

Spiral of Fear and Silence in Mohsin Hamid's *Moth Smoke* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

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ABSTRACT: *This article examines the concept of silence and aggression in Mohsin Hamid's *Moth Smoke* and his *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* in relation to Noelle Neumann's theory of spiral of silence. Various ideological, socio-economic, and psychological divisive forces at work in a coercive society trigger the downward spiral movement of silence. The article also discusses Hamid's concept of fear and silence in the light of his news article titled "Fear and Silence." His article explores how the coercive structures of fear and silence work in such a society to build a pressure on and around individuals and eventually silence their deviant voices. Consequently, the pressure people feel to conceal their views when they believe they are in minority creates a climate of fear and prejudice that eventually triggers aggression. Feelings of fear and consequent silence also evoke a diseased psychological behavior in the intellectuals, who in the absence of a just outlet for their creative energies turn to intoxication and crime. Furthermore, the article explores the criminal psyche of the characters in the light of John Dollard's frustration aggression theory as an outcome of such silence. The hierarchy of suppression and division becomes more intensified in the modern oppressive societies where initiative and self-confidence are paralyzed by fear and silence.*

Key words: fear, silence, aggression, and class conflicts

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This article examines Mohsin Hamid's *Moth Smoke* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* in the light of Noelle Neumann's spiral of silence and focuses on socio-economic and psychological pressures that trigger the downward spiral of silence in a society suppressed by various coercive forces. The article also focuses on various kinds of anxiety and unease provoked by societal pressures that gradually build stress on individuals with deviant views. The suppression caused by these social and psychological factors creates a climate of fear and prejudice that eventually triggers aggression. The feelings of fear and silence in turn also evoke a diseased psychological behavior in the intellectuals, who in the absence of a just outlet for their creative impulse turn to intoxication and crime. Furthermore, the article also explores the criminal psyche of the characters in the light of John Dollard's frustration aggression theory as an outcome of fearful silence of enlightened strata. The hierarchy of suppression characterizes modern postcolonial societies where initiative and self-confidence are paralyzed by collective fear and silence. Mohsin Hamid explores the dynamics of how the spiral catches people with dissident voices and suppresses them to stifle their views. Intellectual and rebellious figures in Mohsin Hamid's *Moth Smoke* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* emblemize the silence of intelligent young people in the face of societal forces that foster a culture of coercion. His characters emblemize conditions of "coerced silence" resulting from inhibiting factors.

Noelle-Neumann, founder and director of the Public Opinion Research Center in Allensbach came to recognize man's extraordinary ability to discern the climate of public opinion, which is the "attitudes one can express without running the danger of isolating oneself; a tangible force that keeps people in line," (Griffin 372). She argues that people are blessed with extraordinary sensitivity to the ever-changing standard of what society will tolerate. This sensitivity of humans was later named as *Quasi-Statistical organ*, "a sixth sense that tallies up information about what society in general is thinking and feeling" (373). Later her theory came forward as *the theory of Spiral Of Silence*, "the increasing pressure people feel to conceal their views when they think they are in the minority" (372). Masses, according to Neumann, are only ready to expose their views when they consider it the voice of majority in the prevailing social circumstances. This theory describes how people suffer suppression when their views fall apart from the dominant prevailing views of the time. Spiralling, in other words, is a process of people's silence when they feel their point of view stands in minority.

As long as the contradiction from both sides increases, the whirling narrowing circle shows more and more suppression until at the end, the coil diminishes, depicting a complete silence of personal opinion. If they have fear of becoming the voice of minority, they let it off for the fear of losing social acquaintances. Fear of social isolation makes people silent. "When the contradiction between public opinion and a person's personal opinion grows, the more unlikely the person is to express their opinion for the fear of isolation" (Neumann 256). In other words, Neumann argues that individuals express their opinion only when they discover that their voice agrees with the prevailing voice of the majority in any given society. It elevates their confidence and they feel secure to communicate it without any danger of isolation. Conversely, if an individual finds his opinion contrary to the above situation, he becomes less inclined to convey his view to others and remains silent or is made to remain silent due to adverse consequences of becoming the voice of minority in the society. Fear of social isolation becomes a hindrance for individuals in the way of freedom of expression. John Locke explains a similar view when he argues, "Nor is there one in ten thousand who is stiff and insensible enough to bear up under the constant dislike and condemnation of his own club" (62). Fear of suffering social isolation makes people silent. This sort of compliant silence adopted by the masses due to oppressive prevailing social conditions has been termed "*coerced silence*" by Mohsin Hamid in his article "Fear and Silence." Hamid's main argument in his article is that in a society that is based on intolerance and discrimination, anyone who either tries to help the oppressed or the victims of violence that belong to minority, prevent or just publicly oppose such an injustice will be subjected to threats. The collective result of this is to silence and impose fear not just on a few people of the minority community but on all of us. Hamid ironically states, "Speaking out against the problem means you are the problem, so you had better be quiet" (5).

