

A Lyotardian Study of Religion in Mohsin Hamid's Fiction

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Abstract

The purpose of the present research is to uncover the presence of mininarrative regarding religion in Hamid's postmodern novels while challenging the metanarrative ideologies prevalent in postmodern South Asian societies. In this way the present study finds its way in qualitative research. To analyze the texts, the present study relied upon and integrated the theoretical stance presented by postmodern theorist, Jean Francois Lyotard particularly his notion of "incredulity towards metanarratives". The findings suggest that Hamid's novels are highly unconventional. The textual analysis of Hamid's novels exposes the presence of mininarratives regarding religion while showing skepticism towards the metanarrative ideologies regarding religion. The analysis suggests that relativity is the only truth in postmodern age and the experiences and individual choices of characters play a significant role in shaping their religious identities in postmodern societies. The various characters in Hamid's novels are postmodern individuals. Their local, social, historical and cultural contexts and their individual choices shape their religious identities in postmodern societies. The findings can develop interest as these intend to explore counter narrative/ mininarratives in contrast to grand narratives while giving voice to the unheard or plural. The same study can be further extended to the fictional work of many other postmodern authors while integrating many other postmodern theorists beyond Lyotard.

Key Words: Metanarratives, Mininarratives, ideology, religion.

1. Introduction

In 2000 Mohsin Hamid gets his debut *Moth Smoke* published. This debut novel places Mohsin Hamid among internationally acclaimed authors of substance and imagination, a promise he has sustained in each successive book. Mohsin Hamid has four more novels to his credit beyond *Moth Smoke* which are explorations of South Asian political, religious, social, sexual and economic and postcolonial issues with particular reference to Pakistan as a diverse country. He has to his credit a non-fiction book of essays named *Discontent and its Civilization* (2014). Mohsin Hamid was born in Lahore, Pakistan and grew up in USA and studied in Princeton University and Harvard Law School. He lives and divides his time while living both in Pakistan and abroad. His life currently revolves around three different cities of different countries from his native city Lahore to New York and London. He also travels towards Mediterranean countries including Italy and Greece. As a result of this, Mohsin Hamid's literary and cultural sensibilities present a fascinating amalgam of Pakistani and Western culture and literature. Travelling between Pakistan and the West has also equipped Mohsin Hamid to look at how Pakistan is stereotyped in the West and also how the West is stereotyped in Pakistan and why it is important to undo these stereotypical and formulaic representations of both in the form of mininarratives. The present research aims to explore the ways his novels challenge the metanarrative ideologies related to religion and religious identities while integrating theoretical framework presented by Lyotard.

Lyotard sees postmodernism as a rejection of all confining cultural theories such as Marxism, communism, capitalism, feminism, history, science, religion and family in short anything or idea which claims to be universal or norm. And he argued for much more utilitarian attitude to political life and artistic expression that explicitly ignored the oppressive rules laid down by metanarratives. Postmodern thinking questions the assumed certainty of scientific truth and reality. It shows skepticism to general explanations which proclaim to be valid for all groups,

cultures, traditions or races rather it is relative and it focuses on the relative truth of each person. For Lyotard, ‘Metanarrative’ represents overarching modernist belief in order, unity and stability since they tend to explain all other ‘little stories’ and therefore make universal and totalizing claims about reality, knowledge or experience. These metanarratives are putatively rational. “A metanarrative sets out the rules of narratives and language games” (Lyotard, 1984). He favors mininarratives or stories that represent local practices, small events, individual interests and experiences rather than universal concepts. These are always circumstantial, temporary, transitional, ephemeral and do not assert universality, truth, reason or stability. The present research aims to show the ways Mohsin Hamid’s novels challenge metanarrative ideologies regarding religion in the form of mininarratives.

1. Research Methodology

The purpose of this part is to introduce the research methodology for the present qualitative research regarding postmodern skepticism towards metanarratives. In this research Mohsin Hamid’s novels i.e., *Moth Smoke*, *Reluctant Fundamentalist*, *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* and *Exit West*, will be used as primary texts. The researcher’s approach involves textual analysis through a close reading of the chosen texts. In *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979) Jean Francois Lyotard, a postmodern theorist and scholar refers this condition as “incredulity towards metanarratives”. Taking cue from Lyotard, the analysis focuses on the postmodern treatment of metanarrative ideologies related to religion in Hamid’s fiction. Moreover, the researcher has tried to pick out and critically evaluate that how Hamid’s fiction unmasks the constructed religious realities and assert that diversity is the norm not the universality. Almost all his novels present a diverse world regarding religion that is becoming more and more secular and materialistic. Each and every character has its own approach towards religion. Ironically, some of them even face humiliation on the basis of some sort of religious ideology which they themselves not follow.

