Towards an Ethics of Post-9/11 Fiction: A Reading of Ian McEwan's *Saturday*, Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*, and Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

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PhD in English

2014

I hereby declare that this thesis is entirely my own work, and that where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, praise is due to Allah, the Almighty, for bestowing me with the patience and courage to go through this thesis in spite of the many challenges endured.

I wish also to acknowledge some very special people for this work would not have been completed without their continued encouragement, support, and expert guidance. I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Tim Armstrong, for his valuable suggestions and feedback have greatly enhanced the quality of my work. I would like also to thank him for his assistance, encouragement and patience throughout the entire writing process. I would like also to thank my advisor, Professor Robert Eaglestone, and my PhD viva committee members, Professor Mark Currie and Dr. James Annesley, for their inspirational comments.

My gratitude extends to Royal Holloway University for supporting me in the final year of this project and to all at the Department of English for creating a warm, encouraging and intellectually exciting environment in which to work. I would like especially to mention Professor Judith Hawley, the Director of Graduate Studies during my study for her support.

My cherished debt, as ever, is to my family. Wholehearted thanks go to my parents in Syria for their unstinting support and encouragement have meant immensely in my being able to complete smaller or greater endeavours in my life. I also owe heartfelt thanks to my husband, and daughters, Ruaa and Ayaa, for their love and terrific patience with me during the completion of this project.

Abstract

In the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks, might it be possible to consider that terror is terror whatever its source or purpose? Tracking such a question, this dissertation endeavours to identify an ethics of representing post-9/11. It reads Don DeLillo's *Falling Man,* Ian McEwan's *Saturday,* and Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* not simply as fictional works written or published in the aftermath of the attacks in an attempt to dramatize their repercussions. Rather, they are registered as a trend of fiction that works, in one way or another, against placing the terror of September 11 at the centre of their narratives. Seen individually, each of these novels engages with an especially vivid and instructive encounter with the question as to the effectiveness of facing terror with military retaliation fostered by the United States and its allies, including Britain and Pakistan. Examining the failure of such a violent response, they instantiate the agonizing necessity of envisioning an ethical alternative, in an attempt to encapsulate, even safeguard, a moral landscape in the aftermath of the attacks.

As this thesis proceeds to suggest, as ways of representing post-9/11, the involved Anglo-American narratives need to be examined and tested more closely. Acutely aware of their own limitations, they take up the challenge to propose strategies to move beyond the 'war on terror' rhetoric, while simultaneously highlighting their failures, and in so doing, dismantle their ethical, social and political barriers. Equally, this thesis points to the stakes of such endeavour as being seized hold of by novels reinvigorated by the multiple underpinnings of the gaze of the 'Other.' Deeply imbued with histories of exclusion, of colonial oppression and imperialism, they have the potential to address issues of counter-terrorism, 'Otherness,' agency and resistance, and thereby, often provide a richer space for reading our conflict-ridden post-9/11 world.

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Chapter One

Introduction: Towards an Ethics of Post-9/11 Fiction

In the aftermath of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks the question as to what fiction could do in the face of this tragedy has been often raised. "To speak or to remain silent?" was the first dilemma encountering novelists, Paul Virilio points out in *Art and Fear*.[1] Yet, given the counter-terrorism policy and atrocity that have arisen post-9/11, questions as to what language will there be for their novels, if they speak, and where they should stand in relation to the rhetoric of the 'war on terror,' remain the greatest challenge. In the face of such an impasse and the strong tendency towards abandoning diplomacy and resorting to military actions at the official level, many writers of fiction decided to prompt readers to question the meaning and motives of what they see and hear. Hence, writing about the attacks and their aftermath has moved beyond the conception and representation of the violence of the day to become an occasion for the novelist, as Margaret Scanlan puts it in *Plotting Terror*, to "assess his or her political commitments, actions, and failures," opening the novel up "to more general questions about the writer's ability to understand, respond to, and influence politics."[2] Although mainstream media representations of the American experience of terrorism fueled the perception of the 'war on terror' as a moral crusade, the failure of this war to end terrorism and the United States and its allies to appreciate the limitations of violence caused many novelists to devolve into disillusionment. For them, terror is terror whatever its source or purpose. Reflecting on critiques of the official response to

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[1] Paul Virilio, *Art and Fear*, trans. Julie Rose (London: Continuum, 2006) 35.
[2] Margaret Scanlan, *Plotting Terror: Novelists and Terrorists in Contemporary Fiction* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001) 7. This is not the same as, say, writing about the breakup of a relationship without engaging with the event except as an intermittent refrain, as it is the case with Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland*; Joseph O'Neill, *Netherland* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2008).

September 11, this thesis reads Ian McEwan's *Saturday*, Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*, and Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* as post-9/11 novels. By post-9/11 novels, I do not simply refer to fictional works that are written or published in the days that followed September 11 or that deal with its aftermath.[3] Rather, my use of the term involves delineating an ethics of an emerging canon of fictional works that moves beyond placing the event at the centre of their narratives towards retrieving the possibility of alternative understandings and approaches to our post-9/11 world.

But at what point is regulating terror more about fiction than reality?[4] Whether fiction can alter the course of events or achieve what politicians failed to do by means of violent actions is beyond the scope of this study. Yet, many scholars have raised the question of an appropriate novelistic response to September 11. "In years to come, the novels that matter," Nancy Armstrong asserts in "The Future in and of the Novel," "[will] be those seen as having prepared us for an epistemic shift in how we imagine ourselves as human beings."[5] Such a shift might go along the lines of what the French philosopher Jacques Rancière posits as 'aesthetic dissensus,' "a form of dissensus, a dissensual re-configuration of the common experience of the sensible."[6] In times of political turmoil, according to Rancière, aesthetic dissensuality acquires particular significance as it achieves "[t]he dream of a suitable political work of art … the dream

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[3] This definition refers to 9/11 narrative, as well as the 'war on terror' narratives defined by Kamila Shamsie. She emphasizes in an interview that *Burnt Shadows* is a 'war on terror' rather than a post-9/11 novel: "Even now I quite deliberately use the phrase 'War on Terror' rather than post-9/11 to talk about the final section of the novel. It may seem just a semantic difference – but to talk about a 'War on Terror' novel is to really talk about the consequences of the decisions made by various governments (including those of the US and Pakistan), rather than to place the terrorists of 9/11 at the centre of the narrative"; Michele Filgate, "The Kamila Shamsie Interview," *The Quarterly Conversation* 6 July 2009, 5 September 2011 <http://quarterlyconversation.com/kamila-shamsie-burnt-shadows-interview>.
[4] Scanlan argues that novels about terrorism are effective and pertain to reality: "[they] are real enough; they have historical and social origins and consequences" (Scanlan, 1).
[5] Nancy Armstrong, "The Future in and of the Novel," *Novel* 44.1 (March 2011): 8-10, 8.
[6] Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, trans. Steven Corcoran (London: Continuum, 2010) 140.

of disrupting the relationship between the visible, the sayable and the thinkable [of politics]."[7] In other words, he further explains, such form of dissensus has the potential,

> to change the frames, speeds and scales according to which we perceive the visible, and combine it with a specific invisible element and a specific meaning … such strategies are intended to make the invisible visible or to question the self-evidence of the visible; to rupture given relations between things and meanings and, inversely, to invent novel relationships between things and meanings that were previously unrelated.[8]

It is within this milieu that the aim of this thesis is to draw attention to the post-9/11 novel as that which tells the other side of the story of our post-9/11 times, offering a proper novelistic response to September 11, and in doing so, displacing normalized 'war on terror' narratives no longer adequate to emergent political urgencies. Following this caveat, the proper role of the novelist would be to inhabit a space for critical reflection on the experience of the attacks and their aftermath.

Bearing that in mind, many scholars seem to place their faith in literary narratives that enjoy or generate critical distance from existing hegemonic cultural formations. For them, such narratives acquire value inasmuch as they approach the post-9/11 period from the perspective of the 'Other,' be it immigrant, racial, religious, or even postcolonial. "What is striking about stories of the immigrant encounter," Richard Gray writes in "Open Doors, Closed Minds," "is what tends to be missing in novels of 9/11 and its aftermath … a strategy of deterritorialisation."[9] That is to say, immigrant narratives focus on the margins without keeping the centre far behind. For example, these narratives "bear witness to the encounter of Southeast Asians with America, in which the strategy, very often, is to read the US through American wars waged on

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[7] Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. and with an introduction by Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2004) 65. Defining politics and aesthetics as forms of 'dissensus,' Rancière "seeks to defend a version of this latter alternative" (Rancière, *Dissensus*, 1) for "[p]olitics revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak" (Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 13).

[8] Rancière, *Dissensus*, 141.

[9] Richard Gray, "Open Doors, Closed Minds: American Prose Writing at a Time of Crisis," *American Literary History* 21.1 (Spring 2009): 128-148, 141. See also Richard Crownshaw, "Deterritorializing the 'Homeland' in American Fiction after 9/11," *Journal of American Studies* 45.4 (2011): 757-776.

foreign soil as well as to show the reader what it is to be American by exploring

American spaces and places from extrinsic vantage points," and thus, have an

advantageous approach for the aftermath of September 11.[10] In line with Gray, Elleke

Boehmer, in "Postcolonial Writing and Terror," proposes that "postcolonial writing,"

associated as it is with migrant spaces, "has the power to draw attention to places

outside of the terror-stricken state, to supply a fuller understanding of the painful losses

as well as strategic gains of such acts."[11] "With its commitment to cross-border

interaction and ethically inspired adjustments to the other," she further adds,

> postcolonial writing can be said to expand and complicate, as well as to
> question, the shared languages and common frames of reference, legacies of a
> colonial history, which make globalisation possible. By the same token such
> writing seeks to define, or redefine, home as against world, the particular and the
> local as distinct from, even though intricately bound up in, the global.[12]

Thus, postcolonial narratives, Boehmer seems to suggest, have the potential to uncover

the hegemonic perspective to which 9/11 narratives are particularly attuned,

representing terror as "a force that has been *incorporated everywhere*" rather than that

which "cannot be incorporated within civic society";[13] hence the reference to the terror

of the 'war on terror.'[14]

At the other end of the literary spectrum, Anglo-American narratives,

preoccupied with the private sphere, the national and the local, as they are, may seem

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[10] *Ibid*.

[11] Elleke Boehmer, "Postcolonial Writing and Terror," in *Terror and the Postcolonial: A Concise Companion*, eds. Elleke Boehmer and Stephen Morton (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010) 141-150, 146.

[12] *Ibid*.

[13] *Ibid*., 145. Emphasis in original.

[14] Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* could be said to qualify as the most notable, if not the only, exceptions to this assumption. They even qualify as 9/11 narratives. Although both novels inhabit a 'deterritorialized' space, geographically speaking – *The Kite Runner* is set between Afghanistan and America, and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* occupies a space between Afghanistan and Pakistan – and they are said to express a deterritorialized perspective, that of Hosseini as an Afghani writer, they reflect the dominant discourse on Islam and the September 11 attacks, and lend humanitarian backing to the 'war on terror': While *The Kite Runner* employs the demonization of Taliban, represented by the antagonist Assef, to endorse as messianic the US-led invasion of Afghanistan, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* presents this invasion and the consequent eradication of Taliban from Afghanistan by the coalition forces as a liberation of Afghani women represented by the heroine, Laila; Khaled Hosseini, *The Kite Runner* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2003); Hosseini, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2007).

hindered, even irretrievably disabled, in articulating a radical literary form in relation to the post-9/11 experience. While fiction of the 'Other' insists either on a literal mapping outside the American borders or a consideration of the ways in which the local experience of the attacks is linked to globalized structures of dominance, Anglo-American fiction written after the attacks vigorously positions the West, particularly America and Britain, at the centre of their narratives while ignoring the periphery. Novels like J. G. Ballard's *Millennium People*, Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, Claire Messud's *The Emperor's Children*, Jay McInerney's *The Good Life*, and Ken Kalfus' satire *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country* fail to conceive a just role for the United States' foreign policy, one that acknowledges the global underpinnings of local conditions, and in this manner, fail to inscribe post-9/11 transnationally.[15] They seem to be hindered by the tendency to assume that life in other parts of the world, like Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan, has continued post-9/11 at the same pace whereas life in the Western world has been radically changed. As Zygmunt Bauman asserts in *Wasted Lives*,

> global solutions to locally produced problems or global outlets for local excesses are no longer available [in these texsts]. Just the contrary is the case: all localities (including, most notably, the highly modernized ones) have to bear the consequences of modernity's global triumph. They are now faced with the need to seek (in vain, it seems) *local* solutions to *globally* produced problems.[16]

Preoccupied with their insular tendencies, as Gray points out, novels with Anglo-American sensibility become mired in the perceived psychological and interpersonal repercussions of September 11:

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[15] J. G. Ballard, *Millennium People* (London: Flamingo, 2003); Jonathan Safran Foer, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2005); Claire Messud, *The Emperor's Children* (London: Picador, 2006); Jay McInerney, *The Good Life* (New York: Knopf, 2006); Ken Kalfus, *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country* (New York: Ecco, 2006). In these novels, the attacks function as a background for characters' personal affairs, except for Messud's where the life of characters is detailed in the months leading up to the attacks.

[16] Zygmunt Bauman, *Wasted Lives: Modernity and Its Outcasts* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004) 6. Emphasis in original.

> [R]elying on a familiar romance pattern – in which couples meet, romantic and domestic problems follow, to be concluded in reconciliation or rupture … – [these narratives] simply assimilate the unfamiliar into familiar structures. The crisis is, in every sense of word, domesticated … [A]ll life here is personal; cataclysmic public events are measured purely and simply in terms of their impact on the emotional entanglements of their protagonists … reducing a turning point in national and international history to little more than a stage in a sentimental education.[17]

Such recourse to sentimentalization, to the mobilization of emotions in fetishizing the American experience of pain is what informs these novelistic responses to the attacks.[18] As a result, they fail to produce accounts of the lives of those for whom the attacks function as just one episode in the continuous violence with which they live. On the other hand, novels like Amy Waldman's *The Submission*, and Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America* work against expectations by displacing the attacks and bringing to light the atrocities of the war against terrorism, in particular, the experiences of discrimination that Muslim 'Others' undergo in the aftermath of the attacks, though in counterfactual, national contexts.[19]

A productive literary approach to our post-9/11 world, then, is one that introduces a 'deterritorialized' perspective, that allows for the weaving in and out of the context of September 11, and thereby, accounts for prejudice against the 'Other' within or outside of the contours of the United States. However, the main contribution of such a 'deterritorialized' space to an ethics of post-9/11 representation, Gray asserts, lies in the obligation it offers to writers to "insert themselves in the space between conflicting

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[17] Gray, 134.

[18] It could be argued here that in Foer's novel, the reference to the Dresden Bombing, in one of the letters written by Oskar's grandfather, and the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, presented in Oskar's discussion of the event's aftereffects in a school report, alleviate this sense of fetishization for September11.

[19] Amy Waldman, *The Submission* (London: William Heinemann, 2011); Philip Roth, *The Plot Against America* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2004). Both novelists explore the wider implications of the attacks for Muslims and immigrants in America by juxtaposing the 'war on terror' rhetoric against a virtual present or past: While Waldman speculates on the possibility that a Muslim architect, Mohammad Khan, was to win the competition for the 9/11 memorial design, in a more indirect way, Roth imagines what would have happened if in the 1932 elections the American president would have been the anti-Semitic, Charles Lindbergh, making a parallel with the framing of Muslims under the Bush administration.

interests and practices and then dramatize the contradictions that conflict engenders. Through their work, by means of a mixture of voices, a free play of languages and even genres, they can represent the reality of their culture as multiple, complex and internally antagonistic."[20] The reference here is to the "enactment of difference," which denotes, according to Gray, "not only the capacity to recognize that some kind of alteration of imaginative structures is required to register the contemporary crisis, to offer testimony to the trauma of September 11 and its consequences, but also the ability and willingness imaginatively to act on that recognition."[21] Boehmer's reference not only to "ethically inspired adjustments to the other," but also to "a both/and rather than an either/or verdict," hits on a pertinent point, with the implication that the poststructuralist intervention is what pushes narratives to account adequately for the post-9/11 theme.[22] Consequently, the re-situation of a dialogical structure of communication, which is "about showing one's face in recognition of each other's existence and humanity, violating exactly the greatest taboo for terrorism experts: giving a *face* and a voice to the 'terrorists,'" is a precondition for a fictional response to the attacks as well as the encounter with the 'Otherness' engendered in their aftermath, as anthropologists Crolyn Nordstrom and Antonius Robben argue in their introduction to *Fieldwork under Fire*.[23]

Defining the prominent role of envisioning active alterity in proposing a response to terrorism, cultural theorist and philosopher Gayatri Spivak contends:

> If in the imagination we do not make the attempt to figure the other as imaginative actant, political (and military) solutions will not remove the binary which led to the problem in the first place. Hence cultural instruction in the exercise of the imagination … It is an imaginative exercise in experiencing the

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[20] Gray, 147.
[21] *Ibid.*, 134.
[22] Boehmer, 147. It is perhaps the confrontation with the conditions of the subject's impossibility and the emergence of the abject as a competing force in the days that followed the attacks that makes such a poststructuralist reading more justifiable, providing valuable warnings against essentialist and nationalist polemics.
[23] Crolyn Nordstrom and Antonius C.G. M. Robben, eds., *Fieldwork under Fire: Contemporary Studies of Violence and Survival* (Berkeley: University of Carlifornia Press, 1995) 19. Emphasis in original.

> impossible – stepping into the space of the other – without which political solutions come drearily undone into the continuation of violence.[24]

This process of "stepping into the space of the other" stresses the importance of the liminal and ambivalent boundaries of the narrative space in writing the margins of the post-9/11 world which is, in turn, key to what is referred to in Homi Bhabha's "DissemiNation" as "*writing the nation*."[25] Most importantly, Bhabha further adds, such liminality "would ensure that no political ideologies could claim transcendent or metaphysical authority for themselves. This is because the subject of cultural discourse – the agency of a people – is split in the discursive ambivalence that emerges in the contestation of narrative authority between the pedagogical and the performative."[26] It is within this context that locating narratives on the attacks and their aftermath in a liminal space is where the established systems of representation – characterized by binary oppositions that suggest an ontological polarization between the 'Self' and 'Other,' West and East, colonizer and colonized, centre and margins – are challenged or even dissolved, as a prerequisite for the processes of a dialogue to be initiated between the opposites. 'Minor' fictions, according to Bhabha in *The Location of Culture*, inhabits such a borderline position which allows them to challenge and contest the imagining of originary subjectivities, or what can be referred to as stable identities, in favour of an ongoing articulation of 'Otherness.'[27] As he puts it, "the representation of difference

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[24] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Terror: A Speech after 9/11," *Boundary2* 31.2 (Summer 2004): 81-111, 94.

[25] Homi K. Bhabha, "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation," in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990) 291-322, 297. Emphasis in original. That is, constructing the national identity by delineating its space, by including the nation's 'Other' in the definition of the national 'Self.' Above all, as Geoffrey Bennington points out, the "national differentiation does not come along to trouble the state *after* its perfect constitution, but precedes the fiction of such a constitution as its condition of possibility"; Geoffrey Bennington, "Postal Politics and the Institution of the Nation," in *Nation and Narration*, 121-137, 130. Emphasis in original.

[26] *Ibid.*, 299.

[27] 'Minor' and 'major' fictions refer to the minority and majority discourses, in general. Such use of the terms is also closely akin to the particular view held by Deleuze and Guattari about 'minor literature'; Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan, foreword by Réda Bensmaïa (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986). In a chapter devoted to answer the question of "What is a Minor Literature," they outline the following three main characteristics: In

must not be hastily read as the reflection of *pre-given* ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition. The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation."[28] In this sense, the novel of the 'Other' could be said to have risen up to the challenge of conceiving models of social critique that resist social codification.[29]

On the other hand, the first-person perspective finds its way into Anglo-American fictional paradigms in the aftermath of the attacks. Their essentialist reading of the post-9/11 world seems to replace the poststructuralist one, focusing primarily on the condition of the national 'Self' in a form of ideological and narrative regression. That is to say, these narratives do not open themselves up to the challenge of 'Otherness.' They achieve this either by their tenacious attempts to avoid such confrontation, or by charting the cultural and literary resonance of the terrorist signifier along bifurcating modes – one that identifies it as a catalyst for the reinvigoration of the narrative, and the other that debates it as the point of origin for the unfolding of terror. As such, they fall in the trap of the political proliferation of "coherent identities" which can never be "the basis on which a crossing over into political alliance with other subordinated groups can take place, especially when such a conception of alliance fails to understand that the very subject-positions in question are themselves a kind of 'crossing,' are themselves the lived scene of coalition's difficulty," as Judith Butler

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minority literatures, "language is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization," which denotes that a minor literature "doesn't come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language"; "everything in them is political"; and "everything takes on a collective value" (Ibid., 16-17).

[28] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994) 2. Emphasis in original.

[29] In other words, even as 'major' fictions produced their critical responses, in the process, 'Otherness' is created and legitimized in the service of the hegemonic narrative they are meant to counter in the first place. It is in such a slippage that a 'minor' fiction emerges as a form of resistance that engages in the process of undoing power relations that shape 'major' fictions. It is, then, an emergence that is not born out of the need to correct or complicate distortions left behind by other accounts of the attacks and the subsequent war against terrorism so much as to critique the strictly Anglo-American view that projects the Western writer as the authoritative voice of these accounts.

points out in *Bodies That Matter*.[30] Such a line of reasoning in approaching September 11 bespeaks narratives prone to locate 'Otherness' in terms of binary oppositions and stereotyping, impeding the experience of mutuality and dialogic existence between the 'Self' and 'Other.'

A brief look at the strategies employed by novelists coming from an Anglo-American sensibility as they attempt to adapt their narratives to accommodate the terrorist 'Other' of September 11 or, perhaps, find an approach to debunk terrorism helps clarify the point more. Some novels, like Lorrie Moore's *A Gate at the Stairs*, for example, endeavor to accommodate the 'Other' in their narratives while keeping the hierarchical 'us/them' binary opposition residing at the heart of the 'war on terror' in place.[31] These oppositions can be perceived in terms of culture, nationality, ethnicity, religion or even refer to social class. Such claims of a "transcendent or metaphysical authority," that Bhabha opposes, could be ascribed, in some cases, to the complexity of the terrorist's position in the Anglo-American novel. Put simply, the tactics of promoting distance or transcendence in the representations of terrorists highlight these narratives' ambivalent, even cautious, approaches to terrorism and counterterrorism, and might be said to save their authors from potential imputations of unpatriotism.[32]

The other common point of critique of Anglo-American narratives on the attacks and their aftermath is manipulation of ignorance about the 'Other,' a recurrent theme in the hegemonic political discourse about terrorists, as a justification for entrenching stereotypes. Thus, novels like *The Garden of Last Days* by Andre Dubus III not only

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[30] Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (London: Routledge, 1993) 115.
[31] Lorrie Moore, *A Gate at the Stairs* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010).
[32] Definitely, the portrayal of terrorists and their motives seems to create an aporia that these novelists could not fill due to a contradictory affiliation with terrorism. That is to say, there is a limit registered in their novelistic representations of terrorists, for imagined aggressors lie at the heart of the novel, yet, concurrently, following the official language of counterterrorism, they are alien, dangerous and psychically distant individuals who commit unfathomable acts. Accordingly, terrorists figure in such novels but, in one way or another, they are de-centred: they are both present and absent; they need to be present to sustain a sense of difference, whilst also sufficiently absent to sustain a sense of distance emotionally and mentally.

draw a clear, safe distance from terrorists, but they also make little effort to imagine or

empathize with them in favour of an epistemological knowledge of 'Otherness.'[33] In

"The End of Innocence," Pankaj Mishra explains how such novels end up flattening the

intricacies of the space of the 'Other':

> If inviting terrorists into the democratic realm of fiction was never less than
> risky, it is now further complicated by the new awareness of the mayhem they
> cause in actuality. Their novelist-host has to overcome much fear and revulsion
> in order to take seriously murderous passions aimed at his own society.
> Sympathy often breaks down, and hasty research reduces individuals as well as
> movements to stereotypical motivations.[34]

Hence, while the novel of the 'Other' constructs the figure of the terrorist as a

disenfranchised citizen, a disillusioned immigrant, and a rebel, adding more depth to

such narratives, the dominant Anglo-American novels present this figure, prevalently,

with the stereotypical images of evil, violence, and fundamentalism. As anthropologists

Joseba Zulaika and William Douglass points out in *Terror and Taboo*, such a reductive

reading of terrorists is the outcome of novelists gauging their approaches to the attacks

against "one of the tenets of counterterrorism," according to which "any interaction with

the terrorist 'Other' is violation of a taboo. Terrorists are kooks, crazies, demented, or at

best misguided. Contact with them is polluting; dialogue is pointless since terrorists are,

by definition, outside the pale of reason."[35] In this light, any novelistic attempt to make

terrorists out to be dupes, evil by nature or even mad only reflects the stereotyping

language of the 'war on terror' in its linkage of terrorism with identity or mental

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[33] Andre Dubus III, *The Garden of Last Days: A Novel* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2008). This novel
figures the Saudi Mansoor Bassam Al-Jizani as one of the 9/11 terrorists, and follows closely the last days
of this terrorist and the cell based in Florida that eventually hijacked American Airlines flight 11. Yet,
with all the effort that Dubus exerts to make this terrorist real, especially in terms of using Arabic words,
Bassam ends up being stereotyped.
[34] Pankaj Mishra, "The End of Innocence," *The Guardian* 19 May 2007, 2 June 2011
 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2007/may/19/fiction.martinamis>.
[35] Joseba Zulaika and William A. Douglass, *Terror and Taboo: The Follies, Fables, and Faces of
Terrorism* (London: Routledge, 1996) x.

disorders.[36] Such a rendering of the enemy 'Other' is a powerful way of obviating

questions about political agendas which can be simply dismissed as being energized by

a deification of violence or insanity. It is relying on these assumptions and pre-

established certainties in characterizing terrorists that precludes any attempt to engage

in a serious dialectic of terrorism.

In the face of this paradigm of de-centring the 'Other,' some Anglo-American

novels do succeed in bringing that 'Other' back to the centre. Apparently, they seek to

bridge the gap between terrorists and readers, and thereby, overcome as much as

possible the central problem of representing the attacks in their works. These few

attempts, however, did not go far beyond the familiar terrain of stereotyping, and were,

as a result, largely unsuccessful. Ostensibly attentive to the importance of crawling into

the terrorist's skin, yet myopically inimical to profound and effective engagement in an

exercise of empathetic imagination which might render terrorism fathomable, John

Updike's *Terrorist* and Martin Amis *The Second Plane* seem to fall within this

category.[37] Although both novelists adjust their narratives to focus primarily on the

character of the Muslim terrorist, they have perpetuated pre-existing, uninformed

typologies that only serve to equate him with perversion and peculiarities, be they

sexual or moral, and in so doing, assign his motivations to issues not far from the

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[36] This recalls the Norwegian Anders Breivik who killed 77 persons in a bomb and gun rampage in 2011 and whose declared insanity cloaked his terrorist act and the mission of saving Norway from the rising of Islam, immigration and multiculturalism. This also could be seen as a commitment to stereotypes of terrorists as either fanatical Muslims or deranged non-Muslims. Nonetheless, Breivik is called by Western media agencies a 'far-right fanatic,' or 'twisted killer, but never a terrorist. But even as Breivik is said to fall into the 'deranged' category, al-Qaeda and Muslim Jihadists are implicitly proposed as his inspiration; Agency staff, "The Goal was to kill them All," *The Mirror News* 19 April 2012, 30 April 2012 <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/anders-breivik-trial-mass-murderer-799580>.
[37] John Updike, *Terrorist* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2006); Martin Amis, *The Second Plane: September 11: Terror and Boredom* (New York: Knopf, 2008). Referring to the failure of Updike, Mohsin Hamid in an interview comments: "Here's Updike, this master, who is so good at getting to the core of who a human being is, utterly failing to create a believable protagonist. He didn't do what we must do, which is to be that character. If you can't be that character, don't write about him! He doesn't want to empathize with this guy, he can't let himself be that guy"; Jennifer Reese, "Reluctant 'Success,'" *Entertainment Weekly* 13 June 2007, 29 June 2011 <http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,20042152,00.html>.

promise of virgins in paradise.[38] Hence, it seems that once terrorists – no matter how

loosely structured – are presented in the Anglo-American fictional works, lapses into

stereotyping are likely. Such construction of a dehumanized, demonized, depersonalized

and depoliticized enemy, incorporated in the fictional counterterrorist's discourses,

functions to satisfy political objectives akin to the hegemonic norms of the war against

terrorism. Particularly contentious is the question of whether novelistic attempts to hide

behind the façade that these terrorists are incomprehensible, thus mapping an analogous

operation with the counterterrorism enterprise, can be considered potentially violent.[39]

This question can be contemplated in the light of Zulaika and Douglass' assertion that,

"[c]ounterterrorism's policy of defacing the activist and reducing his/her narratives to

sheer criminality only replicates the violence's original logic of secrecy and

dehumanization. Both the terrorist and the counterterrorist … are engaged in

systematically ignoring the human condition of the other."[40] Novelists as the carriers of

counterterrorism's violent ideologies and terrorists are sharing the same "world of

secrecy, masks, and hidden agendas," which only yields violence, to quote Zulaika and

Douglass again.[41]

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[38] In Updike's *Terrorist*, the terrorist in the making, Ahmad, is criticized for being an instrument without a will in the hands of a dubious Imam who inculcates on him extremist values. In *The Second Plane*, a collection of essays and short stories, Amis passes judgment rather than imagines terrorists. From the "diminutive Islamist terrorist," Ayed, in "The Unknown Known," through the impotent son of a Saddam-like dictator in "In the Palace of the End," to the horribly constipated terrorist in "The Last Days of Mohammad Atta," the 'Other,' represented by the Islamic male terrorist, is depicted as irrational, sexually inadequate, and a nihilist.

[39] Literary violence, here, is in the sense of reproducing a cultural monologue. Put simply, the implication of (mis)representing the September 11 perpetrators is that any attempt to negotiate or engage in dialogue with terrorists, or suspects of terrorism, to find about their true motivations is destined to fail. This entails also that violence is the only acceptable course of action to stamp out terrorism – hence is the literary crime of disenfranchising the 'Other' and inciting violence against them within and outside the borders of the literary realm.

[40] Zulaika and Douglass, 226.

