

Language of conciliation: A reading of Joseph O' Neill's *Netherland***Fikret GÜVEN¹****APA:** Güven, F. (2019). Language of conciliation: A reading of Joseph O' Neill's *Netherland*. *RumeliDE Dil ve Edebiyat Arařtırmaları Dergisi*, (14), 411-428. DOI: 10.29000/rumelide.541074**Abstract**

The present paper analyzes Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland* as a narrative of conciliatory engagement with the Other despite the presence of an Orientalist discourse in the post- September 11 world. This novel depicts a Western society disoriented by the anxiety generated by the intensified phenomenon of terrorism after September 11. Mostly Western characters find themselves anxious, fearful and discomfited due to the ubiquitous presence of individual and collective anxiety. The manifest intent in the novel is to bring these characters out from their pre-September 11 spaces of comfort into a post-September 11 world of discomfort in order to confront, engage and reconcile with people, events and phenomenon that have contributed to those discomforts. These undertakings force the characters to explore a whole plethora of strategies, some escapist and irrational, others more meaningful and productive. Like the conflict between the self and the other, and the West and Islam in most September 11 novels, *Netherland* too recognizes those differences. However, the distinct approach here is not to avoid, ignore or escape from those differences, but to look for a middle ground based on the principles of peaceful co-existence, mutual understanding, conciliation, forgiveness, humanism, tolerance and multiculturalism. The other is accorded recognition in an international and cosmopolitan space of less divisiveness as the new discourse discourages the binary divisions of nations, ethnicities, cultures and religions.

Key words: *Netherland*, conciliation, humanism, tolerance, multiculturalism.**Uzlaşma dili: Joseph O 'Neill' in Hollanda adlı eserine bakış****Öz**

Bu çalışmada, Joseph O'Neill' in Hollanda adlı eseri, 11 Eylül sonrası dünyadaki Oryantalist bir söylemin varlığına rağmen, Öteki ile uzlaştırıcı bir ilişki anlatısı olarak değerlendirilmektedir. Roman, 11 Eylül'den sonra terörizm fenomeni tarafından yaratılan kaygı ve korkuyla çevrelenen bir Batı toplumunu tasvir etmektedir. Batılı karakterler, çoğunlukla bireysel ve toplu kaygının her yerde var olmasından dolayı kendilerini endişeli, korkmuş ve rahatsız olarak bulmaktadırlar. Romanın temel amacı, bu karakterleri 11 Eylül öncesi var olan rahat alanlarından çıkartarak, bu rahatsızlıklara sebep olan insanlarla, olaylarla ve olgularla yüzleştirecek, ilişki kurdurmak ve uzlaştırmak için 11 Eylül sonrası oluşan rahatsızlıklar dünyasına getirmektir. Bu teşebbüslerin bazıları yüzleşmekten kaçan ve irrasyonel bir yaklaşımı benimserken, diğer bir takım stratejiler ise daha anlamlı ve üretken bir şekilde keşfetmeye zorlamaktadır. Kendi ve Öteki ile Batı'nın ve İslam'ın 11 Eylül romanlarındaki çatışmaların varlığına benzer bir şekilde, Hollanda bu farklılıkları kabul etmektedir. Bununla birlikte, buradaki farklı yaklaşım, bu farklılıklardan kaçınmak, göz ardı etmek ya da kaçınmak yerine, barış içinde birlikte yaşamının, karşılıklı anlayışın, uzlaşmanın, bağışlamanın, hümanizmin, hoşgörünün ve çok kültürlülük gibi ilkelere dayanan ortak bir zemin arayışındır. Yeni söylem,

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ulusların, etnik kökenlerin, kültürlerin ve dinlerin ikili bölünmelere sebep olduğundan, ötekini uluslar arası ve kozmopolit bir bölünmüşlük içinde tanınmasını öngörmektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Uzlaşma, hümanizm, hoşgörü, çok-kültürlülük.

Orientalism and language of conciliation

September 11 and contemporary terrorism committed by Muslim radicals, are presented as visible manifestations of the perceived historical rivalry between Western and Islamic civilizations. This rivalry is realized through the use of strategies to depict a contrasting and malevolent Other whose sole purpose is opposed to the existence of the West. September 11 and its aftermath witnessed an intense use of those strategies to renew the fear of the “Other” in the Western psyche. After the attacks, political discourse, governmental rhetoric, the media, and conspiracy theories reemphasized the division of the world into two rival blocks based on the infamous binaries of “us” versus “them,” and “good” versus “evil.” After the Cold War, the 1990s witnessed an upsurge in the West-Islam rivalry. Samuel Huntington’s theory of “clash of civilization” depicted Islam as West’s enemy number one in conflicts around the world in current and future wars. The theory explained contemporary rifts between societies, and including other minor conflicts, predicted a major cultural war between Islam and the West after the Cold War.

Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) explains and characterizes the conflictive relationships between the West and East. The theory challenges the destructive thesis of the West-Islam conflict. Drawing on Foucault and, to a lesser extent, Gramsci, Said’s study deeply influenced the agenda of the study of non-Western cultures. *Orientalism* became a devastating critique of how through the ages, but particularly in the nineteenth century, Western texts have represented the East, and more specifically the Islamic Middle East. Using British and French ‘scholarly works . . . works of literature, political tracts, journalistic texts, travel books, religious and philological studies’ (Said, 1978: 23), Said examines how these texts construct the Orient through imaginative representations, through seemingly factual descriptions and through claims to knowledge about Oriental history and culture. Together, all these texts constitute a Foucauldian discourse – a loose system of statements and claims that constitutes a field of supposed knowledge and through which that ‘knowledge’ is constructed. Such discourses, although seemingly interested in knowledge, always establish relationships of power and for Said the West’s representations of the East ultimately work within the framework of a conscious and determined effort at subordination. For Said, Orientalism has traditionally served hegemonic purposes. Antonio Gramsci thought of ‘hegemony’ as domination by consent – the way the ruling class succeeds in oppressing other classes with their apparent approval. In Gramsci’s analysis it does so through culture: the ruling class makes its own values and interests central in what it presents as a common, neutral, culture. Accepting that ‘common’ culture, the other classes become complicit in their own oppression and the result is a kind of velvet domination. Orientalism, then, has traditionally served two purposes. It has legitimized Western imperialism in the eyes of Western governments and their electorates and it has insidiously worked to convince the East that Western culture represented universal civilization. Accepting Western culture could only benefit its inhabitants and would make them participants in the most advanced civilization the world had ever seen.

According to Said, Western representations of the Orient have always been part of this damaging discourse. Wittingly or unwittingly, they have always been complicit with the workings of Western power. Even those Orientalists who were clearly in sympathy with Oriental peoples and their cultures could not overcome their Eurocentric perspective and have unintentionally contributed to Western

domination. So instead of disinterested objectivity, we find false representations that have effectively paved the way for military domination, cultural displacement, and economic exploitation. In response to criticism, Said has modified his position and presented a less homogeneous picture of Orientalism, while he has also downplayed the extent to which it merely constructs and never arrives at knowledge. Said's book also drew attention to the way in which the discourse of Orientalism serves to create the West as well as the East. West and East form a binary opposition in which the two poles define each other. The inferiority that Orientalism attributes to the East simultaneously serves to construct the West's superiority. The sensuality, irrationality, primitiveness, and despotism of the East construct the West as rational, democratic, and progressive. The West always functions as the 'center' and the East is a marginal 'other' that simply through its existence confirms the West's centrality and superiority. Not surprisingly perhaps, the opposition that the West's discourse about the East sets up makes use of another basic opposition, that between the masculine and the feminine. Naturally the West functions as the masculine pole – enlightened, rational, entrepreneurial, disciplined – while the East is its feminine opposition: irrational, passive, undisciplined, and sensual. The theory put in the limelight the role of the West's cultural institutions in its military, economic, and cultural domination of non-Western nations and peoples and asked literature's role in past and present racial, ethnic, and cultural encounters.

