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Beyond Recognition: Emotional Citizenship in Twenty-First-Century Postcolonial Fiction

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Abstract

In most of postcolonial criticism, belonging is largely theorized by migration, diaspora and territorial politics of the nation state where citizenship is a legal relationship that can be granted, denied, or taken away. The article proposes that a major current in twenty-first century postcolonial fiction is an alternative mode of belonging, the emotional citizenship, that is based on more than symbolic documentation, descent or state affirmation – on caring, grieving, touching and holding on to the object of belonging. Together, when read against both one another and in conjunction with The Last White Man (2022) and Exit West (2017), Reading Kamila Shamsie's Home Fire (2017) and Mohsin Hamid's Exit West (2017) establishes a framework of analysis that introduces and animates a colonial aspect of misrecognition, developed by Fanon, alongside a cultural politics of emotion suggested by Ahmed and Butler's theory of affective attachment, all of which interrelates Said and Bhabha to throw the racial and cultural grammars at odds with these novels into relief. The article argues that these texts are not just an expression of an unspoken consolation for legal exclusion, but a critique of legal exclusion; that is, they assert claims against legal exclusion, and that these claims are realized through the bodies of their readers and are only readable to readers willing to be read by their bodies. Each novel stages an antagonism it declines to resolve: Shamsie's protagonist makes an affective claim the state can read only as a criminal one; Hamid's migrants improvise relational publics that no polity ratifies; and the collapse of racial legibility in The Last White Man leaves recognition dependent on the slow labour of intimates. Emotional citizenship thus names both an alternative to the politics of recognition and its most exacting critique, since affective belonging carries no enforcement and remains vulnerable to sentimental capture.

Keywords: *emotional citizenship; affect theory; belonging; grievability; diaspora criticism; Kamila Shamsie; Mohsin Hamid.*

Introduction

Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire* opens not with a death or a crime but with an interrogation. A young British woman on her way to a doctoral programme is held at Heathrow and asked to account for her opinions on the Queen, on democracy, on the Great British Bake Off (Shamsie 3–5). The scene is comic in its banality and merciless in its logic: the questions do not seek information but a performance of attachment. What the state wants from Isma Pasha is evidence of feeling, and it wants that evidence in a form it can administratively read. The novel's subsequent tragedy follows from the discovery that the state's appetite for legible

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attachment is matched by its refusal to be bound by any attachment in return. Published in 2017, two years before the British government deprived Shamima Begum of her citizenship (Begum, par. 1), Home Fire anticipated with uncomfortable precision the political situation in which membership of a polity became, for a racialized minority, a revocable privilege conditional on the sentiments its members could be shown to hold.

That situation is the point of departure for this article, but not its subject. The subject is the counter-movement that contemporary postcolonial fiction has begun to describe: the emergence, within and against the collapsing guarantees of legal membership, of forms of belonging constituted by emotional and relational bonds. This formation is emotional citizenship, and it names something more specific and more demanding than the affective residue of political exclusion. Emotional citizenship is a mode of membership whose currency is care, grief, touch and sustained attention; whose jurisdiction is interpersonal rather than territorial; and whose claims are advanced not through documentation or descent but through acts that oblige another person to acknowledge one's existence. It is, in the texts examined here, both a genuine alternative to state-issued belonging and a form conspicuously vulnerable to the very powers it evades.

The claim requires situating within a critical field that has long thought about belonging in other terms. Postcolonial studies has produced a rich account of citizenship as the afterlife of empire: as a status distributed unevenly by colonial cartographies, contested in the metropole by those the empire brought there, and administered through racialized suspicion. From Said's demonstration that the colonized subject is produced as an object of knowledge before being denied the standing of a knower (Said, Orientalism 36), through Bhabha's analysis of the ambivalent subject who is almost but never quite admitted to the norms of the coloniser (Bhabha 86–88), to Gilroy's diagnosis of a postimperial melancholia that cannot mourn the empire it has lost and therefore cannot live with those it produced (Gilroy 98, 108–10), the field has been acute about the mechanisms by which belonging is withheld. Diaspora criticism has correspondingly theorized belonging as spatial: as a relation to homeland, to routes and roots, to the cartographies of dispersal that Brah taught the discipline to read. Where citizenship itself has been the object, it has generally been approached through migration, borders and the nation-state's regulation of entry.