[41] *Ibid.*, 226. No doubt the conflation of poetics and politics with regard to stimulating violence may initially appear striking. Yet, it is this slippage between textual and political violent practices, in this chapter and throughout the thesis, which I found most compelling in understanding the role of fiction post-9/11. By situating literary and literally violence on the same conceptual scale, the suggestion is that fiction possesses a functional force that shapes and inflicts political reality.

This tone of characterization, contingent upon representing the terrorist in terms of stereotyping and hierarchical orderings, as Boehmer puts it, is evoked "in terms that suggest a cancellation of temporality."[42] In the same vein, Butler purports that, supplying "the character and content to a law that secures the borders between the 'inside' and the 'outside' of symbolic intelligibility," such modes of representation work "to pre-empt the specific social and historical analysis that is required, to conflate into 'one' law the effect of a convergence of many, and to preclude the very possibility of a future rearticulation of that boundary which is central to the democratic project."[43] That is to say, with their stereotypical tendencies, Anglo-American narratives register the urgent insistence on historically decontextualized 'now' of post-9/11 as well as the lack of future orientation. "[A]pparently traumatized by accelerating social change and political crisis," Gray maintains, these narratives have been unable or unwilling to meet the challenge of allowing their work to be a site of history.[44] The position of these novels is, consequently, counterproductive for mounting a critique of the 'war on terror' as an imperialist impulse entirely consistent with the American history of neoliberal globalization. By contrast, novels like Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* and Nadeem Aslam's *The Wasted Vigil* locate their post-9/11 rhetoric not only in a different space but also in a different time, allowing September 11 to be viewed through the lens of America's history of involvement with such different parts of the world as Japan, late colonial India and Afghanistan.[45] They seem to generate a strong interest in history that reflects what Hayden White refers to in *Metahistory* as "historical consciousness *in and*

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[42] Boehmer, 149.
[43] Butler, 206-207.
[44] Gray, 147.
[45] Kamila Shamsie, *Burnt Shadows* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009); Nadeem Aslam, *The Wasted Vigil* (London: Faber and Faber, 2008).

for itself."[46] In such texts, Boehmer proposes, the 'Other' "excluded from the experience of moving into modernity according to need, instead projects him/herself decisively, uncompromisingly, into previously exclusive strata of temporality."[47] Offering a commentary on the "nation's temporality" of dominant narratives, these "acts of projection," she further adds, "are concerned to restore temporal depth, a sense of the deep layering of history," undoing "the compression of time that is represented by a sudden death or bomb-blast, by looking at *processes*."[48] Most importantly, this alternative reading of September 11 "allows us to examine its occurrence in the reciprocally violent historical contexts of colonialism and global neocolonialism rather than of the ahistorical 'war on terror' in which [such] terror is viewed simply as savage and irrational, an irruption of the primitive."[49] By the same token, although set in the pre-9/11 worlds of Kashmir, New York and Los Angeles, Salman Rushdie's *Shalimar the Clown* gives way to a more astute reading of terrorism in general, and September 11 in particular.[50] A different approach could be detected in H. M. Naqvi's *Home Boy*, Shaila Abdullah's *Saffron Dreams* and Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* where the effect of media bias and stereotyping on the Muslim community in the aftermath of the attacks has come to the fore at the expense of transnational and historical spaces.[51] The post-9/11 experience simply renders Chuck and Arissa, Naqvi's and Abdullah's Pakistani protagonists respectively, victims of American intolerance to 'Otherness' as it does to Ali's Bangladeshi immigrant Nazneen and her family in London, but never cause them

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[46] Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1973) 97. Emphasis in original.
[47] Boehmer, 149.
[48] *Ibid*. Emphasis in original.
[49] *Ibid*., 147.
[50] Salman Rushdie, *Shalimar the Clown* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005).
[51] H. M. Naqvi, *Home Boy* (New York: Shaye Areheart Books, 2009); Shaila Abdullah, *Saffron Dreams* (Ann Arbor, MI: Modern History Press, 2009); Monica Ali, *Brick Lane* (London: Doubleday, 2003). Even though the settings of these novels do not travel beyond the American frame of reference, as it is the case with Naqvi's and Abdullah's, or beyond London, in Ali's case, they could still be said to offer a 'deterritorialized' perspective to the post-9/11 experience of the Muslim 'Other.'

to project themselves into previous "strata of temporality" or explore the wider implications of the 'war on terror.'[52]

Furthermore, concomitant to this "interest in the perfectibility of the present," figured most dramatically by Anglo-American narratives written in the aftermath of the attacks, is the lack of "projection onto the future" which Jacques Derrida in "Deconstructing Terrorism" correlates with the 'war on terror' in its "inexhaustible demand for justice."[53] In this way, no alternative response to the attacks is proposed, with the suggestion that the 'war on terror' remains the frame into which situations of terror will be resolved. For example, novels like Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* and Paul Auster's *Man in the Dark* fit into this model though in varying degrees.[54] In their steadfast reflection upon the post-9/11 'now,' such novels register a culture perpetually stuck in the loop of traumatic stasis of the attacks' aftermath, with a future void of any possibility or purpose, generating situations in which there is no meaning except the monumentality of the horror of the event and its potential reiteration.

Other works of fiction, like William Gibson's *Pattern Recognition* and David Foster Wallace's short story "The Suffering Channel," propose that facing the terror of the attacks is rather a cultural project that manifests itself as a renewed faith in the

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[52] It is worth noting here that Ali's representation of the migrant Muslim community is more controversial than Naqvi's or Abdullah's in the sense that it is spilt by the contradiction "between the hope for revelation on the one hand, and knowledge of the impossibility of any complete unveiling on the other. She wants to illuminate a set of lives that have frequently been forgotten and set aside, and the novel clearly seeks to uncover subjectivities that have so far been deprived of a public voice. At the same time, however, the process of uncovering can itself be read as a fictional construction created in discourse"; Jane Hiddleston, "Shapes and Shadows: (Un)veiling the Immigrant in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*," *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 40.57 (2005): 57-72, 59.

[53] Jacques Derrida, "Deconstructing Terrorism," in Giovanna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003) 137-172, 167.

[54] Cormac McCarthy, *The Road* (London: Picador, 2006); Paul Auster, *Man in the Dark* (London: Faber and Faber, 2008). While McCarthy's novelistic approach to post-9/11 is anchored in a post-apocalyptic world entirely devoid of any possibility for future, Auster's is set against a counter-factual historical backdrop where neither the attacks nor the 'war on terror' would have occurred, where the movement into future would have been possible had the outcome of the 2000 presidential elections in America been otherwise.

aesthetic.[55] However, this exaggerated faith in the capacity of the aesthetic to displace

the political falls apart as it leaves narratives too far steeped in existing cultural

practices rather than producing a workable response to the attacks. Sealing themselves

off against politics, novelists too often fail to resolve the conflict that originally drives

their stories, and thereby, they hold their narratives in suspension and fall short of imag-

ining a future that replaces the status quo. Furthermore, ruling out the possibility of the

ethical response to the attacks being orchestrated by both sides of the conflict, such

narratives align themselves with the biopolitical polemic of liberal regimes engaged in

the 'war on terror,' operating, stereotypically, to privilege the 'Self' over the 'Other'

and deny the latter any possible agency in that orchestration. This negation of the

agency of the 'Other' is indicated in some of these novels by the suggestion that a

proper tone of response resides in the process of "moralizing socialism which conjures

away social antagonisms, thus maintaining in actual fact, despite concessions of form,

the essential positions of capitalism,"[56] while simultaneously erasing "antagonisms that

are the necessary precursors of revolutionary theory and practice," as Fred Moten

contends in "The New International of Decent Feelings."[57] A more alleviated, perhaps

even discreet, form of subverting the agency of the 'Other' is proposed through merely

charting the equality of suffering between victims of September 11 and those of the

'war on terror.' In this manner, subversion could be detected not only through "the

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[55] William Gibson, *Pattern Recognition* (New York: Berkley, 2003); David Foster Wallace, "The Suffering Channel," in *Oblivion* (New York: Back Bay, 2004) 238-329. This attempt to reinstate the aesthetic in novelistic responses to September 11 takes many forms: while some novelists replicate media representations aesthetically to make readers conscious of the power the aesthetic could have over their perception of the attacks, others assert this power only indirectly by distancing themselves from media representations of the attacks while endeavoring to place them within their narratives. Still others attempt to assert this role more forcefully by bringing the aesthetic face to face with situations of terror, suggesting that responding to terror is rather a civilizational project.

[56] Fred Moten, "The New International of Decent Feelings," *Social Text* 20.3 (Fall 2002): 189-199, 196.

[57] *Ibid.*, 191.

liquidation of dissent or of whatever marks the possibility of another way of being political," but also "the suppression of alternative tones or modes of phrasing as well."[58]

Destabilizing Anglo-American narratives' mode of temporalization, the novel of the 'Other' serves as a site of memory that speaks to the power of a productive engagement with the genealogy of the 'war on terror' to illuminate the future. As Boehmer puts it, such narrative "maps a chronology on to the 'moment of danger,' the moment-in-and-out-of time, of terror, registering not only the past history but also the future consequences and repercussions of necropolitical acts for human subjects."[59] Thus, the novel of the 'Other' "might be understood as itself an alternative mode of seizing hold upon the now, upon the right to define *this moment*, although a seizing-hold that, importantly, does not involve a negation of the future."[60] Perhaps most importantly, they not only succeed in imagining a literary vision of the future of the 'war on terror' that invalidates its cause, but simultaneously they have the ability to display the possibility of an ethical alternative response to terrorism, one that ends its cyclic nature. At the heart of this alternative is the retrieval of the suppressed political public content in Anglo-American narratives, departing from Bhabha's contention in "Terror and After" that "the decision to *implement* and administer terror, whether it is done in the name of god or the state, is a *political decision* not a civilizational or cultural practice."[61]

Closely related to this sublimated response are issues of agency and resistance. That is to say, if these narratives propose that facing terror is a political practice, they simultaneously, perhaps even consciously, stipulate that it is one that involves the cultivation of a healthy political public sphere, insisting "*right now*, on a full

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[58] *Ibid.*, 189.
[59] Boehmer, 147.
[60] *Ibid.*, 148. Emphasis in original.
[61] Bhabha, "Terror and After…," *Parallax* 8.1 (2002): 3-4, 3. Emphasis in original.

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participation [of the 'Other'] in the political life of the nation," in Boehmer's words.[62]

To this end, rather than merely reiterating and confirming the post-9/11 structures of

power, these narratives are able "diagnostically to explicate and interrogate, even

narrativize" the resistance to such structures, and in so doing, reveal within the

processes of terror.[63] In other words, they produce what Julian Reid in *The Biopolitics*

of the War on Terror refers to as the 'nomadic life,' as a direct contrast to 'logistical

life' figured in their Anglo-American counterparts,

> a life which refuses to accept and live within the boundaries determined as
> necessary for the production of efficiency, which seeks other principles upon
> which to form community with others, and which when subject to any regime
> which seeks to contain it spatially, discipline its use of time, or control its
> movements, threatens that regime with its own capacities to wage a war of
> movement against it.[64]

Equally, Boehmer contends that by the re-signification of colonial pasts under

the auspices of the 'war on terror,' the novel of the 'Other' correlates itself with

struggle, subversion, and resistance to "the global status quo – whether that be

capitalist-driven colonialism or contemporary neo-imperial globalisation."[65] Above all,

she stresses that such narrative "posits futurity" in relation to resistance."[66] The

implication here is that resistance is configured in these narratives as a means for

endurance and recovery rather than terror. Even more to the point is Boehmer's remark

that the writing of the 'Other' that "has to do with resistance is concerned to keep watch

on these hegemonic centers and borders, to sabotage, subvert and baulk them if

necessary, and also to explore alternative yet co-existent locations and lineages of

meaning and survival."[67] What is assumed to be a subversive political force in these

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[62] Boehmer, 148. Emphasis in original.
[63] *Ibid.*, 142.
[64] Julian Reid, *The Biopolitics of the War on Terror: Life Struggles, Liberal Modernity, and the Defence of Logistical Societies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006) 13.
[65] Boehmer, 143.
[66] *Ibid.*, 146.
[67] *Ibid.*, 144.

narratives, then, deviates from rather than subscribes to the normative model of violence. Neither does it suggest an understanding of the relationship between the 'Self' and 'Other,' between 'us' and 'them,' that unfolds as more of the same rather than breaking out in different and unexpected directions. That is to say, resistance presented in the novel of the 'Other' is not born out of the urge to confer privilege on oneself or claim ones' discourse as right, or better in the face of hegemonic discourses, be they literary or political, so much as to engage in an on-going process of critique that enacts "dialogue, complicity and transculturation," and resists the temptation to entrench oneself further in one's own dogma.[68] Then, it is this shift from the pedagogic (passive) to the performative (active) form of the identity of the 'Other' that becomes the premise that guarantees that "no political ideologies could claim transcendent or metaphysical authority for themselves."[69] As such, the novel of the 'Other,' "whether defined under the heading of resistance, or of hyprid cosmopolitanism" never provides "justifications of terror or sidestep the pain and wrong that it is the objective of a terrorist act to inflict … What it can provide is an understanding of what is at stake subjectively and sequentially for the different parties involved when terrorism takes place," supplying "channels for thinking through and beyond terror and the shocking breaks in time it inflicts, and offers ways of developing workable political responses to its horrors."[70] "[T]hrough the medium of different modes of dialogue," Boehmer further adds, these narratives find "ways of continuing and prolonging the lineages of life. And they see such conversation and prolongation as practices that must be continually renewed and repeated."[71]

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[68] *Ibid*., 143.
[69] Here, the link is made between liminality and resistance; more precisely, resistance as a means of asserting liminality.
[70] Boehmer, 149.
[71] *Ibid*.

Consequently, what distinguishes the novel of the 'Other' is advocating a productivity of resistance, a "radical resignification of the symbolic domain"[72] or what is referred to as "the possibility to put the consolidation of the norms … into a potentially productive crisis," towards reworking the gap the attacks widened between the 'Self' and 'Other,' and that has otherwise remained outside the purview of 9/11 literary ethics, in Butler's words.[73] Clearly then, such narratives have the capacity to grapple with the "inherent ethical character" of post-9/11 conditions and the ethical nature of what is to emerge, to quote Slavoj Žižek in *For They Know Not What They Do*.[74] It is this very "constitutive force of exclusion, erasure, violent foreclosure, abjection and its *disruptive return* within the very terms of discursive legitimacy," which US-UK-centric narratives disavow.[75] In view of that, I would suggest, a proper post-9/11 narrative is fundamentally contingent upon and, indeed, shaped by resistance. It is the one that opens and keeps open the possibility of a critical resistance that works against the politically-sponsored project of normalizing the subject towards a more ethical relation between the 'Self' and 'Other,' one of interdependence and more equality.

Although this overview cannot do enough justice to the complex question as to what counts as a proper tone for post-9/11 fiction, it opens up potential spaces for moving beyond the literary conventions of 9/11 narratives towards attending to the diversity of the post-9/11 experience. It also establishes the broad scope for narratives endeavoring to encapsulate, even safeguard, a moral landscape in the aftermath of September11. By placing McEwan's *Saturday*, DeLillo's *Falling Man* and Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* against this backdrop, I argue that it is in these novels where

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[72] Butler, 22.
[73] *Ibid.*, 10.
[74] Slavoj Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do*: *Enjoyment as a Political Factor* (London: Verso, 2002) 110.
[75] Butler, 8. Emphasis added.

the post-9/11 tone is attentively experimented and tested. Spanning three continents, and featuring the post-9/11world either from the Anglo-American perspective or from the perspective of the Pakistani Muslim 'Other,' they offer, in varied ways, a 'deterritorialized' perspective, one that tells another story about September 11 and its aftermath. Whether displacing or merely resisting the dominant literary discourse on the attacks, these fictional works propose alternative frames of belonging and modes of living under the shadow of no towers. And whether struggling with their ethical burdens, or embracing them willingly, they raise the reader's awareness of the post-9/11 moral crisis as well as set into action the performative task of fiction in delineating a post-9/11 ethical agenda. To pursue this endeavour, the novels in question bring significantly different strategies – in terms of narrative form, plot design, medium of representation or even authorial statements. They reflect different possible tones of fictional representations (sympathetic but arrogant, pragmatic but distanced, and outraged but tolerant) that need to be examined against issues as central and interwoven in the post-9/11 world as those of history, politics, attending to 'Otherness,' dialogue, agency and resistance. And therefore, each of the novels deserves a separate and detailed investigation within the scope of this thesis.

My discussion begins, in Chapter two, with an examination of McEwan's *Saturday* as a fictional representation of post-9/11 from a British perspective and background. This chapter argues that the novel does not come up with sufficiently precise alternative approach to our post-9/11 world. Yet, arguably, its alternative is inscribed in its reference, even resistance, to its own limitations to propose one. In this light, this chapter offers a reading of *Saturday* as enactment of what Dominic Head

refers to as the "double consciousness" of modernity.[76] On the one hand, the novel

suggests a post-9/11 transition through the evocation of the ethic of empathy. It registers

the need to empathize and sympathize with the 'Other,' in its aspirations for

emancipation from ongoing violence and terror. On the other hand, it refers to the

limitations, and thus, inevitable failure of such ethical approaches in a culture that holds

on to its neo-liberal values and biopolitical mindset. Through the Perownes' private

sphere, the novel suggests that liberalism creates a sense of empathetic identity

constantly torn between personal security and the interpersonal imperative of engaging

with 'Otherness,' with a strong bias towards the former. Featuring a post-9/11 British

family ambivalent about the wisdom of the 'war on terror,' the novel reflects their, and

the West's, inability to affect empathy, or to provide such a possibility of reconciliation

with the terrorist 'Other.' It even highlights the potential ravages of the empathetic-

liberal hybrid that promotes detachment, political and social violence and weighs on the

everyday lives of working classes. The chapter closes, as does the novel, with the

remark that although the move from violence to empathy in the post-9/11 world would

be a major step, it risks being dragged back by the liberal agenda's linkages to

biopolitical control. Along with its main discussion comes a consideration of the plight

of liberalism and the liberal in the post-9/11 world. Relevantly, this chapter probes the

relation between the private and public, science and literature, vicarious traumatization

and witnessing, and the role of media in the post-9/11 world.

My analysis of DeLillo's *Falling Man*, in chapter three, investigates the

representation of a post-9/11 cultural climate from an American perspective. It

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[76] Head argues that "this form of double consciousness, which connects experience and knowledge, lies behind some of the key literary effects in McEwan's oeuvre"; Dominic Head, *Ian McEwan* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007) 207. In the same vein, I suggest that *Saturday* performs the "double-consciousness" of modernist/liberal fiction; placing faith in this literary genre, while simultaneously undermining it. Here, the reader is invited to conduct an evaluation of the potentials and problematics of the genre.

documents the novel's resistance to 9/11 literary ethics as well as to the attempt towards self-absorbed decency and closure featured prominently in *Saturday*. Conscious of the ethical, social and political barriers involved, the novel registers an American society fixed in a loop of traumatic stasis in the days that followed the attacks, while simultaneously proposing strategies to move beyond the 'war on terror' rhetoric. DeLillo argues for the importance of history in expanding our understanding of the attacks as a step towards moving forward into the future. Yet, he acknowledges the failure of this approach in a culture entangled in the memories of the attacks, which bespeaks a failure of futurity. Set close to the rubble of the Twin Towers, the novel records the Neudeckers' emotional and existential struggles, with the suggestion that the event left American society deeply immersed in a sense of victimization. Largely ignoring the 'war on terror,' the novel's blindnesses reflect Western nation's tendency to inflict violence inside and outside their borders against suspects of terrorism or even ordinary Muslims, risking another eruption of terror as well as precluding any possibility of reconciliation with the 'Other.' This chapter also expands on the novel's revival of familiar themes in DeLillo's previous novels, such as the power that media's, terrorists', and novelists' representations could have over human perceptions of terrorist events. It also features the development of a new, yet pertinent, theme within the context of post-9/11, one that probes the relation between novelists, terrorists and survivors.

Chapter four surveys Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* as a novel that concerns itself with the post-9/11 experience of Changez, a Pakistani Muslim immigrant, in the United States. It argues that the novel offers an alternative appropriation for the post-9/11 theme, one that moves beyond the first-person perspective to which 9/11 narratives are particularly attuned, towards cultivating a

dialogue, or more precisely, a dialogic relationship with hegemonic discourses. Set in Pakistan, the novel rearticulates the space of the Muslim 'Other' by retrieving his voice and agency. Giving Changez the chance to produce his own testimony, the novel seeks to highlight the consequences of sentimentalizing and homogenizing the national community in post-9/11 America, a theme that has remained otherwise partially or completely out of the purview of dominant narratives. This chapter also considers the way subjecting the post-9/11 theme to the gaze of the 'Other' moves it away from the internalizing tendencies of Anglo-American narratives to recuperating the political. Such a sublimated approach, it will be argued, unveils the revival of exclusionist practices under the auspices of counter-terrorism security measures. In view of that, this chapter conducts a profound reconsideration of the United States' history as a site of cultural diversity and ethnic tolerance. This calls into question the normative status of pre-9/11 accommodational practices that resist welcoming Changez other than as a stranger. The novel's engagement in his pre-9/11 experiences of exclusion, it will be argued, is where these discourses, deeply rooted in 'either/or' distinctions, are interrogated and even subverted.

The focus of this chapter then shifts to consider the novel's exploration of the wider implications of the 'war on terror,' and its deconstruction of the meaning of fundamentalism by interrogating the monologic frameworks within which American foreign and domestic policies operate. Setting secular Changez on a collision course with America's nationalist and economic fundamentalisms, the novel works to refute Islamic fundamentalism as the evil of the age as well as subvert stereotypical images of the Muslim 'Other.' Most of all, this chapter proceeds to argue, the novel unsettles its Anglo-American counterparts by its "enactment of difference," taking issues of subjectivity, agency and resistance into consideration. Changez emerges not only as an

effect, a suffering subject, but also as a political agent. The fact that this resistance is not informed by revenge as much as by a desire to engage in an on-going process of critique that enacts dialogue is featured as a key point in the novel's ethical approach to our post-9/11 world.

The concluding chapter conducts a comparative analysis of the novels in relation to their attentiveness to the ethical and performative task of fiction in the aftermath of the attacks. It investigates how their articulations of the post-9/11 theme vary according to their national, ethnic and critical affiliations. Highlighting their limitations and potentials, this chapter views these novels as delineating the key contours of a post-9/11 emancipatory fiction that remains open to stylistic, thematic, and aesthetic variations.

Chapter Two

Experiencing 9/11: Ian McEwan's *Saturday* and the Power of Love

[The 'war on terror' is] an even greater mess than anyone imagined. I have no doubt that, if a rewind button could be pressed by Tony Blair, if he could bring us back without anyone noticing to February 2003 – he would press it.

Ian McEwan, "The difference a day makes"

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Matthew Arnold, "Dover Beach" (1867)

When we go on about the big things, the political situation, global warming, world poverty, it all looks really terrible, with nothing getting better, nothing to look forward to. But when I think small, closer in – you know, a girl I've just met, or this song we're going to do with Chas, or snowboarding next month, then it looks great. So this is going to be my motto – think small.

Theo, *Saturday*

The post-9/11 theme seems to fit within the literary palette of Ian McEwan, the novelist for whom violence of the public sphere is an inescapable reality. However, if his post-9/11 novel comes into consideration, it is not just because it is written by a novelist who has been perceptive about the prevalent anxieties of the contemporary world that seemed incapable of long-term peace, and in which human aggression threatens to bring about global destruction, but also because it offers an alternative ethic for thinking about our post-9/11 world. *Saturday*, it will be argued, contains within itself an attempt to press the "rewind button" in order to advance cherished humanistic strategies to move beyond violence and terror, to use the words of McEwan in his interview with Boyd Tonkin.[1] In what follows, I will conduct a cursory chronological survey of McEwan's pre-9/11 novels in an attempt to identify the approach underlying his post-9/11 novel; his interest in writing about a single, accidental, terrifying incident and the conflict-ridden world it engenders, as well as probing the relationship between the private and the public

In most of his pre-9/11 novels, McEwan was engaged with the state of the world, the imminent disasters and unexpected intrusions, with a gathering pessimism that, for many reasons, could be easily related to the attacks and their aftermath. As Lee Siegel puts it in the "Imagination of Disaster":

> He has captured an essential quality of the bourgeois, consumerist West … [He] caught its obsession with the Transfiguring Event, an obsession that reaches its most intense degree in open, vulnerable, self-conscious societies, and especially in America, where so much cultural, commercial and psychological energy is spent maintaining the illusion of a secure and gratifying present that will never end.[2]

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[1] Ian McEwan, "The difference a day makes, an interview by Boyd Tonkin," *The Independent* 28 January 2005, 12 February 2010 <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/ian-mcewan-the-difference-a-day-makes-488407.html>.
[2] Lee Siegel, "The Imagination of Disaster," *The Nation* 24 March 2005, 23 April 2009 <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20050411/siegel>.

Long before the attacks on the United States, McEwan would create entire novels out of a single, accidental, terrifying incident. He is, to use Jason Cowley's words, the novelist for whom "life is a kind of disaster area, where random events destabilise even the most ordered lives."[3] His first two novels, *The Cement Garden* (1978) and *The Comfort of Strangers* (1981), describe small-scale terrible events and focus primarily on the inner world of his protagonists.[4] After that, McEwan engages in writing more about the outer world. He believes that the political realm could be best approached through the interweaving of the public and private worlds. "[B]y measuring individual human worth," as McEwan contends in *A Move Abroad: 'Or Shall We Die?' and 'The Ploughman's Lunch'*, "the novelist reveals the full enormity of the State's crime when it sets out to crush that individuality."[5] He intends to examine how social and political issues determine our personal lives; how "the psychology and morality of nations is mirrored in the psychology and morality of individuals," and how "the innermost self can be penetrated and disfigured by desires cultivated in the public sphere," to quote Kiernan Ryan.[6] These are very much the spaces that McEwan's later novels inhibit; the psychological private space as well as the public one.

The Child in Time (1987),[7] Richard Bradford writes in *The Novel Now*, marks McEwan's first novelistic attempt "to open out his generally private chronicles of catastrophe to a more public sphere, to incorporate political and ideological registers that his characters and his readers shared."[8] In this novel, the traumatic kidnapping of the child of the title, which influences the parents painfully, feels, to quote Bradford

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[3] Jason Cowley, "Amsterdam: Ian McEwan," *The Times* 19 September 1998, 3 March 2009 <http://www.jasoncowley.net/reviews/reviews_T.html>.

[4] Ian McEwan, *The Cement Garden* (London: Picador, 1980); McEwan, *The Comfort of Strangers* (London: Picador, 1982).

[5] McEwan, *A Move Abroad: 'Or Shall We Die?' and 'The Ploughman's Lunch'* (London: Picador, 1989) xi-xii.

[6] Kiernan Ryan, *Ian McEwan* (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1994) 55.

[7] McEwan, *The Child in Time* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1987).

[8] Richard Bradford, *The Novel Now: Contemporary British and Irish Fiction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006) 38.

again, "symptomatic of the prevailing political climate" and is meant to criticize Britain under Thatcher's conservative extremism.[9] In *The Innocent* (1990),[10] the murder and dismemberment of a German ex-army sergeant by his German ex-wife and her English lover, which leads to the break-down of the lovers' relationship, reflects, as Rosa Gonzalez Casademont puts it, "the dismemberment of a city: the bomb-devastated Berlin of the post-war."[11] In *Black Dogs* (1992),[12] the female protagonist's momentous encounter with a pair of wild black dogs while with her husband on honeymoon overturns the settled lives of the couple and reflects how the fall of the Berlin Wall, which is considered the end of the legacy of Nazi Germany, gives rise to "a vicious new generation of racists [which] emerges to take up the torch of fascism," to quote Casademont again.[13] Though *Enduring Love* (1997) presents characters that are almost entirely removed from the historical and social settings, there is the hot air balloon accident as a public event that opens the novel and intrudes into the comfortable lives of characters for the rest of the novel.[14] Published in the same year as the September 11 attacks, and, obviously, written prior to that, *Atonement* (2001) explores the devastating consequences of a childish miscomprehension on the Tallises, offering a critical comment on the adoption of an appeasement policy by Britain at Munich in 1938.[15]

A similar approach allowed McEwan's 2005-novel, *Saturday*, to attend to the complexity of the post-9/11 theme. Though not addressed directly, September 11 looms large in the novel and forms the backdrop against which it is set. The novel also reflects the public in the private sphere of the Perownes, and in so doing, invalidates one of the

[9] *Ibid.*, 37. See Jack Slay Jr., "Vandalizing Time: Ian McEwan's *The Child in Time*," *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* 35.4 (June 1994): 205-218.
[10] McEwan, *The Innocent* (London: Picador, 1990).
[11] Quoted in Ryan, 58.
[12] McEwan, *Black Dogs* (London: Vintage, 1992).
[13] Quoted in Ryan, 61.
[14] McEwan, *Enduring Love* (London: Random House, 1998). See David Malcolm, *Understanding Ian McEwan* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2002) 8.
[15] McEwan, *Atonement* (London: Vintage, 2001).

basic tenets of liberalism, that of configuring the public and private as separate and asymmetrical.[16] Moving beyond the limitations of the decent private sphere, McEwan charts an attack on the Perownes that goes in parallel with September 11. Through this intrusion on the private space, the novel foregrounds the ways in which the embrace of violence is untenable by having violent responses failing their administerer as a means of taming terror. In opposition to the official discourses, it is suggesting that the conflict with the 'Other' is controllable when ethical choices are the option. Along these lines, one could even say, *Saturday* aspires to move beyond merely mirroring the public sphere towards providing an alternative sphere where rationalist interests take a back seat to ethical imperatives in the post-9/11 years. In addition, *Saturday* eerily predicts and promises another terrorist attack, the London bombings of July 2005, in response to Britain's participation in the US-led war against terrorism.

McEwan's intimations concerning the ethic of empathy as a possible way of reconciling with the terrorist 'Other' and coming to terms with the post-9/11 times have been evoked in two of his *Guardian* articles published in response to the attacks. In what follows, I will try to characterize the main thrust of this chapter in the light of these articles reflecting on McEwan's ideas on love, imagination and sympathy, which will provide the base for coming to grips with the strengths of *Saturday* as a proper tone for post-9/11 fiction.

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[16] That is to say, the novel's aspirations for emancipation in the post-9/11 world are located in the private sphere. However, this engagement with the private sphere to probe the dynamics of an ethical approach to a post-9/11 setting locates this sphere as public in addition to its being private.