After some harsh criticism after September 11, Said indicated the same limiting tendencies in his 2003 preface to *Orientalism*, where he repeats that *no one* in the West seemed to be free from the opposition between "us" and "them" after the Cold War and the first Gulf War. The consequence was a sense of "reinforced, deepened, hardened" manifestations of Orientalism (Said, 1978: 334-5). Yet, Orientalism has alternatives in the form of strategies that Said suggests in his writings. He tries to explore some positive outcomes and goals in theorizing Orientalism. He did not want, as he writes, to perpetuate the "hostility between two rival political and cultural monolithic blocks," but to reduce the terrible effects of the discourse (Said, 1978: 335). Though not establishing it as his major purpose, he states that he was happy that people interpreted the book "as stressing the actualities of what was later to be called multiculturalism, rather than xenophobia and aggressive, race-oriented nationalism" (Said, 1978: 335). This means that writers in the West could leave behind the restraining discourse of Orientalism if they rejected Orientalism's conflictive binaries and empathized with the realities of the multicultural and international space. When Said critiques what is involved in representation and studying the Other, he comes up with alternative and fairer ways with which the West might engage with the Other. Those alternatives are to avoid racial thinking and uncritical acceptance of authority and authoritative ideas. Intellectuals should realize their proper sociopolitical role, the great value of skeptical critical consciousness and of "human freedom and knowledge" (Said, 1978: 327). This possibility of moving outside of the discourse of Orientalism to engage with the Other can be seen in many places in Said, who believes that there are instances in scholarship that are "not as corrupt, or at least as blind to human reality" (Said, 1978: 326). These works are "discrete and concrete," and methodologically self-conscious to free themselves from "the rituals, preconceptions, and doctrines of Orientalism" (Said, 1978: 326). Other scholars and intellectuals might free themselves similarly if they try to "complicate and/or dismantle the reductive formulae and the abstract but potent kind of thought that leads the mind away from concrete human history and experience and into the realms of ideological fiction, metaphysical confrontation, and collective passion" (Said, 1978: xxiii). Said calls for humanism as the answer, which he believes is the only and "final resistance we have against the inhuman practices and injustices that disfigure human history" (Said, 1978: xxix). Rather than draw upon the "the manufactured clash of civilizations" Said calls for the "slow working together of cultures that overlap, borrow from each other, and live together in far more interesting ways than any abridged or inauthentic mode of understanding can allow" (Said, 1978: xxix). Such working relationship can be realized due to advances in modern

cultural theory, which believes in the universal principle that “cultures are hybrid and heterogeneous,” and that “cultures and civilizations are so interrelated and interdependent as to beggar any unitary or simply delineated description of their individuality” (Said, 1978: 347).

As a manifestation of Said's optimism Joseph O' Neill's *Netherland* embraces a new approach towards that difference and the “Other” that is compassionate, balanced and humane. Contrary to “the clash of civilizations” theory, this novel believes in the interdependence and accommodation of cultures. It tries to establish a discourse governed by a scientific attitude, secularism or atheism because these are recognized as the only feasible discourses in a conflictive environment. *Netherland* introduces an immigrant “Other” space through the game of cricket. The protagonist, a Dutch, finds his life paralyzed after September 11. This anxiety compels him to look for stability, and he leans on the game of cricket, played by an immigrant community in New York City. In the process, he discovers the presence of large multiethnic communities in the city. Predominantly sport, and, to a lesser degree, business, become the medium of interaction in the cosmopolitan space like New York City as a means of trying to reach a great understanding of the life of the Other.

Manifestation of Said's optimism: Joseph O' Neill's *Netherland*

Netherland's epigraph envisions a city as the foundation of love and friendship in response to tough times. The novel depicts Western characters in the United States in a post- September 11 world of anxiety and fear. These anxieties are exacerbated by a lurking fear of terrorism, which these characters have to face and come to terms with. Family becomes the primary support to cope with the disorienting experiences created by terrorism. Literature, music, kindness, and friendship are other spaces of comfort. By emphasizing a discourse of science, secularism or atheism to confront schisms, the novel advocates multiculturalism as the only workable discourse in the post-September 11 world. It also suggests a positive interaction and engagement with the Other toward cooperation and conciliation in cosmopolitan and international space. Such interactions and engagements are favored because they are not dependent on nationalist, religious, and cultural binaries. Thus, *Netherland* emphasizes the idea that a space for mediation might be possible, and may be the only useful space available to cope with terrorism in the fearful post - September 11 world.

The politics of binaries is discarded because mainly Western characters interact with the Other in subtle ways to understand their position in a cosmopolitan space. A discourse based on the neutral principles of science, atheism or secularism, business, sports and multiculturalism is the new paradigm of this new space. The text uses imaginative ways to find this more or less middle-of-the-road discourse of a new working relationship as the old paradigms of binaries lead to further disorientation and recrimination. Sorting out this working relationship between cultures, and engagement with the Other has been mostly counterproductive due to the use of binaries and othering. This is the primary disabling aspect of some post September 11 novels that engage with the Other. The tendency is to either sympathize with the victims of or justify the terrorists. Zizek calls this disabling quality the “temptation of the double blackmail” (Zizek: 2002: 50). According to him, it is an ethical enigma due to two contrary and equally exclusive categories: “If we simply, only and unconditionally condemn it, we simply appear to endorse the blatantly ideological position of American innocence under attack by a Third World Evil; if we draw attention to the deeper sociopolitical causes of Arab extremism, we simply appear to blame the victim which ultimately got what it deserved” (Zizek: 2002: 50). Neither the stance of othering, stereotyping, and blaming the Other nor advocating American innocence and victimhood are useful. Versluys believes that September 11 shows the “limits of tolerance” because it's problematic to respond to intolerant

people (Versluys, 2009: 152). Consequently, writers resort to the “bad” alterity of “othering,” which “is an act of exclusion, whereby, through prejudice, ignorance, or both, one refuses to treat someone else fully as an individual” (Versluys, 2009: 150). Similarly the stance of blaming America for everything in the world is problematic. Despite authors’ leaning towards one of these categories, Versluys also seems optimistic about the possibility of spaces where positive interaction with the Other might be possible through the “good” alterity model of Emmanuel Levinas, which asserts responsibility toward the Other as primal and antecedent to defining oneself as human (Versluys, 2009: 149). This human responsibility also conforms to Said’s notion of humanism. Contrary to the use of binaries and the blame game in the narratives, *Netherland* imagines spaces of positive interaction based on the principles of humanism and responsibility towards the Other in the cosmopolitan space.