These are indispensable frameworks, and this article does not propose to displace them. It does propose that they have left a specific dimension of belonging comparatively unexamined. If belonging is analysed primarily as a relation between a subject and a territory, a state or a cultural inheritance, then the relations through which people actually experience themselves as belonging (being loved, being cared for, being grieved, being touched, being recognized

by name) appear as sentiment rather than as structure. Affect theory has of course insisted otherwise. Ahmed has shown that emotions are not private states but social forms that circulate and stick to bodies, aligning some subjects with the national body and casting others as its threat (Ahmed, Cultural Politics of Emotion 11); Berlant has traced how attachment to compromised objects, including the promise of citizenship itself, organizes political life (Berlant, Queen of America 1–24; Berlant, Cruel Optimism 1). Citizenship studies has developed cognate vocabularies: Plummer's intimate citizenship, Rosaldo's cultural citizenship, Fortier's account of affective citizenship, Isin's reconception of citizenship as a matter of acts rather than statuses. What has not followed, or has followed only sporadically, is the sustained application of these resources to contemporary postcolonial fiction as a body of writing that theorizes belonging in its own right. The affective turn and postcolonial analyses of citizenship have often proceeded in parallel.

The argument advanced here is that twenty-first-century postcolonial fiction is where their convergence can most productively be read, because the novel is uniquely able to hold together the scale of the state and the scale of the caress. This reading rests on three propositions. First, that these texts represent emotional citizenship as a form of claim-making rather than of consolation: when Aneeka Pasha lies down beside her brother's body in a Karachi park, she is not expressing grief so much as filing a suit. Second, that emotional citizenship is embodied and therefore exposed, which is why these novels return so insistently to skin, to corpses, to hands. Third, and this is where my account departs from the more affirmative strand of recent affect-oriented criticism, these novels do not present emotional belonging as a solution. They present it as a rival jurisdiction whose verdicts the state is under no obligation to enforce, and whose currency can be counterfeited. To read them otherwise is to mistake a diagnosis for a consolation.

The corpus is deliberately narrow. Shamsie's *Home Fire* and Hamid's *Exit West*, both published in 2017, and Hamid's *The Last White Man* (2022) are the work of two British-Pakistani novelists published within a five-year span and addressing racialized belonging through formally distinct means: tragic realism, speculative allegory, and fable respectively. Their proximity permits a genuinely comparative argument rather than a survey. Each novel dismantles a different guarantee of belonging: Home Fire removes legal status; *Exit West* removes territory; *The Last White Man* removes racial legibility. What remains in each case, and what each novel then subjects to pressure, is the relation between persons.

It is worth stating early what emotional citizenship is not, since the surrounding conceptual territory is crowded. It is not empathy. Empathy describes a movement of feeling from a secure position towards a precarious one, and the postcolonial critique of that movement is well

established: it leaves the asymmetry it deplores intact, and it can be enjoyed. Emotional citizenship as I use the term describes a claim made from the precarious position, and it is directed at obligation rather than at feeling. Nor is it multicultural recognition, which distributes acknowledgement from a centre to groups that must first render themselves recognizable; the whole force of the concept lies in its indifference to whether the state is watching. Nor, finally, is it cosmopolitanism, which retains the polity as its horizon and merely enlarges it. Emotional citizenship does not enlarge the polity. It operates beside it, in a register the polity cannot process, and this is at once its critical value and the source of its fragility.

The originality of the argument therefore lies in three moves. It takes a sociological and citizenship concept and applies it to the field of literary criticism, meaning that it outlines the scope or nature of things that novels can do that other kinds of writing cannot; novels can describe the inside of a claim, the length and the expense of a claim, pathologically things off which legal and ethnographic writing is incapable. It requires that what are being included in the category be risky, rather than sentimental; most that typically passes as "affective belonging" is left out. It rejects the affirmative conclusion that affect-oriented criticism tends to go towards; that these novels entail emotions as citizenship; that the political is felt, but that there is no political enforcement; that are real, but not protective, emotional citizenship, and that are indeed consequential, but have no enforcement. Hereafter, the period is pivotal because of the growing discussion of the "right to immunity" from deportation, migration, and the question of racialized citizenship, membership, and exclusion (Rutkowska 871–88; Banerjee 288–302; Sadaf 636–47). Formal experiment is the way Shamsie and Hamid react to those pressures, not so much as protest fiction.

Methodologically, the article proceeds by close reading informed by theory rather than by the application of theory to illustrative passages. I attend to narrative voice and focalization, to the disposition of the sentence, to figures of skin and burial, and to the structure of address: the question of who in these novels is permitted to say you to whom. Theoretical categories are treated as instruments to be tested and, where the texts resist them, revised. This procedure matters particularly for recognition theory, whose Hegelian ancestry assumes a reciprocity that Fanon had already shown to be unavailable under colonial conditions (Fanon 168–72), and which these novels re-encounter in the contemporary security state.

