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## Exploring the Conceptualization of Time and History in Hamid's Moth Smoke and The Reluctant Fundamentalist: An Intertextual Study

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### Abstract

*Interrogating the chronological and teleological notions of time, this study explores the contemporaneity and relevance of the 'past' in Mohsin Hamid's two novels, Moth Smoke (2000) and The Reluctant Fundamentalist (2007), by engaging Julia Kristeva's postulations on 'Intertextuality'. Hamid's fictions interweaving the past and present are examined by utilizing Mudrovic's views on history to affirm the viability of the 'relational' and cyclic nature of time which is opposed to the temporal succession and linearity. Accordingly, the conceptualization of history in Hamid's novels is scrutinized in relation to the 'authentic history', in a bid to establish the significance of History in shaping the present and predicting the future, thereby, renewing the prominence of time and history in spatial, temporal and theoretical spheres in post-modern times. Claiming to be a valuable addition to the scholarship on 'Time-Studies', this research would also help in rethinking and reinterpreting Pakistani anglophone fiction via unhackneyed standpoints.*

**Keywords:** Contemporaneity, Chronological, Intertextuality, Relational Time, Anglophone Pakistani Literature, Postmodern, Historicity

### Authors:

**Muhammad Afzal Khan Janjua:**(Corresponding Author)  
PhD Scholar/Lecturer, Department of English Literature, Government College University Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan.  
(Email: [janjua\\_ravian@yahoo.com](mailto:janjua_ravian@yahoo.com))

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### Authors:

**Muhammad Afzal Khan Janjua:**(Corresponding Author)  
PhD Scholar/Lecturer, Department of English Literature, Government College University Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan.  
(Email: [janjua\\_ravian@yahoo.com](mailto:janjua_ravian@yahoo.com))

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### Abstract

*Interrogating the chronological and teleological notions of time, this study explores the contemporaneity and relevance of the 'past' in Mohsin Hamid's two novels, *Moth Smoke* (2000) and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), by engaging Julia Kristeva's postulations on 'Intertextuality'. Hamid's fiction interweaving the past and present are examined by utilizing Mudrovic's views on history to affirm the viability of the 'relational' and cyclic nature of time which is opposed to the temporal succession and linearity. Accordingly, the conceptualization of history in Hamid's novels is scrutinized in relation to the 'authentic history', in a bid to establish the significance of History in shaping the present and predicting the future, thereby, renewing the prominence of time and history in spatial, temporal and theoretical spheres in post-modern times. Claiming to be a valuable addition to the scholarship on 'Time-Studies', this research would also help in rethinking and reinterpreting Pakistani anglophone fiction via unhackneyed standpoints.*

**Keywords:** [Contemporaneity](#), [Chronological](#), [Intertextuality](#), [Relational Time](#), [Anglophone Pakistani Literature](#), [Postmodern](#), [Historicity](#)

### Introduction

Mohsin Hamid's novels *Moth Smoke* (2000) and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) are loaded

with historical consciousness. Incorporating history in fictional narratives, he accentuates the contemporary predicament, complexities, and





ambiguities surrounding contemporary times. His reconstruction of antagonism between Aurangzeb Alamgir and Dara Shikoh with regard to capturing the Peacock throne in 17<sup>th</sup> century Mughal India is equated with the modern-day struggle for power, dynamics of competing forces, rampant corruption, degradation of values-ethical, social, and civic-degeneration of humanity in the global capitalistic world. Usually, the postmodernist paradigm rebukes the concept of authenticity of truth or historicity but the ongoing research contends that the past is as valid and significant as the present. This research does not lend superiority to the present only. The research focuses on the contemporaneity of the historical past. The meaning of the word 'contemporaneity' originates from "cum-tempus" meaning thereby living together (Mudrovic, 2024). Therefore, the contemporaneity, sharing the same time, is undeniable because time is not chronological, linear, successive, teleological, and homogeneous; rather, time is relational, heterogeneous, and cyclic. "The historical past is not the other of the present, something that has happened at an earlier time, nor is the future a period "after" the present" (Mudrovic, 2024, p.52). Reconstituting the relational conception of time and the importance of the past, the researcher argues that history's relevance in the fictional world, is still intact in historical deconstructivism, a feat often followed in postmodern 21<sup>st</sup>-century fiction. The conceptualization of historicity-the presentation of actual history- is equally important to better comprehend the contemporary reality. "The past is not a distant or dead realm accessed by historians through archives. Instead, historians are themselves an integral part of that past, shaped by the relationships they forge with it" (Mudrovic, 2024). This idea of relational time, what Mudrovic calls a "temporal community of actants, and "living together" as the current concurrence of processes and activities, allows us to redefine historical time" and also to subvert the Western notions of chronological and succession-based temporalities: the West attempted to create European superiority and logocentrism in a bid to homogenize the heterogeneous civilizations (p.51). "Chronology is the tool as the absolute and linear time used to domesticate and homogenize in the name of the

myth of objectivity and neutrality" (Mudrovic, 2024).

This research contends that the historical time, ontologically, is anthropocentric and relational. The anthropocentric and relational nature of historicity is examined in Hamid's novels with the help of intertextuality creating, thereby, the relation between the conceptualization of historicity in the fictional postmodern world of Hamid's novels and the actual history. The real history authenticated by genuine historians is brought in comparison with the history embedded in the multilayered and polyphonic narratives of Mohsin Hamid. In *The Moth Smoke*, Hamid uses the historical allusion to the rivalry between Aurangzeb Alamgir and Dara Shikoh to gain the control of peacock throne in Mughal India. In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, Hamid has traversed global history right from the tribalistic and ethnocentric historical Genghis Khan, to the clash between Muslims and Christians in the Crusades, the dilemma of Janissaries in the Ottoman Empire, and the contemporary dynamics of the civilizational clash between Islam and the West in the wake of the momentous incident of 9/11.

Mohsin Hamid is a Pakistani Anglophone fiction writer whose novels abound in historical underpinnings and contexts. He consciously loads his narratives to challenge the monolithic, logocentric, and essentialist discourses of history and time. This research postulates that on the one hand, he challenges 'objective reality' but on the very other hand, he accepts and shows complacency with the unavoidable historical truths. The uniqueness and individuality of Mohsin Hamid lie in the fact that he exposes the complexities and dynamics of power struggle in the contemporary society of Lahore in *Moth Smoke* and the global currents involving issues of identity, transnational and transcultural complexities, civilizational clashes, suspicions, and fears of the 'other' in modern times with the help of the re-conceptualization of historicity in an anthropocentric way. History is an actant in his novels. His presentation of history is not conventional. In his novels, historical figures are transformed into imaginative characters. The plots of his novels are not set in the historical period but keep a historical resonance. His conceptualization of history and time validates Mudrovic's point that

“the present has no epistemic privilege over the past; it does not constitute an “observatory” of the past” (Mudrovic, 2024). The relational nature of historical time is necessary to understand the complex and entangled history of modern civilization.