Cosmopolitanism as a concept is not new, as political thinkers and writers have struggled for long to come up with pragmatic principles to govern relationships in spaces of differences. The term dates back to the Cynics of Ancient Greece of the fourth century BC, who used the word to name a “citizen of the cosmos” (Appiah, 2006: xiv). The Stoics used the word with similar connotations in third century BC. Both emphasized a sense of attachment among all human beings. Like any other concept to govern relationship among different communities, cosmopolitanism as a theory is multifaceted. The result is that the content and pragmatic character of cosmopolitanism is yet unspecified. Consequently, the concept has resisted positive and definitive specification, because “specifying cosmopolitanism positively and definitely is an unc cosmopolitan thing to do” (Pollock et al., 2002: 1). Defining it would close cosmopolitanism’s door to those cultural, national or religious entities that are different. Discourses emanating from these different entities created enough conflicts in the twentieth century. Cosmopolitanism as an idea has always motivated people “to live tenaciously in terrains of historic and cultural transition” (Pollock et al., 2002: 4).

Modern thinkers like Immanuel Kant thought of cosmopolitanism as the guiding principle if humanity wants to save itself from conflicts and wars. Hospitality and a shared right to the resources of the world are the guiding principles of his theory of cosmopolitanism. Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida consider ethics and hospitality respectively to provide a working relationship between people and cultures in the cosmopolitan space. It is noteworthy that these principles are not similar to the written laws of a society or state. Levinas’ s work is important, specifically in the context of relationship to the Other. Similarly, Derrida emphasizes this aspect in the context of welcoming the Other in one’s home. According to him, the historical space of cosmopolitanism requires to offer “unconditional hospitality ... to every other, to all newcomers, *whoever they may be* (22). According to Kwame Anthony Appiah, the widely known advocate of contemporary cosmopolitanism, cosmopolitanism begins “with the simple idea that in the human community, as it is in national communities, we need to develop habits of coexistence; conversation in its older meaning, of living together, association” (xix), a conversation between people from different ways of life. That conversation is inevitable, since the population of the world is on the increase, and as Appiah predicts, will reach nine billion towards the end of the first-half of the 21st century. Paul Gilroy offers a possible alternative to the radical emphasis on familiarity and an unwelcoming attitude to strangeness. He believes in the “methodical cultivation of a degree of estrangement from one’s own culture and history” as a necessary step towards to a cosmopolitan commitment” (Appiah, 2002: 67). This estrangement entails a “process of exposure to otherness” in order to foster “the irreducible value of diversity within sameness” (67). Gilroy believes in a “planetary consciousness” against race and national thinking (Gilroy, 2005: 75). It is important to note that these cosmopolitan writers advocate to move beyond the familiar and recognize the Other. Judith Butler is one example, who critiques the idea of establishing the familiar as the criterion for valuing others, and

believes that the other should be given proper recognition without limitations of the familiar (Gilroy, 2005: 38). The restricting influences of familiarity should be overcome to visualize new spaces of interaction between differences.

Novelists are presumably better equipped as they have the power to imagine those alterities. They are also “experts at imagining the unimaginable, the master of other worlds of possibilities” (Houen, 2004: 420). That’s why, as Houen argues, newspapers asked novelists to respond to September 11 in the immediate aftermath in order to visualize alternatives in the divisive contemporary world. Their fictional responses were detailed attempts to explore new avenues of engagement, problematize and complicate current rules of engagement, and imagine ways to cope with the new reality. Novelists are also important because the “creative imagination is usually associated with a certain power of explanation, a kind of affective or empathic understanding” (Versluys, 2009: 150). They have the capacity to “practice imaginative identification, to go into someone else’s skin,” and “have a special affinity with the Other” (Versluys, 2009: 150-51). As commonalities, September 11 novels share issues of terrorism, trauma, the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the discrimination, anxiety, fear and displacement that followed afterwards. However, while these novels looked for a solution or remedy, most leaned on the very discourses that created the problem. As the following argument shows, some September 11 novels have begun the process to explore new spaces for meaningful engagement to thwart further exacerbation. These narratives struggle towards a peaceful and less fractious co-existence. The intent is to find a middle ground, a meeting space, where all human beings are connected to a bigger narrative of the human race against the limiting influences of inhuman and unjust practices. Such novels make their protagonists, all of them Westerners, leave their spaces of comfort, experience discomfort and anxiety, find spaces to cope with the anxiety, and come to terms with people who have similar sufferings.

Netherland outlines this intent of peaceful engagement towards understanding and conciliation in the cosmopolitan space in its epigraph. The novel begins with lines from Walt Whitman’s poem “I Dream’d in a Dream,” which reads: “I dream’d in a dream, I saw a city invincible to the attacks of the whole of the rest of the earth; I dream’d that was the new City of Friends.” Whitman wrote the poem to envision an ideal city where people could live in harmony. Though disappointed due to the Civil War, the Mexican War and slavery, Whitman believed that such an invincible city could be possible if the city was built on the idea of love and friendship. O’Neill attempts to find that city in post- September 11 New York City. As the narrative shows, such a city is possible if relationships are not based on binaries of race, religion and nationalities, but something neutral and gentle, like the game of cricket where everyone follows the rules of the game in the true spirit of sportsmanship. People from around the world, including Hans, try to find their spaces of harmony and comfort in an environment, which might be least antagonistic to their culture, ethnicities and race. O’Neill regards New York as an example of such a cosmopolitan space where different sectarian and ethnic communities come together to form a global and international community of people who do business and play games. Such spaces, according to Rothberg defy “the “us-and-them” logic common to terrorism and counter-terrorism” (Rothberg, 2009: 157). Though the circumstances of the characters may be different, O’Neill’s protagonists arrive at their own spaces of harmony and comfort after going through feelings of anxiety and discomfort in the post- September 11 world.

Post-september 11 fear and anxiety

O’Neill’s *Netherland* (2008) depicts a disjointed world after September 11. Hans van den Broek, the narrator, is a Dutch oil analyst, who, along with his English wife Rachel and son Jack, had migrated to

New York from London with hopes of peace and prosperity in 1998. Hans finds his job as a financial analyst in New York rewarding. His wife Rachel, with a similarly rewarding job as an attorney, contributed to their million-dollar Tribeca apartment. It is 2006, and Hans narrates from his Highbury home in England about tough times for himself and his family immediately following September 11. Hans reminisces about the past, as he has received news from a *New York Times* reporter that the dead body of Chuck Ramkissoon, a Trinidadian he befriended in cricket in August 2002, has been recovered from Gowanus Canal in Brooklyn, New York City. Hans begins his story shortly after September 11, with the family moving to the famous Chelsea hotel from their Tribeca loft near Ground Zero. Unable to cope with the anxiety in the United States after the attacks, Rachel leaves for London. She has become extremely anxious and critical of life in America under George Bush's presidency. Hans also narrates the nature of his friendship with Chuck and cricket—the reason for their friendship. Hans was attracted to the game of cricket in New York City played by immigrants from all over the world due to his difficult existence after September 11. Cricket becomes the metaphor to provide support in times of duress, and a tool to interact with people from other cultures. Through the game of cricket, the narrative explores new spaces of interaction to understand the Other, and move beyond differences contributing to misunderstanding.