The article proceeds in seven further sections. The next section reviews the scholarship on postcolonial citizenship, diaspora, affect and recognition, and specifies the limitation the article addresses. The following section develops emotional citizenship as an analytical category by staging an encounter between Fanon and Butler on recognition and Ahmed and

Berlant on affect. Three sections then read *Home Fire, Exit West* and *The Last White Man* in turn. A discussion draws the comparative argument together, and a conclusion states what the category changes for postcolonial criticism.

Belonging, Citizenship, Affect: The State of the Field

Scholarship on postcolonial citizenship has been shaped by the recognition that the nation-state, the political form decolonization inherited, was never designed to accommodate those it had governed as subjects rather than citizens. Anderson's account of national community as an imagined artefact remains foundational (Anderson 6–7), but postcolonial criticism has been most productive where it has examined the machinery by which that imagining is policed. Recent work on Home Fire exemplifies the tendency and its limits. Sarkowsky reads the novel through the law's treatment of burial, showing how citizenship's urgency becomes visible precisely at the point where the state disposes of a body (Sarkowsky 29–44); Rutkowska situates the novel in relation to the Begum case and the political novel's uneasy relation to an unfolding present (Rutkowska 871–88); Banerjee traces the historical sedimentation of British Muslim identity from labour migration to conditional citizenship (Banerjee 288–302). Chambers and Morey have established the broader field within which such readings operate, demonstrating how contemporary British Muslim fiction negotiates a representational economy in which Muslim characters arrive pre-interpreted (Chambers, "Sound and Fury"; Chambers, Making Sense; Morey; see also Morey and Yaqin; R. Ahmed). This body of work is substantial and indispensable. Its orientation, however, is predominantly towards the state: it asks what the state does to belonging. The question of what belonging does in the absence of the state remains comparatively underdeveloped.

Criticism on *Exit West* displays a comparable emphasis. Perfect reads the novel's refugees against the discursive production of the refugee as a hole in the national fabric (Perfect 187–201); Lagji attends to waiting as the temporal condition of migration (Lagji 218–32); Sadaf situates the doors within a post-Brexit reimagining of history and geography (Sadaf 636–47); Carter examines the ethical demand the novel places on its reader (Carter 619–38). Knudsen and Rahbek come closest to the concerns of this article in reading the novel's hopefulness as a formal achievement rather than a naivety (Knudsen and Rahbek 442–54). What unites these readings is an understanding of the doors as the novel's central device and of migration as its central subject. This is a reasonable emphasis, but it has meant that the novel's long central movement, in which nothing much migrates and a relationship slowly fails, is treated as the human interest around a geopolitical argument rather than as the argument itself.

Diaspora studies has theorized belonging with greater attention to affect, though rarely under that name. Hall's account of cultural identity as a production rather than an inheritance, and Brah's insistence that diaspora space is inhabited by those who stay as well as those who move, both point towards a relational conception of belonging (Hall 222; Brah 209). Yuval-Davis makes the conceptual move most directly, distinguishing belonging as an emotional attachment from the politics of belonging as the boundary-maintaining project of political communities (Yuval-Davis 197–99). The distinction is precisely the one this article requires, yet it has been taken up more readily in sociology than in literary criticism, where the emotional attachment tends to be treated as the object of representation rather than as a form of political claim.

Recognition theory supplies a third body of resources and a cautionary lesson. Taylor's argument that misrecognition inflicts real damage, and Honneth's derivation of moral claims from the struggle for recognition, established a normative vocabulary that Fraser contested on distributive grounds (Taylor 25–26; Honneth 160–79; Fraser and Honneth). Postcolonial and Indigenous critics have raised a sharper objection: that recognition granted by a colonial state reproduces the authority it appears to concede. Povinelli demonstrated how the liberal demand for recognizable difference disciplines those who must perform it, and Coulthard, returning to Fanon, argues that the politics of recognition secures rather than dissolves colonial domination (Povinelli 1–34; Coulthard 25–50). This critique is the pivot of my argument. If recognition by the state is compromised at the source, then the question becomes what other recognitions are available, and it is here that affect theory and postcolonial criticism must be brought into contact.

Affect theory has developed closely related accounts in adjacent fields, but their systematic application to postcolonial fiction remains uneven. Ahmed's analysis of how emotion produces the very boundaries between bodies it appears merely to cross (Ahmed, Strange Encounters 21–22; Ahmed, Cultural Politics of Emotion 11); Berlant's account of intimate publics and of attachments that wear out those who hold them (Berlant, Female Complaint 5–13; Berlant, Cruel Optimism 1); Butler's demonstration that the distribution of grievability is a political operation prior to any distribution of rights (Butler, Precarious Life 20; Butler, Frames of War 14–16); these constitute a formidable apparatus. Literary criticism has drawn on it, but more often for questions of readerly empathy (Keen) than for the constitution of belonging within the storyworld. The result is a conceptual opening rather than a merely bibliographic one. Postcolonial criticism knows how belonging is withheld; affect theory knows how feeling does political work; citizenship studies has named affective and intimate citizenship as sociological categories. What remains comparatively underdeveloped is an account of emotional citizenship as a literary form, as something contemporary postcolonial

novels construct, test and find wanting, through the resources of narrative. Supplying that account is the task of the sections that follow.

