diverse at all: they were "virtually indistinguishable" (43) with their similar Ivy League educations, self-confidence, and presentably fit bodies. More importantly, all were chosen for their efficiency—the most valued merit in a capitalist system.

Speaking not directly of Hamid's novel, Žižek criticises this hypocritical veneer of diversity in politically correct liberal discourses on "respect for otherness" (*Violence* 41). He argues that "the Other is just fine, but only insofar as his presence is not intrusive, insofar as this Other is not really other. . . . My duty to be tolerant towards the Other effectively means that I should not get too close to him, intrude on his space" (41). Changez notices this attitude in the way his girlfriend Erica's father ap-

pears to respect his faith by asking him whether he drinks. Changez also senses a "typically American undercurrent of condescension" in the father's "*Wall Street Journal* remarks" (Hamid 63) about the failing economy, corruption, and rising fundamentalism in Pakistan. In return, Changez exploits and utilizes his own foreignness to his advantage by often bringing up the "ethnic exception clause" (55). But the moment his ethnic otherness reaches the limits of accepted distance, he feels the awkwardness of his situation as the tolerated Other. For instance, at a dinner table when one of his friends asks the guests about their future dreams, Changez jokingly expresses his desire to become "the dictator of an Islamic republic with nuclear capability" (33) and the atmosphere immediately becomes tense. His joke pushes the boundaries of political correctness and hence shocks the "tolerant" guests at the table.

This instance seems to convey the thin line between "the figure of the Neighbour as the imponderable Other"[5] and the category of the "absolute Other" (Žižek, *Violence* 55). The first could be tactfully respected, but the second is totally foreign. It is therefore less than human and could be excluded from universal human brotherhood and compassion. The absolute Other could then be harassed, tortured, and killed. The Neighbour as the imponderable Other, at any time, runs the risk of being perceived as the absolute Other. Indeed, in Changez's case we see how quickly his politically correct and tolerated position turns into a bizarre, unwanted, and dangerously alien one.

The figure of the Neighbour is problematic, according to Žižek, because it is the materialisation of the uncanny in us. By projecting all that is not the self, i.e., all the secret exclusions I make, onto the figure of the Neighbour and keeping it at a respectable distance, I am also distancing the inhuman aspect of the Neighbour in me. This aspect can also be associated with the idealised dimension of the Real, the desired yet never achieved potential with its uncanny ghostly presence. For Žižek, it is this proximity of the "dimension of the Neighbour" to the self that makes the Other so threatening (*Violence* 45).

Changez also feels the uneasiness of the ambiguity of his situation. He is fascinated by and proudly lives the American dream and at the same time is deeply bothered by certain aspects of this life, such as

spending more than what his father earns in a day on a couple of after-work drinks or ordering around the elderly employees in the companies he values. When he is valuing companies in countries in "the East" (Hamid 73), these conflicting feelings cause him "to act and speak . . . more like an American" (74). Changez's mimicry of the American executive often causes him to feel ashamed. This becomes most disturbingly apparent to Changez in the Philippines when he catches, from his limousine, an "undisguised hostility" in the gaze of a Filipino jeepney driver. Changez thinks a lot about why this instance "got under [his] skin" (76). Insignificant and momentary as it may seem, the driver's gaze haunts Changez and he explains how he shares with the Filipino "a sort of Third World sensibility" that urged him to view his colleagues as foreign and himself as play-acting (77). Similarly, he is annoyed by the "Americanness of his own gaze" (140) when he visits his home in Pakistan shortly after 9/11. His initial reaction was to see how shabby, gloomy, and dated his home is. Once he casts away this judgemental and patronizing gaze, however, he realises that it had not changed much since he left.

Changez's gradual estrangement from Americanness is immensely accelerated after the 9/11 attacks. He is angry about aggressive US policies in general and frustrated about his own ineffectiveness regarding the situation in Pakistan. Moreover, he is burdened with a sense of guilt and betrayal for his in-between position, which makes him feel complicit with US practices. Notably, the rage Changez feels results in an awakening to the otherness within him, the realization of his situation as the Neighbour, which he always intuitively felt but never so acutely registered. He easily adopted and entertained the idea of being a New Yorker, succumbing to the "open-mindedness and—that overused word—the cosmopolitan nature of New York" (Hamid 55). He explains that while he used to "have the feeling of seamlessly blending in" on the New York subway, where his skin colour fell in the middle of the spectrum, after 9/11 he was subjected to verbal abuse and was at the centre of "whispers and stares" because of his beard (148).