Netherland does not go into the details of their pre-September 11 lives, but we can assume its prosperity and harmony, as no information otherwise is given. As September 11 happens, the family goes to the legendary Hotel Chelsea to live temporarily. The family never returns to their Tribeca loft despite directives from authorities that they could safely return, as there are no feasible threats of further attacks. But the family's anxieties do not mitigate, and instead they prefer to stay away from the Ground Zero area despite an unbearable state of "paralysis" in Hotel Chelsea (O'Neill, 2008: 19). Their existence in the hotel is painful due to extraordinary acoustics and the relentless sirens of ambulances and police cars. Hans's insomnia makes him perform the duties of a sentry, and he has nightmares about bombs in the rare moments of sleep that he snatches. The physical New York City becomes what Charlie Reilly calls the "netherworld" during the years after the attack (2). Rachel used to feel apprehensive and fearful as she believed that Times Square, where her law firm was, would be the next target of terrorist attacks (O'Neill, 2008: 20). She suffered constant anxiety in New York because she believed that she put her life at risk every day by going to work and felt that terrorists could strike anywhere at any time. According to her, the city had gone mad after September 11 (O'Neill, 2008: 22).

Even Hans, who has a contrary view due to his ambivalence, feels tired of New York. He held the city in high regard because it was the "ideal source of the metropolitan diversion," but it became "fearsome and monstrous" due to an unfathomable and catastrophic atmosphere after September 11 (O'Neill, 2008: 25). Life had become so painful for the family that every morning, they "awoke into a malign weariness that seemed only to have refreshed itself overnight" (O'Neill, 2008: 23). To get rid of such weariness, the family used to fight constantly to arrive at some kind of resolution of choosing between New York and London as their permanent abode in terms of security for the family. Hans believes that the event has fundamentally changed human life, as it has become impossible to answer questions of love, family and home in such an unpredictable world. Such impossibility is triggered by the September 11 events, the anxiety and fear of further terrorist attacks, dirty bombs, attacks on nuclear installations and bloody wars following September 11. According to Hans, even stray individuals could make a dirty bomb and explode it in Manhattan. He tries to understand the anxiety of New Yorkers by comparing them to the preapocalyptic situation of Jews in Europe in 1930s or the citizen of Pompeii before they were destroyed by the volcanic eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD. The anxiety could also be compared to the near-apocalyptic life in New York, London, Washington or Moscow during the Cold War due to fears of a

nuclear war between the superpowers. Like these traumatic past events, people have lost their ability to speak to each other after September 11. Hans's individual life is symptomatic of that collective existence. Constant paranoia and disorientation compel him to see a psychiatrist. He finds his life's ceiling leaking (O'Neill, 2008: 52) as his family, "the spine of his days, had crumbled" (O'Neill, 2008: 30). The novel depicts September 11 anxieties, a shattered family, a lost and disoriented individual, and his attempt to lean on an international community for friendship and support. As such, the novel depicts a gory picture of the United States after September 11.

Spaces of comfort: Family, friendship, music, and sports

The family in *Netherland* crumbles in its efforts to confront anxiety in the post-September 11 America. The Hans family attempts to address that anxiety and disorientation with strategies to find its spaces of comfort, but Rachel and Hans arrive at contrary conclusions. They decide to go back to London as she thinks that London is safer in comparison to Hans's plea that even London is not safe. Hans is compelled to stay in New York City because of his job and it's decided that he would visit his family once a fortnight in London. Hans, during the difficult times after September 11, called Charles Bolton, Rachel's father, to ask for his advice regarding a coping mechanism as there are fears of nuclear annihilation after September 11. Charles responds by telling Hans to get on with the difficult feeling of anxiety and hope for the best. Charles also believes that deterrence could be one possibility in such situations, but there could be no possible deterrence to events like September 11. Hans also believes that people like Charles who lived through the Cold War have some knowledge, as people who live through disasters have a certain degree of knowledge to work as a protective layer—some sort of mechanism to respond to apocalyptic events. In contrast, Hans does not have that knowledge and protective layer to adjust himself to the post- September 11 anxiety. Therefore, he lives a life of paralysis and disorientation. He has to adjust to a life in transit—a life of anxiety where one has to find and appreciate his moments of comfort. As a Dutch immigrant who has worked in England, Hans is open to adjust to life in America, as he had "eagerly taken to new customs and mannerisms at the expense of old ones" (O'Neill, 2008: 49). Hans's life is also representative of the disorientations and adjustments made by the deterritorialized and global persons in the contemporary world. Unemotional Hans stresses this mechanism for change in his personality by detaching his current self from the "accidents and endeavors" of his past selves (O'Neill, 2008: 49).

However, he finds his capacity for self-transformation finite, and hence the anxiety and ambivalence. Hans uses the analogy of his batting style in cricket to demonstrate the limit to his transformation. Changing his batting style according to the realities of ragged cricket ground conditions in America would destroy the "fine white thread running, through years and years, to his mothered self" (O'Neill, 2008: 50). But we see that he can cope as he constantly changes and improvises his batting style according to the needs of what Chuck calls 'bush cricket' (O'Neill, 2008: 9). To make for the familial space, Hans befriends Mehmet Taspınar at the Chelsea Hotel, has an affair with Danielle, and leans on an immigrant community in the context of cricket. He derives great satisfaction from the fact that he has Chuck as his friend, along with a large number of cricket players. Though the club members rarely went beyond the game, there are instances of kindness beneath this seeming detachment among individuals. Hans used to wonder why the respect of those cricketers mattered so much to him. Hans stayed for a night with Shiv, a fellow cricketer, for emotional support as Shiv's wife had left him. Shiv, an Indian, was feeling extremely dejected, and the club members worried that he might do something bad to himself. The experience was comforting for Hans, as he felt confident that he would be given the same care during difficult times. Cricketing in the multicultural space is Hans's space of comfort. Cricket provides the

space to interact with the Other to recognize their camaraderie. The game becomes a metaphor for the Other, an immigrant community in America. This immigrant community is mostly from the Third World, whose marginalization is depicted through the marginalization of cricket in America. The novel creates a new and novel space for inclusion and accommodation in America through the sport of cricket.

Unlike big ideals and utopias, Hans considers it consolatory to abbreviate “the world’s area” to a small space. Furthermore, Hans considers a dentist’s attempt to reduce his field’s vision to the space of a mouth reassuring (O’Neill, 2008: 192). Still, he sometimes imagines himself playing in international cricket, batting against Bret Lee, the Australian fast bowler. He wants a “benign annexation” of the actual by the fanciful, “so that our daily motions always cast a secondary otherworldly shadow, and at those moments when we feel inclined to turn from the more plausible and hurtful meanings of things, we soothingly find ourselves attached to a companion farfetched sense of the world and our place in it” (O’Neill, 2008: 103-4). The situation might become troublesome and less promising if there is too much difference between fantasy and reality, as in the case of Chuck. Chuck wanted to do the impossible—to introduce cricket to America and build a cricket stadium in New York. In his case, there was a vast gap between what he wanted and the reality, which became the reason for his downfall.