Research Question

The overarching question of present research is:

- ✓ How do Hamid’s novels deconstruct metanarrative ideologies related to religion?

Research Objectives

The main objectives of present research are

- ✓ To examine the portrayal of various characters in Mohsin Hamid’s novels with regard to their religious practices.
- ✓ To integrate theoretical framework presented by some postmodern theorists with aim to develop the postmodern theoretical understandings of these novels.

2. Theoretical Framework

The concept of metanarrative and mininarratives was brought into prominence by Francois Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. He defines postmodernism as “incredulity toward metanarratives” and calls for an increasingly skeptical attitude to resist “the totalizing nature of metanarratives” (Lyotard, 1979). “Meta” is Greek word for “beyond”; narrative is a story that is characterized by its telling. Metanarrative is a story, narrative or theory which claims to be above the ordinary or local accounts of social life. In postmodern approach and critical theory, a metanarrative is an abstract idea that is thought to be a comprehensive explanation of historical experience or knowledge. He propagates that every notion came into existence as a result of language games and there is no reality other than that. He calls himself a philosopher not an expert. He acknowledges that he does not have perfect knowledge but he is at least capable of

asking brilliant question even if there are no answers to them. For Lyotard, ‘Metanarrative’ represents overarching modernist belief in order, unity and stability since they tend to explain all other ‘little stories’ and therefore make universal and totalizing claims about reality, knowledge or experience. “A metanarrative sets out the rules of narratives and language games” (Lyotard, 1984). Modernism tends to highly value metanarratives and the social institutions which produce them. In the postmodern world, these grand narratives have lost their legitimacy and so Lyotard defines postmodernity as ‘incredulity towards metanarratives’ because these are ideologically constructed. Lyotard’s skepticism towards ‘grand narratives’ in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979) remains the most influential voice of Postmodern Philosophy. He argues that reality is nothing but a result of language games. He is critical of metanarratives that claim to be able to explain everything. The concept of grand narratives is known as emancipation narrative (Lyotard, 1984), that depicts the interconnection between events related to each other and describes a social continuous hierarchy and gradual development that cause to execute these historically collectively rather than focusing on particular isolated events in history. Moreover, he is of the view that in postmodern era, people are more interested in little narratives and grand narratives are considered oppressive. For, every grand narrative excludes. According to Lyotard there is no one way (metanarrative) to describe the facts rather many ways (mini-narratives).

The concept of a metanarrative is similar to a worldview—something that gives meaning to life and the individual event that take place in life. John Stephen states that metanarrative can be called ‘global or totalizing’ narrative schema which arranges and illustrates knowledge and experience. It acts as a ‘cognitive lens’ through which people see the world (Adebanwai, 2016). In this way metanarratives provide a mental schema to understand the world and self and other. The term metanarrative can be applied to a wide range of theories and ideas. History is the result of material conditions, rather than ideas. He believed that religion, morality, social structures and other things are all rooted in economics, and Freudianism, Free Market Capitalism, and Enlightenment Emancipation would be examples of metanarratives in that every event in life and history is seen through one of these lenses. Religious world views are also metanarratives for lives of individual faith. Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity all offer metanarratives to explain various events in history and the contemporary world. Scientific method is the metanarrative for experimentation in the sciences. Slavoj Žižek’s (1949.....) debut *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (2009) concerned with the concept of human agency in postmodern world in a provocative and genuine way. He examined the ideological fantasies of wholeness and exclusion which constitute human society. In his account, he talks about structural absence where real is amalgamated with the lost object. And this structural absence is masked in social relations by a ‘sublime’ fantasy figure. Social orthodoxy stigmatizes this figure as the eradicable cause of what is happening as ineradicable antagonism. The ‘social’ objects act as substitute for the dangerous seductions of death drive. Society blames the demons it itself has created for its own inevitable tensions and falsely tends to believe that their elimination will make it a whole. The ‘communists’ were targeted in the cold war of America in the 1950’s, Jews were chosen by Hitler of Germany and sometimes the same structural position is occupied by creating different figures. There is a potential danger of constructing ‘the Islamic fundamentalist’ in the sense of antagonist which will be accountable for global disunity. Žižek views this supposed enemy of good as structural. Because if that supposed enemy is eliminated the hatred and actual antagonism would remain. Žižek argues that instead of suppressing the supposed enemy there is a dire need to reconsider this antagonism by social and political theory. It can be done in the way of