In Hamid's fictive world, when characters are forced to suppress their deviant opinion, they, consequently, suffer anxiety, which according to John Dollard, leads to aggressivity. This aggression also manifests in drug addiction and other ills (Myers 386). Barua expresses a similar view:

"The criminal mind is born out of frustration at the unequal opportunities that society offers, frustration that basic goodness and intrinsic brilliance have no value if held by persons from the wrong end of society, frustration that the laws are different for the

outcasts of society, frustration that human law is corrupt and biased...and that truth is elusive and justice is unfair and unequal.” (Barua 6)

Mohsin Hamid's *Moth Smoke* opens dramatically with a vision of a prophecy being heard by Shah Jahan in the seventeenth century Mughal India. The prophecy is that his youngest son Aurangzeb will be the ruler after his demise. The prophecy comes true when Shah Jahan receives the head of his most beloved son Dara Shikoh at Agra fort. The sinister opening note of rivalry, conspiracy and battle for succession strikes the first note of fear which is “usually unpleasant feeling that arises a normal response to realistic danger” (Marks 5). Then the plot of the novel takes a sudden transition from Mughal era to the modern Lahore of 1998—a time when Pakistan reclaimed its strong defense system by demonstrating its nuclear ability before the whole world. The plot of the story then focuses on Darashikoh Shahzad, the novel's protagonist. He is a banker, and when he loses his job he degenerates from a banker to a criminal. His condition is portrayed in contrast to his rich friend Ozi and his wife Mumtaz who is Daru's only friend and remains his only support after he has lost his job. Manucci, Daru's loyal servant also could not make his stay longer with him. Ironically, Daru's best friend Ozi does not care to offer him any help. Daru faces a severe scarcity of everything in his life with no electricity, food, AC, and relations. “Air conditioning” is the point of demarcation between different classes in the novel. Hamid portrays the struggle between the three strata in the modern Pakistani society by portraying the characters of Ozi, Daru, and Manucci. These are the people that belong to upper, middle, and lower rungs of the social ladder. The class discrimination that emerges from different socio economic conditions of different characters builds a stress on the less privileged minority. We see Daru feels inferior to Ozi and Manucci is submissive and fearful of Daru's behavior. Manucci exemplifies the behavior of lower classes that are suppressed to an extent that they usually do not speak before those who are at a higher rung of social ladder. The people like Daru and Manucci know well that their words have no value for the ruling elite like Ozi. This creates a class as well as a psychological conflict in the novel, which results in their criminal silence leading further to their moral decay or erupts in their aggressivity. Daru is held responsible for a crime, which is actually committed by Ozi. The cost of Ozi's crime is paid by Daru because he does not have the resources and money to fight his case. As a

protagonist trying to survive in a class based society he experiences existential alienation, loss and despair.

Moth Smoke depicts the degeneration of modern man in a cosmopolitan like Lahore. Daru's tragedy begins from losing his parents and later his job. He knows quite well that his mushroom status in society snatched his mother away from him. "He knew that his mother would not have died if AC had been cooling her room that night"(Hamid 109). Daru's regret at not having AC is actually the regret of not having a good financial status in his society. The reason for losing his job was also his employer Mr. Jiwan who tried his "feudal hierarchy on the bank" because of his big bank balance. Daru tried to raise his voice for his rights but fell from favour and was dismissed from his job. The helpless silence of Daru gives rise to frustration which later manifests in his aggressivity.

"perhaps he merely feared the loss of social status that the end of his air- conditioning represented...he needed money to have his power and air-conditioning and security restored, and he swore that nothing would stand in his way. He, a man, who hated guns, came to accept that he would have to use one."(Hamid, *Moth Smoke*109)

Daru's silence breeds in him frustration and aggression and the dilemma of not to be what he wants and not to be able to voice what he wants to say explains the psychology of criminal mind. Lambroso argues, "The criminal mind is born out of frustration at the unequal opportunities that society offers ... frustration that truth is elusive and justice is unfair..." (60). Daru must not be blamed for his plight because in indigenous society crime is but the product of criminal policy based on injustice. Hulsman argues, "Crime is not the object but the product of criminal policy..."(71). Daru becomes involved in drug addiction, murder, and is later reduced to a doomed lover seeking an escape from the worsening circumstances in his life. He uses heroine and other forms of intoxication as a source of escape from the fear of cruel and 'artificial rules' of modern day corrupt society. "Desperate to be what he's not, he hooked on to drugs that relieved him only temporarily from the burden of who he is" (Lahiri 7).