Emotional Citizenship: Constructing the Category

The category is assembled from four theoretical positions that do not ordinarily sit together, and the assembly matters more than any of its components. An account is taken from Fanon as of why recognition by the dominant is structurally unavailable; from Butler an account of how subjects are nonetheless constituted in address; from Ahmed an account of how emotion performs the political work of drawing boundaries around bodies; and from Berlant an account of why attachment to the promise of belonging can be sustaining and damaging at once. Said and Bhabha supply the representational field in which all of this occurs.

Fanon's analysis of the encounter in which a child's cry fixes him in place remains the most economical demonstration available of what misrecognition does (Fanon 84–86). The point is not that he is insulted but that he is seen, and that the seeing arrives already furnished with a story about him; his body is returned to him as an object he must inhabit. Fanon's account is generally read as an argument about racialization, which it is, but it is also an argument about the structure of recognition itself. The Hegelian scene requires two subjects each of whom can confer standing on the other; colonialism produces a scene in which only one party has the authority to confer, and therefore in which what is conferred is never recognition but classification (Fanon 168–72). This is why Coulthard can argue that a politics organized around demands for recognition from the colonial state entrenches the authority it petitions (Coulthard 25–50). The implication for a theory of belonging is severe: if the state is the only recognizing party, then belonging is available only in the form the state can read, which is to say in the form of docility.

Butler's work opens the alternative. If the subject comes into being through being addressed, and can give an account of itself only in terms it did not author (Butler, Giving an Account 36–39), then recognition is not exclusively a vertical transaction with an authority; it is a horizontal and continuous operation between persons. The twist of politics is provided in Butler's later writing. Grievability – whether or not certain lives count as lives that can be lost – comes before and conditions the distribution of rights (Butler, Precarious Life 20; Butler, Frames of War 14-16). A people who can't mourn a death has predeterminated the fate of the life. Here is the first element to emotional citizenship: Grief is not about the loss of membership, it's about the assertion of membership. He said that it is "public" to mourn someone as to signify that they "belonged.

Ahmed gives him the 2nd. Emotions do not map onto the subject, but are picked up by one subject to be carried by another, and become freighted with meaning and attached to specific 'bodies' of the subject (Ahmed, Cultural Politics of Emotion 11). The stranger, in her earlier formulation, is not the one we fail to recognize but the one we recognize precisely as a stranger (Ahmed, Strange Encounters 21–22). Emotional citizenship must therefore be distinguished sharply from tolerance or sympathy, which are the affects by which the majority confirms its own position. The relevant emotions in the novels examined here are those that place the feeling subject at risk: grief that will not privatize itself, love that is administratively inconvenient, attention that costs the attender something.

Berlant supplies the third component and the necessary scepticism. Citizenship in Berlant's account is already an affective structure, sustained by fantasies of belonging that survive their own falsification (Berlant, Queen of America 1–24), and the intimate publics that form around shared feeling can consolidate as easily as they can contest (Berlant, Female Complaint 5–13). Cruel optimism names the condition in which the object one is attached to is the obstacle to one's flourishing (Berlant, Cruel Optimism 1). Any account of emotional citizenship that presented it as simply emancipatory would fail this test. The novels read below do not fail it: each demonstrates that affective belonging can be exploited, misread or fatally unenforceable.

Said and Bhabha frame the field within which these operations occur. Said's demonstration that the Orient is produced as a textual object anterior to any encounter (Said Orientalism 36) explains why the characters in these novels are met by interpretations before they are met by persons; Bhabha's ambivalence and third space (Bhabha 37, 86–88) describe the position of subjects who are formally included and substantively suspect. Emotional citizenship is not, however, a version of hybridity. Hybridity describes a condition of cultural identity; emotional citizenship describes a mode of claim-making. The distinction is important because the novels examined here are not primarily interested in what their characters are (their hyphenations are largely settled) but in what their characters can do to secure acknowledgement.