As much as Changez is the tolerated Neighbour for his American colleagues and friends, Americanness in him as well as in other people is

the tolerated Neighbour for Changez. This attitude becomes apparent in the objectified status of Changez's American listener. As the silent addressee of Changez's dramatic monologue, the American is constantly under Changez's gaze. Hamid's novel appears to be primarily about Changez's endeavour to explain himself; however, it is as much about his interpretation—through constant deductions—of the silent American. Throughout the narrative, the reader only has access to Changez's version of the American, and despite Changez's conscientious and hospitable remarks, a passive-aggressive cynicism comes through in his voice. Thus, the reader's impression of the American is entirely shaped by this attitude.

Indeed, Changez's realization that Americanness is his tolerated Neighbour comes as a surprise. With 9/11, he becomes aware of this psychological phenomenon that manifests itself in his social interactions both in the US and Pakistan. Changez harboured resentment for American economic dominance as well as the aggressively neoliberal economic values he adopted, both of which ultimately caused his initial reaction to the terrorist attacks: to smile at the collapse of the twin towers. He says: "Yes, despicable as it may sound, my initial reaction was to be remarkably pleased. . . . I was caught up in the symbolism of it all, the fact that someone had so visibly brought America to her knees" (83). At the same time he found it difficult to understand "why a part of [him] desired America harmed" when he was a "product of an American university, earning a lucrative American salary and infatuated with an American woman" (84).

This controversial reaction likely causes serious resentment and even disgust in the reader, which is manifested in the silent American's clenched fist. Indeed, on a BBC radio show aired on 7 March 2009 an American reader commented on this scene: "Changez's smile brought us [the members of the Princeton book club] to a full stop; we lost sympathy with him and read the rest of the novel very cautiously" (qtd. in Gilbert). However, Hamid claims that the instance is based on his observation of Londoners in a local gym, where he happened to be when the first tower collapsed on a live broadcast. Hamid remarks: "I looked around and saw that some people were smiling. These weren't people

who looked like me; they were white people. For days, I saw this recurring, people happy, people joking. If I mentioned the human suffering to these people, some said they were ashamed of the way they felt. It was the symbolism of the act that pleased them" (qtd. in Kaplan).[6]

Terrifying as it appears to be, Changez's reaction is very much like the mixed sentiment that dominated non-American media during the immediate aftermath of the attacks. There was extensive coverage of the tragedy of those who died in the attacks: a repetitious replaying of the movie-like collapse of the twin towers, interviews with survivors, and memorial ceremonies held on the spot that came to be known as Ground Zero. Yet an underlying notion was present that somehow the US reaped what it sowed for its foreign policies in general and for its former support of the Afghan *mujahideen* against Russia in particular. These critical sentiments increased in non-American media especially after images and news of first the American retaliations against Afghanistan, then the establishment of the Guantánamo Bay prison, and finally the occupation of Iraq began to flood television screens. Individuals may still have had the capacity to feel compassion for the victims of the terrorist attacks, but when America—as a capitalist power oppressing the greater part of the world—became objectified as the Other, their ability to feel sympathy diminished.

This paradox can be explained by Žižek's argument that the Neighbour is the materialization of the feared Other within us and a devastating act of violence taps into deep-rooted sentiments and anxieties. The overwhelming shock of the 9/11 attacks was partly due to the seeming suddenness and the lack of immediate reason for a violent outburst of this magnitude. According to Žižek, "the fundamental systemic violence of capitalism" is uncanny because it is objective, anonymous, and not attributable to specific individuals (*Violence* 12). Therefore, when people react to capitalism in what he calls subjective violent outbursts, this response seems to appear out of nowhere. This internalized uncanny dimension of capitalism is what Changez seems to react to through his smile.

Hamid's novel also invites the reader to draw parallels between the political situation and the love relationship it depicts. The dys-

functional love triangle that Changez finds himself in and extreme public and media reactions to 9/11 trigger the same emotional response. Žižek explains the uncanny resemblance of the loved one to the Neighbour: "[T]he position of the beloved is so violent, traumatic even: being loved makes me feel directly the gap between what I am as a determinate being and the unfathomable X in me which causes love" (*Violence* 57). The lover idealizes the beloved by attributing what is not there and excluding his or her negative aspects. In allowing someone to love us, we lower our defences, making ourselves vulnerable to the Other.

When Changez falls in love with Erica, she seems to be suffering because of her inability to distance herself from an/Other she let in that is now gone. She experiences an acute sense of longing for the absent lover. She feels "alive" only when she is talking about her dead lover Chris just as Changez's soul is animated when he talks about home. The novel draws parallels between the repressed thoughts about Chris in Erica and about Pakistan in Changez that 9/11 evokes.