Only Love and then Oblivion

The power of imagination, of love, of poetry to touch lives, casting "a spell" on violent people transfixing them, appears to be McEwan's approach in the days that followed the attacks.[17] This is manifested in his use of Matthew Arnold's poem which seems to have a salvific effect on the terrorist Baxter, dispersing him into the plurality of the Perownes, triggering some labile, positive response in his deranged brain, and as a result, liberating them from the suffering of a purgatorial Saturday to the hope of a resurrectional Sunday. Simultaneously, the poem extends the family's consciousness into community, fracturing the barriers that forge their individualistic subjectivities. One has to say that McEwan's invocation of Arnold's "Dover Beach" is not, perhaps, surprising, not least because of the nineteenth-century empire-building and colonialism atrocities' resonance with the twenty-first-century colonial enterprise of the 'war on terror.' The poem seems to shed light on the situation of a contemporary world about to involve in a destructive, open-ended war based on mere assumptions and undeclared interests. In its appeal to the redemptive powers of sympathetic imagination in times of pervasive crises, the poem proves to be instrumental in raising important issues about justice, interrogating prevalent political attitudes and influencing ethical consciousness by imagining more viable ways of living with one another in the future, all of which are of continuing interest and profound relevance to our contemporary world. From this vantage point, what McEwan attempts to prove is that the invocation of the ethic of empathy, through poetry, love, and the imaginative way of thinking, has the potential to counteract the tendency to violence by unifying disparate groups bringing them into 'Culture': It is the recourse to which one turns in crises when sympathy, consolation,

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[17] McEwan, *Saturday* (London: Vintage, 2006) 278. Subsequent page references are cited parenthetically in the text.

humanity and social order are most needed.[18] He is indebted, in this respect, to Arnold

whose main concern had always been to claim a central space for poetry that would

even displace religion, philosophy, and science as a source of knowledge about life:

> The future of poetry is immense, because in poetry, where it is worthy of its
> highest destinies, our race, as time goes on, will find an ever surer and surer
> stay. There is not a creed which is not shaken, not an accredited dogma which is
> not shown to be questionable, not a received tradition which does not threaten to
> dissolve … More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry
> to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without poetry our science
> will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes for religion and
> philosophy will be replaced by poetry.[19]

This is how Arnold expresses his plea for poetry in "The Study of Poetry" (1880).

Saturday manages to push this idea forward, bringing the notion of contemporary

empathy and its relation to literature – literature and its power to evoke empathy – to the

fore. While some take this to be a clumsy attempt to prove the preeminence of the

imaginative way of thinking, that "crazy knife-wielding people can be tamed by the

beauties of Western literature," it could be better valued as an embodiment of an

aesthetic vision that posits how things should work in our violent, post-9/11 world.[20]

In his first article published in *The Guardian* after the event, McEwan argues

that, since September 11, the West's security is under threat and that technology is no

defense in the face of those who developed anti-Western sentiment. "The world would

never be the same. We knew only that it would be worse," he contends.[21] He feels that

the reality of the attacks rendered not just politics but also literary endeavours of pre-

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[18] In *Culture and Anarchy*, Mathew Arnold arrays culture as a counterforce in the face of anarchy resulting from "doing as one likes," "strong individualism" and "unrestrained swing of the individual's personality"; and in his essay "Democracy," he demonstrates that a "character without culture ... is something raw, blind, and dangerous"; Quoted in Gage McWeeny, "Crowd Management: Matthew Arnold and the Science of Society," *Victorian Poetry* 41.1 (Spring 2003): 93-111, 106.

[19] Quoted in Joseph Bristow, ed. *The Victorian Poet: Poetics and Persona* (Kent: Croom Helm, 1987) 199.

[20] Andrew Crumey, "Perils of Seizing the Day," *Scotsman* 6 February 2005, 12 February 2010 <http://living.scotsman.com/books/Perils-of-seizing-the-day.2600920.jp>.

[21] McEwan, "Beyond Belief," *The Guardian* 12 September 2001, 11 February 2010 <http://books.guardian.co.uk/departments/politicsphilosophyandsociety/story/0,,555275,00.html>.

imagination futile and that "fact had overwhelmed fiction."[22] Three days later, in his

second and more focused article, "Only love and then oblivion," McEwan argues that

nothing could match up the victims' own version of counter-narrative to the terrorist

attacks as voiced in their last phone calls: "I love you."[23] McEwan expands on this idea

further and comes to the realization that a proper approach to the predicament faced in

the aftermath of September 11 is to expand our sympathies, which can be only

guaranteed by means of cultivating empathy through the workings of imagination. The

fact that most people post-9/11 engaged themselves in a fantasy or daydream, projecting

themselves back into the event embodies, for McEwan, the renovating value of

empathy; "to think oneself into the minds of others" – "Imagining what it is like to be

someone other than yourself is at the core of our humanity. It is the essence of

compassion, and it is the beginning of morality" since "[i]t is hard to be cruel once you

permit yourself to enter the mind of your victim."[24] In this sense, the hijackers' crime is

the "failure of the imagination."[25]

Such an approach to sympathy and imagination as highly dependent on each

other has its roots in eighteenth-century models of sympathy. Isobel Armstrong has

endorsed this view giving a good sense of how important sympathy was in the Victorian

period as a term linking moral understanding with the act of imagination. In *Victorian

Scrutinies*, she argues that "[s]ympathy was the faculty of sharing and understanding the

situation of another person by being able to change places with him in imagination."[26]

This liberal humanist discourse is anchored, ultimately, in the thinking of Adam Smith

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[22]Alan Cowell, "Ian McEwan Hints at a Coming Novel," *The New York Times* 6 December 2004, 2 January 2010 <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/12/06/books/06mcew.html?_r=1&oref=slogin>.
[23] McEwan, "Only love and then oblivion. Love was all they had to set against their murderers," *The Guardian* 15 September 2001, 8 January 2010
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/wtccrash/story/0,,552408,00.html>.
[24] *Ibid*.
[25] *Ibid.*
[26] Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Scrutinies* (London: Athlone Press, 1972) 9-10.

for whom sympathy is induced by imagining oneself in the other's place, and by the resulting survey of the sentiments and motives which directed his actions. Therefore, we can never form any moral judgment concerning the propriety of the other's actions except by imagination. As Smith makes plain:

> As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation. Though our brother is upon the rack, as long as we ourselves are at our ease, our senses will never inform us of what he suffers. They never did, and never can, carry us beyond our own person, and it is by the imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations … By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him, and thence form some idea of his sensations, and even feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them.[27]

Smith's views on the virtue of extending sympathies had been reworked in George Eliot's version to value the artist for exerting the power of sympathy: "The greatest benefit we owe to the artist, whether painter, poet, or novelist, is the extension of our sympathies."[28] By the same token, yet without explicitly making such connection, McEwan seems to be suggesting that the work of literature can, in some way, help developing empathetic skills, and thereby, enjoys a privileged place as a counter-narrative to be set in the face of terror.

Though neither mentioned fiction or fiction's obligations post-9/11, both articles can be seen to draw the basic pencil lines for *Saturday*. As a critique of the military response to September 11, *Saturday* affords the chance to scrutinize carefully the moral choices to be made in the aftermath of any violent intrusion. More specifically, it is intended to be a novel in praise of the effectiveness of the imaginative way of thinking – as opposed to the scientific one – in the face of cruel interventions in the age of

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[27] Quoted in Glenn Hendler, *Public Sentiments: Structures of Feeling in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001) 4.
[28] Quoted in Amanda Anderson, *The Powers of Distance: Cosmopolitanism and the Cultivation of Detachment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001) 11.

terrorism. Considering Arnold's view on the functional aspect of poetry, and of imaginative thinking in general, it seems that the novel is "at bottom a criticism of life" in the post-9/11 era.[29] In this light, it offers an answer to the question, deliberately evoked not only in the figure of the protagonist Henry Perowne, but also in the opening quotation from Saul Bellow's *Herzog* (1964), which was written in a spirit of criticism of the United States' support of the war in Vietnam, as to how to live against the background of your government's involvement in a colonial enterprise, referring to Britian's participation in the 'war on terror.' Most importantly, the novel highlights the utopian potential of tragedies like September 11, presenting them as a chance for renewed love and sympathy, just as in the novel the invasion of the privacy of the Perownes strengthens the family bond and stimulates their recognition of the wider community they belong to.

Examining McEwan's published comments on the event and the role of empathy in its aftermath, the central aim in what follows is to situate his post-9/11 novel in the context of critical debates that question the United States' moral certainty in its execution of the 'war on terror.' This is to suggest that *Saturday* offers, in one way or another, that critical insight in its attempt to envision a non-violent post-9/11 landscape.

From Violent Solutions to Ethical Choices

Given the fact that the novel develops an ethic of empathy, it registers living in the post-9/11 world at the domestic level, which might be considered reductive at best in view of the global challenges that the novel addresses. Yet, the novel represents the private sphere less as a space within which to escape the post-9/11 times, than a space to engage with them. Within this context, *Saturday* exemplifies how in Britain, one of the

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[29] Quoted in Carl Dawson, *Matthew Arnold: The Poetry* (London: Routledge, 1995) 306.

Western nations involved directly in the 'war on terror,' September 11 affected the private life of people in many ways that increase their anxiety and sensitivity towards any violent attack. Their sense of alertness hinders their capacity for analyzing the motives behind any possible intrusion. As the novel unfolds, driven by their faith in state-endorsed media, British citizens occupy a detached position that ensures their security and absolves them from the responsibility of taking any explicit decision or participating in the formation of public opinion. The tendency is to interpret any intrusion in a way that is familiar to them in order to find a solution that fits within the state's doctrine of legitimizing violence. Against this backdrop, the novel raises the question as to what is the right course of action to be taken in the aftermath of any violent attack. In response, McEwan seems to offer a potential formula for solution where, coming face to face with terror, the British protagonist would realize his responsibility for provocation as well as the limits of his autonomy. Similarly, many theorists problematize the violent retaliation that the United States adopted and other Western nations approved, and postulate ethical alternatives. For example, in *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* Jenny Edkins argues that, in the traumatic aftermath of the attacks, we became aware of "the contingency of everyday life and the fragility of the taken-for-granted safety ... the vulnerability and uncertainty of human existence and the horror that lies not so far beneath the surface of social life."[30] The non-ethical, military response exposed how the West, which pretends to be the guardian of human rights and provider of security, is itself "productive of and produced by force and violence."[31] For Edkins, a system like this offers stability and protection, but, to do so, inflicts violence, degradation and suffering upon individuals from its camp and the terrorist camp alike. It declares wars on terrorism and compels its citizens to die for the cause. In view of that,

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[30] Jenny Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 227.
[31] *Ibid*., 6.

Edkins correlates the 'war on terror' and September 11 because, for her, they both produced what Giorgio Agamben calls 'bare life'– "life that could be taken with impunity."[32] Consequently, imagining an alternative system that recognizes the devastating effects of implementing violence in the name of security, and works by "encircling the trauma rather than attempting to gentrify it" becomes an imperative in the days that followed the attacks.[33]

In his afterward to *Revolution at the Gates*, Žižek considers September 11 as an issue that is not about good versus evil, or Islam versus Christianity, or "clash of civilizations." Rather, he holds that "[e]very feature attributed to [the 9/11 terrorists] is already present in the very heart of the USA."[34] He further explains that "to succumb to the urge to act and retaliate" in the aftermath of September 11 "[just] to *avoid* confronting the true dimensions of what occurred" is an irrational act whose long-term results are "further acts of mass terror … acts that are less spectacular, but much more horrifying."[35] As a result, the United States becomes unwittingly "involved in what [it is] fighting against."[36] This leads Žižek to develop a conclusion that falls in line with Edkin's 'bare life.' That is to say, the two parties, the September 11 hijackers and the US-led war on terrorism campaign, are not dissimilar; rather, "they belong to the same field" in the sense that they are both terrorizing the innocent.[37] He takes this notion even a step further to suggest that the only proper attitude to be espoused in the face of the violence done on September 11 is the "unconditional solidarity" between victims of the

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[32] *Ibid*., 227. See Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, eds. Werner Hamacher and David E. Wellbery, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).
[33] *Ibid*., 15.
[34] Žižek, "Afterward: Lenin's Choice," in *Revolution at the Gates: A Selection of Writings from February to October 1917* by Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, ed. and with an Introduction and Afterword by Slavoj Žižek (London: Verso, 2002) 165-336, 237.
[35] *Ibid*., 234. Emphasis in original.
[36] *Ibid.*, 247.
[37] *Ibid.*, 244.

terrorist attacks and those of the 'war on terror.'[38] That is, to consider that the lives of

victims on both sides as valuable alike and, as a result, stop terrorizing others in return

for the terror that has been already endured. Blurring the boundaries between the 'Self'

and 'Other,' and operating under the assumption that there exists no difference between

the life of the attacker and that of the attacked can only be warranted, for Žižek, by

relying on what he calls "self-relating," the "inclusion of oneself in the picture" of the

'Other' which is "the only true 'infinite justice.'"[39] Only then, according to Žižek, can

we avoid embracing narratives that denounce 'Others' violent acts and justify ours as a

step towards a more peaceful world.

With her critical assessment of the attacks and the 'war on terror' in *Precarious

Life*, Butler maintains that Western countries used to have the prerogative "to be the one

who transgresses the sovereign boundaries of other states, but never to be in the position

of having one's own boundaries transgressed."[40] In the traumatic aftermath of

September 11, she argues in *Undoing Gender*, they resort to violence as one of the

values they are used to preserving.[41] "[T]he dislocation from First World privilege,

however temporary," she assumes, "offers a chance to start to imagine a world in which

that violence might be minimized."[42] Moving Žižek's political approach to the personal,

intimate level, the thrust of her assumption is that, in the aftermath of any trauma, the

realization of our human vulnerability uncovers that our live is dependent on the others'

and this "inevitable interdependency becomes acknowledged as the basis for global

political community."[43] Thus, vulnerability, as the constitutive ground of our humanity,

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[38] *Ibid.*, 245.
[39] *Ibid.*, 247.
[40] Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004) 39.
[41] Butler, *Undoing Gender* (London: Routledge, 2004) 321.
[42] Butler, *Precarious Life*, xii.
[43] *Ibid.*, xii xiii. Actually, both approaches, Žižek's and Butler's, though different in scope, reinforce this study since it takes a general approach to the relation between the 'Self' and 'Other.' Butler is more in the deconstructive tradition in which one cannot really hope to integrate the 'Otherness' of the 'Other.' Though she views the 'Self' and 'Other' in a mutual relation, as a gender theorist, she seems to insist on

can have moral implications in the sense that it brings us face to face with the sociality of our life.[44] It is such intrinsic interdependency that becomes the basis of Butler's claims for non-violent rhetoric as "it becomes incumbent upon us to consider very carefully when and where we engage violence, for violence is, always, an exploitation of that primary tie."[45] However, feelings of vulnerability and lack of security endured in the United States in the wake of September 11 were fiercely disavowed in an attempt to maintain a false sense of superiority and privilege giving way to the desire for revenge.

In this regard, Butler proposes that we need to admit and accept our own vulnerability and dependency or public accessibility rather than trying to deny them. In the struggle for a less oppressive social world, the 'Self,' as Butler puts it, "is invariably in community, impressed upon by others, impressing them as well, and in ways that are not always clearly delineable, in forms that are not fully predictable."[46] Imagination, she asserts, is a critical element here. It makes us able to visualize ourselves beyond the familiar and to remain open to what is unfamiliar. Imagination, as she points out, is "what reality forecloses" – "it is what allows us to imagine ourselves and others otherwise; it establishes the possible in excess of the real; it points elsewhere, and when it is embodied, it brings the elsewhere home."[47] Then, Butler advances that it is through imagination that we might be able to re-conceive and re-articulate the space of our subjectivity,

> precisely to underscore the value of being beside oneself, of being a porous boundary, given over to others, finding oneself in a trajectory of desire in which one is taken out of oneself, and resituated irreversibly in a field of others in which one is not the presumptive center … [This] particular sociality …

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keeping the boundaries secure. However, with his Hegelianism, Žižek hopes to fully integrate the 'Other's difference. From his vantage point, negating any aspect of the 'Other' means negating the 'Self' and passing over into non-being, as asymmetry in the Self-Other-relationship which is predicated on a non-recognition of the 'Other' as constituting oneself.

[44] Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 22.
[45] *Ibid.*
[46] *Ibid.*, 21-22.
[47] *Ibid.*, 29.

establishes a field of ethical enmeshment with others and a sense of *disorientation for the first-person*, that is, the perspective of the ego.[48]

So, if we are for a less post-9/11 violent world, she seems to suggest, we have to acknowledge our "ethical enmeshment" with others; a way of living within a community that establishes the individual as being dependent on and connected to others. In this sense, in the aftermath of any trauma, we have to move from the state of being "at one with oneself"; a state that establishes the individual as autonomous, free of social conditions, without dependency on others, and without the capability of imagination, to that state of being "beside oneself" in order to avoid more violence and ensure security.

Referring to identity privilege and the privileged collective responsibility for the globally distributed vulnerability, Devon W. Carbado's theory seems workable within the context of September 11 and the ensuing 'war on terror' though it looks closely at the way identity privilege operates within the same culture as *Saturday* does in terms of social class. In his essay "Straight Out of the Closet," Carbado proposes that "[t]aking identity privileges for granted helps to legitimize problematic assumptions about identity and entitlement. These assumptions make it difficult for us to challenge the starting points of many of our most controversial conversations about equality."[49] To put it another way, accepting unquestionably the privileges we have entrenches inequality, injustice, and violence. He argues, for example, that unexamined racial, gender, and heterosexual privileges play a role in perpetuating systems that disadvantage people who are marginalized on the basis of their unprivileged identities, making them vulnerable to oppression, violence or discrimination. At the same time, these same systems have their normalizing corollary in the ethical conduct of those

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[48] *Ibid.*, 25. Emphasis added.
[49] Devon W. Carbado, "Privilege," in *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology*, eds. E. Patrick Johnson and Mae G. Henderson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005) 190-212, 190.

whose identities create a form of privilege. In this sense, as Carbado explains, privilege operates in the form of "negative identity signification" where the privileged accept their difference and take it to be the norm, and on this basis, take their security for granted.[50] Accordingly, expanding Carbado's idea beyond its borders to accommodate the larger scope of this study, a nation, like Britain or the United States, that has the privilege of being associated to the First World may not think of itself other than the norm. Here, we can see how the First-World privilege has a neutralizing effect upon nations attached to it, leading them to think of themselves as victimless vis-à-vis violence, while being at the same time its perpetrators. In other words, First World nations that occupy positions of privilege but are unmindful of the unprivileged status of other nations are complicit in profiting from and producing violent systems.

In order to disrupt these frames of "negative identity signification," according to Carbado, we need to adopt "a privileged-centered conception of discrimination."[51] This understanding is based upon the assumption that "[o]ur identities are reflective and constitutive of certain systems of oppression … This creates an obligation on the part of those of us with privileged identities to expose and to challenge them."[52] On a global scale, we can say that September 11 produces such revelation and challenge on behalf of the First World. In the light of this argument, it is perhaps possible to characterize "the presumption of First World impermeability," in Butler's argument, as a type of "negative identity signification" that was disrupted by September 11 in the sense that, "the loss of First World presumption is the loss of a certain horizon of experience, a certain sense of the world itself as a national entitlement."[53] Simultaneously, Carbado, in an argument that has parallels with Butler's, examines alternative ways to respond to

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[50] *Ibid.*, 192.
[51] *Ibid.*, 191.
[52] *Ibid.*
[53] Butler, *Precariouse Life*, 39.

the traumatic exposure and dismantling of "negative identity signification," and the consequent sense of insecurity, highlighting their potential transformative effect. In the aftermath of such disrupt and revelation, he argues, the privileged should not think of employing their privileges as a response. Rather, they "should recognize and grapple with the fact that they do not have to," a necessary first step to come to terms with their own privileges and an ethical imperative that has emerged in the wake of this disruption.[54] Accordingly, in the aftermath of September 11, the United States should resist the desire to reassemble its disrupted frames of "negative identity signification," set aside the assumption that its association with the First World endows it with an "entitlement" to "impermeability," and to "recognize and grapple with" the fact that "[its] privileges are located on the same map as [other nations'] suffering, and may – in ways we might prefer not to imagine – be linked to their suffering, as the wealth of some may imply the destitution of others," to quote Susan Sontag in *Regarding the Pain of Others*.[55] In effect, Carbado's argument can be considered as a call for the executors of the 'war on terror,' as the privileged party, to recognize their collective responsibility for the terrorist attacks, to re-examine their violent reactions that might result in having other strikes of terrorism, and to take part in minimizing the misery of the unprivileged at least by non-entrenching "social practices, institutional arrangements, and laws that disadvantage other(ed) people."[56] And the cumulative effect of these non-violent choices is the avoidance, if not prevention, of terrorism that the 'war on terror' has claimed to subdue.

The same issue of responsibility is discussed from a different vantage point in E. Ann Kaplan's *Trauma Culture*. Acutely mindful of the lesson of Vietnam, Kaplan, in

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[54] Carbado, 193.
[55] Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (London: Picador, 2003) 102-103.
[56] Carbado, 191.

the aftermath of the attacks, states that the United States' post-Vietnam foreign policy

has hardly changed: "At first," she argues,

> I thought we had learned from Vietnam, but as time went on that did not seem to
> be the case. By the end of March 2002, it liked less and less possible that our
> leaders would rise to the occasion rather than lapsing into isolationist, 'go it
> alone,' or revenge tactics. Subsequent events – the invasion of Iraq in March
> 2003 – proved my fears only too warranted.[57]

According to her, "rising to the occasion" of September 11 implicates connection with

the issue of responsibility towards the 'Other' rather than "lapsing into isolationism"; it

is related to the process of "finding ways to enable us to be responsible. To do this, one

has to learn to take the Other's subjectivity as a starting point, not something to be

ignored or denied. It is only in this way that we can gain a public or national ethics."[58]

In an argument that finds itself in tentative step with Butler's claims of "ethical

enmeshment" and the correlated role of imagination, Kaplan highlights the urgency of

conflating the boundaries between the 'Self' and 'Other,' and emphasizes that one such

way "to enable us to be responsible" and bridge the residues of this gap is through

'translating' September 11 by means of the work of art, and that of literature and

imagination by the invited extension, into something other than trauma in order to help

people to overcome it and resume their lives. "Translating trauma" by means of art, in

her perspective, helps "finding ways to make meaning out of it, and to communicate,

catastrophes that happen to others as well as to oneself."[59] Such catastrophic events,

Kaplan asserts, "can never be 'healed' in the sense of a return to how things were before

a catastrophe took place, or before one witnessed a catastrophe … if the wound of

trauma remains open, its pain may be worked through in the process of its being

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[57] E. Ann Kaplan, *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature* (New
Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005) 18.
[58] *Ibid.*, 123.
[59] *Ibid.*, 19.

'translated' via art."[60] Rather than "colluding with dominant political forces,"[61] as it is the case with media narratives, art helps culture to move to "'working through,' the stage of accepting what has happened, mourning the many kinds of loss," and provides "a fitting witness, a fitting way to memorialize the catastrophe."[62]

In its alternative appropriation of the post-9/11 theme, *Saturday* places emphasis on the ethical and presents Edkins' call to "encircle" the revelatory potential of trauma, Žižek's assertion on the significance of "self-relating," Butler's notion of "ethical enmeshment," Carbado's "privileged-centered conception of discrimination," and Kaplan's "translation" of trauma via art as effective strategies against terrorism. To this end, McEwan evokes the sense of living under the shadow of the September 11 attacks by setting his novel in their wake, when the world was on the verge of a new order that included critical discussions about the 'war on terror.' He also takes a figurative approach to the event, as his novel does not involve stories of those who happened to be near the World Trade Center, nor does it depict images of the towers collapsing into the rubble. Rather, it takes place an ocean away from New York, within the context of a single day, February 15, 2003, when a huge demonstration took place in London protesting against the US-UK-led military response to September 11, more specifically, the imminent invasion of Iraq.

In what follows, I will examine how McEwan opens an interface between the public and the private. He evokes the sense of invasion felt on September 11 by deploying a series of comparable events which produce comparable feelings in characters, and therefore, raise similar ethical questions as to the proper approach to move beyond violence and terror.

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[60] *Ibid*.
[61] *Ibid*., 66.
[62] *Ibid*., 136.

The Post-9/11 Community of Anxiety

Explaining his choice of confining *Saturday* to the subjective space of the Perownes, McEwan, in his interview with Zadie Smith, says that "one can only do it on a private scale. If you say the airliner hit the side of the building, a thousand people died, nothing happens to your scalp. So I, in a sense, tried to find the private scale of that feeling."[63] In view of that, although addressed only indirectly relaying on what the reader already knows, the attacks loom large, and images and events that metaphorically allude to them pervade the novel. And while the novel is not specific about the cause of the protagonist's anxiety, its strategies place us as witnesses to his anxious mood, with the suggestion that these alluding images and events are responsible as they permeate the normalcy of his day making him face the terror of September 11 through their lens. As early as the opening pages of the novel, an important 9/11 allegory is presented. The Post Office Tower, an equivalent to the Twin Towers, is dominating the square and looming over the Perownes' home. Henry remarks that with "[a]ll that glass, and the unsupported height," the Post Office Tower puts fear in the heart (197). It would quite possibly crush his home, if it fell their way after a terrorist attack like that of September 11 (196). Along with this widespread anxiety, McEwan directly presents the horror of the terrorist attacks through another 9/11-allegory behind this tower, a stricken plane descending from the London sky. This scene inscribes itself into the mind of Henry so profoundly that it might be said to be the first event that exposes him to a threat similar to that of a terrorist attack. In the only occasion in the novel where Henry makes a direct reference to the attacks, he muses:

> It's already almost eighteen months since half the planet watched, and watched again the unseen captives driven through the sky to slaughter, at which time there gathered round the innocent silhouette of any jet plane a novel association.

[63] Zadie Smith, "Zadie Smith talks with Ian McEwan," *The Believer* August 2005, 23 May 2013 <http://www.believermag.com/issues/200508/?read=interview_mcewan>.

Everyone agrees, airliners look different in the sky these days, predatory or doomed. (16)

Not only does the burning plane event seem to echo the September 11 nightmare as such, but also in the reactions it generates in Henry's mind. Eighteen months ago, he observed a trauma from a safe distance, and now he is doing the same thing: "That is the other familiar element – the horror of what he can't see ... Watching death on a large scale, but seeing no one die. No blood, no screams, no human figures at all, and into all this emptiness, the obliging imagination set free" (Ibid.). He also spends the rest of the day listening to the news in order to make sense of the event.

The intrusion of Baxter, a patient suffering from a neurodegenerative genetic syndrome, into the Perownes' domestic security, is the other event that can be read also as a direct allegory to September 11 since it works as a parallel to that of the radical extremists' into the broader security of the United States. On one level, Baxter represents the world's underprivileged whose misery is generated by the United States' foreign policy, "its gunboat diplomacy, its nuclear arsenal, its vulgarly stated policy of 'full spectrum dominance,' its chilling disregard for non-American lives, its barbarous military interventions, its support for despotic and dictatorial regimes," as Arundhati Roy points out in *Power Politics*.[64] He is the First World's "dark doppelganger. The savage twin of all that purports to be beautiful and civilized," to quote Roy again.[65] On another level, Henry represents, as Zadie Smith puts it, "what the First World is"; he is rich, and he employs rationality, violence and full control to uphold the order and privilege of his life.[66] Hence, it seems that he does not accept the fact that he shares life with other unprivileged people or that he is involved in their disadvantage. At the scene of the collision between his Mercedes and Baxter's BMW, Henry tries to control the

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[64] Arundhati Roy, *Power Politics,* Second edition (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2001) 122.
[65] *Ibid.*
[66] Smith, "Zadie Smith talks with Ian McEwan."

situation and rescue himself by abusing his knowledge, authority, and privileges. He treats Baxter with the indifference of the First World to the Third World without taking into consideration that this might spawn more anger and violence, and will precipitate a terrifying eventual confrontation. In Roy's words, he does not attune to "[t]he tired wisdom of knowing that what goes around eventually comes around."[67] As a result, Baxter intrudes into Henry's own secure home. He uncovers the vulnerability of his fantasized security and poses a threat of annihilation similar to that made against New York in 2001. What McEwan seems to assert here is that Baxter's intrusion is not a random act of invasive violence; rather, it is a desire for revenge for earlier humiliation. In Reid's terms, it is his attempt to show resistance as an assertion of his 'nomadic life.'

These images and events, commensurable to September 11 at a micro level as they are, haunt McEwan's characters in ways that affect their psychological and emotional states, and their personal relationships. Above all, these disturbing residues of September 11, inscribed in the characters' minds, suggest that this inter/national trauma is at the same time deeply personal, and thus, it is impossible to separate it from their private sphere or separate their domestic trauma from the public one, in this case the political agenda of Britain in the aftermath of the attacks. As McEwan maintains, "this is a novel that is set not about that event, but its shadow, and it casts a very long shadow, not only over international affairs, but in the very small print of our lives."[68] In this sense, *Saturday* captures the anxiety of living under the shadow of the attacks and the 'war on terror.' To this end, McEwan sets these events against the illusory comforts of Henry's life, depending on a sense of domestic accord with characters set in their complacent ways. About braiding public anxiety with domestic contentment in this novel McEwan says:

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[67] Roy, 107.

[68] McEwan, "Conversation: McEwan, by Jeffrey Brown," *The Online NewsHour* 13 April 2005, 30 January 2010 <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/entertainment/jan-june05/mcewan_4-13.html>.

> I decided to give [Henry] pleasures and those pleasures were going to be superficial ones like wine and sport, and profound ones like love and sex. To make him free, as it were, to worry about the world. He doesn't have to worry about his wife and children. Of course, he has a dying mother, but everyone has a dying mother unless they predecease their parents. It was a desire to braid together private happiness and public anxiety.[69]

The novel opens with Henry waking up at dawn in a state of "euphoria" (5). Like any other Saturday, he intends to play squash with a colleague and visit his elderly mother. What is special about this Saturday is that there will be a family reunion that night. To his misfortune, it is not very long that he is filled with uneasiness as he sees a plane on fire heading into Heathrow which he mistakes for a terrorist attack early that day. His feeling of unease infiltrates every aspect of his day. It escalates as he makes his way through London streets filled with more than two million people marching in opposition to the war on Iraq, culminates with a car accident that brings him face to face with Baxter, and crystallizes with Baxter invading his private realm that night.