totalitarianism or to civilizing the supposed enemy as is being done in liberal democracy. In other words, it can be termed as consensus.

Messages are transmitted and retransmitted through nodal points. However, the content and place of addressee are altered through interferences with the messages as a result the power relations it was supposed to reinforce are altered. Such sort of alterations keeps on all the time. For instance, in a heartless world, the religion becomes the heart. During war time message is redefined through different sides as a result a war on terror turn into a war on Islam and further conflict is aggravated between East and West.

3. An Analysis of Religion in Hamid's Novels through Lyotardian Lens

Writing fiction in English implies engaging in the process of 'global storytelling'. While Pakistani readers are justified to feel worried that Pakistani literature might uphold the existing image of Pakistan among international readers, it can and has also compelled readers to think otherwise. Bapsi Sidhwa asserts that international audience's interest in reading about the place they regularly see in a particularly negative light in the news is a positive sign. According to Bapsi Sidhwa once said that anything written by Pakistanis which British and American audiences read is good for Pakistan. These writings show Pakistanis as ordinary, normal human beings and not just as fundamentalists and terrorists. These writers are making a bridge between the West and Pakistan.

In the same vein, Hamid's novels are not set against the religious beliefs or practices. Nowhere in his novels, had we found a derogatory reference to those who practice Islam. The novels make critical reference to the obsession with Islam both in the West and the East. These novels very fairly challenge the metanarrative of faith by mininarratives that shatter the stereotypical assumptions associated with the various tactics of religion. In this way it seems that he has tried to clarify the image of Islam and Pakistan in the west.

The one thing which is significant to mention here is that Islam has not been mentioned in any of Hamid's novels explicitly rather it can be understood by the context and pattern of the texts of novels. The setting of almost all Hamid's novels is directly or indirectly Pakistan. Pakistan is an Islamic Democratic state of Pakistan. Majority of Population is Muslim. Islam is the state and organized religion of Pakistan. The religion of almost all the protagonists of his four novels seemed to be Islam. In the First two novels i.e., *Moth Smoke* and *Reluctant Fundamentalist* the religion Islam can be easily inferred with the settings and characters. But in the last two novels, the novelist has provided some hints with which reader can presuppose the religion of its major characters. Although it is not clearly stated yet the way Saeed and Nadia visit Nadia's cousin's grave Saeed offers prayers but Nadia neither prayed nor put rose petals rather, she just put her hand on the rounded mound. The grave with rose petals and water on it indicate toward their religion Islam. Saeed and his father offer communal prayer and preacher prayed after sermon reveals their religion Islam. In the third novel *How to get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* the father of protagonist 'you' seems to be a religious person having strong faith in Islam: "His faith is strong and idiosyncratic, manifesting itself in prayers, visits to shrines, religious music, and sacred verses written on paper and worn as amulets" (Hamid, 2013, p.93). The above lines suggest the religion of the father of the protagonist 'you' is Islam.

The opening and ending of Hamid's first novel *Moth Smoke* contain prologue and epilogue which unmask a sense of religious intolerance. Aurangzeb, the youngest son of Shah Jahan gets his eldest brother, Dara, hanged after obtaining a fatwa against him. He is declared apostate by religious scholars of that time. Epilogue reveals in an indeterminate way Aurangzeb repenting in

his final letter to his favorite daughter. On the other hand, Dara who was stigmatized as apostate called out to God while dying. The textual analysis of the novel exposes that the same sense of intolerance regarding religion and manipulation of law and religion still exist in contemporary Pakistan as well since centuries has passed. It also reveals the phenomenon of blurring the line between history and fiction with the idea that there is no such thing as objective history. History is a story told by historian.