Discourse of science, secularism and atheism

Arthur Bradley and Andrew Tate in their book *The New Atheist Novel: Fiction, Philosophy and Polemic after September 11* (2010) argue that the early years of the twenty-first witnessed the birth of what they call “a curious cult calling itself ‘New Atheism’” (Bradley and Tate, 2009: 1). The book is motivated by a conviction that “religious belief is not simply irrational but immoral and dangerous” (Bradley and Tate, 2009: 1). *Netherland* draws on this new atheist zeitgeist. Old paradigms of nationalistic, cultural and religious rhetoric make characters uncomfortable in the novel. To cope with conflict and anxiety, characters look for something less encumbered, a discourse not based on binaries of these paradigms, but something new and practicable. *Netherland* avoids direct confrontation with religion, and instead discourages it in subtle ways as a means of identification in the cosmopolitan space.

The novel encourages a discourse of engagement that is not based on religion, morality, culture or other loaded terms. These categories are counterproductive in the contemporary world because these necessarily work through a process of binaries. Contrary to Rachel, who has a sentimental disposition about identity and morality, Hans considers himself a rationalist. Unlike businessmen and novelists who are somehow dreamers, as they project future through charts and narratives respectively, Hans thinks of himself as closed to these “fantastical aspects” because he is a mere analyst who has to use actual data (O’Neill, 2008: 103). As a bystander, he observes phenomenon and decides accordingly. He has the temperamental disposition of someone who simplifies things in rational terms without sentimental considerations. Rachel calls such an approach “moral laziness,” as Hans only looks on the surface of things (O’Neill, 2008: 238). Rachel wants Hans to have some moral positions regarding America, terrorism and his friendship with Chuck, but Hans cannot come up with any such positions. Though impassive, Hans could, however, forgive any wrong if a simple apology were offered in the cosmopolitan space. Similarly, he could have relationships with people from other culture if those relationships could be based on something neutral like business or sport. On a collective level, Hans considers progress in science an indication of overall progress of the human race. During a party, Hans comes across a man who believes that the invention of artificial light has transformed human life. The idea is that science is closely connected with the overall progress and optimism of humanity. The anxiety for this man is that as there were constant outages after September 11 and further fears of prolonged darkness, he worried

that people would turn into wolves who would engage in atavistic and retrogressive behavior if there were no light (O'Neill, 2008: 195). Science in *Netherland* is perceived as the hallmark of human progress and evolution, and any disturbance to that order would disturb rational people like Hans.

Anti-Americanism and postcolonial melancholia

There is a clear departure in *Netherland* from the American narrative regarding September 11 and terrorism. The protest marches against the Iraq war in England in the novel point to the distinct unease with American foreign policy in Europe. Iraq is the single most important international crises, and characters are in fear that it will destabilize the region with far-reaching consequences for the future peace of the world. This rising power of America is clearly resented in the novel, as most British characters have antagonistic attitudes towards the U.S. English people have resentment against the U.S., as it has dislodged Britain from its status as superpower. This resentment is symptomatic of what Paul Gilroy calls "postcolonial melancholia" in his 2005 book of the same name. According to Gilroy, after 1945, England's life "has been dominated by an inability even to face, never mind actually mourn, the profound change in circumstances and moods that followed the end of the empire and consequent loss of imperial prestige" (O'Neill, 2008: 90). *Netherland* makes England confront that postcolonial melancholia. As Gilroy says, the melancholia is triggered by the "arrival of substantial numbers of postcolonial citizen-migrants" and the anxiety about national identity (O'Neill, 2008: 90). As later discussions show, the question of multiculturalism and arrival of postcolonial people is troubling, but in this section, it's the declining prestige and power of the English nation in international affairs that characters have to confront. The troubling knowledge for England in an international context is the fear of "what is actually involved in being on the receiving end of imperial power." This discomfort is realized in the form of fear that the nation "itself is becoming a colonial dependency of the United States" (Gilroy, 2009: 92). This disorienting fear brings characters face to face with postcolonial melancholia.

Netherland introduces the US as a place of envy and high social and economic prestige. When Hans was about to leave for the U.S. in 1998, the vice president at his bank in UK seemed envious about life in America. The V.P. was "doing nothing to hide his envy," as he himself had stayed in the U.S. for years. Hans and Rachel planned to go to the U.S., stay in New York for a year or three and then come back to London, but the V.P. was doubtful about their coming back to UK, as "New York's a very hard place to leave" (O'Neill, 2008: 3). Hans has the same feeling after leaving New York, though he was unhappy in the city for the first time in his entire life after September 11. Hans was also fascinated by the American frankness and directness of the V.P. as he did not try to hide his deplorable conditions in England. The VP sounded like "one of those Petersburgians of yesteryears whose duties have washed him up on the wrong side of the Urals" (O'Neill, 2008: 4). As people working for the Russian empire on the Asian side of the Ural Mountains were less fortunate, the VP had the same feeling working on the less rewarding side of the Atlantic. This envy becomes bitter after September 11, as those previous ideals become disoriented due to strong sense of unease about life in America, and its highhanded foreign policy after attacks, which clearly sidelined Britain as a past empire.

While Hans seems ambivalent about these issues, Rachel displays extreme anger against the rising power of the United States and its aggressive foreign policy. Hans longs for the "shadowy cast by the scooting summer in northern Europe," in comparison to the "barbarously sticky American afternoon," and the good cricket grounds. Climate differences aside, he also experiences the racial tensions in New York after September 11 towards those perceived as foreign, regardless of their Caucasian appearance. He felt helpless and perturbed after a hostile treatment meted out to him at the Driving License Center

in New York City. Two women wearing faces of “sullen hostility” at the front desk were treating people coming for the exams like enemy forces (O’Neill, 2008: 65). Hans also could see perplexed and rebuffed Chinese men wandering around at the center. A minor typo in Hans’s name, despite other supporting documents, became a reason for rejection due to an inflexible bureaucratic system. Hans felt intimidated by the harsh tone of the supervisor at the center. He was told to go to the Immigration Office to correct the mistake. When Hans asked whether the supervisor really wanted him to go to the Immigration for such a minor correction, the supervisor replied that he was forcing Hans to go there (O’Neill, 2008: 68). As a result of this treatment, for the first time, Hans had a “nauseating sense of America, his gleaming adopted country, under the secret actuation of unjust indifferent powers” (O’Neill, 2008: 68). Notwithstanding this vague assessment of America, it’s Rachel who has extreme and outrageous hostilities to America. He does not have any specific outbursts against America, but he clearly differentiates between American and British response to terrorism. Comparing the response of September 11 New York City with July 7 London, Hans believes that “Londoners remain in the business of rowing their boats gently down the stream. Unchanged, accordingly, is the general down-the-hatch, who-are-we-fooling lightheartedness that’s aimed at shrinking the significance of our attainments and our doom” (O’Neill, 2008: 178). According to him, even though the July 7 London bombings in 2005 was a frightening incident for Londoners, it was not disorienting like September 11 for Americans. Hans wants to emphasize the difference in terms of America’s angry response to September 11 with Britain’s calculated response to July 7.