Besides drug addiction, he also becomes involved in a bomb blast with the help of Murad Badshah thereby ruining the lives of thousands of innocent victims. He also shares his part in a bank robbery and later develops his illicit relations with Mumtaz. His philosophy of

life aims at earning money and having entertainment at any cost. This is the extreme of degeneration and devastation of his moral, and social life. We see how degeneration occurs step by step in the novel and converts a fearful person into a criminal. His entire life reveals how the noxious spiral of silence first suppresses his voice and consequently triggers his aggressivity that turns inward and outward. The narrowing spiral of silence reveals the inherent contradictions of an unjust, irrational society.

His intoxication of drugs and love is a scapegoat for his failures and fear of criticism. Like Kamila Shamsie's portrayal of the redemptive power of love between Karim and Raheen in *Kartography*, Hamid shows the power of friendship between Mumtaz and Daru but later his friendship is doomed when Mumtaz abandons every relation in the novel. In the end she says that love is not a proper word for this relationship. She uses the word 'obsessed' for Daru's infatuation with her. Daru's obsession is, in fact, his strong need for affiliating with an influential person after he has lost Ozi. Qadeer argues that in Pakistan economic conditions, caste, identity, and affiliation with modern elitist sector together make up the basis of class status (210).

According to Merton, an individual plays many roles in society and along with the increase of disintegration in society, the more the individual is subjected to the incompatible roles (170). Mumtaz's character stands for the very few people of indigenous society who raise their voice for the rights of the minority but ironically much like Daru she also loses her strength at the end because of the coercive structure of spiral of silence. This coercive silence results from the conflict that a figure like Mumtaz faces from a sense of incompatibility. She becomes a bad mother, a disobedient wife, an immoral friend and above all a fearful journalist so terrified by the coercive force of silence that she does not use her real name as a journalist. Instead, she uses the pseudonym of "Zulfikar Manto". This shows how the socio political situation suppresses any deviant voice- be it minority voice, a or voice of revolutionary thinking that Mumtaz signifies. "Our coerced silence is the weapon that has been sharpened and brought to our throats" (Hamid, *Fear and Silence* 5). Fear of grave consequences makes her silent in the end of the narrative. Eventually as a gesture of defiance, she defies all restraints and conditions of all relations to become a bold non conformist journalist but ironically the fear of socio cultural chains make her life a melting pot.

There is another example of coercive silence in the novel which shows the power of silence exercised by the dominant people in society. In the novel, Mumtaz defends the case of a prostitute Dilaram who was ruthlessly raped by a landlord, his friends and his son. Dilaram becomes pregnant and the landlord sells her for fifty rupees to a city man. In order to free herself from this man, she is bound to pay back her price. She finds herself compelled to go to *heera mandi* (Red Light area) to earn money through prostitution. The fear and domination of the elite are the reasons why she resorts to prostitution. Mumtaz draws from her the untold story of her prostitution. Prostitution has been the theme of the stories of many bold writers like Manto. No wonder Mumtaz adopts the pseudonym of Zulfikar Manto in the novel. Zulfikar means "sword" and Zulfikar Manto stands for the "literary" sword of Manto that can slash and unearth the hidden stories. Though she is brave enough to defend the minorities in the novel, yet she is fearful of her family, husband, and other acquaintances. The necessity for a pseudonym reveals her fears and also her resolve to raise her voice against tyranny. She goes to *heera mandi* with Daru because she does not want to reveal to her husband that she is the very Zulfikar Manto who writes articles in defense of the silent and the oppressed. She is afraid that her husband might become exasperated, and will not allow her to carry on with this vocation. This fact makes it clear that people do not want to become the voice of the minority no matter how much powerful they are. Hamid uses a visual parallel to the spiral of silence in the uncanny image of the moth smoke. The moth encircling around the flame shows the degeneration prevailing in society at individual and national level. This is what coercive silence does to an individual and consequently annihilates him. In the circle growing ever narrower, the moth eventually falls into it and burns to ashes. At individual level we see the degenerate silence of Daru, Dilaram, Mumtaz and even Manucci (Daru's servant) in absence of justice in society that builds pressure on them. At national level Pakistan's passion for becoming a nuclear power can also be taken as a self-annihilating tool for the entire country. The futile struggle of Daru, Mumtaz, and Dilaram to overcome the dominant voice of majority and to convey their own dissident voice against injustice and class divisions makes all burning moths, who suffer self destruction: "The title of the book refers to what remains when a moth is seduced by a candle....in the end promising Daru is just smoke" (Barua 5).