The novel *Moth Smoke* (2000) unfolds with a Prologue showing the Mughal king Shah Jahan listening to a prophecy in which he is told that his youngest Aurangzeb will succeed him as the ruler of the subcontinent and will wear the peacock throne. The prophecy turns out to be true: Aurangzeb becomes the ruler but not through the lawful succession but through forcefully sidelining and then beheading his elder brother Dara Shikoh. Moreover, Shah Jahan himself gets imprisoned at Agra fort by his own blood and receives the head of his favorite son Dara Shikoh. The plot of the novel, then, shifts to the modern-day city of Lahore at a time when Pakistan tested its nuclear bomb in 1998. Like the historical Dara who was ostracized, segregated, and then beheaded by his all-powerful brother Aurangzeb, *Moth Smoke* encapsulates the story of the downfall of Dara Shehzad Shikoh who works as a banker and then his life spirals down to the world of crimes and degeneration. Starting with a Prologue, the novel ends with an Epilogue, interweaving the historical setting in which the historical Aurangzeb Alamgir is visualizing the fall of his empire in the subcontinent. This conceptualization of historicity in the novel done through historical allusions, naming of the characters after historical personalities, and reference to historical events in the novel, signifies and symbolizes the cyclic nature of historical time.

*The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), too, incorporates traces of global history like the reincarnation of Historical Genghis who were called 'the scourge of God' by Muslims, the Crusades, the Ottoman Empire, the Western nostalgia, and the dynamics of capitalistic cum cosmopolitan world in a bid to expose East-West dichotomy, issues of hybridity, cultural clash, terrorism, islamophobia, especially in the wake of 9/11 incident. The novel posits an aesthetically discursive narratology to reconsider the ontological and epistemological conundrums of historical realities, global politics viz-a-viz the story of one individual, i.e. Changez, the protagonist of the novel. The novel indirectly tells the centuries-old

history. The protagonist recurrently goes deep into the past of his life as well as into the past of civilizations. The names of the characters are even symbolic which serve an important purpose in the novel. The reader oscillates between the present and past and "therefore, conceiving the present as a temporal community of actants, and "living together" as the current concurrence of processes and activities, allows us to redefine historical time" (Mudrovic, 2024).

### Literature Review

Both the novels of Mohsin Hamid have been evaluated and examined through various prisms until now but the concept of relational time and history has, hitherto, been overlooked in literary scholarship. Hamid's novels fall into the category of postmodern fiction owing to their multilayered texts, experimental genre, metafictional historiographies, multiple narrators, heteroglossia, and intertextuality. The current study delimited to the nature of historicity in the Pakistani Anglophone postmodern paradigm establishes the argument that the relational and contemporaneity of historical reality remains a vital ingredient in shaping the present as well as the future. Postmodernism's deconstruction of essentiality, historicity, objective reality, universality, and linearity of time, has been reconsidered and reconceptualized in the ongoing study. An exhaustive review of the existing literature and interpretations is provided here in a bid to find the research gap in the existing scholarship.

Rebekah K. Costen's thesis enunciates that Hamid's *Moth Smoke* portrays the dynamics of interrelation between emerging adulthood and the capitalistic cum modernized socio-political sphere in a developing country like Pakistan. The process of identity formation in such a competitive and polarized society, she argues, is related to the historical allegory used in the novel. She contends that Hamid exposes the limits of the capitalistic system in an allegorical way. She relates the process of identity formation with the historical allegory. She contends that in an "age of the capitalistic economic system, the attempt of the individual to get freedom fails miserably" (Costin, 2005).

Adding on to the Marxist interpretation of Hamid's *Moth Smoke*, another critic has tried to relate the historical perspectives in the novel with

the predicaments of globalization and how the latter is sabotaging the social strata bringing in segregation and exploitation. Contemporary society is divided on economic division and income inequality, which provides an understanding of the plight of characters like Daru in the novel *Moth Smoke*. It is argued that Hamid tries to "analyze the contemporary Lahore through a 'post-post-colonial framework, one less interested in foregrounding the persistent effects of British colonization than dramatizing how economic globalization has transformed Lahore and the characters populating his novel'" ("5. post-postcolonial writing in the age of globalization: The god of small things, red earth and pouring rain, moth smoke," 2011). Commenting on the historiographic nature of the narrative is the intermingling of fictional reality and the real history in the novel, Jonathan Levi reviews that the historical nature of Mohsin Hamid's novels that "uncertainty about the past is just a fancy name for a bad memory –and bad memories are the foundations of present-day life on the subcontinent" (Pakistan saga of fraternal rivalry, 2000).

Anita Desai, a renowned critic and writer, has also linked the historical foundation of Hamid's novels with the class system thereby interpreting the novels from the Marxist point of view. Again, her criticism is not related to the nature of the historical embeddedness in the novels; rather, she uses the historiographic nature of Hamid's novels to comment on the present-day reality of capitalistic society and relates how class system and monopoly of elites in modern life affect the overall fabric of societal sphere. She opines that Hamid's gift of "clear-sightedness" exposes the power structure of a society that has transformed from the old feudalism hinged on ancestral roots to the new Pakistani elitism based on wealth" (Desai, 2020). Adding on to the Marxist critique, Afshan, et al, 2024 in their article *Marxist Perspective of Class Conflict in Mohsin Hamid's Moth Smoke and How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*, have discussed the link between class inequality, injustice, social segregation and the downfall of the characters in the novel with the economic conditions prevalent in contemporary society of Lahore.

Hamid's *Moth Smoke* has also been interpreted with the prism of psychoanalytic theory given by Sigmund Freud. It is argued that Darashikoh, a

former banker who slides into the heroin addiction, becomes the victim of psychological conflicts in an environment seeped into a socially judgmental sphere where characters are judged on the basis of their wealth and resources. It is argued that the personality of Daru is revengeful, stubborn, spiteful, and bad-tempered due to the pervasive negativity and social ostracism in society (Anwer et al., 2023). Zainab Hameed Ullah et al. have discussed the novel from a stylistic perspective. By using the qualitative method and formalistic approach, they have attempted to explore the development of characters, plot development, and setting viz-a-viz the stylistic techniques used by the writer (Ullah, et al., 2022). In the same breath, the novel's historical tendency is equated with the postmodern pastiche connecting history, popular culture, and literature.