Rachel and her son Jack participated in the same anti-war protest in London in 2003 while Hans was living in New York. Jack was holding the placard “NOT IN MY NAME” (O’Neill 95). Along with other similar placards, this one specifically dissociated the public from the government’s stance. The protestors wanted to tell their government that the excuse of citizens’ safety in going to war was misplaced, as the public themselves objected to such a stance because the war would make them more insecure. By 2003, and especially after the protest, Rachel had made up her mind that she would never return to the United States till Bush or any successor government has stopped perusing policies of “military and economic domination of the world” (O’Neill 95). She does not want Jack exposed to an “ideologically diseased, mentally ill, sick, unreal” country whose masses and leader suffer from “extraordinary and self-righteous delusions about the United States, the world ... the universe, delusions that had the effect of exempting the United States from the very rules of civilized and lawful and rational behavior it so mercilessly sought to enforce on others” (O’Neill, 2008: 95- 6). She does not want to expose her family to the perspectives one get from “TV networks funded by the conservative advertisers,” the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Times*, the typical American perspective where people are unable to point to Britain on a map, and who believe that Saddam sent those planes into the Towers (O’Neill 96). She also says that the issues started after September 11, and believes that highhandedness of the U.S. government signifies issues of a “life-and-death struggle for the future of the world” (O’Neill 98).

All her reactions against America are triggered by postcolonial melancholia, as America is perceived to displace Britain from its ascendancy. She is the true articulation of British melancholy, as she struggles with Britain’s own controversial imperialist history and the loss of the British Empire. She belies this melancholy through her rage over the United States’ imperialist designs to occupy Iraq. In her arguments with Hans, she says that the United States is “now the strongest military power in the world. It can and will do anything it wants. It has to be stopped” (O’Neill 98). To her, the United States—its people and leaders, suffer from “extraordinary and self-righteous delusions” about itself and the world. She believes that due to the “influence of the fanatical evangelical Christian movement,” America wants to impose its will on the world without any “legal or moral authority” (O’Neill 95-96). What Rachel does

here is exactly what Gilroy wants Britain to face—come to terms with its imperial past. It seems Rachel here is criticizing the British Empire by criticizing the United States because the American Empire is following in the footsteps of Britain, a former empire. By calling the U.S. “mentally ill, sick, unreal” (O’Neill 95), Rachel indirectly and unwittingly realizes and confronts her country’s own imperial heritage. Moreover, she is anxious about Britain’s marginalization as American imperialism marginalizes other nations. This is the fear of what Gilroy calls the fear of Britain becoming a dependency of the United States. Rachel responds by leaving the United States to save their son Jack from adopting the American perspective of marginalizing others. Her assessment that Americans cannot point to Britain on a map critiques the same self-centered American perspective. Her antagonism to the war on Iraq is motivated by the anxiety of a similar fear, as the attack would “destroy international law and order as we know it and replace it with the global rule of American force” (O’Neill 96). In her argument, she compares Bush’s domination of the world with Hitler’s (O’Neill 98). As Britain resisted Hitler, Rachel evokes a similar anti-Nazi sentiment, in this case against America. Gilroy finds Britain play upon this sentiment when it has to face its own melancholia (89). In *Netherland* then, O’Neill depicts a uniformed shift in national identity. Characters are uncomfortable with the rising power of America, and try to come to terms with it in the context of their country becoming a colony of the United States.

Multiculturalism in post- september 11 world

In their introduction to *American Multiculturalism after September 11: Transatlantic Perspectives* (2009), Derek Rubin and Jaap Verheul point to the fact that the promotion of multiculturalism and internationalism in response to rising anti-Americanism came into disrepute after attacks (Rubin and Verheul, 2009: 7). According to them, this trend was set in motion by vociferous attacks on multiculturalism by Lynne Cheney, the wife of the United States Vice-President. Cheney criticized educationalists who wanted to promote multicultural teaching and internationalism as a response to rising anti-Americanism. The notion that Americans needed to learn more about other cultures in the world, she argued, was tantamount to admitting, “that the events of September 11 were our fault, that it was our failure to understand Islam that led to so many deaths and so much destruction” (Rubin and Verheul, 2009: 7). Instead of teaching diversity and tolerance, she argued, teachers would do better to concentrate on the classics of world history and, most of all, the history of the American nation. This is in clear contrast to the phenomenon of expanding globalization or internationalization in the twenty-first century. Dominic Head believes that this trend to turn to “domestic topics” in prominent novelists in Britain and the United States may signal a “halt to a confident march towards internationalism or cosmopolitanism,” and thus “confirm the impression of a turning away from the full political implications of global terrorism” (Head, 2008: 100). This turning away from internationalism is dominant in some novels, but *Netherland* counters the trend and Cheney’s comments by embracing multiculturalism and internationalism by the presence and acceptance of an international community and the acceptance and recognition of the Other in a cosmopolitan space.

Netherland has a powerful narrative of multiculturalism, as there is no concept of center or periphery that is occupied by any particular ethnicity. O’Neill’s own persona as a writer suggests internationalism. His mixed Irish and Turkish parentage and his migration to the United States dictates Hans’s character and his perception of crossing boundaries between cultures. Like his creator, Hans moves among the narratives and lives of people from the Netherlands, England and the United States. Benjamin Kunkel writes that *Netherland* is “a British novel on American themes narrated in English by a Dutchman mostly about his Trinidadian Gatsby and transatlantic separation.” Kunkel believes that contemporary

life is far-flung “globalized in all its localities, international even on a molecular scale,” and that contemporary fiction has struggled to keep pace with the aggressive contemporaneity of this way of living. And yet, this depiction of a diverse and mobile contemporary life is the hallmark of *Netherland*.

Along with the transatlantic nature of the narrative, New York City itself becomes a miniature form of the world, as Hans comes across all kinds of people from around the world. He discovers an unknown world of New York City during his cricketing trips, visiting restaurants with Viny, a food assessor from India, and more importantly, his trips with Chuck that take Hans to faraway places, “the nether regions” in the outside New York boroughs, or what O’Neill calls in a PBS NewsHour interview with Jeffrey Brown the “underbelly” of New York City. Hans finds it surprising that such a large number of synagogues and mosques along with beauty salons exist side by side. There are also businesses proclaiming provenances from Pakistan, Tajikistan, Ethiopia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Armenia and Ghana. The scenes of “the Jewry, Christendom, Islam” cohabiting a common ground fascinate Hans (O’Neill, 2008: 146). There are other interesting sights of trucks driven by Turks, Muslim funeral homes, Hispanic gardeners, Jews and Hindus and people from all cultures and ethnicities (152). Hans also travelled outside New York City to New Jersey, Philadelphia, and Long Island on cricketing trips. Much of this diversity operates according to certain rules. Though Hans watches scenes of diversity in the United States, he emphasizes their coming together purely in the world of business. Similarly, Hans’s joyful participation in a multicultural community in cricket is governed by rules of the game and nothing else. There is not a single instance in the novel where Hans or other members of the team discuss religious or cultural difference. They talked about cricket most of the time because “there was nothing to discuss.” Hans uses an apt analogy to stress this quality of the sport: “The rest of our lives—jobs, children, wives, worries—peeled away, leaving only this fateful sporting fruit” (O’Neill 48).