Later, she writes “The Trial” in defense of Daru. She interviews many people “who are willing to say ...that it was a Pajero [of Ozi] and not a Suzuki [of Daru] who killed the boy” (Hamid 244). But people of Accountability Commission reject this stance in defense of Daru. Instead, they speak in support of Ozi, claiming that, “it would be extremely inconvenient for Khurram Shah [Ozi’s father] himself under investigation, if his son were to be accused of this crime” (Hamid, *Moth Smoke* 244). For fear of losing the good terms with Khurram Shah people listen to the voice of the majority and dare not speak for Daru who, being a member of the marginalized people has become the “other”. Conversely, Ozi has many supporters because he is the affluent voice of majority people would lend their support to. At last Daru loses the case and becomes silent in the face of abject law made for the rich only.

The novel examines the coerced silence of Daru and Dilaram and partial silence of Mumtaz. It is interesting to note how Mumtaz’s partial silence changes into coerced silence. Hamid’s Mumtaz and Ibsen’s Nora in *A Doll’s House* have a close resemblance as both the heroines strive to cope with adverse circumstances and gender stereotypes and both challenge every dominant voice of their societies. Both are the epitome of deviant voices and rise against the prejudices of society at the cost of social isolation. At the end when the question of Mumtaz’s character and her role in society arises, she judges herself as “a bad woman” and a “monster”, who has been trying to keep the truth from herself. She knows she is neither a good mother, nor a good wife. “That it was not my fault I didn’t love my son Muazzam” (Hamid, *Moth Smoke* 241). Her inner self shatters into many selves and at the end she abandons all social roles and decides like Nora to spend a life free from all relations because of coercive societal structures. This abandonment of all social roles is paradoxically not a gesture of defiance but an act of extreme form of the silence as both have left their homes but not the society.

Moth Smoke exemplifies how people suffer suppression , when their views fall apart from the dominant prevailing views of the time. As long as the contradiction from both sides increases, the whirling cicle shows more and more suppression until at the end , the coil diminishes, depicting a complete silence of personal opinion. This shows the fear of social isolation becomes a hindrance for individuals in the way of freedom of expression. The cases of Daru, Mumtaz, and Changhes exemplify this perspective. As they lack the support of the majority,

their silence is a *coerced silence* because they want to raise their defiant voice but are forced by hierarchical class structures and societal pressure of isolation to remain silent for fear of becoming marginalised members whose individual voice has lost all authenticity.

The theory of "Spiral of silence" shows the coerced silence of Daru, Mumtaz, and Dilaram in *Moth Smoke*. It not only explores the complex paradoxical dynamics of silence under the societal pressures of public voice but also examines the problematics of Neumann's concept of individual silence in Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*.

The Reluctant Fundamentalist voices the same fear and anxiety and anxiety of the Muslim immigrants in America. The novel underscores the trauma, fear and consequent silence that increased manifold for Muslims after September 11. The novel's protagonist Changez explains his life in America before and after September/11. After the notorious incident, he has now two split identities. This silence is especially exemplified by Changez's character in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* when he voices his indignation on being dubbed as a fundamentalist by the propagandists during the course of his job at Samson Underwood in America. He does not express his feelings in the unfavorable social setup of America in the midst of the powerful and influential Americans that have slandered him. Paradoxically, he breaks his fearful silence in his homeland and it is here while sitting in the secure surroundings of a hotel in Lahore that we hear his opinion about America and Americans. The behavior, anxiety, and restlessness of all these characters can best be seen in relation to Noelle Neumann's theory of Spiral of Silence which explains the silence of masses due to pressure of society. The silence of these characters raises questions about the normative behavior of masses in an oppressive society. The rising hierarchy of suppression and superiority intensifies class conflicts in societies where initiative and self-confidence are paralyzed by the coercive and aggressive spirals of fear and silence.