Imran Ali Khan and Ayaz Afsar, in their research work, foreground the Anglophone Pakistani fiction in the socio-political realities of Pakistan. Using the theoretical assumptions of Social Conflict Theory, they argue that Pakistani Anglophone fiction is a formidable source for exploring and investigating the socio-political issues, values, and dynamics of contemporary Pakistani society. Along with exposing the social challenges bedeviling the social sphere, the Pakistani literature especially Hamid's *Moth Smoke* and Kamila Shamsie's *Salt and Safron* (2000) measures the nature of social and political transformation of society. They are of the view that through these historically embedded novels, the writers highlight "pressing social challenges" in a bid to "reflect on their roles, and foster empathy. Literature also serves as a platform for marginalized voices, challenging prevailing narratives and amplifying underrepresented perspectives" (Afsar & Khan, 2023).

In the research article *A Deconstructive Analysis of Mohsin Hamid's Moth Smoke*, the novel is deconstructed via Derrida's theory of 'difference' and is established that the symbols and signs used in the text challenge the centrality and logocentrism of meanings and interpretations. The meaning of the text is contextualized providing a multiplicity of meanings and interpretations. It is not the authorial intention that matters; rather, the perspective of the reader is significant and draws meaning from his/her own vantage point. The

deconstructive reading of the text invites a multiplicity of meanings, relativity, and subjectivity. This study examines Hamid's use of the metaphor of 'moth' in the narrative that captures the downfall of Daru into oblivion. While mapping the individual's "ambiguity of the human nature and indecisiveness", the deconstructive reading of the novel robs the text of its "originality and centrality" (Faiz et al., 2022).

Androgynous reading of the novel has also been carried out in which the authors of the article, *Negative Portrayal of Androgynous Women in Contemporary Literature: A Study of Hamid's Moth Smoke and Shamsie's Kartography*, investigate the negative portrayal of female characters in the narrative both validating and challenging the "oversimplified and stereotypical" representation of women who are an embodiment of evil, greed, and cunningness as well as androgynous and resolute. On the one hand, female characters are shown as strong, decisive, and authoritative in resisting the negative representations of women but on the other hand, this research concludes, that the novelists are complacent with the over-dominating and repressive system of patriarchy. The researchers equate the character of Mumtaz with Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth and comment that the "evidence can be observed in both old and new fictional characters like Lady Macbeth and her contemporaries like Mumtaz and Maheenas that these are evil, greedy and cunning creatures who would reach any extent to achieve their malicious goals", establishes the fact that the androgynous women are detrimental to the traditional social setup (Rukh et al., 2021).

Morey Peter, in the article *The rules of the game have changed: Mohsin Hamid's The Reluctant Fundamentalist and post-9/11 fiction*, opines that the novel challenges the traditional interpretations focusing on personal journey of an individual or the novel being emblematic of the 'clash of civilization' thesis; rather, this narrative shows the transformation of a young thriving professional "who moves from fully interpellated capitalist "fundamentalist" and post-political transnational subject to racially profiled (and possibly hunted) anti-American firebrand" (Morey, 2011). Evaluating this novel in the backdrop of 9/11 tragic happening, the novel does not only reflect upon the acceptance of Islamic radicalism but "employs hyperbole,

strategic exoticism, allegory, and unreliable narration to defamiliarize our reading experience and habitual identifications, forcing us to be the kind of de (-) territorialized reader" (Morey, 2011).

Nath Adalala'a, 2012 has scrutinized *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by foregrounding the seismic shift of Changez's identity from the transnational self to taking refuge in the native land in a bid to delineate the complexity of the relationship between America and the 'Muslim Other' in the backdrop of 9/11 incident. Adalala'a argues that the novel challenges the traditional hegemonic and combustion notion of the West because America gives a chance to the 'other' to express and speak. The whole story is told by the Muslim narrator in Pakistan, which signifies the expressive freedom of the speaker in particular and the Muslim 'other' in general. The novel incorporating the exigencies of the contemporary socio-political and cultural chaos provides an opportunity to reposition and rethink the dynamics of the relationship between the 'Muslim other' and the so-called hegemonic West. Along with the reconsideration of the 'encounter' between the West and the 'other', it "sets out: within the text, America and the Islamic world seem caught up in a pervasive mood that mobilizes a reconsideration of national and cultural boundaries" (Adalala'a, 2012).

Studying the novel in the backdrop of Islamophobia, Mir Sayar Ahmad, n.d. attempts to lay bare the moral failure of the US society in the sense that the protagonist of the novel, Changez-a lover of America and a corporate professional- is compelled to leave the deoxygenated and Islamophobic space of America. It is the 'mistreatment' of the American society that compels him to leave America and turn into a radical person in his homeland. The journey shows Changez's disillusionment with American society and his evolvment as a transnational individual. Ahmad's research "reveals how he was marginalized and mistreated in the multicultural American society because of his Muslim identity" (Ahmad, 2000).

*The Yale Review of International Studies* contends that the story of Changez "leaves the reader disturbed and questioning" (Chandra, 2012) by raising suspicion and Arabian tale-like suspense that raises questions about the use of dramatic monologue as a literary technique to the



mysterious American listener and the confusing sort of the denouement of the story. Subverting the traditional foregrounding of the novel carried out along the civilizational or nationalistic grounds, Chandra opines that "*The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is about the twisted, self-righteous, simplistic, and self-serving political path that Changez adopts. He isn't a "reluctant" fundamentalist. Rather, he is a fairly deliberate and self-deluding one" (Chandra, 2012). However, the harsh treatment of the Muslims at the hands of the Americans as depicted through stereotyping of Muslims and beating of the Muslim Taxi drivers in the text should not be ignored.

Avirup Ghosh et al. are of the view that the novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* highlights the dynamics of alienation and integration viz-a-viz Changez's life story. The decision of Changez to leave America is propelled by the alienation that he went through at the hands of the polarized, exclusive, and traumatized society of America in the backdrop of the nightmarish events of 9/11. It is the desire for belonging to the native land accruing out of alienation perpetuated by the segregating migrant land that causes Changez to return to their homeland. At the same time, he is not able to integrate into his homeland: he loves America one way or the other while living in Pakistan. The conflicting and complex nature of the identity of Changez reflects the identity crises of the diasporic selves. Ghosh is of the view that "the opposite impulses of integration and alienation constitute the crux of the novel" (Ghosh, 2013).