Characters in this novel gain power and capital in religiously acceptable terms. In *Moth Smoke*, while giving a detailed description of AC's the elite class has conquered the atmosphere by creating an artificially cooled world. The elite class enjoys ACs in their bedrooms, washrooms, drawing rooms, lounges, cars and offices. They grab their lunch in air-conditioned restaurants. And they are supposed to be good Muslim because they offer their five prayers regularly "Which they hope will gain them admittance to an air-conditioned heaven, or at the very least, a long, cool drink during a fiery day" (Hamid, 2000, p. 103). Mumtaz as a member of elite class is skeptic and critic of the hypocrisy of the rich people.

Changez in Hamid's second novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* becomes an object of continuous humiliation and rebuke in the hand of American because of his religious identity. No matter how much secular stance he himself has. The novel deconstructs the traditional constructed image of Muslim identity and presents mininarratives regarding the identity of Muslims. The novel critically interrogates the stance, taken by Americans, against Muslims in the name of War on Terror after the demise of 9/11.

Mohsin Hamid has challenged the western metanarrative ideology related to the monolithic representation of Muslim characters while using beard as metaphor. While some Western Muslim men have chosen to assert their identity by wearing beard, the Western media and people are terrorized by the sight of Muslim men wearing beard. "Do not be frightened by my beard: I am a lover of America" (Hamid, 2007, p.1). The use of the beard is very significant here. In the very opening paragraph of the novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* Changez reassures his American listener in a sardonic manner that his fears are unjustifiable because they are the result of the stereotyping and exaggeration which make fear, suspicion and caution is his first instinct in Lahore. He deliberately uses his beard because it is stereotypically associated with fundamentalism and terrorism in the West. During the course of their conversation the American listener is again alarmed at the appearance of an unnamed bearded visitor who turned out to be a waiter. So, American's fears related to bearded Muslims seems baseless. Changez further explains that he decided to keep beard as mean to strengthen his identity as a Muslim in New York after being humiliated in the course of events related to the demise of 9/11. Even Changez' own mother advised him to get his beard removed than Changez replied to her that his father and brothers do have beard. His mother at this reveals the fact that they do not wear beard to hide their baldness. So, beard for them is a sort of hiding what they really are. Moreover, she commented that you looked like a mouse in your beard. So, Changez wore beard as a form of protest against the affront of America against Muslims after the incident of 9/11. Where Changez realizes that being a Pakistani and a Muslim is considered not only a reference to one's religion and culture but a stereotype and a label with many associations. "I would find flaunting my beard as a provocation" (Hamid, 2007, p.101). He is flaunting it to provocative aggressive Islamic phobic Americans who identify him as a Muslim partially because of his beard and continuously rebuke and humiliate him. Changez further states:

It was perhaps, a sort of protest on my part, a symbol of my identity, or perhaps I sought to remind myself of the reality I had just left behind; I do not now recall my precise motivations. I know only that I did not wish to blend in with the army of clean-shaven youngsters who were my coworkers, and that inside me, for multiple reasons, I was deeply angry. (Hamid, 2007, p.78)

The textual analysis unmasks in a sardonic manner that beard is wrongly associated with fundamentalism and terrorism by the American. Rather it has multiple implications which are based on individual perceptions as in case of Changez, his brother and father.

Mohsin Hamid has presented his characters with diverse worldviews rather than being purely religious. He himself has acknowledged in an interview that he has depicted only human beings which are free from the shackles of religion or any other authoritative, normative identity.

“Now I feel this heavy politicization of religion happening in Pakistan, but in other countries as well, meaning that religion is no longer providing the basic, spiritual, comfort it used to give people.

In a non-religious way, I wanted to touch on those things”.

Changez seems to defend ‘fundamentalist jihadis’ on the basis external factors in the form of American aggression not because of expressing the true internal beliefs of Islam. Throughout the novel, religion seems to be indivisible from culture and attains racist connotation in the hands of American characters who persistently associate him with Islam because of his native country and culture no matter how secular he is in his bearings and action. He is not a man with strong religious morals. While talking to Erica, Changez acknowledges that: “Alcohol was illegal for Muslims to buy so he has a Christian bootlegger (Hamid, 2007. p. 27).