So, just beneath the surface of the pleasures of Henry's daily life lurks a threat to their continuance. Definitely, the scene of the burning plane makes Henry afraid that his city and happy family are under threat. This event also engenders an internal conflict within Henry himself, leaving him emotionally isolated from his family. As the novel unfolds, he does not report the event until it is too late. As a result, he has been alone "in a state of wild unreason and in a folly of overinterpretation" (39). Sleepless in the early hours, he acts on his own fears thinking that "there must have been survival advantage in dreaming up bad outcomes and scheming to avoid them. This trick of dark imagining is one legacy of natural selection in a dangerous world" (Ibid.). Sometimes, this caused him even to drift from "the erotic to Saddam" (Ibid.). He is depressed by "how easily an existence, its ambitions, networks of family and friends, all its cherished

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[69] McEwan, "The Salon Interview: Ian McEwan, by Laura Miller," *Salon* 9 April 2005, 20 February 2010 <http://dir.salon.com/story/books/int/2005/04/09/mcewan/index.html?pn=2>.

stuff, solidly possessed, could so entirely vanish" (6). Heading to the squash club in

Huntley Street, the marchers are there to remind Henry of the state of the post-9/11

world that troubles him most. With the imminent war against Iraq, he suffers from a

gathering pessimism and raising fears that London, and his happy family life are under

an inevitable threat:

> There are people around the planet, well-connected and organised, who would like to kill him and his family and friends to make a point. The scale of death contemplated is no longer at issue; there'll be more deaths on a similar scale, probably in this city … The assertions and the questions don't spell themselves out. He experiences them more as a mental shrug followed by an interrogative pulse. (81)

Henry's turmoil and feeling of unease influence his behavior with Baxter in a negative

way at the car crash scene, and as a result, he is affected physically as well as

psychologically. He is feeling pain because of the beating he received from Baxter.

Most importantly, like the epiphany Butler claims to be resulting from the exposition to

violence, Baxter's threat forces Henry to come face to face with his mortality and the

vulnerability of his life, something which he never takes into account due to his

privileged status. Also he becomes more shocked and emotionally isolated as he, again,

does not share the story with anyone except his son, to whom he gives a condensed

account and who disapproves of his father's behavior with Baxter: "You humiliated

him. You should watch that" (152).

Henry's anger impacts the day's activities. The squash game with his American

colleague, Jay Strauss, is rendered humorless and attritional as he draws his energy to

play from "a darkening pool of fury" (106). When his resentment reaches its peak, he

thinks that "[t]here's only one thing in life he wants. Everything else has dropped away.

He has to beat Strauss" (107) – "[h]e'll emancipate himself by beating Strauss" (108).

The fact that he loses at squash signifies that he will not be able to protect his privacy.

He will not be able anymore to think of his world as immune from the pain of others

and the immediacy of danger of the public domain that can ravage his life without warning. Moreover, Henry's fears colour his relations with his children, Theo and Daisy. He discusses the cargo plane event with Theo twice, and the case of war against Iraq and terrorism once with Daisy. Feeling troubled because of the day's events, he prefers to stay at home with a Mozart trio, and a glass of icy white wine rather than going to Theo's musical rehearsal in the afternoon. Meeting his daughter after six months of separation, Henry feels tightness above his heart as their dispute about the war becomes fierce: "[H]e's interrupting her, arguing with her, rather than eliciting her views and affectionately catching up with her. Why be adversarial? Because he himself is stoked up, there's poison in his blood … and fear and anger, constricting his thoughts, making him long to have a row" (189-190). This is how Henry spends his day, with the post-9/11 menu of fear and anxiety permeating all his actions and emotions towards family members and strangers.

Political Debates in the Private Context

Reflecting a post-9/11 private sphere that it is no longer amenable to be envisioned as immune from the public one, McEwan presents another form of interface between both of them. Apart from the psychological and emotional repercussions of living in the shadow of the attacks, he brings the political to intrude on the characters' private discussions. In this sense, he seems to elude the liberal attempt to lay claim on a pre-political definition of the private sphere. As the novel suggests, although none of the characters participate in the anti-war march, the novel presents their privately-led political discussions as possible forms of engagement in the public sphere. Conflicts hitherto restricted to the public sphere regarding the 'war on terror' now intrude into the private one. As the novel emphasizes, the decision of the occupation of Iraq did not

seem to offer consolation; rather, it caused more anxiety in the British society which becomes besieged by the risk of terrorism. Describing this vicious circle of repression, Derrida in "Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Suicides" comments, "the 'war on terrorism' work to regenerate, in the short or long term, the causes of the evil they claim to eradicate" and "will never be 'smart' enough to prevent the victims … from responding, either in person or by proxy, with what it will then be easy for them to present as legitimate reprisals or as counterterrorism."[70] As an epitomization of the divided loyalties of both the nation and the novel's protagonist pertaining to the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq, McEwan freezes the time of the novel for the length of the single historically significant day of the anti-war demonstration. On the national level, we are told that "there's a fair degree of anxious support [for the war] in the country along with the dissent" (145). On the personal level, Henry expresses shifting attitudes towards the coming invasion. His experience with an Iraqi professor of ancient history whose torture scars testify to the brutality of Saddam Hussein's regime sharpens his ambivalent reaction towards the war on Iraq. As a result, he becomes less certain about either the wisdom or the futility of this seemingly inevitable war. Henry is unable to make any clear statement about the war and becomes even not sure what the military incursion into Iraq will bring about other than the deposition of Saddam. As a result, he prefers not to participate in the march, and instead, he withdraws into his private world, preparing for a family reunion in the evening.

Saturday reflects Henry's ambivalence clearly. On the one hand, the novel seems to suggest that although not completely formed, his opinion about the war is clearly leaned towards being for America's invasion of Iraq. Henry thinks that "the humanitarian reasons for war" is "the only case worth making" (69). What bothers him

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[70] Derrida, "Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Suicides, A Dialogue with Jacques Derrida" in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, 85-136, 100.

is that the anti-war marchers are paradoxically "gathering to express their preference for peace and torture" (126). Simply put, they are, according to him, Pro-Saddam. He is, therefore, struck by the celebratory nature of the crowds: "All this happiness on display is suspect … If they think … that continued torture and summary executions, ethnic cleansing and occasional genocide are preferable to an invasion, they should be somber in their view" (69-70). Later on, during his discussion with his daughter, Daisy, he further stresses this disparaging attitude. While the fact that, among those two million marchers, no one raised a banner against Saddam seems to be at odds with Henry's expectations, it is their double-standards that contribute significantly to his critical appraisal. Referring to paper cups scattered everywhere and huge gatherings outside McDonald's, he views those protestors as gullible consumers who enjoy the life of Western consumerism while at the same time taking sides with their enemy (191). Henry's coming across one of the banners reinforces such perception: "Not in My Name goes past a dozen times. Its cloying self-regard suggests a bright new world of protest, with the fussy consumers of shampoos and soft drinks demanding to feel good, or nice" (72). On the other hand, he feels that he might have been with those marchers, in spirit at least, if he had not met Professor Taleb. He worries that,

> the invasion or the occupation will be a mess. The marchers could be right. And he acknowledges the accidental nature of opinions; if he hadn't met and admired the professor, he might have thought differently, less ambivalently, about the coming war. Opinions are a roll of the dice … They have good reasons for their views, among which are concerns for their own safety. Al-Qaeda … will be provoked by an attack on Iraq into revenge on the soft cities of the West. Self-interest is a decent enough cause. (73)

Yet, at the same time, Henry's aloofness towards the anti-war movement is kept in place for he "can't feel, as the marchers themselves probably can, that they have an exclusive hold on moral discernment" (Ibid.). It seems that it is his indecisiveness concerning the British decision to join Bush's 'war on terror' which results in

precluding the possibility of adopting a moral viewpoint from which to take a clear position when it comes to discussing the possible military intervention in Iraq and its consequences.

More ambivalently, Henry is "a dove with Jay Strauss, and a hawk with his daughter" (193): While Jay's enthusiasm for the American intervention in Iraq tilts him towards the anti-war camp, Daisy's anti-war views prompt his pro-war mood. Considerably, in the face of Henry's ambiguous attitude regarding the war on Iraq, *Saturday* provides two alternative counter-discourses by his poet daughter and musician son. Daisy is definitely against the military response to the attacks and is frustrated by her father's ambivalence. In this instance, the sharp contrast between Henry as a rationalist and his daughter as a literary persona serves highlighting the problematic nature of scientific frame of thinking in the post-9/11 world. At this stage, it could be argued, Henry does not stand for science and certainties so much as for ambivalence. In a similar way, Daisy stands not only for poetry, but also for the conscientious objection to the war on Iraq. That is to say, poetry here acquires value not so much as an expressive practice, but because of its potential to secure some critical distance, and thereby, to open up a space for critical thinking on the characters' post-9/11 concerns. In an argument about the validity of the case for war, Henry tells her to let the war go ahead, and in five years if it works out, he is for it, and if it does not, he is not responsible. For her, such response displays a bias towards the anti-war movement, in particular, and activism, in general. Demanding her father to voice a definite opinion about the war, Daisy says:

> You're an educated person living in what we like to call a mature democracy, and our government's taking us to war. If you think that's a good idea, fine, say so, make the argument, but don't hedge your bets … making guesses about the future is what you do sometimes when you make a moral choice. It's called thinking through the consequences. (188)

Actually, neither of these options, for or against the war, seems viable to Henry. In his view, as McEwan states in an article published in *The New York Observer*, "ambivalence is no less effective than passionate conviction."[71] Keen to take up a position and eradicate his ambivalence, Henry prefers to cling to the idea that "the war's going to happen, with or without the UN, whatever any government says or any mass demonstrations. The hidden weapons, whether they exist or not, they're irrelevant. The invasion's going to happen, and militarily it is bound to succeed" (189). Here, the reference is not only to the inevitability of the invasion of Iraq, but also to its illegitimacy as a war based in the first place on false assumptions regarding mass-destruction weaponry. Nonetheless, Henry still glorifies the end of Saddam Hussein's regime. Because she is presented as someone who has a clear vision of the war on Iraq and its real motivations and conduct, Daisy is more able to see things on their own terms: "You hate Saddam, but he's a creation of the Americans. They backed him, and armed him" (187). She even highlights the war on Iraq as one of the neo-liberal capitalist enterprises, championing democracy while intending to exploit the country's oil reserves and strategic location: "When the Americans have invaded, they won't be interested in democracy, they won't spend any money on Iraq, they'll take the oil and build their military bases and run the place like a colony" (186). What Daisy fears most is that the United States is leading Britain to its impending attack as this war might provoke terrorists who are willing to die for their cause against the West. However, the effects of the United States' foreign policy as the breeding ground for terrorism never feature in Henry's consciousness, other than in the vaguest of ways.

The novel also explores a third opinion, represented by Henry's son, Theo. Henry understands that "Theo's world-view accommodates a hunch that somehow

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[71] McEwan, "Hawks Have My Head, Doves Have My Heart, Guess Which Wins?" *The New York Observer* 23 February 2003, 9 April 2010 <http://www.observer.com/node/47163>.

everything is connected … and that certain authorities, notably the US government, with privileged access to extra-terrestrial intelligence, is excluding the rest of the world from such wondrous knowledge" (30). He is convinced that Theo should not be considered about the rest of the world and should only enjoy the access to such knowledge and many other privileges of the First World. Concerning the burning plane event, Theo thinks that the "universe might be showing his father a connection" – between September 11 and the future waiting for his beautiful city if he continues with his support of the war on Iraq and if his country also does – a sign which Henry chooses not to read; a case which Theo cannot do anything about (Ibid.). Like Daisy, Theo is against invading Iraq, but he is not participating in the march either: "His attitude is as strong and pure as his bones and skin. So strong he doesn't feel much need to go tramping through the streets to make his point" (151). Rather, he will be on the march in spirit. In fact, the September 11 attacks represent "Theo's induction into international affairs" (31). Since then, he manages to keep the world of politics out of the scope of his life with his belief that "the bigger you think, the crappier it looks":

> When we go on about the big things, the political situation, global warming, world poverty, it all looks really terrible, with nothing getting better, nothing to look forward to. But when I think small, closer in – you know, a girl I've just met, or this song we're going to do with Chas, or snowboarding next month, then it looks great. So this is going to be my motto – think small. (34-35)

With such an attempt to lay claims on a strictly private definition of identity, an identity that no longer belongs to the public sphere, and thereby, is politically incompetent, Theo's approach to the post-9/11 world looks rather liberal.

Thus, *Saturday* has not taken up one particular political position; rather, it argues all sides with the same level of attention, cultivating an air of democratic debate. "I think anyone who gets into the long, slow haul of writing a novel will find that [promoting a political agenda] is pretty unsustainable … It falls apart in your hands. Not

only is it a bad idea, it's condescending," McEwan points out in his interview with Andre Mayer.[72] On the other hand, perhaps most importantly, by presenting different political perspectives, the tendency is to raise the reader's awareness of the post-9/11 moral crisis. In this sense, the novel seems indicative of the inability of the Perownes, and the British in general, to reach a decision concerning the 'war on terror' or affect change at the political, public level, hence Theo's motto which impels him to think of local hedonism rather than global fury. "[T]hinking small is not the novel's motto; it is its subject. McEwan is not urging us to think small. He is reminding us that we are increasingly tempted to do so … [In this sense,] [t]he book does not have a politics. It is about our inability to have one – to sketch a credible agenda for large-scale change," as Richard Rorty puts it in "A Queasy Agnosticism."[73] It is along these lines that *Saturday* could be said to offer 'good intentions,' in the form of privately-led political discussions concerned about the rest of the world, as a substitute for Western people's withdrawal from real engagement in the public affairs in general, and the anti-war march in particular. In Rorty's words:

> The problem for good-hearted Westerners is that they seem fated to live out their lives as idiots (in the old sense of 'idiot,' in which the term refers to a merely private person, one who has no part in public affairs) … They cannot *imagine* how things could be made better. But secular Western liberals would still like to think of themselves as brothers to all the rest.[74]

Accordingly, it could be argued, in his alternative approach to the post-9/11 theme, McEwan opens up the private sphere of his novel to the political, while simultaneously, even consciously, highlighting the limitation of his route. The implication here is that although characters discuss politics privately, they do not belong to the public; they are

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[72] McEwan, "No Ordinary Day: Ian McEwan and the 9/11 novel, an interview by Andre Mayer," *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation* 6 April 2005, 17 February 2010 <http://www.cbc.ca/arts/books/noordinaryday.html>.
[73] Richard Rorty, "A Queasy Agnosticism," *Dissent Magazine* 52.4 (Fall 2005): 91-94, 92.
[74] *Ibid*. Emphasis added.

still entangled in the private, and thus, their views are politically ambivalent and impotent.

In the following section, the ambivalence of the characters' political views will be set against the limitation of engaging in the public sphere productively in a mass-saturated culture, or more precisely, in a liberal culture where media is a means of controlling people's perceptions and manufacturing consent.

The Private Sphere as Mass-oriented

Through the private sphere of the Perownes, *Saturday* highlights the dominance liberal mainstream media exercises over the general population's perceptions of the post-9/11 world, in particular, the 'war on terror.' As the novel suggests, in the only instance where characters attempt to engage with the political, to form a decision regarding their country's participation in the invasion of Iraq, their views appear to be ambivalent, passive and detached. Whether they are for or against the war on Iraq, it could be argued, the primary concern for them is their country's security. The suggestion here is that media representations and narratives about Saddam's alleged chemical weapons imperiled their empathy creating a sense of an identity constantly torn between personal security and the interpersonal imperative of caring for the would-be Iraqi victims, with a bias towards the former. It is noteworthy that mass media does not communicate explicitly what Norman Solomon refers to, in "Spinning War and Blotting Out Memory," as "[t]he official directives" of "[d]o not let too much empathy move in unauthorized directions."[75] Instead, it could be argued, as a powerful invading force, news media fosters in McEwan's characters the illusion of being active, and in so doing,

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[75] Norman Solomon, "Spinning War and Blotting Out Memory," in *War, Media, and Propaganda: A Global Perspective*, eds. Yahya R. Kamalipour and Nancy Snow (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004) 47-58, 58.

distracts them from their public responsibility.[76] Primarily, it is this intrusion that makes

them recede into their privately-led political discussions rather than actively participate

in the anti-war march which is described by Habermas and Derrida in "February 15, Or,

What Binds Europeans Together," as "a sign of the birth of a European public sphere."[77]

The effect of media news on the passivization of Perownes' role in the public

sphere could be understood in the light of what Susan Lurie refers to in "Falling Persons

and National Embodiment" as "a trauma of spectatorship."[78] Lurie points out that the

"intertwined empathetic and threatening identifications" engendered by media coverage

of traumatic events creates a sense of "safe spectatorship,"[79] assuring "spectators both

of their difference from the viewed victims and of safety restored."[80] As a result,

spectators feel a sense of superiority – however false and misguiding – with the

privilege of having quick and thorough access to exceptional events as if they were

experiencing it at first-hand without worrying for their personal safety. Though it is

short-lived, such media-endorsed safety and immunity to the horrors of the public

sphere lead to moral numbness towards the suffering of others in favour of personal

safety. The passivization of the Perownes' public role could be also interpreted through

Kaplan's 'secondary trauma.' Kaplan remarks that since September 11, "the supreme

example of a catastrophe that was experienced globally via digital technologies

(Internet, cell phone) as well as by television and radio," people have been trained to

have access to the suffering of others at a distance under the control of media narratives

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[76] See Margot Lovejoy, *Digital Currents: Art in the Electronic Age* (London: Routledge, 2004) 273.
[77] Habermas and Derrida, "February 15, Or, What Binds Europeans Together: Plea for a Common Foreign Policy, Beginning in Core Europe," in *Old Europe, New Europe, Core Europe: Transatlantic Relations After The Iraq War*, eds. Daniel Levy, Max Pensky, and John Torpey (London: Verso, 2005) 3-33, 4.
[78] Susan Lurie, "Falling Persons and National Embodiment: The Reconstruction of Safe Spectatorship in the Photographic Record of 9/11," in *Terror, Culture, Politics: Rethinking 9/11*, eds. Daniel J. Sherman and Terry Nardin (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006) 44-68, 46.
[79] *Ibid.*
[80] *Ibid.*, 45.

and representations.[81] Such indirect exposure to trauma, she remarks, may induce symptoms of 'vicarious traumatization': "[L]ike therapists working with trauma victims, [media audience] are often vicariously traumatized."[82] She explores how trauma encountered vicariously through media might or might not "facilitate or interfere with pro-social individual and cultural change": "Arguably, being vicariously traumatized invites members of a society to confront, rather than conceal, catastrophes, and in that way might be useful. On the other hand, it might arouse anxiety and trigger defense against further exposure."[83] Nevertheless, according to Kaplan, the former response has proved to be the exception rather than the rule as the experience of vicariously media-induced trauma, most often, does not generate socially beneficial impact on its audience precluding in them any empathetic response for the suffering of those far removed from their own communities.

The key premise of Kaplan's argument is that media manipulates the public consciousness by offering representations of trauma that are biased, distorted, and removed from their socio-political context preventing or distracting them from thinking about this trauma deeply and critically. Moreover, these representations depend basically on sentimentality; exploiting emotions – by presenting images that foment feelings of revenge and aggression, but that, at the same time, paralyze the audience ability to think critically about the reason for such violent feelings, their consequences, or even about their role, as audience, after adopting such a violent disposition – "for political and other ideological ends – often to mask underlying political agendas powerful forces wish to conceal."[84] Based on such presumption, Kaplan concludes that any kind of media reporting which "encourages sentimentality by presenting viewers or

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[81] Kaplan, 2.
[82] *Ibid.,* 21.
[83] *Ibid.,* 87.
[84] *Ibid.,* 22.

newspaper readers with a daily barrage of images that are merely fragments of a large, complex situation in a foreign culture about which audiences may know very little and that reporters usually omit" induces only 'empty' empathy, that is, "empathy elicited by images of suffering provided without any context or background knowledge" – "While empathy … may have pro-social aspects, it is hard for pro-social motives to be aroused through mere isolated images of violence, aggression, deprivation, and death."[85] This conclusion helps to explain the reactions to the suffering of others adopted by Henry, who, as a media consumer, is indirectly asked not "to think about the ethics of the war [on Iraq], human rights, and other important topics."[86] In its coverage of decontextualized events, the media arouses in him 'empty' empathy that closes off the possibility of critical interpretation of those events, desensitizes his empathetic capacity, and stirs up his sense of paranoia and defensiveness, both of which Kaplan refers to as the non-useful effects of mediated vicarious trauma. As a result, he feels, at best, "[c]ulpable in his helplessness. Helplessly culpable" (22).

As the novel unfolds, markedly, media forms constitute an essential part of Henry's daily routine, and engagement with them takes the form of a habit or leisure activity. Beside science, media is one of his sources of knowing the world. For example, an admittedly secular figure, he clearly maintains a religious-like attachment to media for he starts Sunday morning reading newspapers rather than being at church (176). He feels the gravity of the newscasts, and realizes that "[i]t's a condition of the times, this compulsion to hear how it stands with the world, and be joined to the generality, to a community of anxiety" (Ibid.). More specifically, this habit has "grown stronger these past two years" as "a different scale of news value has been set by monstrous and spectacular scenes. The possibility of their recurrence is one thread that binds the days"

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[85] *Ibid.,* 93.
[86] *Ibid.,* 95.

(Ibid.). Actually, in the aftermath of September 11, the media news agenda has been

increasingly focusing on a myriad of issues related to the abiding presence of terrorist

threats within the West. It has been presenting "terrorist and counterterrorist events

abroad as well as frequent threats by terrorists and terror alerts by government officials"

which "kept the level of concern consistently high in the post-9-11 years," to use the

words of Brigitte Lebens Nacos in *Mass-Mediated Terrorism*.[87] As the novel suggests,

media news always keeps its consumers in an anticipation of more monstrous events:

"The government's counsel – that an attack in a European or American city is an

inevitability – isn't only a disclaimer of responsibility, it's a heady promise" (Ibid.). In

this context, pro-state media is producing public opinion rather than merely reflecting it.

That is to say, instead of presenting real events, it is bringing them into being to keep

attracting its consumers and, at the same time, stirring their anxiety to control their

reactions and ensure their consent upon any anti-terrorist decision taken by the

government. This results in the audience habit of following thrilling news being

developed into an addiction. "Everyone fears [an attack]," Henry observes, "but there's

also a darker longing in the collective mind, a sickening for self-punishment and a

blasphemous curiosity … Please don't let it happen. But let me see it all the same …

and let me be among the first to know" (Ibid.). The implication here is that apart from

being a form of addiction, such longing for a terrorist attack is a form of 'self-

punishment.' Reflecting on this point, Rorty maintains: "We sicken for self-punishment

because of the guilt that comes from being able to do little and being unable to imagine

doing more … We feel that our world does not deserve to last, because it is so

irredeemably unjust."[88]

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[87] Brigitte Lebens Nacos, *Mass-Mediated Terrorism: The Central Role of the Media in Terrorism and Counterterrorism* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007) 182.
[88] Rorty, 93.

As a member of the media-saturated community, Henry consults media as the main source for his knowledge to find about the story of the burning plane spotted at dawn. This event with its post-9/11 media-driven interpretation "flew right into his insomnia, and he's been only too happy to let the story and every little nervous shift of the daily news process colour his emotional state" (180). Furthermore, in order to nourish his fears, he ignored most of the details that do not fit his sense of unease like,

> that the plane was not being driven into a public building, that it was making a regular, controlled descent, that it was on a well-used flight path … [T]here were two possible outcomes – the cat dead or alive. But he'd already voted for the dead, when he should have sensed it straight away – a simple accident in the making. Not an attack on our whole way of life then. (39)

Thus, Henry seems to have answered the media's post-9/11 call to adopt an unsettled state of mind. Throughout the day, he is preoccupied with, constantly, checking the news updates of this event. He is either watching TV news while playing squash, visiting his mother, preparing a meal; or listening to radio news while having a bath or driving. As Michael Warner explains in *The Trouble with Normal*, media news gives its consumers the impression that they are connected together to the extent that they imagine themselves as real participants in the public sphere: they think that they are "being given solidarity with the world and do not notice that this imaginary commonality is in fact a substitute for the very kind of active, public solidarity of which [they] are so acutely deprived."[89] Redolent of Warner's argument, the narrator comments on Henry saying: "It's an illusion, to believe himself active in the story. Does he think he's contributing something, watching news programmes, or lying on his back on the sofa on a Sunday afternoons" (180)? Or "[d]oes he think that his ambivalence – if that's what it really is – excuses him from the general conformity" (181)? Media news

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[89] Michael Warner, *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000) 70.

forecloses his actual involvement in the public sphere and makes him inhibit the space

between "the terrible actuality and daydreams," as explained by McEwan:

> I suspect that in between times, when we are not consuming news, the majority of us are not meditating on recent foreign policy failures, or geopolitical strategy, or the operational range of helicopter gunships. Instead, we remember what we have seen, and we daydream helplessly … Waking before dawn, going about our business during the day, we fantasize ourselves into the events. What if it was me?[90]

On the other hand, Henry realizes that the process of going after events provides

him with little certainty or comfort and causes his inability to concentrate on other

activities as it intrudes on every space of his day. He asks himself: "Isn't it possible to

enjoy an hour's recreation without this invasion, this infection from the public domain"

(108)? He decides that "[h]e has a right now and then – everyone has it – not to be

disturbed by world events, or even street events" (Ibid.). He goes as far as to consider

this process of obliterating "a whole universe of public phenomena in order to

concentrate" as "a fundamental liberty. Freedom of thought" (Ibid.). Eventually, he

seems to undervalue the media for it fails in its narratives and representations to produce

something that is sensational, highly informed and reliable. What the novel captures

here is the way media escalation and distortion of political news have become a habitual

part of the process of reporting. As the novel unfolds, mainstream media offers a

version of the burning plane event, one that is fuelled by stereotypical images of radical

Islamists setting fire to their own plane in the cause of jihad, making it qualify as one of

the most sought after thrilling piece of news in the post-9/11 world. However, with the

early evening news, Henry realizes that, like a soap bubble, the story has burst. As

revealed, the event he witnessed at dawn is not a terrorist attack, the burning of the

plane resulted from engine failure, and the pilots are not "Chechens or Algerians, they

are not Muslims, they are Christians, though only in name, for they never attend church

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[90] McEwan, "Only love and then oblivion."

and own neither a Koran nor a Bible. Above all, they are Russians and proud of the fact" (179).

Henry is disappointed to know that the plane event does not meet his expectations or fit into the frame of post-9/11 media news. It is precisely because of his disappointment with the cycling of news that he laments his dependence on media as a source of information. "It's part of the new order," he admits, "this narrowing of mental freedom, of his right to roam" (180). He even comes to the realization that his relation to media "amounts to a consensus of a kind, an orthodoxy of attention, a mild subjugation in itself" by which "his nerves, like tautened strings, vibrate obediently with each news 'release'" (181). These words reflect how Henry develops the awareness that media news is arousing in him what Kaplan calls 'empty' empathy, inviting him to participate in affection without understanding the real context of the reported events and their enshrouded particularities. As a result, he comes to reflect upon his inability to assume a critical distance, which leaves him ambivalent about public affairs: "He's lost the habits of scepticism, he's becoming dim with contradictory opinion, he isn't thinking clearly, and just as bad, he senses he isn't thinking independently" (Ibid.). He feels estranged as the constant intervention of media narratives upon his private realm breaks his ability to identify himself as an agent. He is "becoming a dupe, the willing, febrile consumer of news fodder, opinion, speculation and of all the crumbs the authorities let fall. He's a docile citizen, watching Leviathan grow stronger while he creeps under its shadow for protection" (180).

Additionally, perhaps most importantly, McEwan seems to propose that even Henry's engagement in private debates with his daughter about the war on Iraq could be construed as an answer to the post-9/11 media's call to be confined to the private. In one way or another, we are told, the characters' private attempts to be active and engage in

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debates about the large-scale world of politics are affected by news media: whether their opinions are for or against the occupation of Iraq, "[e]ither way, it amounts to a consensus of a kind, an orthodoxy of attention, a mild subjugation in itself" (181). That is to say, their debates are motivated by media narratives and comprised of "everything they've both heard and read a hundred times, the worst-case guesses that become facts through repetition, the sweet raptures of pessimism" (186). They are passively, non-empathetically, "fighting over armies that they will never see, about which they know almost nothing" except from what is provided by media news (190). More to the point, they celebrate the fact that they will not be held responsible for their securely taken decisions: "And how luxurious, to work it all out at home in the kitchen, the geopolitical moves and military strategy, and not to be held to account, by voters, newspapers, friends, history. When there are no consequences, being wrong is simply an interesting diversion" (193). In this light, it is not surprising that the Perownes do not go to the march to express their opinions publicly, and prefer, instead, to discuss the whole stuff of the war on Iraq privately.

As will be discussed in the next section, this retreat into the private world away from the public one and the accompanying sense of immunity from its complexities is not long-lasting, as by the end of the day the novel McEwan positions Henry as a witness to a 9/11-like attack in a disturbing way that nevertheless provokes in him the need to take responsibility. In this sense, the novel seems to propose witnessing as a substitute means for accessing trauma in the face of media representations and narratives which work to preclude ethical choices. With the intrusion of Baxter, *Saturday* might have followed Sigmund Freud and showed how a new traumatic happening could trigger September 11 as a prior trauma, but this would have required a direct confrontation of that event and its horrors on the part of, at least, the protagonist.

Instead, we are shown that this is Henry's first-hand witnessing of such a trauma – his experience of the attacks was only at second-hand through media – and that while his first encounter with Baxter takes on the latter's suffering to no avail, his second encounter, which involves witnessing, *might* suggest pro-social action. This is because it is this act of witnessing which will grant Henry the contextualized perspective that allows him to respond to Baxter in a way that goes beyond the 'empty' empathy of their first meeting. Thus, *Saturday*, it could be argued, counts on the possible social utility of the witnessing experience. In this regard, Kaplan underscores the reliability of witnessing vis-à-vis vicariously mediated trauma. While she doubts the possibility for the latter to bring about beneficial empathy, she argues that witnessing is essential for injustice to be realized, and thus, has pro-social results. According to Kaplan, while media vicarious traumatization involves "sharing what others have suffered," witnessing moves beyond,

> the concept of sharing to consider the ethical requirement for 'witnessing' as part of reconciliation … people can move beyond sharing trauma and engage in witnessing, which is a new level of responsibility. It differs from vicarious trauma, from voyeurism/sensationalism, and from melodramatic attempts to close the wound as in Hollywood treatments of historical trauma.[91]

And she defines witnessing as the term used "for prompting an ethical response that will perhaps transform the way someone views the world, or thinks about justice"; hence the novel's ethical expectations of the impact Henry's act of witnessing would exert upon his view of the post-9/11 world and in/justice.[92]

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[91] Kaplan, 21-22.
[92] *Ibid.*, 123.