The narrative relates the nostalgia felt for a missing beloved and the kind of political nostalgia America is engaged in after the 9/11 attacks. Changez notices the "retro" feel in the proliferation of flags, uniforms, and generals on TV and the emphasis on duty and honour in the headlines (Hamid 130). He is confused about what the Americans long for: "[A] time of unquestioned dominance? of safety? of moral certainty? I did not know" (131). Both this nostalgia and pining for a loved one arise from a longing felt for a lost/lacking object of desire, which proves to be destructive.

To understand the destruction Erica's nostalgic infatuation brings to her, it is useful to ask the question: What does Changez represent for Erica? In the beginning he is perhaps an object of scrutiny: foreign, exotic, and interesting; or, rather, a safe harbour from everyday chaos. But later, he comes too close to touching the untouchable dimension of the Neighbour in her. Changez becomes the physical surrogate for that ghostly Other she lost, and in his unobtrusive affection, rather paradoxically, he gradually breaches that tolerated and respected distance one keeps between the self and the Other.

Their triangular sexual experience is both surreal and uncanny with the dead rival haunting both Erica and Changez. It is intimate and intense but at the same time, as Changez expresses, it feels violating for both parties. Changez feels ashamed in complex ways since he is conscious of both doing Erica harm and betraying himself. The experience increases Erica's desperate nostalgia and pushes her into a more severe depression from which she does not recover. And consequently, Erica's disappearance causes a similarly strong feeling of nostalgia in Changez. He admits he too often withdraws into a fantasy world where he imagines a whole life with her. Changez explains his mood: "It is not always possible to restore one's boundaries after they have been blurred and made permeable by a relationship: try as we might, we cannot reconstitute ourselves as the autonomous beings we previously imagined ourselves to be. Something of us is now outside, something of outside is now within us" (197). Similar to that of the beloved, any encounter with the ghostly dimension of the Neighbour is an internal act of violence for the psyche and the very core of personhood. That ghostly dimension of the Neighbour is always present in the psyche of the tolerant liberal. Any encounter with the Neighbour is potentially threatening. Under "normal" circumstances, one can keep the distance necessary to maintain the illusion that the Neighbour is an entity whose otherness should be tactfully respected; however, in the case of a traumatic event such as 9/11, that distance is breached and maintaining the illusion becomes impossible. In moments of crisis, the ghostly dimension of the internalized Other surfaces to awareness.

Another work that deals with various aspects of this ghostly dimension of the Neighbour, especially in relation to mourning and memorial, is Waldman's *The Submission*. The novel depicts how 9/11 changed the lives of its protagonists but places that change in the web of relations where different discourses, in Gray's terms, "reflect and refract, confront and bleed into one another" (55). Waldman's novel is about the result of an anonymous competition for the design of the 9/11 memorial for Ground Zero. When the jury members—a group of intellectuals, legal and bureaucratic experts, as well as a family member of a 9/11 victim—finally come to a conclusion after long debates and negotia-

tions, they are all perturbed to discover that their chosen design belongs to a Muslim American, Mohammed Khan. The bickering and arguments raised against the result within the jury foreshadow the tempest to come: once the name and the background of the designer is leaked to the press, all hell breaks loose.

Khan is a promising and ambitious young architect working for a multinational construction firm. However, the public hysteria that follows the leak transforms him from a professional New Yorker with a bachelor's apartment and occasional pretty girlfriends into a bitterly disappointed recluse. Likewise, the growing controversy affects Claire Burwell's life in a similar manner, since she is the only jury member who lost a loved one in the attacks. Even though she initially defends Mohammed's "The Garden," Claire slowly begins to question not only the meaning of the design but also the designer's intentions. The events following the breaking news about the identity of the finalist designer shatter the widow's self-image as a tolerant liberal and reveal the designer's position as the tolerated Neighbour.