*The Reluctant Fundamentalist* has also been discussed with the help of postcolonial theorizations. Delimited to Bhaba's theory of 'Hybridity', Dr. Moazzam Ali Malik et al. have explored the exigencies of transnational and hybrid identity in the globalized world. Challenging the traditional and binary relationship between the 'colonized' and the 'colonizer', the researchers are of the view that hybrid selves are "transcultural and fluid in nature and can negotiate themselves 'in the third space of enunciation' for 'new' forms of social collectives" (Malik, 2021).

Like *Moth Smoke*, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is also discussed in the backdrop of postmodernism delimited to Jean Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality at the intersectionality of

postcolonial and postmodern paradigms. The novel utilizes postmodern concepts such as hyperreality, self-reflexivity, irony, parody, the equivalence of high and low art, retro fascination, questioning grand narratives, temporality, and late capitalism. Contrary to the stance of the researcher of this article, Nicolai states that the novel challenges the meta-narratives of historical facts and helps to create the "readers' ontological uncertainty of text's fictional representations of reality, destabilizing the fixed boundaries between the real and fictional" (Nicolai, 2020). The metafictional historiographic evaluation of the novel problematizes the relation between the real and the fictional, between the past and the present.

After an exhaustive review of the literature, the author of this article has found that both the novels, despite being interpreted from many angles and perspectives, have not been examined along the lines of conceptualization of history and time. The traditional postmodern critiques have disassociated the link between the past and present in shaping the future. While subverting the essentialist discourse revolving around time, universality, objectivity, metanarratives, chronological time, and centrality of meaning, postmodern critique often overlooks the relational and cyclic nature of time. The historical embeddedness of the novel does not rebuke the relevance, contemporaneity, and importance of history. Logically and textual evidentiary, this research, specifically, accentuates the significance of historicity-the actual authentic history- and its relevance with the contemporary world. Mudrovic's book *Conceptualizing the History of the Present Time* (2024) provides a viable context and theoretical lens through which the conceptualization of historicity in Hamid's two novels has been explored in the forthcoming analysis.

## Theoretical Framework

The contemporaneity and relevance of historicity in the postmodern narratives of Mohsin Hamid have been analyzed with the help of Julia Kristeva's theorizations of 'intertextuality' elaborated in her books *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (1980) and *Kristeva Reader* (1986) and Maria Ines Mudrovic's idea of history

elucidated in the book, *Conceptualizing the History of the Present* (2024) is employed. While employing the technique of intertextuality, the fictional history presented in the novels is equated and compared with the real history establishing thereby the relevance and contemporaneity of history in evaluating and understanding the contemporary world. As it happens in the Metafictional historiography put forward by Linda Hutcheon, the historicity that is the authentic history loses its ground and it morphs into the historiography- the art of writing history. The focus of this research is on the relevance of historicity rather than on the historiography which traditionally is considered an important element of postmodern philosophy and critical theory. The researcher argues that the historicization of the fictional texts-novels-lends credibility to the reality of history itself: these fictional narratives don't, as is argued in the current research, dislodge history of its value; rather, incorporating historicity in the fictional world provides multifarious interpretations of the historical facts as well as validating the importance and utility of history in mirroring the present and predicting the future.

Although the term 'intertextuality' was coined by Julia Kristeva for the first time in 1966 its genealogy goes as far back as antiquity or at the commencement of discourses especially in Greek and Roman history. It got theoretical and methodical importance at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the arrival of some of the prominent theorists like Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), Mikhail M. Bakhtin (1895-1975), Julia Kristeva (b. 1941) and Roland Barthes (1915-1980) all of them revolutionized the concept of intertextuality (Zengin, 2016). But it was T.S. Eliot who, firstly, initiated the idea of reading and understanding the parallel texts that he calls 'traditions'. He elucidated the idea of semi-intertextuality in his celebrated essay *Tradition and Individual Talent* (1919). He was of the view that the autonomous genius of any artist is elusive and impossible. He established the synchronic relationship between the work of art and the surrounding culture and traditions. He validated the historical consciousness of the author who intermingles with the earlier and parallel movements/milieus. The ingenuity of an artist lies in his understanding of past developments and movements. The personality of the author or writer is the perennial merger into the soul of the

whole universe making it an 'impersonal' and detached self.

Intertextuality as a field and theory got credence in the broader structuralist and poststructuralist theorizations. Intertextuality dislodged text of its autonomy granted by the Russian formalists and American brand of New Critics. Formalists considered the text as an independent meaning-making entity incorporating assemblage and symmetry of words that don't need any contextualization or assistance. A work of art, for example, a poem is an independent unit and its meaning could be deciphered by unlocking the conflict within the arrangement of words. Intertextuality, on the other hand, "changed the concept of text, recognizing it as an intertext owing to the interrelations between texts and texts' absorptions of other texts" (Zengin, 2016). The meaning of the text cannot be deciphered without taking into account the other texts. A work of art needs to be studied alongside history, geography, culture, philosophy, and socio-political realities. Thus, Intertextuality is basically interdisciplinary in nature. That is why real history is studied and compared with postmodern historicization to what Linda Hutcheon gives the name of 'Historiographic metafiction' in which the difference between the real and imaginary evaporates rendering the text at the behest of the reader who interprets the historiographic reality according to his/her own vantage point. Intertextuality encourages relativity but at the same time, it talks about relatability as well. It grants readers the opportunity to interpret the text in multifarious ways viz-a-viz tracing the marks of other texts- history in the case of this study.

Julia Kristeva, the feminist psychoanalyst, is considered the pioneer of intertextuality who marked no difference between a text and a non-text, between the work of art and the other fields of knowledge. "Kristeva used the term in her seminal essays on Bakhtin and intertextuality, in both "Word, Dialogue and Novel" in 1966 and "The Bounded Text" in 1967" (Zengin, 2016). The separate existence of text is impossible as it is in constant dialogue with other texts, thus making it an 'intertext' phenomenon. "Intertextuality suggests a range of links between a text and other texts emerging in diverse forms as direct quotation, citation, allusion, echo, reference, imitation,

collage, parody, pastiche, literary conventions, structural parallelism and all kinds of sources either consciously exploited or unconsciously reflected" (2016). Intertextuality is also used as a discursive tool to challenge the other narratives as it happens in postcolonial theory and philosophy in which historical record is exploited to denounce the hegemonic and Eurocentric discourse. Said's contrapuntal method is assisted by the incorporation of textual pieces of evidence other than literary works. Furthermore, Intertextuality establishes the fact the author or creator of any work of art is not merely an imaginative visionary, rather, he is acquainted with prevailing socio-political, cultural, economic, and even emotional realities.