On one hand, he is bracketed with Asian/South Asian diaspora and on the other, he is held responsible of every political crisis in the west. These two disparate identities become the cause of his fear and his alienation. The main reason for Changez's sense of foreignness is the ideological factor that became pronounced after 9/11 for all those living as immigrants in America and the west. Paradoxically, after September/11 Changez also feels a change in his attitude. His dormant, subconscious Pakistani self now awakens to transform into his more alert conscious self after his homecoming. He transforms from a normal

assimilated immigrant to a reluctant fundamentalist. He narrates his trauma in a dramatic monologue to an anonymous American whose gestures and movements are shown rather than voiced. It is through the figures of Changhez and silent American that Hamid reveals the working of vicious cycle of silence. Changez recounts to his American guest:

America was gripped by a growing and self-righteous rage in those weeks of September and October as I cavorted... Pakistani cabdrivers were being beaten to within an inch of their lives; the FBI was raiding mosques, shops, and even people's houses; Muslim men were disappearing, perhaps into shadowy detention centers for questioning or worse. (Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* 90)

The treatment meted out to Changhez is emblematic of what all American Muslims suffered after the incidence. As a minority voice, they were helpless and fearful before the Americans. For fear of public opinion, they lost their voices. Hamid explores the social and psychological effects of this suppression on the minority community through his protagonist Changez whose behaviour is emblematic of how a passive mind changes into an aggressive criminal mind. He sums up the social divide in a coercive class-riddled society in these words:

“Our political system's at fault. Men like us have no control over our destinies. We're at the mercy of the powerful...we need a system. Where a man can rely on the law for justice...given basic dignity as human being... Opportunity to prosper regardless of his status at his birth.” (*The Reluctant Fundamentalist* 225)

We meet the novel's protagonist Changhez who unfolds to his anonymous American guest the dilemma he encounters after 9/11 to an anonymous American. He informs his listener that despite living with Americans like their siblings, they did not trust him after the holocaust of 9/11. A distrust deficit builds between Changhez and his girl friend Erica whom he loved dearly. The whole story of the novel is in the form of a dramatic monologue, which reinforces how the coercive forces operate at linguistic level also in Changhez's world that has now turned turtle. Changhez is now facing the suspicion and distrust of Americans. In America he was the silent minority and lost his voice for fear reaction from the American majority.

Changez and the anonymous American seen in the light of Neumann's theory, reveal the paradox of silence of minority. We come

to know that silence of both characters is the coerced silence. Changez is speaking against all the mistreatment he was meted out by the Americans, and the discrimination and bigotry he observed in America for all Muslims in the hearts of Americans. An important question that arises here is: Why did Changez remain silent in front of Americans when he was in America? The answer is ironic: "Any one who defends an apostate is itself an apostate" (Hamid, "Fear and Silence" 5). Even those handful Americans who believe that Muslims should not be marginalized are afraid of public opinion. While in America, Changez was afraid of defending the minority Muslims and being labeled a fundamentalist and also because if an individual perceives his opinion is against the dominant majority, he remains silent for the fear of facing isolation and fatal consequences. To raise the voice against the bigotry of super state while living there spells severe consequences for the minority voice. Though Changez, Erica, and their other friends have been depicted as a young generation with belief in the freedom of expression but no one likes to defend the case of minorities. In America Changez remains a victim of public pressure. However, the dynamics change when he returns to Pakistan. The tables have turned and now it is his American guest who is a minority voice in Pakistan. If the paradoxical silence of the anonymous American in Pakistan is explored, there are two reasons for his enigmatic silence. The first one is again the "spiral of silence." Being in the land of Muslims, he is sure that his point of view will definitely fall in the category of minority. So he prefers to express his anger and disgust through different gestures and remains silent throughout the novel. The second interpretation is that his silence depicts his unwillingness to make any dialogue with a Pakistani. To make a dialogue is an effort to search for a middle way where two different schools of thoughts can interact or communicate. He does not break the silence. Americans are not ready to make any dialogue and discussion on the topic of extremism and fundamentalist after 9/11. So he remains silent and his gestures confirm that he is convinced that Changez is also a terrorist like other Muslims. Americans are a less resilient enemy against whom his own government is fighting. It is because of this fear of government opposition that they do not voice their opinion. Chomsky highlights the political dynamics of this ideological conflict in these words, "[American forces] are engaged in another war against a much less resilient enemy, the American people. The battle ground is ideological, not military" (Chomski 141).