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From Privileged Detachment to Empathy?

Exploring the failure of characters to engage with the ethical through their privately-led political debates, an attempt curbed by politicized media, the novel investigates how they respond when they come face to face, rather than vicariously, with a violent intrusion. It raises the following questions: If they could not sustain the political, can they sustain the ethical, or will their failure at the political level impact their ethical choices? In the first place, could they afford to engage with the ethical without the political? Could the ethical choice to our post-9/11 world be sustained at all at the private sphere of the novel? And could the power of imagination, of poetry, at this instance, help rational interests to take a back seat to ethical imperatives? In this respect, and through the private sphere of the family, the novel endeavours to enable the generalization to the broader case of September 11 and the 'war on terror,' and in doing so, opens the text out to the larger public context. As Mark Lawson writes in "Against the flow," "*Saturday* catalogues the local only in order to focus on the global."[93] Indeed, the novel presents Henry as an epitomization of the Western governments and links his trajectory on that Saturday with that of the United States on September 11 and its aftermath. Accordingly, he is introduced as both rational and detached. He desires liberal self-actualization and control, and he is fearful of difference. That is to say, the Western nations' lapse into isolationism seems to extend to him taking the form of individualism. Henry's privileged status, in the light of Carbado's argument, operates in the form of "negative identity signification" in the sense that he accepts them unquestionably and takes them to be the norm, and, on this basis, considers the disadvantaged 'Other' as 'abnormal.' He is unmindful that his security and privileges are profiting from the unprivileged status of others, which leads him to ignore his

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[93] Mark Lawson, "Against the flow," *The Guardian* 22 January 2005, 25 February 2010 <http://books.guardian.co.uk/review/story/0,,1394977,00.html>.

collective responsibility towards them. In this sense, Henry does not seem to realize that he is "a child of this mass and a brother to all the rest. Or else an ingrate, dilettante, idiot," to quote the novel's epigraph. To put it differently, he has to made a choice between blurring boundaries with the unprivileged 'Other' or, in Rorty's words, being one of those infantilized Westerners who are locked into the private sphere, and who are "ingrates and dilettantes – ingrates because their affluence is made possible by the suffering of the poor and dilettantes because they are no longer able to relate thought to action. They cannot imagine how things could be made better."[94]

John Banville describes Henry in his review of the novel as "an unashamed beneficiary of the fruits of late capitalism."[95] As the novel suggests, Henry thinks,

> the city is a success, a brilliant invention, a biological masterpiece – millions teeming around the accumulated and layered achievements of the centuries, as though around a coral reef, sleeping, working, entertaining themselves, harmonious for the most part, nearly everyone wanting it to work. And the Perownes' own corner … an eighteenth-century dream bathed and embraced by modernity. (5)

Taking this one step further, Henry even valorizes the liberal capitalist system of violence and inequality that casts a normalizing effect on his luxuries and comfortable lifestyle for their supposedly long-term peace and progress. "In a spirit of aggressive celebration of the times," Henry enjoys his full sense of security thinking that "[h]is wellbeing appears to need spectral entities to oppose it, figures of his own invention whom he can defeat" (78). At the same time, his haughty vision of life is associated with fear of those who might bring about any change to his comfortable and happy private realm. He intermittently asks about 'how it stands with the world,' a query that highlights the inevitability of more terrorist attacks that inspire unease (176). He sometimes feels that the world is becoming a less secure, or even more dangerous place.

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[94] Rorty, 92.
[95] John Banville, "A Day in the Life," *The New York Review of Books* 26 May 2005, 10 October 2009 <www.nybooks.com/articles/17993>.

Reading in Fred Halliday's book that "the New York attacks precipitated a global crisis that would, *if we were lucky*, take a hundred years to resolve," Henry becomes afraid that his city and his happy family are under threat (32-33, emphasis in original). However, at other times he puts this view aside as it is countered by his belief in progress, proved by his privileged position, by which he tries to rise above this "vague sense of shame or embarrassment":

> [H]is readiness to be persuaded that the world has changed beyond recall, that harmless streets like this and the tolerant life they embody can be destroyed by the new enemy – well-organised, tentacular, full of hatred and focused zeal. How foolishly apocalyptic those apprehensions seem by daylight, when the self-evident fact of the streets and the people on them are their own justification, their own insurance. (76-77)

Furthermore, Henry is a champion of the Darwinian cause to the extent that if he were called in to construct a religion, he would make use of Darwin's evolution. Reading the biography of Darwin triggers many of his scientific meditations on human character and confirms for him more that *"there is grandeur in this view of life"* (55, emphasis in original). In response to Halliday's hundred-year claim, Henry argues that the "[t]alk of a hundred-year crisis is indulgence," and that "[t]o deride the hopes of progress is the ultimate fatuity, the last word in poverty of spirit and meanness of mind" (77). According to him, nothing could disturb the 'end of history' rhetoric: "There are always crises, and Islamic terrorism will settle into place, alongside recent wars, climate change, the politics of international trade, land and fresh water shortages, hunger, poverty and the rest … [London] won't easily allow itself to be destroyed" (Ibid.).[96] Henry holds on to the idea that "the world would surely calm down and soon be otherwise, that solutions were possible, that reason, being a powerful tool, was irresistible, the only way out" (32).

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[96] The reference here is to the thesis herald by Francis Fukuyama in 1989; Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 2006).

Musing from the comfort of his Mercedes, Henry celebrates the last few years of liberal capitalist progress "despite the junkies and beggars now" (77). Reflecting on the mutual relationship between his privileged status and systems of violence and inequality he is profiting from and entrenching with his incessant celebration, Zadie Smith finds it difficult for readers to sympathize with such character "knowing what his privileges are based on."[97] She adds that the problem "we have with all this progress [that Henry celebrates] is that it has been at the expense of foreign places and foreign people who do not partake of this progress, and that's exactly why we're in this shitstorm/ 'war-without-end' nightmare scenario right now."[98] It seems that Henry's frame of "negative identity signification" fails to gain readers' sympathy the same as it fails to recognize any sense of personal or public responsibility for the less privileged that he manages to exclude from his world picture and monitors with detachment.

Actually, Henry's false sense of security and invulnerability, his belief in the continuation of rational progress within the structured society to which he belongs, and his adherence to the fantasized ordered world, isolates him from the rest of the social world. It is a security achieved through detachment and constant check of the alarms and locks of his home and car to keep himself away from "the city's poor, the drug-addict, [and] the downright bad" (37). To use Edkins' words, he thinks of himself "as a separate, autonomous, sovereign individual."[99] He enjoys the city either from behind his home windows, or from "inside his car where the air is filtered and hi-fi music confers pathos on the humblest details" (76). This distancing or numbness is enhanced by "the repetition of [media] images," which, according to Derrida, creates a kind of "neutralizing, deadening, distancing a traumatism."[100] Indeed, post-9/11 media news

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[97] Smith, "Zadie Smith talks with Ian McEwan."
[98] *Ibid.*
[99] Edkins, 11.
[100] Derrida, "Autoimmunity," 87.

changes Henry's reading of words and events: "Simple train crashes are no longer all that are envisaged, and words like 'catastrophe' and 'mass fatalities', 'chemical and biological warfare' and 'major attack' have recently become bland through repetition" (11-12). It has trained him to empathize from a safe distance. As a result, he enacts a deliberate insulation from the violence of the streets which he spies from his bedroom window, the same way he is insulated from the horrors of the world about which he reads in the papers or watches on TV. He also becomes used to respond with indifference to others' suffering experiences as images and narratives of violence circulated via media news desensitize him to what he sees and hears, making it just another routine part of his daily life. Thus, he becomes a mere consumer of the "pornography of violence," as Patricia Yaeger puts it in *Consuming Trauma*.[101] More to the point is that even his curiosity to know "how it goes with the world?" is not about his engagement in the public sphere; rather, it is about his exclusive concern with his personal sphere. This is very much to make sure that his family will be safe and that nothing will disturb their life or strip them of privileges. In the same sense, his concern for Professor Taleb is not one of the products of his own empathy with the world outside; rather, it is about his fear of having the same destiny at the hands of Saddam. He justifies his refusal to empathize with people beyond the web of his familial relations saying that if he expands the circle of empathy to distant people considering them his brothers and sisters, he may end up expanding it to animals or even to terrorists. In line with Western nations, he believes that "[t]he trick, as always, the key to human success and domination, is to be selective in your mercies. For all the discerning talk, it's the close at hand, the visible and that exerts the overpowering force" (127).

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[101] Patricia Yaeger, "Consuming Trauma; or, The Pleasures of Merely Circulating," in *Extremities: Trauma, Testimony, and Community*, eds. Nancy K. Miller and Jason Tougaw (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002) 25-54, 41.

Henry's sense of detachment enabled what can be called as structural violence. His aloofness towards 'Otherness,' whether in terms of class or race, could be argued to add to their marginalization and misery. He is not tolerant of people from other cultures, a trait perhaps linked to his scientific rigour. He exposes another aspect of imaginative failure, what Paul Gilroy in *Postcolonial Melancholia* calls a "failure of political imagination," which marks his refusal of other cultures to be accommodated within his nation and his strong sense of racism.[102] He cannot imagine himself in community with people who are different or less privileged because their difference poses a sustained threat to him. And his interactions with those people sustain his "negative identity significations" rather than revealing and disrupting it; he feels the estrangement of learning that the nation he thought was his belongs also to others and this blocked knowledge, as a fact too horrible for him to be fully acknowledged, returns in cultural symptoms. One example of Henry's detachment is when he comes across a road sweeper, describes this man's work as "futile," and refuses to acknowledge how the shortcomings of the liberal state weighs on the life of working-class people. What is more, rather than empathizing with the man, he assigns this man's underprivileged situation to 'bad luck,' but not to the "thinking small" philosophy which indicates an inability, or even passivity, of Western liberals like himself to think out of their privileged private realms of "how things could be made better" for the underprivileged:

> How restful it must once have been, in another age, to be prosperous and believe that an all-knowing supernatural force had allotted people to their stations in life. And not to see how the belief served your own prosperity … Now we think we do see, how do things stand? After the ruinous experiments of the recently deceased century, after so much vile behavior, so many deaths, a queasy agnosticism has settled around these matters of justice and redistributed wealth. *No more big ideas*. The world must improve, if at all, by tiny steps. People mostly take an existential view – having to sweep the streets for a living looks like simple bad luck. It's not a visionary age. The streets need to be clean. Let the unlucky enlist. (74, emphasis added)

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[102] Paul Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005) 4-5.

In other occasions, Henry grounds his views of 'Otherness' on multicultural intolerance. Coming across three Muslim women and a group of mainland Chinese, he shows, in both cases, a failure to acknowledge the existence of different perspectives. When he encounters the Muslim women with black burkhas, he displays an unwillingness to understand their religious stand: "He can't help his distaste, it's visceral. How dismal, that anyone should be obliged to walk around so entirely obliterated" (124). "Veils … and the Chinese Republic," for him, "serve the gently tilting negative pitch of his mood" (Ibid.). These attitudes towards different cultures designate, basically, a tendency to keep one's life under control. In this sense, Henry identifies, in one way or another, with terrorists as the novel unfolds, for "[a]n excess of the subjective, the ordering of the world in line with your needs, an inability to contemplate your own unimportance" is terrorists' reasoning (17).

Equally, Henry's overly scientific worldview suggests a concomitant ethical blindness to the particularities of human beings. His profession as a neurosurgeon, the novel implies, tempts him to violate his inter-subjective relations with others treating them as adjuncts to their own brains, which adds to his sense of detachment. The "invisible folds and kinks of character," he cannot help thinking, are "written in code, at the level of molecules. It's a dim fate" (272). As a rationalist and proponent of scientific knowledge and method, he lacks the imagination which is, according to McEwan, "the core of humanity … the essence of compassion, and … the beginning of morality." His focus on abstract theoretical principles he no longer questions, or on the scientific, empirical world, or on the inhuman generalities of war seem to blind him to the insights of imagination. As a result, Henry cannot find a way to quiet his burgeoning and agitating sense of unease, related to living in the post-9/11 world, other than keeping himself isolated. Being an advocate of "efferent reading," "whose attention is focused

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on what he will take away from the transaction," Henry likes to read only for information, a reading that "may not change anyone's life," to quote Denis Donoghue in *Speaking of Beauty*.[103] In his organized life, he has little room for literature and poetry: "[I]t interests him less to have the world reinvented; he wants it explained. The times are strange enough. Why make things up" (66)? His disdain for literature is most relentlessly focused on the fact that,

> [a] man who attempts to ease the miseries of failing minds by repairing brains is bound to respect the material world … the actual, not the magical, should be the challenge … the supernatural was the recourse of an insufficient imagination, a dereliction of duty, a childish evasion of the difficulties and wonders of the real, of the demanding re-enactment of the plausible. (67-68)

Fiction, according to Henry, is "too humanly flawed, too sprawling and hit-and-miss to inspire uncomplicated wonder at the magnificence of human ingenuity, of the impossible dazzlingly achieved" (68). He even "can't see how poetry – rather occasional work it appears, like grape picking – can occupy a whole working life, or how such an edifice of reputation and self-regard can rest on so little" (195). "This notion of Daisy's, that people can't 'live' without stories," he further adds, "is simply not true. He is living proof" (68). In his interview with Ramona Koval, McEwan describes Henry as "the cold, abstract rationalist [who believes that] so many good moments in life are actually produced by clear thinking."[104] Describing Henry in this manner, McEwan intends to show that excessive certainty is a step towards violence. He even warns us to "[b]eware the utopianists, zealous men certain of the path to the ideal social order" (276-277). In this sense, we can understand how Henry's lack of imagination and celebration of certainty led him to act in an amoral way when

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[103] Denis Donoghue, *Speaking of Beauty* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003) 47.
[104] McEwan, "Ian McEwan, an Interview with Ramona Koval," *Books and Writing,* ABC Radio National 21 Septemper 2002, 13 February 2010 <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/arts/bwriting/stories/s679422.htm>.

confronted with Baxter, claiming, as Blair claims is the case with Iraq, that he "was obliged, or forced to abuse his own power" to protect himself (111).[105]

Involved in a car crash, Henry refuses to pay for the damages to Baxter's car. And to safely end the encounter and defuse Baxter's irrational violence, he resorts to his rational violence. Initially, he turns to his detached, analytical frame of reasoning to read his opponent's mind and explain the specificity of his behavior, an approach that proves to be untenable when it comes to human beings. Apparently used to stereotyping people, he judges Baxter by his appearance and based on that anticipates violence. Having seen Baxter leaving a lap-dancing club, associating his car with criminality and drug-dealing, and considering the way he looks and dresses, Henry assumes that the man "gives an impression of fretful impatience, of destructive energy waiting to be released" (88). In his view, "drug dealers and pimps, among others who live beyond the law, are not inclined to dial nine-nine-nine for Leviathan; they settle their quarrels in their own way" (Ibid.). In the face of this anticipated violence, he applies his medical power to diagnose Baxter's condition as Huntington's disease, a degenerative neurological condition that has already impaired his brain functioning and that will eventually produce dementia and other physical disabilities. Henry abuses this power when he decides to manipulate Baxter by offering him a story that gives a false hope in the face of his incurable disease. His scientific frame of thinking seems to provide a screen between him and Baxter. It is partly responsible for blocking an empathetic response towards the man. Henry knows that "[t]here's no way out for [Baxter]. No one can help. But [he] knows himself to be incapable of pity. Clinical experience wrung that from him long ago. And part of him never ceases to calculate how soon he can safely

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[105] Henry's response to Baxter is unethical. It is unacceptable even if it is said to be committed out of self-protection. This is because we cannot, as readers, and as Zadie Smith puts it earlier, sympathize with Henry; the novel prevents us from identifying with him, leaving us at a distance to witness his mental landscape and respond to it only in terms of a shameful act being done.

end this encounter" (99). His non-ethical response, it might be argued, is also partly

attributed to the fact that popular culture transposes the seriousness of his encounter

with Baxter into parody:

> He is cast in a role, and there's no way out. This, as people like to say, is urban drama. A century of movies and half a century of television have rendered the matter insincere. It is pure artifice. Here are the cars, and here are the owners. Here are the guys, the strangers, whose self-respect is on the line. Someone is going to have to impose his will and win, and the other is going to give way. Popular culture has worn this matter smooth with reiteration. (86)

Henry's "shameless blackmail works" (95). His medical knowledge is

overpowering for when he confronts Baxter with the diagnosis, Baxter is amazed and

shaken: "He stands fidgeting with shoulder turned, like a sulky child waiting to be

coaxed, unable to make the first move," and Henry "senses the power passing to him"

(95-96). Hinting at a connection between violent actions and their consequences at

micro and macro levels, McEwan depicts how the car accident scene ends in military

terms with the defeat of Baxter: "The general has been indecisive, the troops are

deserting, the humiliation is complete," and thus, Henry is able to make his escape (98).

As Robert Elias indicates in "A Culture of Violent Solutions," in a society that sustains

"a culture of violent solutions," macro and micro levels of violence are interrelated in

the sense that the macro-practices of violence promote the micro ones.[106] In his view,

much of the interpersonal violence is encouraged by state violence where "violence is

viewed as a legitimate means of solving problems, even if the problem is violence

itself."[107] Thus, one can view how the state's preparations for the war on Iraq,

resonating in the novel's background, works as an endorsement to and a legitimization

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[106] Robert Elias, "A Culture of Violent Solutions," in *The Web of Violence: From Interpersonal to Global*, eds. Jennifer E. Turpin and Lester R. Kurtz (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997) 117-148, 118.
[107] *Ibid*.

of Henry's violent means to solve his problem with Baxter. At the same time, Henry's predicament could be viewed as a metaphor for that of his state.[108]

Rather than sympathizing with Baxter's condition, Henry responds with clinical detachment to achieve a conflict resolution from a strong and privileged position. It is no surprise, then, that his response is one to be governed by the practical rather than the moral sense. By ascribing Baxter's misfortune to biological factors, Henry tacitly absolves himself from the obligation to do anything about his condition. Simultaneously, even equally, he seems to absolve himself from liability for his response, much as his state and its allies have in their cover-up of the real motives for the coming war on Iraq, upon the basis that,

> the threat of a beating excuse[s] him … [T]his haematoma, the colour of an aubergine, the diameter of a plum – just a taste of what might have come his way – says yes, he's absolved. Only a fool would stand there and take a kicking when there was a way out … And he, Henry, was obliged, or forced, to abuse his own power. (111)

Not only does Henry feel absolved of guilt towards Baxter, but he goes even further to legitimize state violence inflicted on the disadvantaged while condemning violence done by them:

> It's not always a pathology; self-interested social organisms find it rational to be violent sometimes. Among the game theorists and radical criminologist, the stock of Thomas Hobbes keeps on rising. Holding the unruly, the thugs, in check is the famous 'common power' to keep all men in awe – a governing body, an arm of the state, freely granted a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence. (88)

Furthermore, legitimizing global violence, especially international wars like the Anglo-American war on Iraq, Henry absolves those who administer distant acts of violence from being subject to any accountability. He even finds it easier and more appealing to

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[108] Believing that any solution to violence must address all its levels, macro and micro ones, as well as the interactions among them, through Henry's abuse of his power and privileges, *Saturday* reflects and criticizes the British government's inability to consider non-violent choices and assess the ethical status and efficacy of its prospected war on Iraq.

commit acts of violence to people whom one does not belong to or know about since these acts should be, according to him, unaccompanied by any sense of guilt: "The foot, like some roughneck hick town, is a remote province of the brain, liberated by distance from responsibility. A kick is less intimate, less involving than a punch, and one kick never quite seems enough" (92-93).

Additionally, through the metaphor of the 'foot' and the 'brain,' *Saturday* raises the issue that since the feeling of distance or detachment allows individuals, and states by large, to misjudge and legitimize acts of violence, dispelling that sense of detachment or distance becomes an imperative. This can be achieved through embracing what Butler calls "ethical enmeshment," resulting from the acknowledgment of our sense of vulnerability which means that we are subject to violence by others as they are subject to our violence. However, Henry's technical background and culture promote him to find a "technical fix" to the violent situation he faces, a solution that "provide[s] temporary relief, but [it] also deflect[s] [his] attention from the underlying nontechnical problems that are not easily remedied," as Jennifer Turpin and Lester Kurtz maintain in their conclusion to *The Web of Violence*.[109] Henry acknowledges Baxter's vulnerability, but his first impulse towards that vulnerability is his desire to be aggressive. At the same time, Henry denies his own vulnerability and lets his sense of priority mould the circumstances to his advantage. Consequently, he escapes the situation, but his manipulation later comes back to him when Baxter breaks into his house and terrorizes his family. As the novel suggests, such an invasion is not a random act or a manifestation of Baxter's inherent violent nature; rather, it comes as a reprisal for Henry's earlier misconduct. Hence, this occasion of intervention does not refer only to the present, but also to the past; it mirrors the circumstances which induce it and which

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[109] Jennifer E. Turpin and Lester R. Kurtz, "Conclusion: Untangling the Web of Violence," in *The Web of Violence: From Interpersonal to Global*, 207-232, 208.

cannot be subtracted from its entity, and might also refer to a future to come if it is not resolved properly.

This movement from the global violence of the post-9/11 world to personal violence, exemplified by home intrusion, is McEwan's way to approach the ambivalence that typifies Henry's thoughts about Baxter and, and broadly speaking, his political ambivalence about the coming war on Iraq. Rather than keeping him shielded from the complexities of the world around him as he used to be, Baxter's terrorist-like intervention recovers him from his passivity by engaging him with these complexities and transferring agency to him to take the altruistic decision. However, the plot development during and after this intrusion charts the novel's emancipatory project along bifurcating modes – one that identifies it as an ethical transition, and the other that debates it as resonating with those tendencies towards a preoccupation with control. Arguably, the problematic closure of violence and terror in the post-9/11 world seems to cast its heavy shadow on the novel's attempt to provide easy answers or closure. In view of that, the novel ends by bringing to the fore the relation between empathy and control, the private and public, and between literature and science, while suggesting that neither is replaced nor subverted so much as kept in opposition.

As the novel suggests, Baxter "come[s] to assert his dignity, and perhaps even shape the way he'll be remembered" (211). Henry expresses ambivalent feelings towards him. He shows a tendency towards employing his privileges as a response to Baxter's violence in the form of "negative identity signification." Thus, the first thing that comes to his mind to save his family is to abuse his medical authority, once again, by renewing Baxter's hope to be cured. The manipulation works for the second time, and the scene ends with Henry and Theo pushing Baxter down the stairs, causing him serious injuries. In this sense, he does not seem to be aware that the power he used to

defeat Baxter, in Emmanuel Levinas' words, "is quite the contrary of power. The triumph of this power is its defeat as power."[110] Nevertheless, Henry sympathizes with his victim, and regrets that he disappoints him: Baxter looks at him "with an expression, not so much of terror, as dismay. And Henry thinks he sees in the wide brown eyes a sorrowful accusation of betrayal" (227). He even decides to offer Baxter medical care until the ambulance arrived. However, we are told, Henry is,

> undergoing a shift in sympathies; the sight of the abrasion on Rosalind's neck hardens him. What weakness, what delusional folly, to permit yourself sympathy towards a man, sick or not, who invades your house like this. As he sits listening to others, his anger grows, until he almost begins to regret the care he routinely gave Baxter after his fall. He could have left him to die of hypoxia, pleading incapacity through shock. (230)

He feels that it is his turn to assert his authority in the face of helpless Baxter. Hence, although other surgeons are available, Henry insists to be the one who operates on him: "[A]s a general rule, Perowne avoids operating on people he knows. But this is different. And despite various shifts in his attitude to Baxter, some clarity, even some resolve, is beginning to form" (233). Yet, when his wife suspects revenge behind this decision, he rejects the idea completely: "I have to see this through. I'm responsible" (239). Furthermore, Baxter is not given agency; he is not consulted about whether he would accept the same person who caused him injuries to operate on him. His intrusion into the Perownes' home as a backlash, or resistance to be humiliated at the car crash scene, is not acknowledged either. Accordingly, throwing him down the stairs is not considered a crime by law, and thereby, his perpetrator, Henry and Theo, will not be charged. Taking this a step further, Henry considers not pursuing charges against Baxter out of pure sympathy, rather than of guilt for provoking the intrusion: because "[Baxter's] claim on life, on a mental existence … won't last much longer, because the door of his consciousness is beginning to close, he shouldn't pursue his claim from a

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[110] Quoted in Butler, *Precarious Life*, 138.

cell, waiting for the absurdity of his trial to begin" (279); "[He]'ll be diminished by whipping a man on his way to hell" (278). He also does not expect Baxter to make a complaint against him and his son as, for him, he is the perpetrator.

On the other hand, the novel suggests the utopian potential of Baxter's violent intervention. Markedly, after everything conforms again, and the dissent is passed off as conformity, occupying a position of strength, Henry starts questioning his detachment, his firm belief that he is cocooned from the world, and his responsibility for and legitimization of the violence around him, which marks his transition into the ethical. Basically, this is signified by his awakening from his state of "dogmatic slumber," a state which sets him rigidly to scientific assertions without giving him any chance to surrender to imagined convictions, and which remained dogmatic until the reality it proposes is suspended by the potential destruction of his secure world.[111] Henry realizes that science, his most trusted source of information about the world, and privileged isolation expand the gap between him and the rest of society. This sense of wakefulness, according to Levinas, is equated with ethical responsibility:

> [P]recisely because [ethical responsibility] is a perpetual duty of vigilance and effort that can never slumber. Ontology as a state of affairs can afford to sleep. But love cannot sleep, can never be peaceful or permanent. Love is the incessant watching over the other; it can never be satisfied or contented with the bourgeois ideal of love as domestic comfort.[112]

In line with Levinas, Sara Guyer in *Romanticism after Auschwitz*, commenting on Geoffrey Hartman's invocation of wakefulness, points out that:

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[111] 'Dogmatic slumber' alludes to Immanuel Kant's statement that reading David Hume had awoken him from his 'dogmatic slumber': "[I]t was the recollection of David Hume that many years ago first interrupted my dogmatic slumber"; Quoted in Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, eds. and trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1998) 23. He claims that "[i]n the year 1770 I was already able to distinguish the *sensibility* in human knowledge from the *intellectual*" and that the "Antinomy of Pure Reason" "serves as a very powerful agent to rouse philosophy from its dogmatic slumber and to stimulate it to the arduous task of undertaking a critical examination of reason itself"; Quoted in Stanley Tweyman, ed., *David Hume: Critical Assessments*, (London: Routledge, 1995) 537. Emphasis in original.
[112] Emmanuel Levinas and Richard Kearney, "Dialogue with Emmanuel Levinas," in *Face to Face with Levinas*, ed. Richard A. Cohen (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986) 13-34, 30.

> [Wakefulness] would be the mode in which one abandons oneself to becoming a perpetual witness … [it] names one way of figuring a limitless ethical obligation after the [disaster] … [it] would signify a deliberate, priestly decision to "forsake sleep" and remain incessantly in the world, never to be nonconscious … [it] would describe the being of a new man: the insomaniac.[113]

Thus, Guyer seems to establish Henry's new state of ethical engagement with the world in the aftermath of Baxter's intrusion with her alignment of wakefulness with the notion of worldliness. In his article "Democracy's Promise and the Politics of Worldliness in the Age of Terror," Henry Giroux, also, argues that wakefulness "suggests a particular notion of worldliness":

> [A] critical and engaged interaction with the world we live in mediated by a responsibility for challenging structures of domination and for alleviating human suffering. As an ethical and political stance, worldliness rejects modes of [engagement with the world that are] removed from political or social concerns, divorced from history and matters of injury and injustice.[114]

Actually, Henry reflects these notions of 'wakefulness' and 'worldliness' posited by Levinas, Guyer and Giroux for his *final* interaction with Baxter, the representative figure of 'Other' of the post-9/11 world in the novel, signifies both notions and espouses the novel's central virtue, sympathy. One of the belated effects of the event of Baxter's intrusion is Henry's revelation and disruption of his "negative identity signification," and his implementation of, to return to Carbado's argument, "a privileged-centered conception of discrimination." He combines his epiphany with an inclination towards re-evaluating his earlier decisions, realizing how he might be complicit in the disadvantaged status of Baxter, or at least his involvement in and responsibility for provoking Baxter's violent reaction. Rather than remaining detached, Henry decides to place the disadvantaged within the frame of his world picture. For

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[113] Sara Guyer, *Romanticism after Auschwitz* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007) 141.
[114] Henry A. Giroux, "Democracy's Promise and the Politics of Worldliness in the Age of Terror," *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 9.1 (March 2007): 1-16, 8. Giroux here is commenting on Edward Said's personal experience of insomnia associating it with the notion of 'worldliness.'

example, he understands that "[h]is attitude was wrong from the start, insufficiently defensive; his manner may have seemed pompous, or disdainful. Provocative perhaps. He could have been friendlier, even made himself accept a cigarette; he should have relaxed, from a position of strength, instead of which he was indignant and combative" (111-112). He also comes to admit his responsibility for terrorizing his family; that it is his detachment rather than a terrorist attack that imperils them, and that deterring violence with violence will not keep them secure:

> [He] can't convince himself that molecules and faulty genes alone are terrorising his family and have broken his father-in-law's nose. Perowne himself is also responsible. He humiliated Baxter in the street in front of his sidekicks, and did so when he'd already guessed at his condition … Why could he not see that it's dangerous to humble a man as emotionally labile as Baxter? To escape a beating and get to his squash game. He used and misused his authority to avoid one crisis, and his actions have steered him into another, far worse. The responsibility is his. (210-211)

Furthermore, the retaliation casts Henry into a situation that raises the very same ethical questions as to the distributions of privilege that he used to be indifferent to. As a result, he starts to experience a deep sense of guilt for being unmindful of Baxter's unprivileged condition:

> [He] possesses so much – the work, money, status, the home, above all, the family – the handsome healthy son with the strong guitarist's hands come to rescue him, the beautiful poet for a daughter, unattainable even in her nakedness, the famous father-in-law, the gifted, loving wife; and he has done nothing, given nothing to Baxter who has so little that is not wrecked by his defective gene, and who is soon to have even less. (227-228)

Above all, this traumatic event disrupts Henry's sense of impermeability, invulnerability and security. Consequently, he is jolted out of his ivory tower into another context where he exists as part of a bigger social world.