From these materials the category can be specified. Emotional citizenship, as I use the term, has four features. It is constituted in address: it exists in the second person, in the moment one person's claim obliges another's response, and it cannot be held in reserve like a passport. It is enacted rather than conferred, which aligns it with Isin's reconception of citizenship as constituted through acts that rupture the given order rather than through statuses distributed by authorities (Isin 36–38). It is embodied, transacted through skin, proximity, burial and touch, and therefore exposed to precisely the violence that legal status is supposed to hold at bay. And it is unenforceable: it produces obligations without instruments of compulsion,

which is at once its ethical superiority to state citizenship and its practical weakness. These four features supply the framework for the readings that follow, and each novel tests a different one to destruction.

Filing a Claim in the Body: *Home Fire*

Home Fire distributes interiority as the state distributes standing, and the distribution is the novel's argument (Shamsie). Its five sections are given over to Isma, Eamonn, Parvaiz, Aneeka and Karamat, an arrangement that appears democratic until one notices what happens in the section that carries Aneeka's name. Where the others are granted free indirect access to their own reasoning, Aneeka's part is substantially assembled from external materials: reportage, headlines, the accumulated noise of a public that has already decided what she is. The formal choice is exact. The novel withholds interiority from the character the state and the press have converted entirely into spectacle, and in doing so it makes legible a mechanism that Ahmed describes: the racialized woman becomes the surface on which a national emotion is deposited (Ahmed, Cultural Politics of Emotion 11). Aneeka is not silenced by the novel; she is silenced in the novel by the same machinery the novel is anatomizing, and the reader is made to experience the loss of access as a deprivation.

The airport sequence that opens the novel establishes the terms (Shamsie 3–5). Isma is asked about her sentiments, and she has prepared her answers in advance; she has practised belonging as one practises for an examination. What is demanded is not loyalty but its performance in a form the examiner can process, and the demand is inexhaustible, since no performance can settle the question permanently. Here the novel identifies the structural asymmetry Fanon described. Isma can only ask her examiner to take a look at her "interiority." The result is a strange self-abnegation in which some emotion that is supposed to be expressed, given a cue and must be what is required by the occasion becomes a document.

The novel's most radical feat is not so much its power of ideologization as its ability to bring us back to the failure in emotional citizenship, for which Parvaiz is a typical victim. He is a sound engineer, collector and archive of ambient noise, a susceptibility that has been laid out by a lack: no account has been kept of his father, whose jihadi career ended upon death during his travelling to Guantánamo, has rendered him a silent one. His recruiter is providing him with the restoration of a paternal story, one that makes Parvaiz a son, not a security threat (Shamsie 124–41). Rejected by other British institutions in the novel except this one, the recruitment is an offer of recognition and this is what makes it work. Shamsie's building is cautious not to justify or blame and Parvaiz's selection is his to make, and novel puts weight

to the consequences of it. But it points out the weakness with utmost accuracy—and it's a location that is affective. It is this cruel optimism—Berlant's first book, titled Cruel Optimism (1): The Attachment that Promises and the Attachment that Destroys the Self—that serves as indispensable to this book: in the form of a promise that an attachment offers itself to Parvaiz as a self, even as it closes him off; in the shape of emotional citizenship (address, acknowledgement, a place in a relation), but without reciprocity, what the recruiter offers.

Instead of this, Aneeka's assertion. After seeing the death of her brother, who was denied entry to the cemetery, she goes to the city of Karachi and lays down beside his body in a public park - neither wants her to be buried nor can they make it go anywhere else or cause her pain to be transformed into the private "washed" form that's politically passive (Shamsie 223-25). It is a scene designed to be propelled Sophocleanly and criticism has been received accordingly but its actual thrust in this novel is agereative—it is a jurisdictional scene. The British state has exercised its authority over Parvaiz twice: it deprived him of citizenship while he lived and it declines to receive him now that he is dead, an exercise of sovereignty over the corpse that has been read productively in relation to necropolitics (Sarkowsky 29–44; cf. Mbembe). Aneeka's response is not to appeal that decision but to render it visible and, in rendering it visible, to advance a rival claim in a different currency. Her body beside his body asserts a relation the state has no procedure for annulling. This is emotional citizenship in its purest and most exposed form: constituted in address, enacted rather than requested, transacted through the body, and, this is the novel's rigour, entirely unenforceable.

What the scene therefore stages is the collision of two jurisdictions. The claim Aneeka files is legible: it is broadcast, photographed, argued about, and it constitutes exactly the sort of intimate public Berlant describes, a collectivity convened by shared feeling around a mediated scene (Berlant, Female Complaint 5–13). But an intimate public is not a polity. It can be moved and it can be monetized; it cannot compel. Karamat Lone, the Home Secretary who is himself the son of Pakistani migrants and who has purchased his own belonging at the price of publicly disciplining his community, possesses the instrument Aneeka lacks. The novel is unsparing about what his assimilation has cost, and it grants him a section of his own in which his reasoning is available and internally coherent, a formal generosity that makes the critique harder rather than easier. He is Bhabha's ambivalent subject promoted to the level of the state, obliged to demonstrate belonging perpetually by refusing it to others.