In the process, Mo (the narrator's nickname for Mohammed) realizes the precariousness of his position as the Neighbour. Mo not only feels American but *is* one—until he is not. The reader is given the story of the Khan family in the form of a background-check report read by the jury chairman, Paul. Mo's parents emigrated from India in 1966 and became a typical upper-middle-class family with respectable intellectual jobs and a mortgage. Thus, Mo is initially incredulous when he is detained at the airport a week after the attacks. While waiting alone in a cell-like room, he keeps thinking about how absurd the process is. He is not only a law-abiding American citizen but is also, as the son of "parents . . . [who] made modernity their religion, [and were] puritanical in their secularism" (Waldman 28), almost a nonbeliever. However, as he is waiting, he gradually moves from feeling misunderstood and in desperate need of explaining himself to being offended in the face of the unjust treatment he receives. Finally, he falls into an angry, almost hostile, silence with the Kalima on his mind. This instinctive gush of faith, which he finds ironic, intensifies as the attacks against his work and identity increase. As Mohammed's treatment by once-tolerant crowds shifts, he begins

to feel the awkwardness of his position. In response, he grows a beard and then, for the first time in his life, fasts during Ramadan. However, these instances are acts of protest rather than faith—a protest as much against his own attitude, which "had become gingerly, polite, careful to give no cause for alarm or criticism," as against the way he is treated (25). He chooses to leave the US as a result of his growing frustration with being ostracized. Over the course of the novel, Khan moves out of his apartment, lives out of a suitcase in various hotels, and gradually becomes alienated from his friends, girlfriends, and even parents. His attachments dissolve one by one until there is nothing to hold him in the US. In other words, Mohammed's world shatters when he realizes that he is not an ordinary American but the tolerated Neighbour.

The Submission also reveals that an attitude of liberal tolerance is impossible to maintain after 9/11. Claire begins the process as the most avid supporter of Mo's memorial design but ends up being the one who shuts it down. When challenged under pressing conditions, the liberal humanist discourse of tolerance becomes dysfunctional in either projecting one's identity or interpreting and responding to the identity of another, which suggests that the discourse of liberal tolerance was possibly illusionary to begin with. The psychological stages Claire moves through during the process cause her to question her past decisions and acknowledge the profound influence of others in her life choices. It is shocking for Claire to discover that what she thought inherent to her character is cracking under pressure to the extent that she feels that "all these different Claires, who just happened to look alike, seemed to rest inside her, so that every argument, no matter how contradictory, found sympathy. Each time she thought she had reached the last Claire, the true and solid one, she was proved wrong. She couldn't find her own core" (235).

Focusing on some of the larger questions the novel deals with can help to understand why Claire is unable to find "her own core." These questions include the implications of mourning and memorial, how these concepts become the site for the interaction of conflicting discourses, and how these ideas resonate with the concept of the Neighbour. The entanglement of private and public loss in a memorial may be a good

place to begin. In *Precarious Life*, Butler explains and questions the notion of public grievability. She begins her argument by pointing out the politicizing nature of mourning: "Many people think that grief is privatizing, that it returns us to a solitary situation and is, in that sense, depoliticizing. But I think it furnishes a sense of political community of a complex order, and it does this first of all by bringing to the fore the relational ties that have implications for theorizing fundamental dependency and ethical responsibility" (22). A memorial is a structure built to remember a significant event or a dead person. But who does the remembering? Memorials are aesthetic pronunciations of both private and public loss. In particular, the memorials of a large-scale tragic event are simultaneously symbols of personal and intimate loss for the families of the dead and national and international statements, often of a political kind. These two different needs may sometimes clash, as they do in the case of "The Garden" and "The Void"—the two finalist designs for the 9/11 memorial contest in *The Submission*. In fact, the designs appear almost antithetical: an organic garden—flexible, alive, peaceful, welcoming, and in need of tending—versus a gigantic granite monument—cold, rigid, lifeless, aggressive, phallic, and distant. Despite the name of the latter monument, the narrator insists that "there was nothing void-like about it. A towering black granite rectangle, some twelve stories high, centered in a huge oval pool, it came off in the drawings as a great gash against the sky" (Waldman 4). To Ariana, the sculptor, and to those jury members who did not actually lose a loved one in the event, the memorial is a symbol that stands both as a reminder of the "visceral, angry, dark [and] raw" (6) aspects of the day and as a national statement about the power and resilience of the country, which should intimidate the "enemy." For this purpose, a garden would be too soft and hence too weak a symbol. But for those, like Claire, whose losses are more intimate, "such abstraction [as a memorial] worked when humans could lay their hands on it, draw near enough to alter the scale" (4). Claire believes that a memorial should provide a tangible medium, a spatial marker where families can mourn their loss—much like a gravestone would do. And in this case, the memorial is the gravestone as it is to be built on Ground Zero, where fragments of the victims exist.