Lucidly, McEwan implements the rift between literature and science, reflected earlier in the novel within the context of making a political decision concerning the war on Iraq, in the final scene of the novel. The intrusion of Baxter, the novel seems to

suggest, modifies the status of Henry, prompting him to consider how his overly

scientific view of the world betrays him. When he discovers that Baxter can be quelled,

and thus his family be saved, by literature rather than by his own rational means, his

prestige as a perspicacious scientist is inevitably overthrown. The man of science, the

keen observer, the specialist in the brain, failed to read Baxter's mind. The Darwinian

affiliation between man and animal is finally proven faulty since it cannot explain the

specificity of human behavior. On the other hand, "Dover Beach" completes the quest

of deciphering Baxter's mind. As a consequence, Henry decides to let go of his over-

reliance upon scientific frames of thinking and comes to appreciate the worth of

literature and its imagined world. He comes to the realization that, to use Lyotard's

words in *The Postmodern Condition*, his "scientific knowledge cannot know and make

known that it is the true knowledge without restoring to the other, narrative, kind of

knowledge, which from its point of view is no knowledge at all."[115] In this sense, the

novel seems to be dictated by "Dover Beach"; it serves not only as the novel's turning

point, but also, with reference to Arnold's attempts to set up an opposition between

poetry and science, it also foregrounds the difference between these two frames of

thinking, underlying the superiority of the former. This advantageous status is due to the

ability of literature to accommodate all sorts of knowledge, including the scientific,

whereas science dismisses literature as "belonging to a different mentality: savage,

primitive, underdeveloped, backward, alienated, composed of opinions, customs,

authority, prejudice, ignorance, ideology," and reduces it to "fables, myths, legends, fit

only for women and children," to quote Lyotard again.[116]

The failure of Henry's scientific approach is further highlighted when he comes

to realize his complicity in provoking the small-scale intrusion of Baxter into the private

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[115] Quoted in Joseph P. Natoli and Linda Hutcheon, eds., *A Postmodern Reader* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993) 85.
[116] *Ibid*., 83.

world of his family, and this is all the more so as the eventual choice of the right end to

the invasion bypasses him and is entirely orchestrated by Daisy, the poet. Henry comes

to grips with an alternative vision of how our emotions and sympathies work. As Baxter

holds the Perownes at knifepoint, he commands Daisy to strip naked, and, realizing that

she is a poet, asks her to read him some poetry. Daisy is in a state of terror but, at the

suggestion of her grandfather, she begins to recite something from memory, "Dover

Beach." The aggressive Baxter, enthralled, drops his knife, asked Daisy to get dressed,

and agrees to go on the drug trial that Henry has suggested. Arnold, Henry reflects,

"swung his mood" (269). As a result, he is transformed "from lord of terror to amazed

admirer" (223). The poem seems to be capable of penetrating Baxter, curbing in him

any tendency to further violence, and at the same time, incorporating him: "[He] fell for

the magic, he was transfixed by it, and he was reminded how much he wanted to live"

(278). In contrast, indicative of Henry's torn attitudes in the final scene, the novel reads:

"Baxter heard what Henry never has, and probably never will, despite all Daisy's

attempts to educate him" (Ibid.). The implication here is that Henry's emphatic identity

is torn for although the poem induces empathetic feelings in him, it fails in curbing his

desire for control and violence.

In addition to its emphasis on the redemptive power of imagination and the

possibility of transcendence through art, "Dover Beach," with reference to recent

Arnold scholarship, resonates with McEwan's negotiation of the private sphere in

relation to the public one wrought throughout the novel.[117] The scene that follows the

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[117] Traditional scholars who understand this poem as a celebration of detachment and isolation in the face of the constant change within the public space include critics like Elaine Hadley, "On a Darkling Plain: Victorian Liberalism and the Fantasy of Agency," *Victorian Studies* 48.1 (Autumn 2005): 92-102, and Robin Ann Roberts, "Matthew Arnold's 'Dover Beach,' Gender, and Science Fiction," *Extrapolation* 33.3 (Fall 1992): 245–257. Recent Arnold scholarship, on the other hand, often reads "Dover Beach" as an acknowledgment of the failure of that detachment and an invitation to re-conceive the self in relation to society: See Gage McWeeny, "Crowd Management: Matthew Arnold and the Science of Society," *Victorian Poetry* 41.1 (Spring 2003): 93–111.

recitation of the poem confirms this observation. Arnold's poem fulfils its social

function by inspiring morality in the consciousness of all of those listening. The

grandfather poet, John Grammaticus, has the impulse to extend sympathy towards

Baxter: "[T]here came a point after Daisy recited Arnold for the second time when I

actually began to feel sorry for that fellow" (229). And Henry himself falls under the

spell of the poem's "mellifluous" lines (220) and "melodiousness" (222). With the first

recitation of the poem, Henry, still holding to his "efferent reading," assumes that it is

one of Daisy's poems about her lover and pregnancy. On the second reading of the

poem, in Donoghue's words, he moves to the "aesthetic reading" which allows him to

focus on "what he 'is living through during the reading event.'"[118] He revises his sense

of the poem's connotations and imagines a different scene: "[H]e sees Baxter standing

alone, with his elbows propped against the sill, listening to the waves 'bring the eternal

note of sadness in'" (221). The poem seems to tell him something about Baxter that his

scientific mindset had missed: "[I]t's through Baxter's ears that he hears the sea's

'melancholy, long, withdrawing roar, retreating, to the breath of the night wind, down

the vast edges drear and naked shingles of the world'" (221–222). Such an "aesthetic

reading" offers him some sort of self-improvement, an ethical guidance, or a form of

social glue. It changes his life by clearing "a little space in [his] mind for

disinterestedness," for viewing the world through the eyes of the 'Other,' to quote

Donoghue once again.[119] Translating the traumatic experience Henry has endured,

"Dover Beach" changes this philistine character who has proved unable to underpin his

advantages with a suitably humane ideology, conferring on him a sympathetic spirit and

transfusing into him the desire to lend a helping hand to the 'Other.' As a result, Henry

answers Arnold's call to grapple the extent of the calamity produced by the fact that:

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[118] Donoghue, 46.
[119] *Ibid*., 47.

[T]he middle classes, remaining as they are now, with their narrow, harsh unintelligent, and unattractive spirit and culture, will almost certainly fail to mould or assimilate the masses below them, whose sympathies are at the present moment actually wider and more liberal than theirs. They arrive, these masses, eager to enter into possession of the world, to gain a more vivid sense of their own life and activity. In this their irrepressible development, their natural educators and initiators are those immediately above them, the middle classes. If these classes cannot win their sympathy or give them their direction, society is in danger of falling into anarchy.[120]

Not only does Henry expand the cycle of connection and empathy beyond the web of his family ties towards Baxter, but also he extends it towards all people, arriving at a new sense of public responsibility for dissipating their trauma and suffering rather than remaining a mere spectator. His witnessing of a 9/11-like trauma, thus, "implies a larger ethical framework that has to do with public recognition of atrocities,"[121]– it "involves a stance that has public meaning or importance and transcends individual empathetic or vicarious suffering to produce community," to quote Kaplan.[122] "You have to recognise bad luck when you see it, you have to look out for these people. Some you can prise from their addictions, others – all you can do is make them comfortable somehow, minimise their miseries," Henry remarks (272). Thus, "[i]n bearing witness," to quote Kaplan again, Henry "feels responsible for injustice in general"; he wants "to change the kind of world where injustice, of whatever kind, is common."[123]

Furthermore, the political ambivalence that typifies Henry's thoughts on the coming war on Iraq has been resolved in the aftermath of Baxter's intrusion. In this way, the novel seems to suggest that the public domain's horrors lie closer to home, thus conflating the private and the public, the personal and the political, and, in doing so, underlining the way in which the individual's inter-subjective relationship with the 'Other' has consequences for larger issues of justice. At the end of his Saturday, it

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[120] Matthew Arnold, *The Popular Education of France: with Notices of that of Holland and Switzerland* (London: Longman, 1861) xliv-xlv.
[121] Kaplan, 122.
[122] *Ibid.*, 23.
[123] *Ibid.*, 122.

seems that Henry loses his appetite for removing Saddam: "[H]e's timid, vulnerable, he keeps drawing his dressing gown more tightly around him … Harder now to recall, or to inhabit, the vigour of his row with Daisy – the certainties have dissolved into debating points" (277). He comes to the realization that whether the 'war on terror' is justified or not and whatever are its motives, it will regenerate more blood and violence, and its eventual consequences are unpredictable: "All he feels now is fear. He's weak and ignorant, scared of the way consequences of an action leap away from your control and breed new events, new consequences, until you're led to a place you never dreamed of and would never Choose" (Ibid.). Here, Henry joins Hannah Arendt's view of violence upon which the political philosophy of the 'war on terror' seems to be premised:

> The very substance of violent action is ruled by the means-end category, whose chief characteristic, if applied to human affairs, has always been that the end is in danger of being overwhelmed by the means which it justifies and which are needed to reach it. Since the end of human action, as distinct from the end products of fabrication, can never be reliably predicted, the means used to achieve political goals are more often than not of greater relevance to the future world than the intended goals.[124]

Undermining any notion of the 'Self' as whole and autonomous, the novel highlights how the intrusion of Baxter not only puts Henry under trial, but also extends its reach to the entire family projecting them into a new social light, and hence the possible social utility of trauma witnessing. Ironically then, this intrusion, as traumatic as it is for this family becomes the catalyst for their reconciliation. One can say that they have moved through their traumatized feelings to shared grief and mourning, a movement that helps them recover from their trauma to find their unexpressed love for each other, a love that seems impossible otherwise. As McEwan puts it, "[e]motions have their narrative; after the shock we move inevitably to the grief, and the sense that

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[124] Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (London: Allen Lane, 1970) 4.

we are doing it more or less together is one tiny scrap of consolation."[125] Rather than putting them in a strong and privileged position that has the potential for provoking revengeful reactions and committing more violence to act out the violence they have endured, Baxter's traumatic disruption brings the family members closer to a sense of shared vulnerability. Like the lovers in Arnold's poem, they are each other's only consolation in the unavoidable unbelief of the public space. They continue their evening sitting close to each other, holding hands, and embracing: "[N]o one wants to be alone, so they remain in the sitting room together, trapped in a waiting room, a no man's land separating their ordeal from the resumption of their lives" (228). Their trauma seems to resist telling, and "[s]udden bursts of urgent, sometimes tearful recall are broken by numb silences" (Ibid.). They try to make full sense of their trauma and work through it by telling their shared experience of the horrible event from different perspectives and realize that they are "delivered from private nightmare, and returned to the web of kindly social and familial relation, without which they're nothing. They were overrun and dominated by intruders because they weren't able to communicate and act together; now at last they can" (229). Thus, in the wake of their traumatic experience, the Perownes achieve a sense of collective identity and responsibility for finding ethical, non-violent response to their trauma. They realize how their shared sense of vulnerability moves them into a community, a larger whole that may have the potential for posing violence, but can also offer protection. At the end, they know that after they have reclaimed each other is "the promise of oblivion" (270).

The novel ends where it opens; at dawn, with Henry alone, close to the bedroom window as he is drawn by the sound of an airplane. This time, he begins another day with the uneasiness that plagued him on Saturday being resolved. Because it forces him

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[125] McEwan, "Only love and then oblivion."

to further exorcise his chauvinism and propels him out of the moral inertia he has maintained long ago, feeling for the man who terrorizes his family also ends up saving Henry from wrestling with his conscience: "He feels calm, and spacious, fully qualified to exist. It's a feeling of clarified emptiness, of deep, muted joy" (258). He feels himself "turning on a giant wheel, like the Eye on the south banks of the Thames, just about to arrive at the highest point – he's poised on a hinge of perception, before the drop, and he can see ahead calmly … from where he stands up here there are things he can see that he knows must happen" (272-273). He knows for sure that the war on Iraq is going to take place, and thereby, terrorist acts are more likely: "London, his small part of it, lies wide open, impossible to defend, waiting for its bomb, like a hundred other cities" (276). Nonetheless, the contentment that flows from his attempt to confirm his moral status, eventually, frees Henry from any worries about his future. He finds himself "in a dream of absorption that has dissolved all sense of time, and all awareness of the other parts of his life. Even his awareness of his own existence has vanished. He's been delivered into a pure present, free of the weight of the past or any anxieties about the future" (258). And the novel closes with his acknowledgment that now he has no trouble "falling towards oblivion" (279).

At the end of this elaboration on McEwan's novelistic approach to post-9/11, it can be concluded that his initial assertion about the power of imagination and empathy in the face of terror gives us some faint hope for the future. Even though characters could not sustain the political – as they fail to make a clear statement against the planned war in Iraq – *Saturday* can be read as a critique of the military response to the attacks. Broadly speaking, it seems to suggest that adopting violent actions to stamp out terrorism will only breed more violence. Henry, after the intrusion of Baxter, becomes aware of this fact and realizes his own culpability in provoking the violent denouement.

In view of that, the novel works as a warning against and a prediction of a terrorist attack similar to that of September 11. The prediction comes true as the London bombings of 7 July 2005 took place as an expression of protest against going to the war on Iraq. Moreover, even though characters could not sustain the ethical, *Saturday* could be considered as subverting the dominant, oversimplified logics that narrow down the debates about the attacks into perpetrator and victim. To break down this dichotomy, the novel suggests, we have to learn to live with the 'Other.' Rather than responding to violence with increased security and more domination, we must embrace a state of openness. Then, and only then, might we be able to end the cycle of violence and ensure a less violent post-9/11 world.

That is to say, though *Saturday* represents the best that liberal literature can offer, it is still politically and ethically limited for its incapacity to humanize the violent of our day or to settle down the contemporary world, which is compared to "a darkling plain / Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight, / Where ignorant armies clash by night" (Dover Beach, 35–37). However, this does not in the slightest belittle the significance of this novel. *Saturday* struggles to deliver a kind of utopian dreaming which expresses those fundamental human desires never fully satisfied in reality and proves to be a success in leaving a strong positive effect on readers with its attempt at safe closure that refuses to leave the traumatic wound open. And even if, in political and moral terms, it is limited, the novel's success lies in serving as a vehicle for investigating radical solutions to the dilemmas surrounding our post-9/11 world.

Chapter Three

Witnessing 9/11: Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* and the Persistence of Trauma

> Beckett is the last writer to shape the way we think and see. After him, the major work involves midair explosions and crumbled buildings. This is the new tragic narrative.
>
> Don DeLillo, *Mao II*

> The Bush Administration was feeling a nostalgia for the Cold War. This is over now. Many things are over. The narrative ends in the rubble, and it is left to us to create the counter-narrative.
>
> Don DeLillo, "In the Ruins of the Future"

> These are the days after. Everything now is measured by the after.
>
> Don DeLillo, *Falling Man*

DeLillo, throughout most of his oeuvre, has tried to come up with some prescription for a counter-narrative to be set against narratives by terrorists, media and technology. In his early novels, DeLillo drew on characters' withdrawal to small rooms as a means of creating an alternative to the commodified world of media images and terrorism. In *Americana* (1971), for example, a television-advertising executive, David Bell, embarks on a cross-country journey, partly to escape the banality of advertising and free himself

from the mass-mediated images that constitute his identity. In *End Zone* (1972), Taft Robinson withdraws from the rigors of football, a representative of the violence of organized sports and a metaphor of nuclear war, to a bleak dorm room. *Great Jones Street* (1973) revolves around the story of Bucky Wunderlick, a super-famous rock star who abandons his public persona in order to hide away in a shabby flat while preparing to release the Mountain Tapes in an attempt to find an alternative to the media's market forces. Both *Players* (1977) and *Running Dog* (1978) focus on hip city-dwellers trying to escape feelings of boredom through espionage, pornography, and terrorist activities, only to criticize the hollowness in contemporary American society. While in *White Noise* (1984) "documentary clips of calamity and death" have an addictive appeal, *Libra* (1988) raises a question about whether media is a contributing cause to violence.[1] This theme finds its fullest expression in *Mao II* (1991) which, as Douglas Keesey puts it, "expresses its author's mid-career doubts about the effectiveness of fiction in a world largely given over to the electronic media."[2] In *Underworld* (1997), DeLillo criticizes two forms of waste that define culture in the second half of the twentieth century: nuclear waste and the waste produced by mass-media capitalism. It shows how repeated playing of the homicide videotape destroys its significance. And in *Falling Man* (2007), in the face of the awkward yet surmountable predicament confronted in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks, comes DeLillo's attempt to weave his fictional counter-narrative to the attacks to encapsulate a moral post-9/11 world.

In what follows, the focus will be on examining the violence and terror in the post-9/11 world as pre-imagined in DeLillo's earlier novels; although the manifest content of his novels might be rock music, or football, or the death phobia and airborne

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[1] Don DeLillo, *White Noise* (New York: Penguin, 1999) 64. Further quotations will be cited in parenthesis.
[2] Douglas Keesey, *Don DeLillo* (New York: Twayne, 1993) 177.

toxic event, or the Kennedy assassination, or the beginning of the atomic age, a conflict-ridden landscape was always under the guises.

From Paranoia to Prophecy

Long before the attacks and their aftermath, DeLillo, dubbed "the chief shaman of the paranoid school of American fiction," would create novels that revolve around themes of violence, fanaticism, conspiracy, and terrorism.[3] He is the novelist who claims that "paranoia replaced history in American life" in the post-Cold War era.[4] Since September 11, 'paranoid,' as the word used to describe his early novels, has been replaced with 'prophetic.' As early as his first novel *Americana* (1971), DeLillo alludes to a possible future disaster at the turn of the millennium.[5] In *Great Jones Street*, he makes an indirect reference to the fall of the World Trade Center which was at the time of writing the novel still under construction.[6] And in *Ratner's Star* (1976), he seems to write of a general falling, saying that "[i]t's in the nature of objects to fall. The whole universe is falling," which could be taken to suggest that fall is in the nature of the Twin Towers as it is in the nature of the universe.[7] His later works share a preoccupation with terrorism. In *Players*, and against the background of European terrorist groups like the Baader-Meinhof gang, the Red Brigades and Weatherman, DeLillo presents a group of radicals plotting to blow up the New York Stock Exchange, making a close connection between terrorism and global capitalism: the terrorists' motto "They have money. We

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[3] Quoted in Thomas DiPietro, ed., *Conversations with Don DeLillo* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2005) 86.

[4] Quoted in Peter Knight, *Conspiracy Culture: From Kennedy to the X-Files* (London: Routledge, 2000) 226.

[5] DeLillo, *Americana* (New York: Penguin, 1989) 347-348.

[6] DeLillo, *Great Jones Street* (New York: Penguin, 1994) 209.

[7] DeLillo, *Ratner's Star* (New York: Knopf, 1976) 89.

have destruction" is giving one of the many hints in the novel about this connection.[8]

While *Players*' terrorists are real people, the terrorists in *Running Dog*, to use the words

of Glenn Scott Allen in in "Raids on the Conscious," are basically "cartoon figures in

search of a hypothetical pornographic film made in Hitler's bunker."[9] Employing

terrorism in a more complex way in *The Names* (1982), DeLillo posits a terrorist group,

the serial alphabet killers of 'Ta Onómata' whose killings "are either random or based

on an arcane understanding of a 'pre-linguistic' language, depending on what they

believe that day."[10] DeLillo continues with his concern with terrorism as his National

Book Award winner, *White Noise*, presents the idea of terrorists of "an air-crash cult

[who] will hijack a jumbo jet and crash it into the White House in an act of blind

devotion to their mysterious and reclusive leader" (*White Noise*, 146). It also presents

the "airborne toxic event" as environmental terrorism suggesting that terrorism lies

everywhere, even in nature. In *Libra*, where the C.I.A. enlists a disturbed person into a

plot against the president, DeLillo seems to propose that, as Allen puts it, "terrorism of

a bureaucratic but inherently uncontrollable nature lurks at the heart of the Kennedy

assassination."[11] The Kennedy assassination was featured in this novel, like September

11, as "the seven seconds that broke the back of the American century."[12] The only

difference between these two events is that the former can "be seen as murder that

achieves its end through the act itself," whereas the latter has "an ulterior purpose," as

Zulaika and Douglass points out.[13]

"Through the operations of a kind of reverse déjà vu," as Peter Boxall puts it in

his book on DeLillo, "it is the pressure of 2001 that exerts itself most forcefully as we

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[8] DeLillo, *Players* (London: Vintage, 1991) 107.
[9] Glenn Scott Allen, "Raids on the Conscious: Pynchon's Legacy of Paranoia and the Terrorism of Uncertainty in Don DeLillo's *Ratner's Star*," *Postmodern Culture* 4:2 (January 1994): 1-28, 1.
[10] *Ibid.*
[11] Allen, 1.
[12] DeLillo, *Libra* (New York: Viking, 1988) 181.
[13] Zulaika and Douglass, 147.

enter into [DeLillo's novels of] the 1990s."[14] Published just a decade before the attacks,

Mao II, the PEN/Faulkner Award winner, seems one of the most powerful forerunners

of the march of international terror "witnessing the birth of a borderless world governed

by a single superpower."[15] With "its threat of Middle Eastern terrorism replacing the

Cold War; its renewed appeal of cults and cults of personality; its wanted despots

gaining aura in hiding, and its terrorists intent upon media exploitation," to use the

words of Jesse Kavadlo, it is even hard to read *Mao II* with pre-9/11 eyes.[16] It is even

harder not to notice how "the novel reads now as if it is preparing, in advance, a way of

reading and articulating" the event of September 11, as Boxall remarks.[17] Indeed, in

Mao II, DeLillo, presumably, identifies the target of the attacks of September 11 and

seems to be warning readers of the inevitability of the Twin Towers collapse: "Out the

south windows the Trade towers stood cut against the night, intensely massed and near.

This is the word 'loomed' in all its prolonged and impending force" (*Mao II*, 87).

Above all, the novel deals explicitly with terrorism and provides an identifiable human

terrorist, Abu Rashid, while suggesting "the terrorist ascendancy" and "authorial

waning," where the terrorist preempts the novelist's influence on the public

consciousness by means of media narratives, to quote Kavadlo again.[18]

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[14] Peter Boxall, *Don DeLillo: The Possibility of Fiction* (London: Routledge, 2006) 157.

[15] *Ibid*., 161.

[16] Jesse Kavadlo, *Don DeLillo: Balance at the Edge of Belief* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004) 1.

[17] Boxall, 157.

[18] Kavadlo, 77. DeLillo, in *Mao II*, explores the relationship between novelists and terrorists and laments that the terrorist is supplanting the novelist's hold on the public consciousness. Bill Gray, the novelist protagonist in *Mao II*, shares this view with DeLillo: "Years ago I used to think it was possible for a novelist to alter the inner life of culture. Now bomb-makers and gunmen have taken that territory. They make raids on human consciousness" (*Mao II*, 41). He distrusts media for being responsible for facilitating the spread of terrorism and making contemporary culture indifferent to the existence of novelists. This is explained by one of the characters; "Bill has the idea that writers are being consumed by the emergence of news as an apocalyptic force … The novel used to feed our search for meaning … But our desperation has led us toward something larger and darker. So we turn to the news, which provides an unremitting mood of catastrophe. This is where we find emotional experience not available elsewhere. We don't need the novel" (Ibid., 72). "In societies reduced to blur and glut," he further adds, "terror is the only meaningful act" (Ibid., 157).

Prophetic of September 11, the cover photo of the William Dean Howells Award winner, *Underworld*, presents the Twin Towers with their upper stories shrouded in mist and a large bird making its way towards them. With this sense of anticipation of the attacks yet to come, there is a clear suggestion about what the medium of such a catastrophe might be: There is "an element of catastrophe tacit in the very fact of a flying object filled with people," one of the characters says.[19] DeLillo's first novel following the attacks, *Cosmopolis*, also reads like a pre-9/11 allegory. The novel is published in 2003, but DeLillo had completed most of the initial draft before September 2001. Although literally it took place in the pre-9/11 world, *Cosmopolis* alludes to the terrorist attacks by focusing on the downfall of a wealthy capitalist, Eric Packer, who lives in a triplex in the World Trade Center and finds his life threatened by a former wretched employee who is rendered "a helpless robot soldier" by Eric's inhuman capitalism.[20] Eventually, Packer, who represents the United States' ruthless capitalist system on a global stage, is murdered by this employee, who represents the world's poor whom the United States pushed aside, and whose name is Richard Sheets, alias 'Benno Levin,' a name that seemingly alludes to 'Bin Laden.'[21]

In view of that, one can maintain that DeLillo has been writing, in one way or another, about the yet-to-come September 11 for around three decades. From *Americana* to *Cosmopolis*, his works with their uncanny analogue with the attacks could be said to lead to the inevitable depiction of this millennial threat within his post-9/11 novel, *Falling Man*. Throughout his oeuvre, DeLillo had discussed terrorism and alluded to the destruction of the Twin Towers. Almost six years after the event, *Falling Man* comes as a consummation of his prophecy with the encounter of terrorists with the

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[19] DeLillo, *Underworld* (New York: Scribner, 1998) 88.
[20] DeLillo, *Cosmopolis* (New York: Scribner, 2004) 195.
[21] Adam Thurschwell, "Writing and Terror: Don DeLillo on the Task of Literature After 9/11," *Law & Literature* 19:2 (Summer 2007): 277-302, 280.

Twin Towers. Thus, eventually, to use Adam Begley's words, DeLillo "has exercised his right of ownership and stamped his name on 9/11 [as] he has written a powerful and direct account of the atrocity and its aftermath."[22]

Possessed by September 11 long before it took place, DeLillo seems the ideal subject to comment on the event and his role as a novelist in its aftermath. Many novelists felt the fear and anxiety that the new age of terrorists and media representation would overwhelm their artistic ability to represent convincingly the world.[23] However, DeLillo, among others, felt the urge to overtake media representations and confront the enormity of that day. Due to his own geographical closeness to the event, the tragedy that occurred at Ground Zero was shattering to DeLillo. Nevertheless, he developed a preoccupation with finding his own literary counter-narrative to the attacks, an alternative to the one adopted in the real life by his nation, the architect of the 'war on terror.' It seems that his earlier prophetic sense of September 11 not only helps him address the event objectively and be in a good place to analyze it, but also becomes an incentive for him to take further steps and think of the possibility of adopting a less violent response in the face of terrorism, one which aims to put an end to the cycle of violence.

In the following section, DeLillo's personal response to the attacks and his vision of the task of literature in their aftermath, offered in his published comments, will be discussed as the predicates that determine the mode of his post-9/11 novel.

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[22] Adam Begley, "DeLillo's 9/11 Resists Gravity," *The New York Observer* 8 May 2007, 15 November 2009 <http://www.observer.com/2007/delillo-s-9-11-resists-gravity>.
[23] James Wood, "Warning Notes from Underground," *The Guardian* 26 February 2005, 15 November 2009 <http://books.guardian.co.uk/review/story/0,,1425409,00.html>.

In the Ruins of the Future

The shock of the attacks, which DeLillo witnessed as a New Yorker, is registered in the 2001 December issue of *Harper's Magazine*. What makes his article, "In the Ruins of the Future," remarkable is not merely what it says about the attacks, but also, and most importantly, how it brings the possibility of an ethical response into question. It could be even argued that its focus on the attacks is only filtered through a concern with such response. In this manner, DeLillo seems to suggest that any attempt to represent the event's traumatic sense cannot operate exclusively on the level of the event' content (representational side) without attending to the mode of response (ethical side); hence DeLillo's alternative to post-9/11 dominant discourses. He supposes that the demand to represent the event is, at the same time, inevitably a demand for response, judgment, and affirming a correct morality.

In this article, DeLillo asserts that in the aftermath of the attacks Americans are called to reconsider the 'end of history' discourse they have dearly embraced "[w]ith the end of Communism," and reexamine the abandoned history of the United States' capitalist imperialism as the breeding ground for terrorism.[24] "In the past decade," he argues,

> the surge of capital markets has dominated discourse and shaped global consciousness. Multinational corporations have come to seem more vital and influential than governments. The dramatic climb of the Dow and the speed of the Internet summoned us all to live permanently in the future, in the utopian glow of cyber-capital, because there is no memory there and this is where markets are uncontrolled and investment potential has no limit.[25]

However, the terrorists of September 11 have already disturbed such discourse and brought back the past to the future-obsessed American culture: "We like to think that America invented the future. We are comfortable with the future, intimate with it. But

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[24] DeLillo,"In the Ruins of the Future," 40.
[25] *Ibid.*, 33.

there are disturbances now, in large and small ways, a chain of *reconsiderations*."[26]

Everything has changed after September 11, he adds, "[terrorists] have literally altered

our skyline. We have fallen back in time and space."[27] This catastrophic event,

according to DeLillo, exposes the United States' claims of autonomy and taken-for-

granted security as ideological fictions, and thereby, changes the way they think and act:

"Our world, parts of our world, have crumbled into [the 'Other's], which means we are

living in a place of danger and rage."[28] DeLillo reaches the wisdom that it is time for

Americans to acknowledge that all the advantages of the United States, especially the

advance of science and technology, are no defense in the face of those who "are willing

to die."[29] Hence, they are reminded of the futility of any similar approach in deterring

future terrorist actions. Above all, it is this same technology that provoked the attacks.