Kristeva improvised on Bakhtin's idea of heteroglossia that the text is the interacting and intersecting place of various texts and discourses "ranging from everyday communication to social, historical, literary discourses, etc. or jargon, dialects or all other uses in the same language" (Zengin, 2016). While extending Bakhtin's dialogism, she opines that "the word's status is thus defined horizontally (the word in the text belongs to both writing subject and addressee) as well as vertically" (Kristeva, 1980: 66; 1986: 36-37). Keeping the intertextuality's mode of reading the text along with other texts is utilized to establish the contemporaneity and relevance of history and time to understand contemporary realities. Mohsin Hamid has juxtaposed historicity in his texts not in the way of denying the historical realities but to create their relevance in modern times. This research argues that it is the historicity that provides meaning to the text.

María Inés Mudrovic's groundbreaking work *Conceptualizing the History of the Present Time* (2024) is the latest addition to the centuries-old debates revolving around the conception of time. Contrary to the notions of time being linear, chronological, and absolute, Mudrovic proposes the idea of relational time and helps in understanding the ontological and epistemological conceptions of time. The relational time theory does not make the fictional narratives written in the postmodern times separate from the past; rather, the past is necessary to comprehend the present. Therefore, the relevance of history cannot be denied. Past is not a dead wood. Even Francis

Fukuyama is compelled to change his 'the end of history' stance and he re-establishes the importance of the past in his latest book, *Identity* (2018).

To understand the contemporaneity of the historicity in the novels, it is necessary to define the word 'contemporary'. Mudrovic is of the view that "the Latin contemporaneus(contemporary) came from cum and tempus and first meant sharing the same time. Contemporary is thus an adjective that relates events that occur and people who exist at the same time, and this use of the term first appeared in France in 1475" (Mudrovic, 2024, p.3). Contemporaneity establishes the temporal relationship with the happenings of the past. The conception of the present or contemporary realities is very much related to past happenings. "History is a specific way in which humans deal with the experience of temporary change. The way they realize it essentially depends upon pre-given or underlying ideas or concepts of time" (Rüsen 2008). The concept of relational time relies on temporal configurations as:

The recognition of Indigenous temporalities, challenges posed by both techno-scientific futures, and the impact of climate change and the Anthropocene are examples of the existence of alternative temporalities and historicities that develop at different paces and have already solidified within the field of "times studies. Chronology was the tool that absolute and linear time used to homogenize and domesticate, in the name of supposed objectivity and neutrality, the relativity, precariousness, and contextuality of the multiple temporal interactions of events (Mudrovic, 2024, p.42).

The chronological and linear conceptions of time are the product of enlightenment philosophy that tried to impose homogeneity in the name of neutrality and progress, thus, marring the spirit of heterogeneity. The teleological, and chronological divisions of the historical time into periods, controlled the unlimited uncertainty of the unknown. Mudrovic argues that "the imposition of chronological metrics regulated the temporal dimension, concealing our limitations and the inevitable uncertainty we face when accepting the plurality and heterogeneity of temporalities that

intersect our lives and the time is never anthropocentric" (2024, p.42).

### Analysis

This section of the article analyses the nature of the conceptualization of history and time by comparing it with the pure history in the novel *Moth Smoke* (2000). Mughal history still continues "to influence cultural production and national literary imaginations in both Pakistan and India. One recent example of this influence is Mohsin Hamid's first novel, *Moth Smoke*" ("Writing from extreme Edges": Pakistani English-language fiction," n.d.). Mohsin Hamid recreates a period in Mughal history that is considered the most important and controversial in our collective memory. *Moth Smoke* (2000) depicts an equally important period in the history of Pakistan when it got nuclear. What would have been the history of the subcontinent had Dara, a liberal and pantheist become the ruler instead of Islamist Aurangzeb Alamgir? In chapter 2 of the novel, the story shifts to modern-day Lahore where Daru Shehzad is facing a trial in the court of law facing the conviction case of the murder of a boy. The rest of the story unravels the real culprit and Daru's degeneration. It is revealed in the story that Daru has been maliciously convicted of a crime that he did not commit: the murder of a boy was done by Ozi (Aurangzeb), his childhood friend. The last chapter again reflects the court proceeding where Daru is to be hanged for a crime that he did not commit. The novel ends with an Epilogue showing Aurangzeb Alamgir deep in thought at the expected demise of the Mughal Empire. In the novel, seventeenth-century Mughal India is set parallel to the contemporary society of Pakistan validating the cyclic nature of time.

The novel *Moth Smoke* is set in modern-day Lahore during the period when Pakistan became a nuclear power in 1998. It is a story about two childhood friends Darashikoh Shehzad and Aurangzeb who part owing to income inequality. The names of the characters are symbolic and based on historical figures. The war of succession between historical Aurangzeb and Dara Shikoh is seen from a modern perspective. The whole drama of Mughal history is enacted again in the last years of the twentieth century. The name of the heroin in the story is Mumtaz. Mumtaz in history was a queen in Mughal history on whose name the

famous Taj Mahal was built. In the novel, Mumtaz is the wife of Ozi (Aurangzeb). In history, she was the wife of Shah Jahan. The real name of the historical Mumtaz was Arjmund Bano. The name of the servant of Daru in the novel is Manucci. Historical Manucci was an Italian traveler who remained under the parentage of Dara Shikoh. There are other characters Shuja and Murad Badshah who are named after Shah Shuja and Murad, two sons of Shah Jahan who took part in the wars of secession and were finally defeated by Aurangzeb. Along with the Mughal history, the novel also captures an important period of contemporary history when Pakistan got nuclear. Mohsin Hamid in his debut novel *Moth Smoke* reflects the modern condition through a historical journey to the past when, it is usually said that, "a covetous prince killing his elder brother" (Herald 11) captures the Mughal throne. What Hamid wants to achieve is the fact that the lust for power for the crown or dominance over other individuals is still played on. It is the reworking of history in the contemporary world.