For this reason, it is very difficult for Claire to accept the design with all the implications that are attributed to it after the controversy about its meaning. She wants to see "The Garden" free of all associations and free of its designer, but no matter how much she tries, she cannot shake her desire to know his intentions. Claire's challenge reveals the problem inherent in liberal tolerance. The idea entails accepting and respecting all differences, which may undermine one's sense of a coherent self. The tolerant liberal often allows competing ideas, values, and beliefs to exist in him or her in an ostensibly harmonious manner until, like Claire, he or she is forced to make a choice. The all-embracing attitude of tolerance does not work in a case such as the memorial when emotional investments are as intimate as Claire's.

In addition to the implications of the idea of a memorial, the way *The Submission* deals with the concept of grieving may also shed light on the dysfunction of the discourse of tolerance after 9/11. The novel portrays how, in the months following 9/11, the families of the dead came to possess a quasi-magical iconic power. This aura is partly due to the media's mythologizing process, which feeds off of the image of the suffering widows and family members by playing the footage of their grief, comments, and feelings over and over again. It is also partly due to the imposition that others adopt a politically correct manner and be respectfully polite about their suffering. Claire is only one member of the jury, but somehow her ideas count more than others and her mourning is more legitimate than that of others: "They'd all lost, of course—lost the sense that their nation was invulnerable; lost their city's most recognizable icons; maybe lost friends or acquaintances. But only she had lost her husband" (Waldman 3). However, the novel questions this sense of entitlement to the exclusive right to mourn.

As the chosen voice of the mourning families, Claire seems to have a privileged position not only among the jurors but also among the families. The inequality among them is manifested in founder of the Memorial Support Committee Sean Gallagher's aggression toward Claire. What seems to resonate in the clashing stratification amongst the grieving families is class difference. Sean is the brother of a fallen firefighter. As a community college dropout, part-time plumber, and

borderline alcoholic, he is haunted by his brother's achievements. The anti-Muslim/anti-design campaigns he leads give him, maybe for the first time in his life, a sense of belonging and purpose. Thus, Sean resents the fact that the young widow of a wealthy businessman is deemed a more suitable spokesperson for the entire group than a blue-collar man of Irish descent like him. However, regardless of social stratification, *The Submission* questions whether grief licences anyone to assault Muslim women or stalk fellow family members of the deceased, as Sean Gallagher does, or legitimizes a catechizing attitude toward others, as Claire assumes toward Mohammed. More importantly, the novel lays bare the complications involved in the issue of entitlement by focusing on the kind of loss that the American public is not willing to recognize. In introducing Asma Anwar, the pregnant widow of Inam, an illegal Bangladeshi immigrant who was cleaning offices in the towers during the attack, the novel asks: "How could you be dead if you don't exist?" (70).

Butler's arguments in *Precarious Life* may shed light on this question. She explores public grieving in the form of obituaries and discusses the issue on an ontological level by asking the question: "[*W*]hat *makes for a grievable life*?" (20; emphasis in original). Butler argues that those who do not fit in with "the normative notion of the human," which has been determined by "the contemporary workings of [Western] humanism," are ontologically considered unreal (34). She discusses how this process of "derealisation" first occurs at the level of discourse, which then triggers physical violence. She considers how millions of people who lost their lives as a result of American air strikes in Iraq and Afghanistan lacked faces and names and were denied obituaries in any form of mainstream media.[7] Butler points out the implications of this denial and how it is an extension of the derealisation process:

> If there were to be an obituary, there would have had to have been a life worth valuing and preserving, a life that qualifies for recognition. . . . I think we have to ask again, and again, how the obituary functions as the instrument by which grievability is publicly distributed. It is the means by which a life becomes,

> or fails to become, a publicly grievable life, an icon for national self-recognition, the means by which a life becomes noteworthy. As a result, we have to consider the obituary as an act of nation-building. The matter is not a simple one, for, if a life is not grievable, it is not quite a life; it does not qualify as a life and is not worth a note. It is already unburied if not unburiable. (34)

Butler's description matches Asma's case in *The Submission*. The authorities initially refuse to accept that Inam is dead. How could he have died? He did not exist in the first place. But after Asma repeatedly reminds them that Inam must have existed from the government's point of view since he paid his taxes regularly, the authorities agree to quietly grant her monetary compensation. But this is not enough for Asma. In the discussions for the memorial, heated arguments arise about whether the names of illegal immigrants should be included among the names of the deceased, and the narrator explains Asma's feelings: "The prospect of her husband's exclusion gnawed at Asma. It would be the final repudiation of his existence as if he had lived only in her imagination. He had to be named, for in that name was a life. . . . She couldn't shake the sense . . . that history had only narrowly made room for him" (Waldman 77). Her loss nevertheless demands recognition like all the grieving family members[8] who—despite their "competing views" (235), class stratification, and complicated personal agendas— strive for one thing in common: the acknowledgement of the lives of their loved ones. The lack of such acknowledgement, as Butler argues, would mean that those lives are not grievable, not worthy of a note, and perhaps not even lives at all. At stake is not only remembrance but the validation of those lives as human.