In a reference to the inextricable, yet undisclosed link between the United States'

neoliberal capitalism and its imperialist agenda, DeLillo asserts:

> The World Trade towers were not only an emblem of advanced technology but a
> justification, in a sense, for technology's irresistible will to realize in solid form
> whatever becomes theoretically allowable. Once defined, every limit must be
> reached. The tactful sheathing of the towers was intended to reduce the direct
> threat of such straight-edge enormity, a giantism that eased over the years into
> something a little more familiar and comfortable, even dependable in a way.[30]

Hence, one of the unforeseen consequences of the United States' political-economic

polices around the world is that its technological advance happened to turn against it

on September 11 in the form of "passenger jets that become manned missiles."[31]

Despite their awareness of the amount of terror plagued by the United States in the rest

of the world, according to DeLillo, Americans still seem unwilling to accept the

devastating effect of the terrorist attacks as commensurable with that terror: "We can

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[26] *Ibid.*, 39. Emphasis added.
[27] *Ibid.*, 38.
[28] *Ibid.*, 33.
[29] *Ibid.*, 34.
[30] *Ibid.*, 38.
[31] *Ibid.*.

tell ourselves that whatever we've done to inspire bitterness, distrust and rancour, it was not so damnable as to bring this day down on our heads."[32]

DeLillo has devoted the remainder of this article to pursuing the potential responses to be set against "the new tragic narrative." Contemplating the status of literature post-9/11, he puts a special emphasis on the novelist's role in weaving a fictional counter-narrative: "The [terrorists'] narrative ends in the rubble and it is left to [novelists] to create the counter-narrative."[33] It had been clear long before this event that DeLillo viewed the novelist and the terrorist as competing over the territory of public consciousness. It is, therefore, not surprising that the September 11 terrorists' "raids on the human consciousness" would prompt him to reflect more directly on the role of the novelist in the aftermath of the attacks. What he seems to insist on is that personal stories on that fateful date have to be part of any intended counter-narrative to be set against "the massive spectacle that continues to seem unmanageable, too powerful a thing to set into our frame of practiced response":[34]

> There are the doctors' appointments that saved lives, the cell phones that were used to report the hijackings. Stories generating others and people running north out of the rumbling smoke and ash. Men running in suits and ties, women who'd lost their shoes, cops running from the skydive of all that towering steel. People running for their lives are part of the story that is left to us. There are stories of heroism and encounters with dread. There are stories that carry around their edges the luminous ring of coincidence, fate, or premonition. They take us beyond the hard numbers of dead and missing and give us a glimpse of elevated being.[35]

DeLillo even proposes, as part of possible counter-discourses, stories about the event which people, in the following years to come, will invent out of "a shadow history of false memories and imagined loss" and the Internet as "shaped in part by rumour,

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[32] *Ibid.*, 34.
[33] *Ibid.*
[34] *Ibid.*, 35.
[35] *Ibid.,* 34.

fantasy and mystical reverberation."[36] It is along these lines that he outlines a program

for writing after the disaster:

> The event itself has no purchase on the mercies of analogy or simile. We have to take the shock and horror as it is ... The writer wants to understand what this day has done to us … [He] begins in the towers, trying to imagine the moment, desperately. Before politics, before history and religion, there is the primal terror. People falling from the towers hand in hand. This is part of the counter-narrative, hands and spirits joining, human beauty in the crush of meshed steel … There is something empty in the sky. The writer tries to give memory, tenderness and meaning to all that howling space.[37]

In fact, this article can be seen as the point of origin for *Falling Man* which

engages directly with the "primal terror" of the attacks. Set in the immediate aftermath

of the attacks, in New York, the novel opens with the horrors of that morning portraying

the collapse of the towers:

> [P]eople [were] running past holding towels to their faces or jackets over their heads … They ran and fell, some of them, confused and ungainly, with debris coming down around them, and there were people taking shelter under cars. The roar was still in the air, the buckling rumble of the fall. This was the world now. Smoke and ash came rolling down streets and turning corners, busting around corners, seismic tides of smoke, with office paper flashing past.[38]

The novel shifts to involve stories of those who happened to be inside the World Trade

Center and managed to survive, and traces the aftermath of this global tremor through

their intimate lives and that of people around them. Hence, the "primal terror" – the

psychological and literal falling during and after this trauma – rather than the political or

historical dimensions of the attacks is the prism through which DeLillo's characters

determined to configure their post-9/11 world. Yet, arguably, and through close analysis

of the novel, DeLillo seems to reflect dominant discourses' tendency to consider

September 11 as a persistent tragedy whose psychological repercussions will be forever

imprinted in the Americans' psyches, overlooking its historical and political contexts,

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[36] *Ibid.*, 35.
[37] *Ibid.*, 39.
[38] DeLillo, *Falling Man* (London: Picador, 2007) 3. Subsequent page references are cited parenthetically in the text.

only to criticize it. Basically, this is most evident in *Falling Man* whereby September 11 becomes a mark of total separation or further estrangement rather than a chance for renewed love and relationships between friends or members of the family, as is the case with the Perownes.

Examining DeLillo's published comments on the event and the task of literature in its aftermath, it becomes productive for this study to approach his post-9/ 11 novel from the perspective of the trauma this event has produced on characters and their responses. To that end, in what follows, *Falling Man* will be situated in the context of critical debates that problematize the United States' violent response to the attacks. This is to indicate how this novel offers, in one way or another, the same critical insight towards providing its own version of counter-terrorism.

History and Mourning in the Aftermath of September 11

The impact of September 11 places not only the task of fiction into question, but also the official counterterrorism which has arisen in its aftermath. *Falling Man* which ventures into this territory seems to be caught within the process of finding ways to cope with September 11 so that this experienced trauma can be assimilated into narratives that end the cycle of violence. Throughout the novel, retaliation on the perpetrators is a recognized impulse and a heightened sense that there is no resolution to the painful experience could be detected clearly. Yet, DeLillo can still be seen as suggesting ways for handling the trauma by reconsidering the historical and political motives for the event. Such reconsideration leads, in turn, to making sense of the event

and engaging in mourning rather than responding with "the civilized barbarism of coolly planned death."[39]

"These are the days after. Everything now is measured by after," muses DeLillo's narrator falling back on clichés which advocate that in the aftermath of September 11 Americans take their holiday from history and are only left to live in the 'after,' in the ruins of their future (138). Reflecting this point, DeLillo largely avoids contextualizing the attacks historically. Nevertheless, the novel, through the European character of Martin voiced the necessity for communion with history in overcoming such a tragedy. Martin offers an implicit call for Americans to make full sense of the event. For him, by examining some of the United States' past and present actions and attitudes, they could come to realize that the attacks have their taproots not in the American freedom and democracy or way of life. Such a realization may lead them to break free from their sense of victimization and deal with what they had endured rather than simply escaping it.

Many theorists, in fact, in the wake of September 11, have perceived an urgent need to take the past seriously. For example, Noam Chomsky, who has long been a critic of American consumerism and imperialism, argues that in the American dominant discourse on September 11 "there are, naturally, very strong temptations to ignore one's own role – which in this case, is not difficult to unearth, and indeed is familiar to everyone who has any knowledge of the region and its recent history."[40] Instead of looking into history, the United States finds that "[i]t is much easier to personalize the enemy, identified as the symbol of ultimate evil, than to seek to understand what lies behind major atrocities."[41] In the same vein, Butler laments that the dominant discourse on September 11 in the United States excludes any consideration of "history of acts that

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[39] Habermas and Derrida, 4.
[40] Noam Chomsky, *September 11*(Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2002) 37.
[41] *Ibid.*

is relevant to the self-understanding [they] form in the light of these terrible events."[42]

She explains that the United States' frame for understanding the event "works both to

preclude certain kinds of questions, certain kinds of historical enquiries, and to function

as a moral justification for retaliation."[43] The reason for this attitude, in Butler's view, is

that "to begin to tell the story a different way, to ask how things came to this, is already

to complicate the question of agency, which leads, no doubt, to fear of moral

equivocation."[44] So, in order to sustain the notion that the terrorist attacks are

inexcusable and, as a result, the United States is a blameless victim, the dominant

discourse on September 11 typically begins with the violent experience of that day

rather than placing it in a broader temporal context. In Butler's words, the United States

tends to dismiss any effort at explanation, as if to "understand the 'reasons' for the

attack on the United States … [would] 'exonerate'" those who conducted them.[45]

This exclusion of history, of the evidence of the United States' potential

implication in the attacks, is followed by its military adventures. The Bush

administration, it seems, had already put its military plans in place before any

investigation of the event and without knowing for sure who carried out the bloodshed.

In less than two years, the United States went from the fall of the Twin Towers and the

attack on the Pentagon to the bombing of Afghanistan (October 2001) and the invasion

of Iraq (March 2003) under the so-called 'war on terror.' While it seemed easier for the

United States' administration to shout for revenge than to look closely at what led up to

the atrocity of September 11, for people who suffered from the event, the 'war on terror'

has often proven no better, as commemoration has been hijacked by revenge, and the

image of death has been taken over by the image of the falling towers. Chomsky, among

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[42] Butler, *Precarious Life*, 6.
[43] *Ibid*., 4.
[44] *Ibid*., 6.
[45] *Ibid*., xiii.

the numerous thinkers who have cast doubt on the military response to September 11, argues that the United States "reacts with extreme violence, and expects to escalate the cycle of violence, leading to still further atrocities such as the one that is inciting the call for revenge."[46] From a psychological point of view, Butler sees in the American government's violent response to September 11 a resistance to mourning. According to her, mourning occurs when we accept the transformation that comes as a result of the loss we have endured.[47] To banish this process of mourning and grief altogether, the United States resorts to violence in a helpless attempt to "restore the loss or return the world to a former order, or to reinvigorate a fantasy that the world formerly was orderly," a view that results from an inadvertence to the historical taproots of the event.[48] She argues that the military action adopted in the wake of September 11 is a way to evade the process of mourning which "furnishes a sense of political community of a complex order, and it does this first of all by bringing to the fore the relational ties that have implications for theorizing fundamental dependency and ethical responsibility."[49] In order to avoid "tarrying with grief,"[50] the United States goes into "a national melancholia" or "disavowed mourning," whereby some lives are considered as valuable and grievable while others' are not, by seeking violence as a displacement activity.[51]

In view of these debates, *Falling Man*, as a potential alternative to the impulse to revenge the attacks, can be said to advance the claim that the failure to contextualize the event historically and politically renders the event a mere tragedy that resists mourning, and thus, threatens to create it anew. In what follows, the focus will be on how the

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[46] Chomsky, 26.
[47] Butler, *Precarious Life*, 21.
[48] *Ibid.*, 29-30.
[49] *Ibid.*, 22.
[50] *Ibid.*, 30.
[51] *Ibid.*, xiv.

novel, enacting dominant discourses by grounding the event in the rubbles, offers its

own counter-discourse in the face of their deviations and exaggerated effects. To this

effect, DeLillo not only breaks the public event of September 11 down to the private

sphere of the Neudeckers, recording their emotional and existential struggles, but also

evokes the sense of intrusion produced by the attacks on that sphere by means of the

novelist's aesthetic tools, denying the role of media representations and narratives in

making "raids on human consciousness."

The Waning of Media, Ascendancy of Art

Due to its theatricality, September 11 dominates the headlines and transforms into "a

narrative of spectacular images. Terrorism for the camera," as Frank Lentricchia and

Jody McAuliffe point out in *Crimes of Art and Terror*.[52] This is precisely the effect

desired by the September 11 terrorists, who sought not only to commit murder, but also

to create mass panic and hysteria through media spectacles of terror. Then, without

media, the terrorism of the attacks could have been ineffective and unable to complete

its totalitarian trajectory to saturate public consciousness with the thought of terror

leaving no sanctuary for the blessed banalities of ordinary life. But if media narratives

played an important role in the reception of the attacks, *Falling Man* seems to discount

that role in the lives of characters. Throughout his career, DeLillo had devoted himself

to narratives set against the omnipresent of media discourses. His relationship with

media culture can be mostly understood in terms of this rivalry spirit. Nevertheless, his

was a fiction that accommodated rather than expunged representations of media. To put

it another way, rather than striving for a commitment to artistic means in representing

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[52] Frank Lentricchia and Jody McAuliffe, *Crimes of Art and Terror* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003) 6.

American culture, DeLillo's novels presented narratives of media culture layered with those of artists, and by the invited extension, of novelists, in an attempt to question the possibility of fiction to have its own say in a media-saturated world. However, while his versions of American culture in the pre-9/11 era followed "the collision and collusion between image and anti-image," to follow Mark Osteen's terminology in *American Magic and Dread*, DeLillo's post-9/11 version, it will be argued, is a work where the "anti-image" overshadows the "image"; hence is his counter-discourse to dominant media narratives.[53]

Accordingly, despite being an admittedly "image-event" as described by Jean Baudrillard in *The Spirit of Terrorism and Other Essays*, September 11 is experienced in *Falling Man* differently.[54] In this novel, DeLillo taps into raw or less mediated realms of this terrorist experience. This leads us to ask the following question: Does he take September 11 as a chance to cut off the terrorist's role in affecting the public consciousness via media-circulated texts? The answer is largely yes. He is after all the author who laments the demise of the novel in the face of its media-driven terrorism.[55] Indeed, *Falling Man* can be read as DeLillo's attempt to restitute agency over terrorist events to the novelist, and thereby, reaffirm his full power and control, as a novelist, over public consciousness. If any, the role of media narratives in the lives of a group of New Yorkers, one of the survivors of the World Trade Center, Keith Neudecker, and his circles of acquaintances, is featured briefly in the novel with the focus given to fermenting anxiety than to framing perceptions of the attacks. Unlike *Saturday*, then, media is not represented as an intruder on the characters' intimate lives, or more

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[53] Mark Osteen, *American Magic and Dread: Don DeLillo's Dialogue with Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000) 25.

[54] Jean Baudrillard, *The Spirit of Terrorism and Other Essays*, trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 2003) 27.

[55] Leonard Wilcox, "Terrorism and Art: Don DeLillo's *Mao II* and Jean Baudrillard's *The Spirit of Terrorism*," *Mosaic* 39.2 (June 2006): 89-105.

precisely, September 11 does not intrude on their personal sphere via media narratives and representations, something which could be ascribed to relative closeness to the attacks as much as to DeLillo's vision of what a fictional counter-discourse should be.

As the novel unfolds, it is only in two occasions that the effect of media narratives and representations of the attacks on the characters' private lives is introduced. Lianne, Keith's wife, says that: "People I know, they read poetry to ease the shock and pain, give them a kind of space, something beautiful in language" – "to bring comfort or composure. I don't read poems. I read newspaper. I put my head in the pages and get angry and crazy" (42). She feels the compulsion to consume news, to "read newspaper profiles of the dead, every one that was printed. Not to read them, every one, was an offence, a violation of responsibility and trust. But she also read them because she had to, out of some need she did not try to interpret" (106). Watching the videotape of the hijacking planes many times, every time Lianne feels that "[t]he second plane … seemed to run beneath her skin, the fleeting sprint that carried lives and histories, theirs and hers, everyone's, into some other distance, out beyond the towers" (134). The other media victim is Lianne's nine-year-old son, Justin, who shows increasingly odd behavior. After watching TV news about the attacks, he starts speaking in a monosyllabic code indecipherable to adults, which could be a reference to media's monologic mode of representation. Scanning the skies with Keith's binoculars for more planes, he refused to admit that the towers actually came down after being hit because he is convinced that the planes are coming back and then 'Bill Lawton' – a mishearing of 'Bin Laden' – will make the towers come down. Hence, his media-saturated consciousness seems stuck in the horror of the attacks. Lianne "couldn't locate the menace she felt, listening to him. His repositioning of events frightened her in

unaccountable way" (102) and "the thought of [him] at the window, with the door closed, searching the skies, continued to disturb her" (74).

Through these two characters, DeLillo seems to suggest that, as a media phenomenon, the attacks become part of a generalized everyday fear especially for Americans whose country was its target, and, more specifically, for New Yorkers who found themselves just a few sound bites away from the site of violence. The fact that media coverage, during and after the attacks, was near constant added to the psychological strain and made them live in forever insecurity. Crucially, in his *Harper's* essay, he further states that the event has been amplified in media narratives to create such effect: "The raw event was one thing, the coverage another."[56] That is why, confronted with media's maintained exclusive hold on the truth of the attacks, DeLillo presents art as a substitute frame of perception, for art remains the only hope for resisting media representation and narratives on terrorism.[57] Hence, aside from the fact that the event itself is regarded by some, among whom is Žižek, as "the ultimate work of art," which justifies why it might be appropriated through artistic means, DeLillo is not willing to surrender to media any part of the authority previously accorded to it.[58] He seems to oppose the incessant movement of contemporary technology with the nostalgia for older and slower forms of attention. He is equally determined on reflecting how characters, the consumers of the September 11 trauma, are only acquainted with the uses of the pause and replay buttons. This is granted by drawing on the paintings of Giorgio Morandi, one of the most admired Italian painters of the twentieth century, with his often-used title "*Natura morta*. The Italian term for still life," and the performance artist. (12, emphasis in original) In addition to their expressive possibilities in reflecting the terror of the attacks, these artistic tools enabled DeLillo to mirror the paralyzing

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[56] DeLillo, "In the Ruins of the Future," 38.
[57] Wilcox.
[58] Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real* (London: Verso, 2002) 11.

effects of the attacks on the American culture that become entangled in their memory. They also signify the characters' experience of September 11 as rupture in history, a moment of historical rupture when everything stops and is irretrievably altered.[59] Indeed, 'Still Lifes' and performance art play a central role in the retention of the memory of the attacks; they retain the capacity to arrest the event and return it in its entirety. Hence, the novel and the subject of this novel aspire to the condition of the cover's still photograph of the falling man in which the event appears to stand still, a monument of September 11 memories.

In view of that, still and moving artistic forms become memory; they replace characters' memories of the attacks, becoming those memories. They shape memory in fundamentally different ways. In their arrest of time, still artistic forms carry a particular power to invoke what had happened on September 11. Their very stillness allows them to be an evidence of death in their capacity to conjure the presence of the absent towers. This is evidenced in the novel as the Twin Towers are said to preoccupy some of the characters through Morandi's 'Still Lifes.' Looking for the first time after the attacks at this painting of bottles and other kitchen objects on her mother's wall, Lianne feels that "there was something in the brushstrokes that held a mystery she could not name, or in the irregular edges of vases and jars, some reconnoiter inward, human and obscure" (Ibid.). Yet, she refuses to restrict it to a specific reading: "Let the latent meanings turn and bend in the wind, free from authoritative comment" (Ibid.). It is only later that she comes to realize that this painting reminds her of the Twin Towers. Martin, a European art dealer and her mother's lover, also keeps "seeing the towers in this still life" (49). Describing this painting, he says: "Two of the taller items were dark and somber, with

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[59] It has been argued that DeLillo's respect of high modernist art has been a constituent part of his work; See John Coyle, "Don DeLillo, Aesthetic Transcendence and the Kitsch of Death," *European Journal of American Culture* 26.1 (2007): 27-39. But in *Falling Man*, it seems, he makes a complete 'retro-modernist' gesture by his recourse to art alone in his depiction of September 11 and its aftermath.

smoky marks and smudges, and one of them was partly concealed by a long-necked bottle" (Ibid.). Although Lianne's mother, Nina, rejects that kind of interpretation, she can still think of the vulnerability and mortality of both the towers and falling bodies whenever looking at the same painting. She even decides to keep the memory of that horrible day alive: "I think these pictures are what I'll look at when I've stopped looking at everything else. I'll look at bottles and jars. I'll sit here looking" (111). As such, in their constant re-inscription of the Twin Towers, these objects project a time in which the towers stand still yet are charged with the meaning of their loss. Hence, 'Still Lifes,' to use Eduardo Cadava's phrase in *Words of Light,* become "the uncanny tomb" of the memory of the attacks in general, and the memory of the towers in particular.[60]

Though still artistic forms are crucial to reflect characters' tangled memories of the attacks, it could be argued that these memories also take the form of a repetition, a reenactment of the event which seems to have an aura of infinity and sorrow. Evoking a fixed moment in September 11, which is in itself considered as "performance art with political designs," the performance artist, whose primary elements of memorialization are repetition and reenactment, seems to prompt characters' memory of people who fell or threw themselves from the towers.[61] Indeed, on several occasions in the novel, Lianne is haunted by the appearances of the performance artist, David Janiak, also known as Falling Man, who appears unannounced around New York in the weeks following September 11. Dressed like a businessman, he leaps from high places only to be caught by a safety harness and ends up suspended upside down in order to "[bring] it back, of course, those stark moments in the burning towers when people fell or were forced to jump" (33). In particular, the position he assumes during the fall – headfirst,

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[60] Eduardo Cadava, *Words of Light: Theses on the Photography of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998) 11.
[61] Stanley Hauerwas and Frank Lentricchia, eds., *Dissent from the Homeland: Essays after September 11* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003) 102.

arms at his sides, one leg bent – reflects that of one of the employees of the Windows on the World restaurant who was photographed falling from the North Tower of the World Trade Center (221). Upon seeing the photograph of this falling man, the narrator tells us that a hole is burned in Lianne's mind and heart (222). And upon seeing the performance artist falling from a maintenance platform as the train went past, the shock of the scene makes her feel "doubled over" (169). It brings to her mind visions of her husband, his friends and all those who were inside the World Trade Center on September 11.

Notably, in his recourse to art, DeLillo, who believes in the "redemptive quality of fiction" for "art is one of the consolation prizes we receive for having lived in a difficult and sometimes chaotic world. We seek pattern in art that eludes us in natural experience," does not aim to rescue characters from their confusions, but rather to reflect them.[62] Sentimentalized and politicized representations and narratives were what media trying to create post-9/11, and against that, it seems, DeLillo wishes for reflecting a patterned, balanced world through the artful representation of the attacks. This is expressed clearly through the performance done by the Falling Man which eludes the audience and Lianne alike. In a panel discussion which Lianne reads about online, academics of The New School cannot decide whether the Falling Man is a "Heartless Exhibitionist or Brave New Chronicler of the Age of Terror" (220). Arguably, he seems to be, like this novel, an artistic attempt to represent and express the terror of the attacks. As Sam Anderson puts it, he is "a neat symbol of the problem of the very existence of 9/11 art … Too painful? Suitably reverent? Exploitative? Healing or wounding? Which should we prefer? And what can art possibly add to an event we've

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[62] Anthony DeCurtis, "'An Outsider in This Society': An Interview with Don DeLillo," in *Conversations with Don DeLillo*, ed. Thomas DePietro (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2005) 52-74, 47.

already experienced and reexperienced so often?"[63] Moreover, the novel is also similar to this performance artist in the sense that it is not about one particular person who fell from the towers. Rather, it is about bodies falling during September 11, and most importantly, those falling, psychologically speaking, in its aftermath. It is about the damaging effect of such a tragedy on its characters' psychological, emotional, and spiritual states, and its deteriorating effects on their personal lives and relationships.

Still Life: 9/11's Falling Bodies

As promised in his *Harper's* essay, DeLillo's post-9/11 novel is mainly interested in reflecting "the primal terror" that seems to persist in the mind of the American characters even in the years to come. Indeed, *Falling Man*, which takes its name from the photograph of a falling man, frozen in midair, shows the impact of the public trauma of September 11 on the ordinary lives of characters; how after witnessing the sheer horror or watching it unfolded on television, they fail to cope with or recover from its emotional, psychological and spiritual repercussions. Also, it is about how characters' interpersonal relationships break under the weight of their post-9/11 world. As the novel suggests, the Neudeckers are separated for a year and a half before the attacks but not divorced. Keith "comes out of an ash storm, all blood and slag, reeking of burnt matter, with pinpoint glints of silvered glass in his face … with a gaze that had no focus in it" (87). He returns to his wife and son, it seems, in order to feel himself alive again as well as to create a feeling of security amidst chaos. It is a moment emblematic of the emotional transformation that September 11 brings about, what can be called the alertness and connectedness that followed the initial encounter with death. At first, it

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[63] Sam Anderson, "Code Red," *New York Books* 23 October 2007, 20 May 2010 <http://nymag.com/arts/books/features/31521/>.

seems that their marriage may be newly possible; however, their post-9/11 pursuits pull them apart. They are already estranged from each other before they suffer this trauma, and the event does not repair them or bring out their noblest sides; rather, it estranged them further. From the beginning, in fact, the novel alludes to the fact that, like their nation, this couple will long suffer from what has just happened. As a doctor treats Keith for his physical wounds, he explains how survivors of suicide bombings sometimes "develop bumps … and it turns out this is caused by small fragments, tiny fragments of the suicide bomber's body … they get wedged, they get trapped in the body of anybody who's in striking range … They call this organic shrapnel" (16). Although he does not suffer from such bodily marks, it seems that Keith carries a psychological version of organic shrapnel that will distress him and those around him for so long.

Watching the videotape of the planes with Lianne, Keith comments: "It still looks like an accident, the first one. Even from this distance, way outside the thing, how many days later, I'm standing here thinking it's an accident" (135). This portends how he is still shocked and unable to believe that the crashing of the first plane into the North Tower was not an accident. His experience of having been in that tower when it was first struck altered his sense of self and the life he is intending to live in the ensuing days. Before the planes, "[h]e used to want to fly out of self-awareness, day and night, a body in raw motion," but after the planes, he is "going slow, easing inward", and "he finds himself drifting into spells of reflection, thinking not in clear units, hard and linked, but only absorbing what comes, drawing things out of time and memory and into some dim space that bears his collected experience" (66). After a period of recuperation, recovering from the physical trauma experienced on that horrible day, Keith tries to resume his domestic routine with his family, but he feels that "[n]othing seemed

familiar, being here, in a family again, and he felt strange to himself, or always had, but it was different now because he was watching" (65). Thus, it seems that he is not yet ready to sink into his family life.

As a direct contrast to the inconsistency Keith feels in his relationship with his family after September 11, it makes sense that a relationship with another survivor rooted in compassion and solidarity will help him cope with his trauma more easily. Indeed, he has an affair with Florence Givens, one of the event's survivors whose briefcase he unwittingly carried out of the tower. His relationship with Florence is based on "what they knew together, in the timeless drift of the long spiral down" rather than the "erotic pleasure" they took from each other (137). All he needs from this relationship is "to hear what he'd lost [from the grim experience they both shared] in the tracings of memory" (91). However, it does not even fulfill that purpose. Florence repeatedly goes over the events of that day and tells Keith everything about her escape from the tower. He listens carefully, notes every detail, but fails to locate himself in her narration of the memories of moving down the stairwell in the same tower where he was. It seems that his trauma does not find a means of expression. He is still unable to make sense of his traumatic experience or explore the pain and rage associated with it. In this sense, he seems to reflect the "paradox" that Cathy Caruth refers to in "Traumatic Awakenings"; "that the most direct seeing of a violent event may occur as an absolute inability to know it, that immediacy, paradoxically, may take the form of belatedness."[64] For Florence, one should mourn the dead, but, at the same time, should accept death as the law of God. Making a reference to the September 11 terrorists, she adds: "Those men who did this thing" – "They're anti everything we stand for. But they believe in God" (90). By that, she chooses to work though her grief; to mourn properly

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[64] Cathy Caruth, "Traumatic Awakenings," in *Violence, Identity and Self-Determination*, eds. Hent De Vries and Samuel Weber (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997) 208-222, 208.

for the trauma she has endured and accept that what happened cannot be cured but through mourning. Keith, in contrast to her, rejects the idea of mourning wholly. As a result, his traumatism escalates, and he no longer feels the need to relate to Florence. Perhaps he needs to dwell more in his melancholia and she does not seem to belong there anymore. As a result, he decides to sever this relationship.

Even more to the point is that Keith is waiting for a chance to act out the violence he has endured and repressed on September 11. In this sense, he seems to identify with his nation's aggressive attitude in response to the attacks. That is why he resorts to violent actions like attacking a man for no reason or going to the gym to discharge that negative energy he has since the attacks. He becomes used to setting his body against the rowing machine, "a sleek dumb punishing piece of steel and cable" (226). What is more, he feels that he wants to kill someone because "there was something that had to be satisfied, a matter discharged in full, and … this was at the heart of his relentlessness" (214). Only then, can he come back home and be in a family again. Hence, without killing other people, without doing other people what has been done to him, Keith thinks that he cannot return to his family as a real husband and father – as if before the attacks he was a real one. Until then, he cannot do anything permanently; neither stay with his son and wife always, nor stay away all the time. In this way, one can understand that his violent responses are not guided by logic, but occur for the sake of psychic stabilization.

As for Lianne, seemingly, the September 11 attacks affected her more than any other character in this novel: "[Keith was] the one in the tower but [she] was the berserk" (215). Her mind is running without a stop as she is burdened with what she read and saw about that horrible day. She could not escape the menace of "[u]nattended packages," or that of "lunch in a paper bag, or the subway at rush hour, down there, in

sealed boxes" that plagues the whole country and threatens to spell the outbreak of another attack (127). What is more, suddenly, Islam is everywhere and she is frightened and angered by its omnipresence. She grows frustrated, in particular, with a downstairs neighbor who repeatedly and loudly plays "music located in Islamic tradition," perhaps a version of the Qawwali music celebrated in *Cosmopolis* (67). For her, this music is a terrible mark of insensitivity. Like her husband, she does not mourn her trauma. Rather, she is waiting for a chance to act it out, and she does so by physically assaulting this innocent neighbor. The attacks also make her feel the impulse to investigate her mother's lover's real name and job: "She wanted to punish her mother but not for Martin or not just for that. It was nearer and deeper and finally about one thing only … who they were, the fierce clasp, like hands bound in prayer, now and evermore" (148). So, it seems that what Lianne broods over is the realization that her mother's longtime lover, Martin, whose real name is Ernst Hechinger, might have secret links with the September 11 hijackers. He belonged once to some sort of a European revolutionary group in the late nineteen sixties, a terrorist from the world of DeLillo's *Players* and *The Names*. And like George Haddad, a representative of a Middle Eastern terrorist group in *Mao II*, who sympathizes "with their aims if not their means" (*Mao II*, 128), Martin seems to sympathize with the motives of the September 11 terrorists. He thinks that they "have something in common with the radicals of the sixties and seventies. He thinks they're all part of the same classical pattern. They have their theorists. They have their visions of world brotherhood" (*Falling Man*, 147).

Keith's unexpected return, as one of the results of September 11, also confuses Lianne as it remains unexplained. His return to home does not so much heal an old wound as much as simply adds a new one, for their marriage must now accommodate his incommunicable memories of the drifting trauma he has suffered. Upon his return,

Keith manages not to talk a lot to her, or even tell her anything about his experience on that fateful day: He is "the man who would not submit to her need for probing intimacy, overintimacy, the urge to ask, examine, delve, draw things out, trade secrets, tell everything" (105). After September 11, she lives with him in the spirit of what is ever impending and feels that "he seemed on the verge of saying something, a sentence fragment, that was all, and it would end everything between them" (103). The implication here is that it is the event that turned her life upside down, though this is not really the case. Her anxiety is not justified as, before the attacks, they were already separated and each one has his own life, so nothing much really changed, as they claim, after the attacks.

In addition, September 11, the most recent trauma in Lianne's life, has stirred up old memories and exacerbate feelings related to a previous trauma. It plays as a trigger that activates her traumatic memory and leads her to be haunted by memories of the death of her father, who committed suicide before his own developing dementia would overtake him (40). This left Lianne with the palpable dread that she too will face the same tragic fading of this disease. As a result, she indulges more in her work with Alzheimer patients: "These people were the living breath of the thing that killed her father" (62). According to some of these patients, the attacks are but God's plan, and thus, revenge on the terrorists who are presumably responsible is something impossible. Theirs is a view that goes in line with Florence's, but which goes directly against Lianne's supposition. Clearly, Lianne resists mourning properly and decides to disbelieve because "[d]isbelief was the line of travel that led to clarity of thought and purpose … God would crowd her, make her weaker. God would be a presence that remained unimaginable" (65). As a result, she becomes unwilling to take on further groups of patients as she realizes that this does not give her the same comfort she used

to feel before the attacks. After the planes, it seems that her voluntary work only increases intimations of her own growing psychological frailty. Eventually, Lianne seeks some sort of spiritual relief by going to the church. Although this might suggest an effective strategy which promises the possibility of an eventual recovery from her trauma, it proves to be only a despairing wish to withdraw from her unstable world. In other words, Lianne likes sitting in the church but she is still stuck with her doubts. She does what other people in the mass do but fails to respond as they do when the priest recites lines from the liturgy. The best she can embrace is that "God is the voice that says 'I am not here'" (236). Consequently, she fails to attend to the state of spiritual awareness that might bring the peace to her post-9/11 existence.