The conclusion refuses every available consolation. Eamonn crosses to Aneeka, and the crossing is an act of emotional citizenship in the exact sense developed here: he places his body in relation to hers, in public, against the interests of his father and of the state. The novel then destroys them both (Shamsie 260). Readings that treat the ending as a redemptive union

of lovers must ignore the violence with which it arrives; readings that treat it as simple tragedy must ignore that the claim was successfully made before it was annihilated. The point is that both are true. Emotional citizenship is real, it is politically consequential, and it has no army. Shamsie's title holds the irony steadily: the home is precisely what cannot be kept.

Rooms, Not Doors: *Exit West*

Criticism of *Exit West* has been organized almost entirely around its doors, and understandably so: the device that transports migrants instantaneously between continents is the novel's most conspicuous invention and its clearest political statement (Perfect 187–201; Sadaf 636–47; Carter 619–38). But the doors are, structurally, an act of deletion. By removing the journey (the boat, the container, the desert, the entire apparatus of suffering through which migration is conventionally narrated and consumed), Hamid refuses his reader the position of witness to spectacle and relocates the novel's drama to what happens after arrival (Hamid, Exit West 69–70, 98). The doors are not the subject; they are the means of clearing space for the subject, which is the slow, unglamorous construction of relation among people with no standing anywhere.

That construction is worked out in rooms. In London, Saeed and Nadia occupy a house in a wealthy district with dozens of other migrants, and the novel's most quietly radical passages describe the improvisation of a common life there: the allocation of space, the management of disagreement, the emergence of deliberative structures among people whom no polity has authorized to deliberate (Hamid, Exit West 143–45). Nadia's participation in the house's council is decisive for my argument. She is not of the community that convenes it; her standing derives from proximity, contribution and willingness to be present. This is citizenship as act rather than status in Isin's sense (Isin 36–38), and it is emotional in the specific sense developed above: it is constituted in address and sustained by attention rather than by documentation. Hamid marks the point without sentimentalizing it; the house is frightening, its arrangements are provisional, and the violence outside is real.

The novel's syntax performs the same argument at the level of the sentence. Hamid's characteristic long clauses, accumulating through coordination rather than subordination, place disparate materials in grammatical adjacency without ranking them: a bombing and a domestic detail, a global movement and a private disappointment, occupy the same syntactic plane. The effect is not flattening but a formal enactment of coexistence, a grammar in which things are permitted to be simultaneously true. This is the prose equivalent of the house.

The interpolated vignettes extend the principle across the storyworld. A man in Amsterdam and a man newly arrived from Brazil find each other on a rooftop; an old woman in Palo Alto

discovers that she has become a migrant without moving, since everything around her has departed (Hamid, Exit West 174–75, 206–09). These fragments are frequently read as illustrations of the novel's thesis that we are all migrants through time. They do more than illustrate. Formally, they constitute the reader as the only figure who inhabits all these locations at once, and they thereby produce a relational public that exists nowhere in the world of the novel and only in the act of reading it. Hamid's device makes the reader the site where an unauthorized belonging is assembled, which is an argument about fiction as much as about migration.

Most consequential is the ending. Saeed and Nadia do not stay together. Their relationship, which the doors carried across three continents, dissolves undramatically in California, and the novel declines to treat this as failure (Hamid, Exit West 218–22). When they meet again decades later in the city they left, the encounter is warm, unhurried and entirely without restoration (Hamid, Exit West 228–29). Here, *Exit West* makes its sharpest contribution to the category under construction: emotional citizenship is not secured by permanence. What Saeed and Nadia held was real while it was held, and its ending does not retrospectively cancel it. Knudsen and Rahbek are right to read the novel's hopefulness as an achievement rather than a naivety (Knudsen and Rahbek 442–54), and the achievement lies here, in a conception of relation that does not require the marriage plot's guarantees. The contrast with Home Fire is instructive: Shamsie shows emotional citizenship destroyed by a state; Hamid shows it surviving its own dissolution, which is a different and more difficult claim.