Seventeenth-century Mughal India is an important part of the collective memory of what Lane-Pool, an eminent historian, calls "the turn of the tide" in the history of Mughal India (qtd. in, Awan, 1994, p. 440). In the Mughal dynastic system, Darashikoh, the elder son of Shahjahan was "the apparent heir to the house of Timur" (Talpur, A7). To avoid wars of succession, Shah Jahan wanted his elder son to succeed him but this could not be materialized owing to the rebellion led by Shah Shuja and Aurangzeb. Shah Jahan was too weak and frail to look after the sprawling state and could not stop the wars of succession. In the succession battle of Sumugarh, elder Dara Shikoh was defeated at the hands of his younger brother Aurangzeb. Dara lost it due to his sensitive nature. Poole, 1997, p. 350-353) Some historians see Dara as the "nervous, sensitive, impulsive creature, never master of himself" (qtd. in Awan, 1994, p. 391). On the other hand, Aurangzeb won owing to his firmness of purpose. The struggle between two individuals is tantamount to the clash between two ideologies, perspectives, and civilizations, the tussle between secular and orthodox forces. There are various views regarding the two historical personalities. Among Western historians, Stanley Lane-Pool considers Aurangzeb as a person "who was prepared to take his throne for the sake of



religion" (1994,362). Western historians disregard him as religiously orthodox and puritanical. Muslim historians take him as the divine gift sent from God Almighty for the welfare of people. Lane-Pool comments that "nothing in life –neither throne, nor love, nor ease weighed for an instant in his mind against his fealty to the principles of Islam" (359). Poole, however, considers him not suitable to handle the diversity and heterogeneity of the subcontinent. Aurangzeb was suspicious of others. He punished, and put behind bars members of his own family; he imprisoned members of his own family including his father Shahjahan at Agra fort, and then he was brought to Delhi in humiliating condition. Dara was declared an apostate for his anti-Islamic views revealed in his books and was put to death. To avoid discontent and rebellion in the state, Aurangzeb is considered to have used a religious card.

However, Aurangzeb is appreciated by the Western and local historians alike. He is even accepted by many Western historians. He was a great general, "as an ideal ruler, as a simple and pious man, as an impartial judge a well-wisher of his subjects. Possessed of undaunted bravery, grim tenacity of purpose and ceaseless activity, he was an ideal monarch of his line" (Ali, 1990, p.148). He was humble in his dealings and led a very simple life. During his rule many Hindus like Jaswant Singh and Jai Singh were appointed to the highest post. It is queer that "the number of Hindu higher officers was greater than that in the times of Akbar (Ali, 1990, 151). His political actions such as the imposition of Jizya, and the destruction of Hindu temples were defended on the grounds that Aurangzeb ordered the destruction of only those temples which were built in place of other religious places. As far as the imposition of Jizya is concerned then he did not impose it right after coming into power. This was done later. Hindus were directed to pay either taxes or join the military services.

Some historians are of the view that, after coming into power, he abolished many taxes on Hindus. The imposition of Jizya came later. He is called a mild ruler. He determined the right justice and equity. (Awan, 463-472). Due to the variant interpretations of the personality of Aurangzeb, he is called a "political paradox"(194, p. 441). On the one hand, he is pious, judicious, and very humble

in dealings, but on the other hand, he is depicted as "blood-soaked and velum filled" (Herald,111). The historical Dara was eclectic; he used to consult the company of people belonging to different religions and creeds. He was "a believer in Wahat-ul-Wajud and Hindu verdantism, i.e. all paths lead towards the truth" (Awan, 1994, p.390). He *Majma-ul-Bahrain* (The melting of two seas) in which he discussed mystical thoughts of Hindu and Sufi mysticism. There are two other books authored by Darashikoh *Safinstul Aulyia* and *Sakinaul Aulyia* in the years 1640 and 1642 respectively which represent him as a pantheist who believed in the "harmonious coexistence of heterogeneous ideas in the Indian subcontinent". (Talpur). He tried to associate Islam and Hinduism together. Dara had a close association with an Armenian poet Sarmed who went naked and used to recite the first part of Kalima only. In *Majma-ul-Bahrain*, Dara came to the conclusion that there is no significant difference between Hinduism and Islam because the truth is found in both. "Truth is not the monopoly of a particular religion; all religions preach the same fact" (Awan, 1994, p.396). Secular and liberal forces mourn the death of Dara. The prospect of the subcontinent would have been different had Dara become the ruler. Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad opines that "Dara had a unique mind and temperament and all should forever mourn the unfortunate day when his enemies triumphed" (Daily Time, A7). Aurangzeb's victory over Dara, to some historians, is emblematic of the defeat of the progressive forces. It created the supremacy of "bigotry and intolerance not only in its immediate aftermath but in the future of this region" (Mariam, 2010).

Mohsin Hamid has embedded the controversial part of Mughal history in his novel. Believing in the anthropocentric history, Ozi, in *The Moth Smoke* symbolizes fascist and parochial forces. He is a representative of the elite class which owns Air conditioners and luxurious cars. In the novel, he gets saved in punishment for a murder due to his influence and wealth. Contrary to his punishment, Daru is unjustly involved in the murder because he brought the bleeding guy to hospital and his clothes were soaked in blood. Ozi's dialogue validates his corruptibility and vulnerability of poor people: "People are robbing the country blind and if the choice is between being held up at gunpoint or

ding the gun, only madman would choose to handover his wallet rather than fill it with some else' case (p. 84). Ozi, like the historical Aurangzeb who got the wealthy empire of Shah Jahan, has inherited wealth from his bureaucrat father Khuram who is named after the real name of Shah Jahan. His ancestral wealth determines his power as he says "You see, the problem is, I make people jealous. Which is understandable. I'm wealthy, well-connected, and successful. My father's an important person. In all likelihood, I'll be an important person. Lahore is a tough place if you're not an important person (p. 184).

The contemporaneity of the past could be linked with the present in the way that like the historical Dara, Daru, in the novel, is robbed of his rights and is ousted from the corporate world. He is "clocked out of the kitchen" (p.185). He becomes jobless because he mishandles a case of an elite person. Jobless Daru drifts to the world of crimes, robbery, self-destruction, degeneration, and moral latitude. Financially crippled, he becomes unable to pay his servant Manuci. Like the historical Dara, he is betrayed by his friends. Historical Dara Shikoh was considered to be a well-read and knowledgeable person, in the same way, Daru is also a former scholar. Dara Shikoh used to discuss religious issues with people belonging to different religions. In the same fashion, Daru shares knowledge with Prof. Julius who is a Christian and a secular person. The relevance of the past is established. Past is not long distanced entity; rather, the Past is associated with the present.

