

Reclaiming the Gaze: Islamophobia and Resistance in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *Home Fire*

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Abstract

This article examines the resurgence of right-wing nationalism and the accompanying rise in Islamophobia and xenophobic sentiment through the lens of contemporary postcolonial literature. It argues that novels such as Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) and Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire* (2017) not only reflect these realities but also actively resist and subvert dominant narratives shaped by the Western gaze. In the context of an increasingly surveilled and suspicious world, where Muslim bodies are targeted and racialised, these novels offer a nuanced portrayal of the personal and collective impact of rising nationalism. Through the use of narrative ambiguity, character agency, and the reconfiguration of classical forms, both texts humanise the Muslim experience in the face of systemic discrimination. The article explores how Hamid and Shamsie reclaim the narrative by positioning their characters as agents of resistance rather than passive victims. By foregrounding the human cost of xenophobia, Islamophobia, and political disenfranchisement, the article contends that postcolonial literature serves as a space for radical reimagining and healing. This analysis contributes to ongoing conversations about literature's role in subverting the colonial gaze and its capacity to resist the rising forces of xenophobia and nationalism globally.

Keywords: Reclaiming the Gaze; Right-wing Nationalism; Islamophobia; Xenophobia; *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*; *Home Fire*.