Besides cricket, Chuck Ramkissoo’n s businesses bring together employees from around the world—Bangladeshi cement guys, Irish and Guatemalans painters, Russian plasters, Italian roofers, and Grenadan carpenters. Unlike the dreams of someone like Jay Gatsby, which are confined to America, Chuck’s dreams are more international. As Rothberg argues, the novel is “an allegory of deterritorialized America” and that “the novel echoes in many places earlier stories of American self-invention, such as that of Gatsby, but it resituates them in a fully globalized world” (156). Such internationalization of Gatsby’s dreams is possible in “hybrid, heterogeneous” spaces, as these spaces resist the discourse of “us-versus-them” on which the verbal currency of terrorism and counter-terrorism depends” (Gray, 2009: 70). *Netherland* crosses national and cultural narratives of boundaries by depicting what James Wood calls “an immigrant’s imagined community.” This assessment is also consistent with O’Neill’s views, as he has often expressed his longing for post-national stories or what he calls “postnational culture” (Reilly 14). These stories of a postnational culture in a cosmopolitan space are appropriate responses to the typical American exclusivity or the nationalistic sentiment exhibited by Rachel. Hans believes that homesickness and unsettlements in the cosmopolitan space cannot be located “in spaces of geography or history,” but cricket played in New York bring together those unspeakable individual longings together (O’Neill 120). As later discussions in cricket show, these longings are directed towards fellow feeling and justice.

Engagement with the other: Cooperation and conciliation

Netherland reintroduces the diversity to America in the form of cricket, which is popularly a sport connected with immigrants in the United States. The significance of cricket in the narrative emphasizes the forgotten history of the game in the United States. Its stresses that cricket is “NOT AN IMMIGRANT

SPORT" (O'Neill, 2008: 101) since the game has been played in New York since 1770s. It's not something alien to America, but a sport "already in the American DNA" (O'Neill, 2008: 102). The game is also employed as a metaphor to remind the republic about its founding principles of civility, justice and equality. The novel's engagement with the Other is quite pervasive. Though there are people from most ethnicities and nations, there are no indications in the text where the reader might decipher a sense of difference of these categories. It's true that Rachel has some strong arguments against Hans's friendship with Chuck, but the readers know that her sentiments are exaggerated by extreme anxiety after September 11. There is also a Turkish man, Mehmet Taspınar at Chelsea Hotel, who dresses like an angel, and who thinks that New York was the only place in the world where he could be himself until the attacks happen (O'Neill, 2008: 35). That sense of attachment has been shattered after September 11 as he was removed from his old place because the tenants thought that he might be a terrorist. The text does not say whether he is Muslim or not, but it's most likely his ethnicity which provokes people's suspicion about him. Except these insignificant instances, the novel depicts the Other trying to stamp its diversity on America, which is the true essence of America.

Although there are a plethora of Others, this Other is predominantly introduced in the person of Chuck Ramkissoon from Trinidad, a descendent of indentured servants. Chuck is the person whose efforts are directed towards carving a forgotten space in the American narrative. His journey is what O'Neill fantasized would be like a *Heart of Darkness* in reverse in which a black man (Chuck) penetrates a white Dark Continent (America), contrary to Conrad's novel in which a white man penetrates Africa, a dark continent (Reilly 13). "Chuck's story, which he tells Hans," argues Gray, "is in many ways reminiscent of the story of that paradigm of the American dream, Jay Gatsby" (Reilly 69). Hans met the charismatic and mysterious Chuck during a cricket match at Randolph Walter Park, in Staten Island in August 2002. The details of their friendship are revealed after a *New York Times* reporter contacted Hans in 2006. Chuck's body was recovered from Gowanus Canal, presumably murdered, as he was found handcuffed. The reporter refers to Chuck as Khamraj, and presumes that Chuck was Hans's business partner. The alliance between the two is confirmed by Rachel's insistence that Hans must be from some kind of old tribe, like the one found in the Amazon forest in Columbia recently. The tribal people still prefer eating monkeys, but are tired of their tribal life. Rachel uses the analogy to connect Hans to Chuck, the latter being from the same part of the world like the newfound tribe. Hans is from the Netherlands, whereas Chuck is from Trinidad, but she uses the analogy of the tribe to instigate a discussion so that Hans might say something about the nature of his relationship with Chuck. She also employs the analogy to emphasize that nothing else but some mysterious tribal affiliation could have possibly make friends out of two different people like Hans and Chuck.

Rachel criticizes Hans for his unlikely friendship with Chuck. She thinks that Hans's friendship with Chuck was simply a pastime, a non-serious companionship, and that Hans was "just happy to play with Chuck" (O'Neill 166). The friendship was unlikely to her because she thinks they were two different people from different backgrounds. There was nothing important in common between them. Thinking in racial terms, she also accuses Hans of "exoticizing Chuck Ramkissoon, of giving him the pass, of failing to grant him a respectful measure of distrust, of perpetrating a white man's infantilizing elevation of a black man" (O'Neill 166). Contrarily, Hans believes that Chuck was a good friend. They had a lot in common, and he tells Rachel that he took Chuck seriously because he was a "friend, not an anthropological curiosity" (O'Neill 167). In fact, Hans shows gratitude for his friendship with Chuck, as he had made Hans privy to many things in his life and privileged Hans with an opportunity "to reflect on the stuff of his soul" (O'Neill 248). The nature of Hans's and Chuck's friendship is also symptomatic of an acultural or impersonal medium of interaction in the multiethnic or cosmopolitan space. It does

not mean that both did not have affection for each other, but they never talk about delicate subjects in their lives.

Hans describes Chuck as someone who has left no stone unturned to participate in mainstream America. Chuck worked in the humanitarian efforts after September 11 and made friends with people from all over America. He considers those efforts to be the happiest time in his life when he served people traumatized by the disaster. His dreams about America are boundless and he considers it a unique quality of United States that anyone can use their imagination to project fantasies of who they want to be. He prefers to call himself an American and when asked where he is from, he always says America. He owns restaurants, runs a real estate business and administers a secret lottery system. The last one, according to Hans, might have been the cause of his death. All his endeavors cater to a multiethnic community in America. The secret lottery system he runs involves immigrant communities. His restaurants target a multiethnic space, and for that purpose, he has taken Mike Abelsky, a Jew, as his partner, to help him enter Jewish neighborhoods. He is also friend with Russians for the same purposes. His real estate and construction businesses employ mostly people from an immigrant community. As his plan of introducing cricket to America indicates, he does not seem to ask for accommodation of difference in America, but instead makes that difference the very essence of America. He has a dream and vision of America, and its only cricket that can realize this dream.