Recognition without Legibility: *The Last White Man*

Hamid's fifth novel begins with a sentence that announces its ancestry: one morning Anders, a white man, wakes to find he has turned a deep and undeniable brown (Hamid, Last White Man 3). The Kafka pastiche is exact and, like Kafka, Hamid declines to explain. There is no mechanism, no patient zero, no institutional response worth the name. What the novel removes is as significant as what it adds: there are almost no proper nouns, no country, no city, no date, and the few named characters are given first names only. Reviewers received the book as a fable (Gunaratne), and the generic identification is right, but the function of the fabular stripping deserves more attention than it has yet received in criticism, which remains thin for a novel now several years old. By deleting the sociological apparatus through which race is ordinarily narrated (neighborhood, institution, history, policy), Hamid isolates the single variable he wants to examine, which is recognition between persons when the visual code that has organized it collapses.

The novel's first movement is a precise inversion of the scene Fanon describes. Anders encounters his own body as something returned to him from outside, furnished with meanings he did not author and cannot refuse; he scrutinizes his altered reflection, hides indoors, and calculates his exposure before eventually venturing outside with a cap pulled low (Hamid, Last White Man 4–10). But the perils of literary experiments of a long ancestry in American writing about racial passing and transformation are familiar;—and while the white subject's brief experience of racialization can provide a glimmer of sympathy, it does not affect the structure of the text. The novel doesn't, in this regard, resort to such a manoeuvre in two ways. It is very noticeable that Anders's understanding is skewed—he gains fear, wariness, but never analysis, and the narration never gives him the analysis that would gild the lily to the reader. But, more interestingly, Hamid speaks to the pain of the loss of whiteness in the second distinction. Mourners do not provide aspects of their characters available for caricature. Those are mourning because they are losing an object that had organized their life for them, in other words, because inside they feel they had an idealistic attachment for their life to an object which they never had the right to, to be secure from (cruel optimism, Berlant 1). Indulging in mourning whiteness is to show what it was or was not.

The prose enacts this slowness. Hamid's sentences here are long and stereotyped, are connected by commas, have a cumulative tendency, are a little interrupted by the paragraph break, and their verbiage is a bit magically redirected at the full stop: They march in cautiously rounded and circular fashion, never progressing to the next level, but moving backwards and forwards, qualifying and retreating into a mind that takes in a fact he cannot change. Late exit, simultaneity, from co-ordination; but late syntax, duration, from *The Last White Man*. This is important to the argument because the novel as a whole is about temporality and recognition—no one in the novel is recognized upon the spot, and everyone recognized requires the passage of time to be done so.

There are three relationships with demonstration. Anders and his dying father supply the first: a man who can no longer identify his son by sight identifies him by other means, and the novel gives the recognition to the body: to voice, proximity, the tasks of care performed on another person's behalf (Hamid, Last White Man 32, 95). The father's acceptance is neither articulate nor ideological; it is practical, and it is precisely because it operates below the level of statement that it registers as authentic. Anders and Oona supply the second. Their relationship, tentative before the change, deepens through it, and Hamid situates their intimacy in a register of touch and physical practice rather than of declaration. When Oona in turn changes, the event is not a crisis for them, because their relation was never underwritten by the visual code that has failed (Hamid, Last White Man 121–22). What the

novel demonstrates through them is that recognition can survive the destruction of legibility, provided it was not resting on legibility in the first place.

The third a far more challenging and significant relationship. The novel's reactionary is Oona's mother, who is a woman with a conspiratorial quasi-wet eye for news, has mobilised her fears around defending a besieged community and has mourned an unmarked absence (Hamid, Last White Man 49-50, 149-50). Perhaps the most daring formal decision in the novel is Hamid's choice of suffering and the relationships that result from it as the path by which she transforms. A relation that is not cancelled out by her is worn into another by a persistence of which she is not argued out, and by her subsequent change. The reader is not allowed any satisfaction of her punishment, or the false comfort of her conversion. What happens to her is a revision of who is ours, in fact, as she demonstrates when emotion marks the border of a national body (Cultural Politics of Emotion 11) Ahmed describes in his talk. Hamid operates it in reverse sense, using it at home and allows it years to run.

The novel's title figure, the last white man, whose death passes with little ceremony, completes the argument (Hamid, Last White Man 148). A category that had appeared foundational turns out to have been a distribution, and its disappearance produces neither utopia nor catastrophe but the ordinary continuation of life, with a child, a grandmother, and the same difficulties differently arranged. Read against *Home Fire* and *Exit West, The Last White Man* removes the last of the three guarantees: Shamsie's characters lose legal status, Hamid's migrants lose territory, and Anders loses the visual code by which he was known. In each case what is left standing is a relation between persons, and in each case the novel declines to declare that relation sufficient.