In addressing the hypocrisy inherent in multiculturalism, *The Submission* asks: What is involved in making meaning out of Mo's design? While the intricate web of emotions, ideologies, and agendas involved make the question almost impossible to answer, it exposes the gradual radicalization of the host society's perception of the Neighbour. The debates following the leak turn the process of choosing a memorial

design into a giant muddle of readers' responses. A seemingly intellectual article in the *Times*' Arts section stokes the fire of these debates.[9] The article comments on the Islamic influences of Mohammed's design and its assertions quickly lead media sources to claim that "the memorial design may actually be a martyrs' paradise" (Fox News), a "VICTORY GARDEN!" (*The New York Post*), "an assault on America's Judeo-Christian heritage, an attempt to change its cultural landscape . . . [or] a covert attempt at Islamization" (*The Wall Street Journal*) (Waldman 116). The ease with which the multicultural diversity that was tolerant enough to allow Mo to submit an entry for the competition collapses into anti-Muslim hysteria exposes both the precariousness of Mo's position as the tolerated Neighbour and the hypocrisy inherent in the tolerant discourse of multiculturalism.

In the face of such hysterical allegations, Mohammed refuses to offer any appeasing public elucidation on the meaning of his design. However, on several occasions, his remarks suggest that "The Garden" aims to contribute to the healing process as he believes it embodies "the right balance between remembering and recovering" (63). Mohammed also explains to Paul Rubin why the geometric layout of the design matters: "The Garden has order, which its geometry manifests[;] . . . it's an answer to the disorder that was inflicted on us. It's not meant to look like nature. Or like confusion, which is what the attacks left behind. If anything, it's meant to evoke the layout of the city it will sit in" (139). Hence, what the critics claim to be a paradise for the martyred jihadists is indeed meant, by the designer, to bring a sense of order and meaning to the chaos the attacks caused. Khan's obstinate refusal to change his design is as much a reaction against sacrificing the healing essence of the design as against the associations people bring to his work just because he is Muslim (Waldman 269).

Khan's refusal to explain himself, justify his design, or make concessions renders the situation more tense, but the novel assumes that he has every right to do so. First and foremost, Khan asks Claire "why [he] should be responsible for assuaging fears [he] didn't create" (268). Goaded by the media, the viewer reads the meaning of a martyr's paradise into his design and as the author/designer Khan should not feel

obliged to defend his work. More importantly, he believes that justifying his design would imply guilt on his part. He reminds Claire of how "[Asma] was saying terrorists shouldn't count more than people like her husband. But [Claire's] questions—the suspicions they contain—make them count more." He adds: "You assume we all must think like them unless we prove otherwise" (268). It is on this account that Khan denies an answer to Claire's question about the meaning of his design.

This refusal to answer taps into the implications in the idea of tolerance. Mohammed is not required to answer others' questions and, if the addresser's attitude toward the addressee is genuinely sincere the questions should not even be raised in his or her mind. Also, the addressee might not be offended by the questions under different circumstances. However, the experience of trauma and the resulting paranoia render communication so complicated that all of this becomes impossible. Tested under extreme conditions, respect for the Other proves false and the liberal idea of tolerance collapses. This occurs in the final dialogue between Mo and Claire:

> "Wouldn't you assume that any non-Muslim who entered this competition thinks the attack was wrong? Why are you treating me differently? Why are you asking more of me?"
>
> "Because you're asking more of us!" she said. "You want us to trust you even though you won't answer questions about your design—what it means, where it came from."
>
> "But you're only asking those questions because you don't trust me."
>
> "And I don't trust you because you won't answer, so we're stuck." (270)

Yes, trusting each other asks more of both sides. And yes, mutual trust is very difficult, almost doomed to fail, as it did in this conversation, but taking a chance on the person in front of you and at least giving him or her the benefit of the doubt is necessary to move beyond the veneer of tolerance. This does not mean support based on principle, or a liberal-minded gesture. Romantic, even utopian, as it may sound, trust only works if it can be practiced "just because."