This ideological war is the second reason for the silence of anonymous American listener in the narrative. His silence, therefore, is paradoxical. The same phenomenon of fear and silence has been depicted by Hamid in his story "Beheading." The story is about a young journalist who is escorted away by some unknown people for his writings. The unknown people come to his house, torture him physically and take him away in the car. He is too frightened to ask his abductors any questions. He says, "Maybe I can just mumble to myself and they'll think I'm religious"(Hamid, "Beheading", 194). The term "Big Brothers" has been used for these people because of their resemblance to Orwell's Big Brothers. Hamid employs the term "big men" "...they're big men. Bigger than me"(198). The young writer does not utter a single word even to himself for the fear of misinterpretation. Such fear of the "Big Brothers" of society makes the masses silent even while "sitting alone by themselves in the room, afraid to think, what we think" because their opinion runs counter to majority voice. (Hamid, "Fear and silence" 5).

The domination of authoritative people paralyzes the freedom of expression especially of middle class people who believe their opinion is suppressed by public voice. The people most affected in this regard are the intellectuals and thinkers who want to raise their voice for their rights. Forceful suppression of these people degenerates their individual character. Fear of isolation makes these individuals adopt a "social character" which Erich Fromm defines as:

"The character structure of most members of a group which has developed as the result of the basic experiences and mode of life common to that group...the social character internalizes external necessities and thus harnesses human energy for the task of a given economic and social system". (239-45)

This character structure of the majority based on basic experiences and common modes of life urges people to adopt a common view of life that is acceptable to all leading to normative behavior that does not challenge the societal norms.

This is the worst form of colonized condition in the *Moth Smoke* when the daring and bold journalist like Mumtaz is made silent through over domination of society. Coercive structures suppress people's dissident voice. Consequently, they are afraid of becoming the marginalized voice. Daru is introduced as an intelligent young boy studying at Government College and his rich friend Ozi is presented as

less capable than Daru. He, being son of an affluent but corrupt Khurram Shah, goes abroad to seek higher education in the United States. The line of discrimination starts widening here in the novel and goes on until Daru becomes a criminal after he has lost his job, and also his social status. On the other hand, Ozi becomes a member of the elite class after returning from States. This contrast between Daru and Ozi explains how socio-economic factors promote divisive structures and set an individual's opinion against public voice and eventually turn people into silent minority.

In a society where the views of intellectuals and intelligent people like Daru, Mumtaz and Changez are not appreciated; there gaps a fearful silence. People are reluctant to express their deviant views and become socially or psychologically mute. Either they abandon all relations like Mumtaz for the fear of losing their voice and become socially mute members or they become psychologically mute by adopting a social character and suffer the consequences silently because a dissident individual knows that he lacks any support from his society and his case will not be considered as we see in sufferings of Daru, Mumtaz, and Dilaram.

Hamid's fiction explores ideological, socio economic and psychological factors involved in making the characters fearful and silent. Changhez narrates his tale of suffering in a dramatic monologue and tries to convince his anonymous listener that every Muslim is not a traitor. He also told his friend Erica how he had accepted her without any discrimination and wanted to make her his life partner. But the novel reveals that not even a single example of Changhez has worked to change the perception of Americans against Muslims. This conflict between speech and silence is a socio-economic, ideological and psychological war which will replicate spirals of silence unless the entire ideological set up of any nation has transformed. The culture of coercive silence still prevails and perhaps centuries are required to transform it.

The essay examines in detail the factors that trigger fear and silence in a class based divisive society. But one thing that emerges from his presentation of silence of the masses is that Mohsin Hamid has not lost hope. He leaves his stories of deterioration incomplete. There is not a single event in both novels where a character commits suicide. Mumtaz escapes to raise her voice against social constraints. Like Nora her decision of leaving her home and giving up all social roles is an attempt to break the vicious circle of stifling silence. It is her gesture of

defiance against all oppressive structures on which oppressive societies are founded. Likewise, Daru is seen waiting for death behind the bars but he has *The Trial* in his hands and he says, "I read it over and over again, until I notice the paper getting wet, the ink blurring into little flowers" (Hamid, *Moth Smoke* 230). The blurring of ink into little flowers is emblematic of optimistic approach which makes Hamid's figures optimistic and hopeful much like his own philosophy of life. He says in one of his articles, "Silence kills hope. It kills optimism". (Hamid, "Silencing Pakistan" 6). His narratives are a gesture of his defiance against fear and pressure dominant opinion imposes on silent minority.

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