Emotional Citizenship as a Critical Category

Read comparatively, the three novels answer the questions with which this article began in ways that are more equivocal, and more useful, than an affirmative account of affective belonging would allow. On the redefinition of citizenship beyond legal and national frameworks, the texts converge: all three treat legal status as contingent, and all three locate durable belonging elsewhere. But they differ instructively on where. *Home Fire* locates it in kinship and the obligations of burial; *Exit West* in the improvised deliberative life of shared rooms; *The Last White Man* in the long attentions of intimates. These are not interchangeable, and the differences map onto the four features specified earlier. Shamsie tests enactment: Aneeka performs citizenship as an act and the state annihilates the actor. Hamid in Exit West tests address: relation is repeatedly constituted between people with no other standing, and it survives even its own ending. Hamid in *The Last White Man* tests embodiment: when the

body's meaning is scrambled, what persists is the recognition that was never resting on the body's legibility. Across all three, unenforceability is confirmed. No character's affective claim compels any institution to do anything.

On the second question, how emotions, recognition and relational attachment produce alternative belonging, the novels support a conclusion that has consequences for affect-oriented criticism. Emotion produces belonging in these texts only when it is costly to the one who feels it. Isma's rehearsed sentiments produce nothing, because they are demanded; the recruiter's simulated recognition produces catastrophe, because it is instrumental; the sympathy of the London public in *Exit West* is unreliable precisely because it costs nothing. What functions is exposure: Aneeka lying in a park, Eamonn crossing towards her, Nadia sitting in a council she has no claim to attend, Oona's mother remaining in a relation that dismantles her worldview. This supplies a criterion the sociological literature on affective citizenship has tended to leave implicit (Fortier; Plummer): emotional citizenship is constituted not by feeling but by the assumption of risk on another's behalf.

On the third question, how these writers challenge colonial and racial structures through emotional forms of citizenship, the answer runs through the critique of recognition. If recognition granted by a colonial or postcolonial state reproduces that state's authority (Povinelli 1–34; Coulthard 25–50), then the political value of emotional citizenship lies in its refusal to petition. Aneeka does not ask the Home Secretary to reconsider; she makes a claim in a currency his office does not issue. This is the sense in which the novels move beyond recognition, and it is a sense that should not be confused with transcendence. They move beyond recognition in the way one moves beyond a jurisdiction whose courts will not hear the case: not to a better court, but to the street outside it.

Three qualifications limit the claim. The corpus is small, anglophone and metropolitan; all three novels were published by major British houses and circulate within a literary economy that rewards a certain legibility to Northern readers, a condition these texts negotiate but do not escape. The category is derived from fiction and its transposability to other genres and other linguistic traditions requires testing. And emotional citizenship, as these novels themselves insist, is not a programme. It cannot be legislated, and any attempt to institutionalize it would produce the demand for demonstrated feeling that Home Fire opens by satirizing. Its critical value is diagnostic rather than prescriptive: it names what these novels see, which is that the erosion of legal belonging has not abolished belonging but relocated it to a jurisdiction with no power of enforcement.

Conclusion

This article set out to establish emotional citizenship as a category adequate to what twenty-first-century postcolonial fiction is doing with belonging. The problem it addresses is not that postcolonial criticism has ignored citizenship (it has analysed it with great precision) but that its analysis has been oriented so consistently towards the state that the relational constitution of belonging has appeared as sentiment rather than as structure. Reading Shamsie and Hamid together demonstrates that these novelists treat it as structure: as a mode of membership with its own conditions of entry, its own acts, its own publics and its own characteristic failures. The theoretical contribution is the assembly itself. Fanon and Butler establish why recognition from above is compromised and how constitution in address supplies an alternative; Ahmed and Berlant establish that the alternative is neither innocent nor automatically emancipatory; Said and Bhabha describe the representational field in which the whole operation takes place. Held together, they yield a category with four specifiable features (address, enactment, embodiment, unenforceability) that can be applied to texts beyond this corpus and can be falsified by them.

The international significance of the argument lies in the conjuncture these novels register. Citizenship deprivation, externalized borders, the conditional membership of racialized minorities and the resurgence of nativist politics are not features of one national situation but of a general reconfiguration of belonging across the states that were once imperial centres. Postcolonial fiction is among the first places this reconfiguration has been thought through in detail, and it has been thought through affectively. To read these novels only for their representation of migration or their critique of Islamophobia is to miss the constructive work they are doing. What emotional citizenship changes, finally, is the question criticism asks. Instead of asking whether a text's characters are granted belonging, it becomes possible to ask what belonging they make, at what cost, and to whom their claim is addressed. The answer these three novels give is sober. Belonging can be made without a state, and it is not nothing: it convenes publics, it obliges, it survives dissolution. But it cannot protect. Aneeka's claim is perfectly valid and perfectly unenforceable, and it is the achievement of this fiction to insist on both halves of that sentence at once.

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