Mohsin Hamid's conceptualization of history makes peace with the past to expose modern-day issues. Hamid remarks at the end of the novel that: "it is perhaps between hope and memory in the Atomic lands once empire, that our poets tell us Darashikoh, the apostate, called out to God as he died" (Hamid). Mohsin Hamid's embedment of history is significant in this "dynamic context that the strength of history lies, in transforming its tools to comprehend the sources of ambiguity and complexity within our present temporal community" (Mudrovic, 2024, p.53). Historization of the fictional narratives helps us understand the entangled history of Pakistan. Decolonized in 1947 from the British yoke, the nation is still yearning for progress, equality, and justice. The Pakistani state has been victim to fascist forces, corrupt political

elites, poor administrative structure, bureaucratic oligarchy, poverty, injustice, and polarized social setup.

The novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* documents the complexities of the modern world, especially of the Pakistan-U.S. relationship after the fateful 9/11 in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The contemporaneity and relevance of history are also established with the help of various non-literary texts. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) is loaded with historical allusions, symbols, and a unique style. In the novel, the names of the characters matter a lot. David Lodge is of the view that "in novel names are never neutral. They always signify, if it is only, ordinariness. The naming of the characters is always an important part of creating them" (37). Mohsin Hamid's novels follow this tradition to a large extent. In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, the proper names of the characters are also important. The name of the Protagonist is Changez. This is the Urdu version of Genghis Khan, the Mongol warrior. When asked about the significance of the name "Changez" in the novel, Mohsin Hamid says that: "many America reviewers said it meant "change". But it's the Urdu name for Genghis (1155-1227), the Mongol conqueror who attacked the Muslim world. And with this name Changez can't really be a religious fundamentalist" (Entertainment, Interview).

Genghis Khan was a Mongol warrior who, from a humble beginning became the master of a vast Empire. His real name was Temujin who is known to the world as Genghis Khan (*The universal ruler*). He brought the nomadic and diverse tribes under one umbrella. After becoming the chief of his tribe, he expanded his reach to East Asia and the Middle East. (Britannica 7: 1013). The Encyclopaedia Britannica quotes Mathew Paris's view that the Mongol nation was a "detestable nation of Satan that poured out like devils from (the) Tartars so that they are rightly called Tartars". (7: 1013). He is hailed in the Western world for his anti-Muslim campaigns in the Middle East. Muslims don't like his persona in history. His battle against Muslim Khwarezm was like that "It was in this war that Mongols earned their reputation for savagery and terror. City after city was stormed; the inhabitants massacred or forced to serve as advance troops for the Mongols against their own people". (Britannica, 7: 1015). Another thing that is important regarding

Genghis Khan is that he used the methods of psychological warfare to make his enemies surrender which are still followed in the present world. The interaction between two cultures at the time of his invasions is also significant which would later help us in exploring the myth of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Britannica dictionary notes that "two societies were in constant contact, two societies that were mutually hostile, if only because their diametrically opposed ways of life, and yet these societies were interdependent." (7: 1013-1014). This cultural interaction is very helpful in understanding the novel. Cultural clash forms an important layer of the novel.

However, Changez in the novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) is a pacifist and unlike the historical Genghis anti-West. The protagonist of the novel is unlike the nomadic Mongol, a conscious being and aware of his civilization and culture. There are also some similarities between the historical Genghis Khan and Changez in the novel. Like the Mongol warrior, Changez goes to America to fight a corporate battle in the capitalistic economic system. Commenting on the similarity between Genghis Khan and the reluctant Changez, Mohsin Hamid says in an interview that: "it is the name of the warrior, and the novel plays with the notion of a parallel between war and international finance." The Mongolian spirit is reconstituted in a modern fashion. Economic and commercial wars are as much significant as the traditional wars were in ancient times. The odyssey of Changez could also be taken as an embodiment of universal Muslims whose culture is diametrically opposed to Western culture and norms. One thing more which Genghis' invasion brought was the interaction between the East and the West. (Americana 12: 419). Mohsin Hamid re-imagines these clashes in the novel. The similarities and dissimilarities between Genghis and the reluctant Changez create a paradox in the novel but it reflects the entangled and cryptic nature of global politics. In the novel, Changez is the lover of America and at the same time hostile towards America. He tells the American visitor that he tried to settle in the cosmopolitan environment of America. Changez is an intelligent and competent man and that is why he was selected in the Underwood & Samson. The historical Genghis Khan was a successful "soldier, conqueror, and his

success lies in his military organization, strategy, and mobility, all of which gave him a canister advantage over opponents who were often weaker and less organized" (Lexicon, 96). The nature of the job of Changez in the novel is to handle clients. Consultancy in the modern world needs an impressive strategy and knowledge. The shift in the personality of Changez occurs when he is compared with Janissaries, During his trip to Chile, he is called a modern-day janissary who is destroying his own civilization. Janissaries were young Christians who were trained as soldiers and recruited into the Ottoman army. They participated in major wars even against the Christian world. Juan-Bautista says to Changez that: "Janissaries were Christian boys captured by the Ottomans and were trained to become soldiers in a Muslim army. They were ferocious and utterly loyal: they fought to erase their own civilizations, so they had nothing else to turn to" (Hamid, p. 91). This allusion to janissaries brought a watershed change in the mental process of Changez. He already had experienced intolerance and bigotry at the hands of the Neo-Imperialistic Empire of the United States. This timely reminder added fuel to the fire and Changez decided to revert back to his tribal identity. Changez reacts to this phenomenon in this way: "I was a modern-day janissary, a servant of the American empire at a time when it was invading a country with a kinship to mine and was perhaps even colluding to ensure that my country faced the threat of war. Of course, I was struggling! Of course, I felt torn" (Hamid, p. 91-92).

The novel brings the issue of cultural clash in a different way. Although the society it depicts is centuries apart from Genghis's reign the cultural affiliations remain constant even in a seemingly homogeneous society. The impact of globalization is great for bringing people together but it has failed to erase cultural consciousness. In the discriminatory environment of the American system, Changez feels like a lost man. He considers himself deviated from his own cultural values. He goes back to his roots. Like Genghis Khan who was "religiously minded, and would worship the 'Eternal Blue Heaven', the supreme deity of the Mongols", (Britannica, 1015), Changez, although a secular Muslim, carries the torch of his culture in the foreign lands. Like Genghis Khan, he also takes refuge in his cultural identity. The cultural gap is

one important factor in the clash between civilizations. Although Changez is a secular who also engages in a sexual relationship with Erica, the West labels him a fundamentalist. The novel provides an insight into understanding the complexity of contemporary politics and history.

The issue of cultural clash is as old as human history. Many wars have been fought on the basis of divergent identities and cultures. Mohsin Hamid recreates this old rut in a fresh and thought-provoking way. Samuel P. Huntington, author of the magnum opus *The Clash of Civilizations*, is of the view that mutual suspicion and fear in multicultural conditions compel the individual to retreat to tribal or religious identity (Huntington, 270). The reversion of seemingly secular Changez to the reluctant fundamentalist is the best example. He accepts the multicultural atmosphere of the United States. It is to be noted that Changez is not a hardliner Muslim but a liberal and secular person.