The textual analysis of Hamid’s third novel exposes the phenomenon that how difference in the sects of same religion becomes a cause of strife and ripple between its followers. In this way, novel provides a hint towards intolerance regarding sects in his country as he states: “the businessman who threatened you belongs to a sect the faction head believes deserving of extermination” (Hamid, 2013, p.128). The militant were killing unarmed innocent people. The fictional portrayal of mistreatment, killing and persecution of people on the basis of the fact, that they belong to another sect, draws the reader’s focus towards the current status of sectarianism supposedly in Pakistan. It highlights that how difference in sects of same religion causes mass hysteria, aggression and intolerance. In chapter “Avoid Idealists” the narrator ridicules the commercialization of religion. “Your organization is, like all organizations. The product it is selling is power” (Hamid, 2013). As a member the narrator attains monthly stipend, residence food and protection from student, university administration, people and even police. Because it is revealed that the organization represents something larger, something righteous in Lyotard’s words an authority/ metanarrative. It further highlights the fear of judgment some religious leader use to scare the people. The leader of the organization advised him to stop mourning the death of his mother longer than the prescribed period which seems quite scripted to the narrator. The father of protagonist ‘you’ in *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* is a religious person and has strong faith and believe in the spiritual power of amulets. “His faith is strong and idiosyncratic, manifesting itself in prayers, visits to shrines, religious music, and sacred verses written on paper and worn as amulets” (Hamid, 2013, p.93).

Through fictional representation, it is exposed in *Exit West* that the country that was made in the name of freedom for every citizen is still unable to eradicate its problems which are

significantly associated with the debate of religion. There are some characters that seem to have strong feelings about or association with religion. The textual analysis reveals that there exist several mininarratives regarding religion rather than a singular pre-established notion about religion i.e., metanarrative in Lyotardian sense. There are some cases where characters deviate from metanarrative regarding religion and religion becomes a cause of strife and division for them. The female protagonist of the novel *Nadia* represents Lyotard's mininarrative regarding religion in her postmodern society. For instance, *Nadia* considers the religion of her family highly restrictive. The adherence of her family to religion causes alienation between her and her family. She remains very skeptic and rebellious regarding the religion of her origin. Her family is firmly religious and her parental home was full of religious verses and photos of holy sites. The people at her home were less talkative because talking less is considered a virtue in their religion. But her parents used to be frightened and upset at *Nadia*'s constant irreverence and questioning regarding faith. To the disgrace of her family, she left her home just after completing her university education and started to live alone. When she heard about the death of her young cousin, she does not meet her relatives and family for condolences rather she visits his grave along with *Saeed*. *Saeed* is a religious sort of person. He offers *Fateha* at the grave of *Nadia*'s cousin but *Nadia* neither offers prayer nor put rose petals rather knelt down and put her hand on the mound. Most importantly, the main theme of the novel is migration which is closely associated with this feature of religion. The militants in *Saeed* and *Nadia*'s country create civil war partly because of their intolerance towards the existence of differences in sects. So, the novel mirrors the civil war in a city (supposedly city in Pakistan) because of the intolerances of religious sects. Even government is not able to end this civil war in which people of a particular sect are martyred. The novel exposes that few claims to be the true followers of religion but act otherwise and try to impose their interpretation of religion on the people of other sects, therefore, in this way; they marginalize and dehumanize the rest of sects of same religion. So, the text is in conformity with Lyotard's theory regarding postmodern fable where religions have been reduced to the level of opinion rather than universal truth. The textual analysis reveals: "The night the militant came they were looking for people of a particular sect, and demanded to see ID cards, to check what sort of names everyone had" (Hamid, 2017, p.79).

In that case, religion becomes a main cause of strife, division and finally migration. On the other hand, the fictional representation also exposes that in some cases religion joins and rejoins its adherents through culture and shared history. At the same time this sense of joining maintains in itself a sense of humanism not spirituality as the textual analysis exposes: "but something human" (Hamid, 2017, p. 148). "It made him feel part of something, not just part of something spiritual.