I have in mind the Turkish word *hoşgörü*, which is often inadequately translated as tolerance. It more accurately translates as "fair sight," or rather "seeing someone/something fairly." The word draws its meaning from Sufism.[10] Contrary to recent attempts to make Sufism into an Orientalised version of liberal tolerance, the idea of *hoşgörü* is indeed an act of moving beyond the veneer of tolerance. It stems from a feeling of respect for all creatures, including humans, for what they are since they carry particles of God; hence one refrains from offending or harming them because of that. The term also involves an awareness that, in a given situation, one has the potential to perform the same behaviour one receives from another. In other words, under the right circumstances, we have the potential for all sorts of good, bad, or even evil actions. This awareness reduces the possibility of being offended by someone else's words and actions. Keeping this awareness active in all our daily interactions, however, is a very difficult mindset to maintain constantly. All we can do is strive to achieve it. *Hoşgörü* does not necessarily mean an approval or acceptance of offensive behaviour, but it allows us to stop for a moment before taking a rash or judgemental action against someone else. We may or may not end up chastising the behaviour, but that moment of pause is one of neutrality. However, unless the moment of pause comes as second nature, it will not work. The resulting attitude will be something other than *hoşgörü*. Therefore, instead of a tolerated permitting or condescending forgiveness, this mindset creates an intuitively neutral attitude, if not of full acceptance, at least of giving someone the benefit of the doubt. *Hoşgörü* is not a naive, romantic ideal or a spiritual, religious activity but a practical way of engaging with the world. The intuitively neutral attitude of *hoşgörü* will work only if it is adopted as a general mindset for engaging with everyone in our daily lives, including both those who are familiar (parents, siblings, friends, bosses, and colleagues) as well as those we regard as Other.

In a situation of crisis like Claire and Mo's, the choice between adopting a cynically suspicious attitude or an intuitively neutral approach may mark the line between perpetuating or breaking out of the stalemate of mutual distrust. This attitude does not imply that a person must categorically empathise with everyone or every act, but it does encour-

age one to resist the paranoia of seeing terrorists everywhere. An attitude of *hoşgörü* may prevent the persecution of people like Mohammed who simply "awaited credit for his refusal to agree that the attack justified America's suspicion of its Muslims any more than it justified the state's overreaching" (Waldman 287).

Considering the ending of both Hamid's and Waldman's narratives in relation to *hoşgörü* may be helpful in determining whether the works suggest the need for an alternative to the discourse of tolerance. The end of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is left open for the reader to write. When Changez offers a handshake and the American reaches into his jacket, the reader may assume that the "the glint of metal" (209) is from a gun and Changez is assassinated by the American or Changez's Pakistani followers intervene to save him or even assassinate the American. Alternatively, the reader may choose to believe that the glint is indeed from a business-card case as Changez claims. Since the reader can only engage with Changez's remarks about the American, choosing to believe in one or the other ending tests the reader's trust in Changez's sincerity rather than in the American's intentions.

The Submission is equally open-ended. In the final chapter, twenty years have passed and two people have come to interview Mohammed for a documentary on the competition. The chapter wraps up the novel's loose ends and Mohammed explains his feelings, perhaps more fully than ever. However, the novel concludes with a visit through "The Garden," which Khan has built as a private commission and wants Claire to see. This gesture can be read in two ways: as a "gift" or a "taunt" (Waldman 297–98). Mo has finally realized their once-shared dream, and he is either telling Claire that this sanctuary for her husband exists or that he achieved his design in spite of her. "The Garden" resembles the original design, except for two details: the steel trees are upside down and, instead of the victims' names, the wall contains verses from the Quran. These two changes may be read as proof of Mo's initial intention for "The Garden," a manifestation of his disappointment in Claire and everyone else who inverted the Garden by forcing the idea of a martyrs' paradise on the design, or simply as reflective of the commissioner's wishes. However, in spite of various possible interpretations,

having heard Mohammed's feelings and ideas, the reader may eventually conclude that if there is anything sinister in "The Garden," it is in the eye of the beholder. Mohammed is bitter about the memorial competition and, consciously or unconsciously, he may have acted out of spite by showing "The Garden" to Claire. But he asks her to "use [her] imagination" and "[s]he had, and with it assumed the worst"—that "The Garden" is the martyrs' paradise (Waldman 298). In fact, other viewers, namely the interviewer, Molly, and the cameraman, William—who happens to be Claire's son—imagine positive intentions for "The Garden." William sees the garden of his childhood and personalizes it by building, in a corner, a cairn for his father. However, his efforts go unnoticed by Claire, the very person who taught her children to build cairns and inspired them with hope. The endings of both *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *The Submission* test the reader's assumptions. After portraying the deadlocks in discussions of tolerance, the novels—with their open endings—invite readers to come up with an alternative attitude without suggesting one.