His retreat from secularism to fundamentalism is due to the discriminatory attitude of the American empire. Samuel Huntington is of the view that civilization consciousness occurs in secular Muslims due to prevalent situations. It is not necessary that only hard-liner fundamentalists could revert to destructive methods. (269) Hanif Kureshei, a British novelist, makes a similar case in his novella *My Son The Fanatic* how the discriminatory and race-ridden environment of the liberal society of America compels individuals to seek refuge in ethnic identity. It is a misunderstanding on the part of the West to understand the complexity of the issue. It could be argued that the seeds of fundamentalism are not sown in the religious connotations but in the liberal and capitalistic system of the United States. The Americans would be another form of fundamentalism. It is visible from the fact that the motto of Underwood & Samson is to 'see the fundamentals'. This misunderstanding is brought forth by contemporary fiction.

The fateful incident of 9/11 added fuel to fire to the cruel attitude of Americans toward Muslim. The war on terror could also be based on misunderstandings. The attitude of the West creates the 'fault line wars' and "hate dynamics", both are the result of "mutual suspicion and international security dilemma" (Huntington 2007). A wave of Islamophobia ran which affected

thousands of Muslim Diaspora communities in the West. A misunderstanding of the religion of Islam was on the way. For the world and especially for the West, the most prevalent image of Islam is of fanaticism, brutality, hatred, and disorder. Islam is held responsible for every illness and anxiety. America ignorant of the dilemma of Changez treats him in religious connotation. That is why it is called that Islam is the "most misunderstood religion in the world" (Rao, 2003). Although Changez is a secular the West observes him through the prism of religious identity.

Muslims are often labeled as 'potential terrorists' in the Western hemisphere in the wake of 9/11 which turned out to be volcanic. Changez could not absorb such an eruption. Crestfallen, Changez finds himself alone in the middle of nowhere with bombs falling on his uncovered head. Amidst the maelstrom of prejudice, Changez becomes the 'civilizational other'. The cultural binarism is a major part of the clash. The melting pot of America is not able to adjust its cultural identity. First, Changez adjusts himself in the cosmopolitan society then he is pushed back. Changez is now a "Frankenstein monster becomes an anathema for the Americans" (Ahmad, 2007). America is considered to be the torch bearer of democratic values but it turns out to be a mere fantasy. The novel is a powerful reaction to the imperial empire.

Moreover, the novel makes the case for nostalgia showcasing its positive and negative sides. The narrator Changez is recurrently haunted by the memory of his past life. Changez delves into the past glories of Islamic civilizations. He praises the Mughal Empire in a euphemistic way. During the Mughal Empire, heterogeneity and an eclectic way of life were the norm not an exception. Speaking on the glory of once splendid and dazzlingly alluring Lahore, Changez addresses the unknown American in the way that: "Lahore was the last major city in a contiguous swath of Muslim lands stretching as far west as Morocco and had therefore that quality of understated bravado characteristically from the tows" (Hamid,76).

## Conclusion

The conclusion accrued from the exhaustive analysis establishes the fact that history and historical consciousness are inevitable to



comprehend the present and to carve out the future. Exploration of the two novels of Mohsin Hamid validates the contemporaneity and relevance of history in understanding the socio-political dynamics of not only Pakistan but the whole world. In the fashion of cyclic time, history repeats itself in the present context. The research has found that the novel *Moth Smoke* is ingrained with the historical sensibility to expose the real-time problems bedeviling Pakistan in the twenty-first century. Hamid has recreated the clash between Mughal King Aurangzeb Alamgir and his brother Dara Shikoh to expose the demons of class struggle, rampant corruption, injustice, capitalistic competition, religious cum sectarian issues, elite monopolism, and the pitfalls of weak institutions. The novel starts and ends with the portrayal of Mughal history, the researcher argues, to authenticate the relational nature of time; the past is not a distant phenomenon rather past and the present are associated with one another. Hamid's use of historicity in the novel challenges the linear, chronological, and teleological time through the narrative structure and plot development. The past and the present are not separate entities; rather, both share the same temporal lines. The contemporaneity in the novels, it is investigated, denotes sharing the same time. The present is the sum total of the activities of the past. The relational value of time was often a neglected subject and field in postmodernist philosophy. The chronological time gave precedent to the Eurocentric world vision in which the teleological conception of time became a hegemonic discourse and cause of illegal occupation of lands-colonialism. After the deconstructive movement and its ancillary movements like postcolonialism and postmodernism, it helped resist the dominant narrative as Mudrovic says that the "memory boom, the "discovery" of "other" cultural temporalities, the deep time of the Anthropocene, among other issues, exposed its ontological assumptions and epistemological inconveniences" (Mudrovic, 2024).

The tragic incident of 9/11 brought a mammoth change in global affairs. The spillover effects of America's War on Terror were huge and tantalizing in the whole world. Samuel P. Huntington's thesis 'Clash of Civilizations' divides civilizations into religious and national lines got momentum when the then President of the United States of America initiated the war on terror. Resultantly, there emerged a revival of islamophobia and segregation of Muslims. This stereotypical treatment meted out to Muslim subjects resulted in the rise of identity crises, ethnocentrism, and social and political chaos across the globe. This transnational and global complexity and issues of identity and belonging are reflected through the history-laden narrative of the novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Mohsin Hamid has dexterously and artistically interwoven the conflicts of the present times with a tinge of historical consciousness. The discourse on the clash of ideologies, identity, or belonging is not new. The reality of Islamophobia, Hamid's novel reveals, originates from the Crusades. Hamid has intentionally chosen the name of the protagonist. The persona of Genghis is not liked in the Muslim world. Though the protagonist of the novel Changez is secular and modern in outlook and vision he is ostracized causing his reversion to his racial identity and native homeland. As discussed in the analysis part of this article, issues of nostalgia, suspicion of the 'other', xenophobia, and islamophobia among many other issues are exposed in the backdrop of history. Historical reality is made alive. History is like a living organism. History never dies. Historical layers of the novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* describe the dilemmas faced by human civilization at a critical juncture. By interweaving real history into fictional narratives, the author has concluded, that Hamid has not only challenged the chronological, teleological, linear, and logocentric conceptions of time to endorse the anthropocentric and cyclic nature of time but has also validated the contemporaneity and relevance of history in post-modern times.

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