O'Neill himself is a cricketer and member of the Staten Island Cricket Club. His dwelling on the intricacies of the game and the inside knowledge of cricket emanates from this attachment. O'Neill transfers this passion for cricket not to Hans, who is an active player, but Chuck, who usually plays the role of a referee in the game. Chuck's business plan to reintroduce cricket to America is motivated by an increasing number of interested players in the immigrant community. As Jeffrey Hill explains in his article, "The American Dream of Chuck Ramkissoon: Cricket in Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland*," cricket had the prospects of becoming a national sport in America in the middle years of the nineteenth century. The sport declined in the 1870s, "as its place had been eclipsed by baseball" (220). Along with other reasons, its decline was due to the perceived "Englishness" (Hill, 2010: 221) of the game, and the American ethos against empire. Interestingly, cricket became a predominant sport in the independent countries of the British Empire due to its egalitarian attributes. To C.L.R. James, another Trinidadian like Chuck, and the author of *Beyond a Boundary* (1993), cricket stimulated "the imaginary resolution" of colonial antagonisms and was considered a means to racial liberation as the game challenged class and race hierarchies (Lazarus, 1995: 342). Similarly, cricket "furnished a common bond between nations which had the ability to help put aside, or bind up, political differences" (Major 193). In a similar vein, Chuck elaborates that when the British missionaries arrived in Trobriand Island, a part of Papua New Guinea, they found the natives constantly fighting against one another. The missionaries introduced cricket, and the game "forced them to share a field for days with their enemies, forced them to provide hospitality and places to sleep, that kind of closeness changes the way you think about somebody. No other sport makes this happen" (O'Neill 210-11). It is due to this leveling clout of cricket that the game reappeared in the second half of the twentieth century because of an increasing number of immigrants from the Caribbean and South Asia.

Chuck's plan to reintroduce the game and build a cricket stadium in New York is inspired by a non-stop increase in the immigrant population in the United States. According to him, there are around a million immigrants from the Caribbean, a region where cricket is a popular game. Similarly, the immigrant population is increasing by 81% among Indians in New York, Pakistanis by 150% and Bangladeshi by 500% (O'Neill 78). Chuck believes that along with the increasing size of the population, the quality is

also changing, as these immigrants are no longer doing the old things like mopping floors and driving taxis. The new wave of immigrants includes people working in high technology jobs, pharmaceuticals, electronics and health care. As people have time and money to play the game, Chuck can invest in inaugurating “The New York Cricket Club” and building a cricket stadium, the “Bald Eagle Field,” a title motivated by Chuck’s attachment to American symbols. He envisions a conflicted post- September 11 world transformed by cricket. He visualizes a Cricket World Cup, a major event in the cricketing world, played on the state-of-the-art cricket grounds he plans to build in Brooklyn. As part of his vision, he sees wealthy New York area immigrants from cricket loving lands buying deluxe box seats to watch cricket while people in the Middle East, South Asia and the Caribbean would watch Hindus, Muslims and Christians play cricket on their TV screens in a multicultural United States. *Netherland* depicts that dream in the early stages of its realization. Hans plays cricket among a large immigrant community. Unsurprisingly, he is the only white man in the team he is playing on, as all his teammates are from Trinidad, Guyana, Jamaica, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka (O’Neill, 2008: 10). The team also includes people from different religious communities, as there are “three Hindus, three Christians, a Sikh, and four Muslims” on his team (11). Devoid of its imperial legacies, cricket in the novel is O’Neill’s vision of a new space of cosmopolitanism.

However, it’s not that easy, as there are many impediments to the realization of that space, the biggest of which is America itself. The U.S. has a flare for national sports like baseball and American football at the expense of a global game like cricket. In the space in New York where Hans plays, cricket players had to wait and started late because of a “difficult environment” in which baseball players have the right to play on the ground first (15). Cricketers are invisible players in America, as they are “scarcely recognized and consigned to a nether land of sporting” (Hill 221). Chuck uses a racial analogy to stress this invisibility and distinct marginality when he tells the players that they would feel black once they put on the white uniform of cricketers (16). Furthermore, Hans feels hindered whenever he tries to explain cricket and its complexity to Americans. He remembers his futile attempts to explain to passersby even the basics of the game taking place in front of their eyes. It was “a failure of explanation and comprehension that soon irritated” him enough to give up the process of explaining (O’Neill 149). This American inability to understand the game points to its inability to understand other cultures and people. Faruk Patel, an Indian entrepreneur and businessman whom Chuck had persuaded to sponsor his cricket plan for America, tells Hans after they meet in London that “there’s a limit to what Americans understand,” and that that “limit is cricket” (251). This incompatibility of cricket to America’s condition and its inability to accept the game is also reflected in the bad ground condition in New York, which is quite opposite to the normal pitch conditions of a regulation cricket field. Instead of a grassy pitch, the one in New York is made of clay. Moreover the clay is not the red cricket clay, but is actually baseball clay. These things seriously influence the bounce because it lacks “variety and complexity” of a typical grassy pitch, which gives the players chances to “test a batsman’s repertoire of defensive and attacking strokes, not to mention his mental powers” (O’Neill 7). What is most important about cricket in *Netherland*, though, is not that it is a mere game, but that it is employed to stress its humanizing qualities. That’s why Chuck requests cricket players to exhibit civility and sportsmanship, as these are the very qualities which cricket inculcates. They must behave responsibly to let their hosts Americans know that these strange-looking guys (cricketers) are up to something worthwhile. The goal is to bring civility to America. Chuck supports this quality of cricket by quoting a famous English phrase. The phrase “It’s not cricket” is used when one has to discourage something unfair, bad or ungentlemanly (O’Neill 14). This phrase pays a rich tribute to cricketers, which requires them to behave responsibly in America. Taking support from its history, Chuck believes that the United States’ destiny is not complete without the game of cricket. The country is “not fully civilized, until it has embraced the game of cricket”

(O'Neill 210). As people fight because of differences, cricket can provide the only space for peaceful coexistence. Chuck supports his claim of cricket as the most civilizing influence due to the fact that the world has become a mess due to differences, especially after September 11, and it might become worse with the passage of time. In that respect, no other spaces of interaction and peaceful coexistence are possible between "Hindus and Muslims" except the game of cricket (O'Neill 211). This environment of peace is realized because when cricketers take to the field, they imagine an environment of justice. So, it's not only Americans who may behave civilly and democratically and benefit from the game, but humanity at large, as "all people, Americans, whoever, are at their most civilized when they're playing cricket" (O'Neill 211). As a result of the novel's insistence on the centrality of cricket, *Netherland* tries to find that human space between cultures and individuals where they can cross the boundaries of ethnocentric and xenophobic tendencies in their cultures.

Conclusion

The main characters of *Netherland* begin process of crossing the interstices and engaging with the Other after experiencing discomfort and anxiety in their lives because of the menace of terrorism. The results of these engagements might not be promising at present, but the author hopes that his emphasis on cooperation will definitely lead into the right direction. The only spaces for interaction might be science and technology, business and sports in the cosmopolitan space for the survival of the human species. The novel creates its own spaces of comfort against terrorism—everyday pleasures like familial intimacies, work, sports and so forth in a multicultural space. The novel condemns terrorism but pursues and celebrates life despite its presence. As it conveys, it's not the self or the other and East/Islam or West, which bleeds every day and suffers a relentless anxiety because of terrorism since we are all victims of one or another form of terrorism. The Other might know the pain of the self if the self could express the pain in terms of a shared humanity. Hans experiences this throughout the narrative, and observes the same homogenous nature of humanity after looking at a map of the United States. He zooms out from New York and then America on Google Maps from his home in England and sees that "there is no sign of nations, no sense of the work of man. The USA as such is nowhere to be seen" (O'Neill 252). The message is that these concepts of nations are human constructions, and if we want to, we can improve upon these constructions, and if needed, can create new ones. Hans' is a dream deferred as Chuck has been killed and Hans has gone back to England. So while the dream might not be possible now, the novel suggests that it is only the space of cosmopolitanism that can succeed against tribalism and nationalism.

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