By laying bare the hypocritical nature of tolerance, admitting that certain liberal discourses are dysfunctional, and insisting on the contestation and convergence of multiple and at times conflicting discourses, Hamid's and Waldman's novels point toward a formative response to crisis and suggest the need for an alternative to the discourse of tolerance. Despite the difficulty of maintaining the intuitively neutral attitude of *hoşgörü*, it is a compelling alternative to liberal tolerance. Embracing the intuitively neutral approach of *hoşgörü* may allow us to break out of the dysfunction that feeds both acts of terrorism and the so-called "war on terror."

Notes

1 As explained later in the essay, the tolerated Other can at any moment become the untolerated Other. The term "(Un)tolerated" used in the essay title aims to indicate this possibility. They are not necessarily different entities but rather different attitudes toward the same entity. Terrorists, jihadists, and all violent groups that would be termed as the "absolute Other" following Žižek's argument are not the focus of this essay. I am interested in how the tolerated Other comes to be regarded as the untolerated Other by the host community.

2 The range of published material includes avant-garde comix, mainstream comic books, and newspaper memorializations as well as plays, poems, and novels. Other artistic media such as sculptures, installations, and photography could also be included in the list of media employed. As for content: *In the Shadow of No Towers* is Spiegelman's personal account of the day, while DeLillo's *Falling Man* and Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* trace the individual traumas of their protagonists. *The New York Times*' *Portraits 9/11/01* and Marvel's *The Amazing Spider-Man* Vol. 2, Issue 36 are good examples of how mainstream media reifies 9/11 as a monumental national catastrophe. Among the novels that offer a critique of late capitalism is Messud's *The Emperor's Children*, whose characters are self-centred and hollow individuals in a consumerist culture. Similarly, in spite of its attempt to portray the mind of a terrorist, Updike's *Terrorist* remains largely a criticism of distraught lives in contemporary America. For a further discussion of both the variety of artistic media and its possible implications, see Keniston and Quinn.

3 Some works engage with terrorists and radical groups but not the tolerated Others who are increasingly perceived as radicals and hence associated with terrorists in the minds of people who were formerly tolerant. Such texts are indifferent to this distinction, which I believe is very important but often missed.

4 The term includes minorities, immigrants, and marginalised groups in any given community. Since the process of marginalisation can take any form, the term involves all kinds of marginalised identities.

5 The Imponderable Other is the position of the tolerated Other that can at any time become untolerated.

6 In situations like these, the ethically right attitude, however, is to resist this urge to pit the number of lives lost in the attacks against the number of lives daily lost elsewhere in the world as a result of aggressive capitalism. The inability to feel the same kind of sympathy for the victims of one catastrophe that is felt for the other not only suggests hypocrisy but also undermines the suffering of those supposedly empathised since it allows the argument that certain acts of violence are more understandable/justifiable than others. For a detailed discussion of how to put things into perspective without getting involved in what Žižek calls "the obscene mathematics of guilt," see his *Welcome to the Desert of the Real* 51–52.

7 This becomes even more striking when one thinks about *The New York Times*' "Portraits of Grief," in which the memory of each victim of the attacks is individualized with personalizing biographical details and a photo. For a brilliant discussion on the implications of this project, see Stow's "*Portraits 9/11/01: The New York Times* and the Pornography of Grief."

8 I should point out that Asma's seemingly similar situation is in fact quite different from the others' in terms of what is at stake for her. She is, on one hand, fighting desperately for recognition for her dead husband and, on the other,

trying to avoid deportation until she gives birth to a son in America. Her fight triggers a series of events which rapidly escalate from ostracism to potential deportation and culminate in her violent death.

9 Žižek refers to a *Newsweek* magazine column titled "Time to Think about Torture" and claims that "such debates, such exhortations to 'keep an open mind', should be the sign for every authentic liberal that the terrorists are winning" (*Welcome* 104). For an analysis of the danger of entertaining ethically controversial ideas in an ostensibly intellectual, hypothetical manner, see Žižek's *Welcome to the Desert of the Real* 102–11.

10 The couplet attributed to the thirteenth-century Sufi mystic Yunus Emre "Yaratılanı hoş gör/ Yaradandan ötürü" (Özmen, 69), which roughly translates as "See the creature fairly by reason of the Creator," is possibly one of the best expressions that manifests the transcendental outlook underlying the concept of *hoşgörü*.

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