After migration, *Saeed* finds pleasure and consolation while praying with the members of neighboring house in Dark London because it gives him a sense of familiarity and belonging. This sense of familiarity and belonging becomes deeper and more intense as the novel progressed because it connects him to his family. Religion creates a sense of affirmative closeness and beautiful nostalgia because *Saeed* feels connected gain to his parents and he becomes able to travel back in time to his native country and to his ancestors. Finally, it is religion which allows *Saeed* to find connection, love and joy in relation with Black preacher's church even though it approaches religion from a slightly different angle then he grew up with. The thing which connects him with it is its spirit of tolerance and charity which bridges the cultural gaps. Rather than the stress of migration, the freedom of stability actually creates the final rift in *Saeed* and *Nadia*'s relationship.

Although Saeed and Nadia are fundamentally incompatible that may have caused strife throughout their relationship, the freedom they find from immigrating to Marin ultimately causes their breakup. For instance, in their native country, where their religion is the default, Nadia doesn't mind Saeed's piousness because he doesn't impose it on her. Conversely, her irreligious practices don't annoy him because he is surrounded by others who show similar stance about his religion, and thus he feels himself convenient and comfortable in his religious practice. However, after migrating from their native country, Saeed becomes more religious even more important because it becomes a source of his connection with his culture and his family from afar, and Nadia's irreligiousness feels more personal. Without a religious default in a country of their refuge, they both become estranged. Saeed's adherence to religion becomes increasingly stifling for Nadia. When the threat of violence diminishes in Marin and refugees attain freedom to explore their spirituality. Saeed develops relation with preacher's daughter because she is not only religious but also relates to his underlying values. Saeed and Nadia relate to the world around them. And each change in them is because of change in time and experience. When the stress of migration diminishes, their sense of likeness also changes. While in their native country, Nadia's conservative robe and her rebellious nature was quite acceptable for Saeed. However, Saeed considers it a sort of insincerity to use this black robe as a shield in their country of refuge as well. It can be said that Saeed might never have seen Nadia's robe in such a negative way if he does not lose his native city where his culture was the majority. "Location, location, location, the realtors says. Geography is destiny, respond the historians" (Hamid, 2017).

In the West, the burqa has also become a bone of contention. While some Western Muslim women have chosen to assert their identity by wearing a burqa or hijab, the Western media, politicians and law makers appear to be terrorized by the sight of burqa-clad women (Nadeem, 2008). Although the institution of veiling is dominant in Islam yet it is neither the source of women's victimization in the Muslim world nor an exclusively Muslim Institution. The Scholars from Papanek (1971) Afzal- Khan Fawzia (2008) have discussed that Muslim woman sometimes wear veil not as a religious obligation but as an instrument that facilitates their mobility and enables them to participate more confidently in their public and political activities. In *Exit West* the narrator states: "Saeed asked her about her conservative and virtual all-concealing black robe. 'If you don't pray, why do you wear it? She replied, men don't fuck with me'" (Hamid, 2017, p.16).

Nadia wears veil to avoid the evil eyes of men. Saeed wears Nadia's black robe and her hijab in order to meet her in her apartment without causing suspicion in people and her landowner. Saeed does so many times to hide his identity as a man. Once at a check post the soldiers ask Nadia to remove her helmet in order to confirm her woman. They were thinking that she might be a man disguised as woman. It may hint towards the deceptive nature of the people of Nadia's city so Saeed was not the only one hiding his identity. A woman wears veil and tells lies and a man hides himself in order to violate the social codes in the guise of strictly following them. There is touch of existentialism in Hamid's novel *Exit West* regarding Nadia's dress and black robe. "She stood naked, she had been born, and she did put on her jeans and T-shirt and sweater, as she did when alone at home, and then put on her robe, ready to resist the claims and expectations of the world" (Hamid, 2017, p.45).

Conclusion

To conclude we can say that postmodern authors and artists create their own mininarratives in accordance with Lyotard in the form of liberating postmodern expression. Mohsin Hamid as a postmodern novelist emerges in the literary cannon with his own mininarratives regarding religion

while challenging metanarrative ideologies. In his novels, he portrays the contemporary postmodern society with particular references to Pakistan in all its multi-faceted glory. His novel offered fragments of society from various parts of the society that together form the varied postmodern fictional world. The analysis unmasks the facts that characters in Hamid's novels are postmodern individuals whose local, social, historical and cultural contexts and individual choices shape their religious identities in postmodern societies.

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