Hence, the alienation of DeLillo's characters in the aftermath of the attacks is not only at the political or historical or religious levels. Above all, their alienation is existentialist. The novel's reference to Søren Kierkegaard, the father of existentialism, makes this interpretation more plausible. More to the point is that this philosopher gives Lianne "a danger, a sense of spiritual brink" for she sees herself in his remark "*The whole of existence frightens me*" which, as the narrator reads, "made her feel that her thrust into the world was not the slender melodrama she sometimes thought it was" (118, emphasis in original).[65] Florence, Alzheimer patients, and the September 11 terrorists, in this sense, represent the antithesis of Lianne and Keith, cultivating a more abiding approach to their existence and non-existence in the face of our myopic world.

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[65] See for example, Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death: a Christian Psychological Exposition for Edification and Awakening*, trans. Alastair Hannay (New York: Penguin, 1989); See also, Kierkegaard, *Three Discourses on Imagined Occasions*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

The Eclipsed Reality and the Prevailing Tragedy

DeLillo, in his *Harper's* essay, says that what matters in the novelistic counter-narrative to September 11 is not history or politics, but the effect of such tragedy on intimate lives. However, politics and history are layered in his novel. They feature in the private sphere of characters and are broached through their discussions. Each of them espouses a different perspective on why the terrorist attacks happened. Nina, for example, is not interested at all in expanding her understanding of the event. In Butler's words, she "tend[s] to dismiss any effort at explanation, as if to explain these events would accord them rationality … involve us in a sympathetic identification with the oppressor … [and] involve building a justificatory framework for them."[66] For her, there is no excuse for the attacks, and al-Qaeda terrorists, whose mentality and religion led them to killing the innocent, are solely responsible for the event. She also believes "[i]t's not the history of Western interference that pulls down these societies. It's their own history, their mentality. They live in a closed world, of choice, of necessity. They haven't advanced because they haven't wanted to or tried to" (47). With her failure to make any connection with the relevant past in her interpretation of the event, Nina considers it as "a viral infection. A virus [that] reproduces itself outside history" (113). It seems that, like all the American characters in this novel, she is imprisoned in the present. In contrast, the European Martin, with his non-American perception of the event, argues that the hijackers "want their place in the world, their own global union, not ours … and it's rational" (116). He believes that the attacks are "a blow to this country's dominance … to show how a great power [that interferes and occupies] can be vulnerable" (46). He tries to convince Nina that religion is not what stands behind the attacks, and that, to use Žižek's words, "instead of endless analyses of how Islamic 'fundamentalism' is

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[66] Butler, *Precarious Life*, 8.

intolerant towards our liberal societies, and other 'clash-of-civilization' topics, we should refocus our attention on … the clash of *economic* interests, and of the geopolitical interests of the United States itself."[67] By saying this, Martin offers an interpretation similar to that of Bin Laden, the one accused of being the architect of the hijacking of the World Trade Center: "The 11 September attacks were not targeted at women and children. The real targets were America's icons of military and economic power."[68] In one of his discussions with Lianne, Martin encourages her to come up with a broader explanation of the event: "study the matter. Stand apart and think about the elements … Coldly, clearly if you're able to. Do not let it tear you down … Measure it. Let it teach you something" (42).

Notably, in spite of its singularity in a novel pervaded by the American's perception of the event, the presence of Martin is very powerful. It seems that it is his task in the novel as a terrorist, a witness (but not a member) of the American society and, most importantly, an art dealer, to change the nature of that society and damn the consequences. The societal alteration he hopes to elicit is a return to history. He addresses the cycle of oppression; how the oppressed become the oppressor, and actively participate in this cycle. In this context, he articulates the link between American foreign policy and the widespread anti-American feeling that has erupted in international terrorism. His first impression after the attacks was "[n]othing seems exaggerated anymore. Nothing amazes me" (41). He is convinced that, to use Arendt's words, "nothing altogether new and totally unexpected can happen, nothing but the 'necessary' results of what we already know."[69] In the words of Baudrillard, he shows "prodigious jubilation at seeing this global superpower destroyed – better, at seeing it,

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[67] Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*, 42. Emphasis in original.
[68] Osama Bin Laden, "Muslims have the right to attack America," *The Observer* 11 November 2001, 6 December 2009 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2001/nov/11/terrorism.afghanistan1>.
[69] Arendt, 28.

in a sense, destroying itself, committing suicide in a blaze of glory" because "it is that superpower which, by its unbearable power, has fomented all this violence which is endemic throughout the world."[70] That is to say, the system which is accustomed to exercise violence against other nations should expect a backlash. Martin believes that Americans are not yet ready to admit the extent of their nation's complicity in the circumstances that encouraged international terrorism. Neither are they convinced that their nation's wealth and technological advance have never been a defense against terrorist interventions and may even be said to invite them. Echoing Baudrillard who argues that the Twin Towers were built only to be targets for terrorism, in one of the discussions with Nina, Martin remarks:[71]

> Weren't the towers built as fantasies of wealth and powers that would one day become fantasies of destruction? You build a thing like that so you can see it come down. The provocation is obvious. What other reason would there be to go so high and then to double it, do it twice? It's a fantasy, so why not do it twice? You are saying, Here is it, bring it down. (116)

This goes, again, in parallel with the words of Arendt, who noted that "power cannot be measured in terms of wealth, that an abundance of wealth may erode power, [and] that riches are particularly dangerous to the power and well-being of republics."[72] As a result of arrogance and wealth, "[s]oon the day is coming when nobody has to think about America except for the danger it brings," says Martin (191). His critical role in the novel suggests that to consider September 11 without a reference to history is ineffective and ultimately despairing. Americans, in his view, would be advised to develop some form of rapprochement with the past in order to understand the attacks, to be able to accept their losses, and to avoid another terrifying eruption of violence.

However, it appears that the tendency to slip into exaggeration is not limited to the Bush Administration for whom September 11 is an attack on civilization,

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[70] Baudrillard, 4-5.
[71] See Baudrillard, "Requiem for the Twin Towers," in *The Spirit of Terrorism and Other Essays*, 35-48.
[72] Arendt, 10-11.

democracy, and freedom, all of which defended by the 'war on terror,' but it also extends its reach to the majority of Americans.[73] This is confirmed by the fact that none of the characters is convinced of Martin's views. His contention as to the actual nature of the attacks is dismissed by Nina and Lianne, and quickly forgotten – even Nina's response was to break up with him because of his non- even anti-American analysis of the event. They are still of the opinion that it is neither necessary nor appropriate to put oneself into the minds of the September 11 terrorists or even look for concrete causes, motives and backgrounds for the event. This is because, to put it in the words of Chomsky, "[i]t is much easier to personalize the enemy, identified as the symbol of ultimate evil, than to seek to understand what lies behind major atrocities." According to them, the terrorist attacks involve a struggle of cultures. Justice is not the issue, and neither are the legitimate rights of oppressed people; it is purely a matter of the desire to kill. They still believe that the attacks are not politically or historically motivated. Consequently, it seems that the post-9/11 "reconsiderations" which DeLillo promises in his *Harper's* essay, and which Martin advocates, do not seem to have led to a renewed historical or political consciousness in his characters. They go even a step further and show no response to or criticism of their country's declared 'war on terror.' This is confirmed in the novel where the light sketching of the march against the war on Iraq is only meant to indicate that it does not feature in the characters' consciousness. Three years after the planes, when Lianne and Justin come across the anti-war march, Lianne does not feel involved in the occasion (181). She feels that all these people are "shit-faced fools to be gathered in this heat and humidity for whatever it was that had brought them here" (182). This signifies DeLillo's characters' tendency to marginalize "anti-war

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[73] See the speech of President Bush on the day of the attacks in "President Bush to address nation," *BBC NEWS* 11 September 2001, 11 December 2009 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/1537613.stm>; See also, Colin Powell in an "Interview by BBC," *U.S. Department of State* 21 September 2001, 11 December 2009 <http://www.state.gov/secretary/former/powell/remarks/2001/5004.htm>.

sentiment and analysis," to use Butler's words, and implicitly approve of their nation's violent response to the attacks.[74] In the light of Butler's analysis of the resistance to mourning, they think of revenge as the only accepted form of response that would ensure their security, help them restore "a former order" and avoid the painful process of mourning. In other words, they do not go beyond reenacting the Bush Administration's approach to the attacks.

Though not carrying any seal of approval, neither from DeLillo nor from his American characters, Martin's views on September 11, it might be argued, represent, in one way or another, those of the authorial persona. This is to say that DeLillo seems to show some kind of tacit assent with Martin's concerns. In this way, he intends his to be an outsider's views. He adopts this approach, it seems, in order to enable us examine his views from a more distant position, with the effect that this approach would result in supposed objectivity; that is, readers and other participants in the novel can choose to accept, contest, reinterpret and challenge that authorial position. In part, perhaps, DeLillo's distanced approach is indicative of his deep awareness of the potential insensitivity his views, or Martin's, might bear. In this way, he would be able to realign himself politically and avoid the charge of "bad citizenship."[75] Linking Martin with a terrorist group also seems to serve this purpose as it works to veil any notion that his views identified with DeLillo's. In addition, this linkage serves to develop DeLillo's reenactment approach as, in the aftermath of the tragedy, anyone who voices any objection or skepticism to the official explanation of the attacks will be considered as a natural ally to terrorism, if not a terrorist himself. This brings us ultimately to settle on

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[74] Butler, *Precarious Life*, 3.
[75] Quoted in David Cowart, *Don DeLillo: The Physics of Language* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2002) 110. George Will, in his article "Shallow Look at the Mind of an Assassin," accused DeLillo of 'bad citizenship' because of his skepticism of the official explanation of the Kennedy assassination in *Libra*. In *Falling Man*, DeLillo tries to avoid causing a similar political offence; George Will, "Shallow Look at the Mind of an Assassin," in *Critical Essays on Don DeLillo*, eds. Hugh Ruppersburg and Tim Engles (New York: G.K. Hall, 2000) 56-57.

the explanation, offered in "The Waning of Media, Ascendancy of Art" section of this chapter, which suggests that *Falling Man* is like the performance artist in the sense that DeLillo's representation of September 11 and its aftermath is a sort of reenactment of what had already happened. However, it is not far-fetched to infer that DeLillo intends by this approach to criticize from within the American culture infested with the negation of history and mourning. Indeed, in this novel DeLillo portrays a group of Americans who, in the aftermath of the attacks, fell prey to their sense of victimization in order to criticize more sharply the culture that gives rise to such a feeling in spite of its own potential complicity with the terrorist attacks. "Here, as in virtually all of his work," in Osteen's words,

> DeLillo imitates the discourses he aims to deconstruct and thereby generates a *dialogue* with those cultural forms that both criticizes their consequences and appropriates their advantages. In short, DeLillo's critique emerges not from Dedalian exile but more cunningly from within the culture itself.[76]

A Curious Knot: Terrorists, Survivors, and Artists

As if it were not enough to tell the novel from the viewpoint of those who survived the attacks and Martin, DeLillo has one of the hijackers to tell the story from his own perspective. In an interview with Melissa Block, DeLillo says that "he didn't want to write about a terrorist, particularly since it involved the deaths and injuries to real people in a city [he] loves."[77] However, at the same time, DeLillo contends: "I also felt a sense of what we might call 'novelistic responsibility'… I didn't think I could tell the entire story without the presence of at least one of the men – or a fictional version of

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[76] Osteen, "Becoming Incorporated: Spectacular Authorship and DeLillo's *Mao II*," *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 45.3 (Fall 1999): 643-674, 644. Emphasis added.
[77] Melissa Block, "'Falling Man' Maps Emotional Aftermath of Sept. 11," *All Things Considered*, National Public Radio 20 June 2007, 18 March 2011
<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=11223451>.

one of the men – who was involved in those attacks."[78] Indeed, DeLillo goes back in time to introduce the terrorists themselves building towards the attacks. He does so mainly through a fictional terrorist called Hammad, much influenced by the more real terrorist and leader, Amir (Muhammad Atta). In three brief sections, the novel traces the experiences of Hammad from a training camp in Afghanistan, to the Hamburg cell of the plotters, to his arrival in Florida to seek pilot training and eventually to his position behind the cockpit on the flight that destroys the building where Keith was working. It also describes some fellow terrorists and how they look and think: "They were all growing beards" (79). Gathering in small rooms, they discuss their motivations for the attacks: "Everything [in the Western world] was twisted, hypocrite, the West corrupt of mind, and body, determined to shiver Islam down to bread crumbs for birds … Islam is the struggle against the enemy, near enemy and far, Jews first, for all things unjust and hateful, and then the Americans" (79-80). What further nurses their resentment is that, as Muslims, "[t]here was the feeling of lost history. They were crowded out by other cultures, other futures, the all-enfolding will of capital markets and foreign policies" (80). Highlighting the helplessness of the United States' technological advantages in the face of their determination to complete their mission, one of the terrorists asserts:

> The state has ground stations and floating satellites, Internet exchange points. There is photo reconnaissance that takes a picture of a dung beetle from one hundred kilometers up. But we encounter face to face … in the flat or in the mosque. The state has fiber optics but power is helpless against us. The more powerful, the more helpless. We encounter through eyes, through word and look. (81)

Predominantly then, the fact that the United States is blinded by its technological superiority is what serves their end most perfectly.

What is more, the novel brings us inside the mind of Hammad. Focusing on his inner thoughts, DeLillo seems to underscore the ascendancy of the group's mentality at

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[78] *Ibid.*

the expense of its members' individuality, which is at the core of the September 11 terrorists' mission. Hammad appears, at the beginning, as a man more confused than anything. He wavers between the religious directions of his teacher, Amir, and the secular longings he felt in the Western world. He moves from fanaticism to normality and back again in a moment. Rebuked by Amir for having a German girlfriend, Hammad feels that "[h]e had to fight against the need to be normal. He had to struggle against himself, and then against the injustice that haunted their lives" (83). That is why his girlfriend "would begin to exist as an unreliable memory, then finally not at all" (Ibid.). Furthermore, Hammad struggles with profound doubts about his commitments as he prepares for the attacks. He raises the question as to "does a man have to kill himself in order to accomplish something in the world?" to which Amir responds that they were born to this fate and that this is by no means suicide (174). "What about the others, those who will die?" Hammad further asks, to which Amir's answer is simply that "there are no others. The others exist only to the degree that they fill the role we have designed for them. This is their function as others. Those who will die have no claim to their lives outside the useful fact of their dying" (176). Typical of his easily-led nature, Hammad is convinced by his leader's logic: The conflict between Amir's teachings that aim to tear down his sense of self to replace it with the terrorist group's identity, and his longing for normalcy continues to grow until the former seems to have the upper hand. This is symbolized by the scene which depicts Hammad sitting in a barber chair. Looking in the mirror, he comes to recognize that "he was not here. It was not him" (175). It seems that he decides to sacrifice his own individuality and sense of self to fit in with the terrorist group's ideals for "there were rules now and he was determined to follow them. His life had structure. Things were clearly defined. He was becoming one of them now, learning to look like them and think like them. This was

inseparable from jihad … They were becoming total brothers" (83). The closer

September 11 gets, the more Hammad's doubts about the role he is intended to play are

shattered. In the training camp in Afghanistan, "[h]e wore a bomb vest and knew he was

a man now, finally ready to close the distance to God" (172). Thus, he becomes more

focused on the mission. Looking at Americans, he muses, those people "need to be

ashamed of their attachment to life … what they hold so precious we see as empty space

… We are willing to die, they are not. This is our strength, to love death, to feel the

claim of armed martyrdom" (177-178). Even at the zero hour scene of the attacks,

where Hammad is guarding the door to the cockpit as the hijacked plane is to make its

final approach to the North Tower, we are told that "[h]e was not confused, only

catching a breath, taking a moment" (237). His final thoughts are those of gratitude that

he is, eventually, able to die with his brothers in the manner of his "pious ancestors"

(239).

At first consideration, it seems that DeLillo tries, through the passages that

concentrate on Hammad and his fellows, to inhabit the September 11 terrorists' minds

and read their inner thoughts. However, in most ways his attempt does not go beyond

being a version of the stereotypes that Western dominant discourses have perpetuated

and propagated since September 11 about those terrorists. This interprets how one can

read the passages, presumably narrated from the point of view of terrorists, as rather

reflecting the perspective of those victimized by the attacks. In this sense, DeLillo's

attempt to give the terrorist a voice is not intended to counteract the sense of

victimization that permeates the American characters and their lives by bringing insight

into the motivations behind the attacks. This takes us back to the explanation, pointed

out earlier, according to which *Falling Man* is envisioned as a reenactment of the

attacks and their aftermath, more precisely, the 'war on terror' rhetoric. That is why,

DeLillo looks justified in retaining his disinterestedness as to the September 11

terrorists' motives except for the strong relationship that hold them closely together:

"[t]hey were strong willed, determined to become one mind. Shed everything but the

men you are with. Become each other's running blood" (83). Their motivations for

attacking the World Trade Center are neither political nor historical, but rather related to

their sense of obligation to each other:

> They felt things together, [Hammad] and his brothers. They felt the claim of
> danger and isolation. They felt the magnetic effect of plot. Plot drew them
> together more tightly than ever. Plot closed the world to the slenderest line of
> sight, where everything converges to a point. There was the claim of fate, that
> they were born to this. There was the claim of being chosen, out there, in the
> wind and sky of Islam. There was the statement that death made, the strongest
> claim of all, the highest jihad. (174)

This is what DeLillo further confirmed in his interview with Mark Binelli:

> I did not want to write a novel that had a great deal of political sweep. With the
> terrorist, I wanted to trace the evolution of one individual's passage from an
> uninvolved life to one that becomes deeply committed to a grave act of terror …
> With Hammad, I wanted to try to imagine how a man might begin as a secular
> individual and then discover religion, always through the power of deep
> companionship with other men. This is the force that drives him. Ultimately it's
> not religion, it's not politics and it's not history. It's a kind of blood bond with
> other men. And the intensity of a plot, which narrows the worlds enormously
> and makes it possible for men to operate without a sense of the innocent victims
> they plan to destroy.[79]

Accordingly, in the novelist-terrorist dyad, DeLillo's effort to win agency over

terrorists' accounts proves to be limited; it is nothing other than an assertion of media's

hold on terrorism referred to sparingly in *Falling Man*. Such a tendency to gauge these

accounts against dominant discourses, it could be argued, works on two interconnected

levels. First, he seems to believe that if he sets out to explore the real motives behind the

attacks, he would belie dominant discourses, and thus media's, but simultaneously, he

would *strengthen* September 11 terrorists' hold on the public consciousness. Second,

DeLillo seems to eschew the charge of terrorism being fully aware that in the post-9/11

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[79] Mark Binelli, "Intensity of a Plot: Mark Binelli interviews Don DeLillo," *Guernica* 17 July 2007, 20 December 2012 <http://www.guernicamag.com/interviews/373/intensity_of_a_plot/>.

world any support of terrorists' cause becomes a synonym to terrorism. It is within this context that DeLillo seems to make another return to a ground already well covered in his earlier novels; more precisely, the familiar pre-9/11 novelist-terrorist dyad which could not rise up to the challenge of September 11.[80] Playing the role of a thematic sequel to *Mao II*, the novel invites the reader to draw a comparison between artists and terrorists. At one point in the novel, we are told that the performance artist, like Gray, the novelist in *Mao II*, eschews media coverage: "The performance pieces were not designed to be recorded by a photographer" (220); "He had no comments to make to the media on any subject" (222). On the other hand, while preparing for the attacks, the terrorist Hammad wants to be of concern to the public: "[He] liked to imagine himself appearing on the screen, a videotaped figure walking through the gate-like detectors on his way to the plane" (173). This brings us back to the notion of terrorism as "an act meant to call attention to itself … it is inherently self-conscious. And in order to disseminate its self-conscious image as victim, it must have resource to the media."[81] In this manner, the novel reflects the terrorist's attempt to displace the artist's role in the public notice via his media-circulated texts. However, aside from the scenes mentioned above, the relationship between terrorists and artists is not featured in characters' discussion as is the case in *Mao II*.

As an alternative to such fleeting discussion of the artist-terrorist dyad, DeLillo provides what seems to concern him most in his counter-discourse, the terrorist-survivor dyad, suggesting a kind of symmetry between their behaviors. The thrust of this reading

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[80] Actually, *Falling Man* is rooted in DeLillo's previous novels and themes. This is basically reflected, as previously discussed, in functioning as a mere culmination of his pre-9/11 novels' predictions about the attacks. In this respect, DeLillo's approach could be compared to Lianne's post-9/11. Lianne aggressively campaigns to edit a book that, similar to DeLillo's pre-9/11 novels, foresaw the potential of the eruption of terrorism in New York. This unpublished manuscript is "a book detailing a series of interlocking global forces that appeared to converge at an explosive point in time and space that might be said to represent the locus of Boston, New York and Washington on a late-summer morning early in the twenty-first century" (*Falling Man*, 139).

[81] Hugh Ruppersburg and Tim Engles, eds., *Critical Essays on Don DeLillo* (New York: G.K. Hall, 2000) 117.

rests on the similarities between DeLillo's representations of Keith and Hammad. In a directly analogous manner, he portrays each of them as loyal to a group; for Hammad, it is the group of jihadists; for Keith, it is the group of poker buddies, whom he used to join before the planes. The force that binds each of them to his group is the deep companionship with, and the sense of obligation to other members; the imperative that binds Hammad to his group is "[s]hed everything but the men you are with. Become each other's running blood" (83); as for Keith, he is "a model of dependability for his male friends, all the things a friend should be, an ally and confidant, lends money, gives advice, loyal and so on" (59). The similarity also comes with their activities, poker games and terrorists' acts, being of interest to the media. And more to the point, to practice these activities, Hammad and Keith have to withdraw to small rooms, and become indifferent about the world outside.[82] Both seek solace in conducting ritualistic acts which refer to the physical preparations Hammad puts himself through before the attacks, his prayers, and the rules imposed by Amir; and the arbitrary rules that govern Keith's poker playing and the physical therapy exercises he spontaneously repeats. Both have the tendency to scrape their lives down to the essentials: Hammad "prays and sleeps, prays and eats" (176); Keith reduces his sleep to five hours to have more time at the poker table. Therefore, it is not surprising that the outcome of their behaviors are not very different. With his absolute sense of this world and the world beyond, Hammad does what he thinks would ensure his spiritual purity and closes the distance to God. In a similar way, Keith, who lacks the solace of a definitive end, sinks more into playing

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[82] This can be thought of in relation to DeLillo's recurrent theme, explored in his earlier novels, of men in small, enclosed spaces "who can't get out and who have to organize their desperation and their loneliness, who have to give it a destiny and who often end up doing this through violent means" (DeCurtis, 57-58). However, the implication of my argument in *Falling Man* is that this novel shows the emptiness of such analysis as Keith's gambling simply converts everywhere into nowhere. That is why one might think of withdrawal to closed rooms in terms of DeLillo's intention to create a kind of symmetry between the terrorist and the survivor in an implicit form of criticism to the victimization of September 11 survivors and the condemnation of terrorists.

poker and isolation, and, above all, increasingly develops the impulse to commit violent acts like terrorists. He even feels aggression towards other poker buddies: "Make them bleed. Make them spill their precious losers' blood," Keith muses (230). By the end of the novel, looping back to the moment just heading to its beginning, DeLillo correlates explicitly Keith with Hammad, the survivor and the terrorist of September 11 (239). This paragraph begins with the description of Hammad riding the plane heading towards the North Tower, and ends with Keith, inside that tower, finding his way down and out, into the street, where we met him at the beginning of the novel.

This perception of the symmetry drawn between terrorists and survivors lends itself to be interpreted in one of two ways. The first tendency is to read this symmetry as a way to suggest that responding in a violent way to September 11, the American survivors in *Falling Man* risk rendering themselves terrorists. According to this interpretation, DeLillo opposes the terrorist attacks, just as he opposes the 'war of terror' perpetrated in their aftermath. Furthermore, this parallel between the praxis of the terrorist and that of the survivor could be construed as a call for Americans to question their sense of victimization and innocence, which might lead to the realization that today's terrorists were victims, just as today's victims were terrorists. The implication here, again, is to explore history which enables us to address the cycle of terrorism and to break from this cycle by making non-violent choices in the face of ex-victims' outbursts. Americans have to break free from the repetitions of history's cycle of violence. They have to get beyond their present or their future is going to be a repetition, a purgatorial repetition, of that cycle. It is only by a sort of communion with history that anything different and new will emerge. All in all, both interpretations seem to lead to the same conclusion, that the tendency to exert revenge in the aftermath of September 11 is a futile counter-narrative.

Beside the relationship between terrorists and survivors, DeLillo asks us to reflect on the relationship between three different types of terrorist' identities and activities incorporated in *Falling Man* as frontispieces to its three sections, each of which is identified with a specific narrative stage. Named after 'Bill Lawton,' a mishearing of 'Bin Laden,' the first stage of the novel details the days immediately following the attacks which he was, supposedly, responsible for. The second stage, titled 'Ernst Hechinger,' the real name of Martin, takes place over the next few months after the attacks when the United States launched its 'war on terror,' white terrorism at its best. The final stage is named after 'David Janiak,' the artist 'Falling Man,' whose performance, it might be argued, fails the task of helping people to come to terms with their trauma and avoid the temptation to slip into vengeance. It is set around the time of the United States' invasion of Iraq. By identifying each of the novel's sections with a terrorist, DeLillo seems to draw attention to the difference in the public acceptance to each of them. While Bin Laden and Janiak, who garner media's attention, linger negatively in the public conscious in the aftermath of September 11, Hechinger, who never features in media, is acquitted. This is confirmed in the novel as Lianne, who could not bear the sound of "music located in Islamic tradition," is perfectly friendly with Hechinger: "Whatever it was he'd done, it was not outside the lines of response … Maybe he was a terrorist but he was one of ours ... and the thought chilled her, shamed her – one of ours, which meant godless, Western, white" (194-195). Provocatively, the implication here is that the Western dominant discourse, a political tool at best, is indulged in double standards turning a blind eye to white terrorists while launching wars on the non-white, September 11 terrorists. More damaging, perhaps, here is the realization that the accusation of terrorism has a racial dimension. This arises questions as to if September 11 made Bin Laden a terrorist, and if the terrorist-like performance

rendered Janiak a terrorist, then why the 'war on terror' never entitled the United States a terrorist state? Unless we are capable of responding seriously to the challenges posed by this question, there is a danger that the 'war on terror' may come to represent the public acceptance of a sinister new concept in the political vocabulary of the United States, which is 'healthy terrorism.' Putting the 'war on terror' on the same level with terrorism, in turn, would have reduced the heroic aura surrounding this war, helped eradicate its public acceptance, and as a result, prevented the United States from taking any further steps into this violent counter-narrative.

Moreover, by centring the novel around these three terrorists, DeLillo also seems to draw attention to the identification between them. Hence, Bin Laden's terrorist act is not unlike the memories of Ernst Hechinger's old activities or the art performed by David Janiak. Basically, this interpretation correlates the terrorism of September 11 with that of the US-led 'war on terror' in a clear manner. It also seems to take the relationship between terrorists and artists into a new direction, one that DeLillo would not appreciate given that it rests on the match between terrorists' and artists' power in influencing public consciousness. To put it differently, in dwelling as he does on the association of Janiak with Bin Laden and Hechinger, one of the risks run by DeLillo is that of artists acceding to terrorism on account of their unbiased reflection of September 11. The implication here is that artists' new role, or "transgressive desire," which is "to influence and shape sensibility and thought," is dangerous because by "'influence' and 'shape'" artists and novelists really mean "'change at the root.'"[83] Approving of Arendt's claim in *The Human Condition* that "it is in fact far easier to act under conditions of tyranny than it is to think," the role of the artist under the tyranny of the

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[83] Lentricchia and McAuliffe, 30.

post-9/11 'war on terror' is considered as one of thinking, writing and being active.[84] This seems to concur with Bill Gray of *Mao II*, who rests with the understanding that "there's no longer a moral or spatial distinction between thinking and acting"; that terror is the logical endpoint of his literary ambition for cultural impact, the zone where thinking and acting collide in the public world with the force of an explosion (*Mao II*, 132). Hence, with their ambitious desire for radical social change, novelists and artists would be terrorists of fiction and art.

Hence, we might argue that like Falling Man's art, DeLillo's *Falling Man* employs terrorists and terrorist techniques in an attempt to make raids on the inner life of culture. Due to that, DeLillo's novel presents him as a terrorist with the conventions of the novel as his own target. Indeed, from the beginning to the end, the structure of the novel has challenged readers. In this regard, in an interview with Thomas LeClair, DeLillo says, "[m]aking things difficult for the reader is less an attack on the reader than it is on the age and its facile knowledge-market … The writer is working against the age and so he feels some satisfaction at not being widely read."[85] As a whole, *Falling Man* proves to be not friendly reading. Every scene is written so sparely that one has to work to figure out who is speaking, what is happening, and when and where. DeLillo constantly shifts the scene in the manner of a film director, never letting any storyline dominate for more than a few pages at a time. This technique works to reflect how characters in this novel are estranged from each other. They do not seem to know each other, and hardly anyone really wants to talk to anyone else about anything, and DeLillo, it seems, wants us to feel this emptiness and helplessness. Most importantly, the terrorism presented within the novel's narrative is reflected in its structure. Initially,

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[84] Arendt, *The Human Conditio*n, Second edition with an introduction by Margaret Canovan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998) 524.

[85] Thomas LeClair, "An Interview with Don Delillo," *Conversations with Don DeLillo*, ed. Thomas DePietro (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2005) 3-15, 12-13.

Falling Man goes relatively linearly, alternating between three sections. Near the end of each of the these sections, the novel shifts literary gears and the narrative related to the post-trauma survivors' lives is interrupted by the narrative focusing on the pre-attack lives of the hijackers. It is the end of the third section of the novel that makes the most of DeLillo's terrorist techniques as, precisely at the point of catastrophic breakdown of the hijackers into the North Tower, the survivor's narrative comes back again and we find ourselves at a point earlier to that of the novel's departure. By constructing the novel in this manner, by employing increasingly unstable narrative, DeLillo teaches us how to read and interpret his literary counter-narrative to September 11.

In a lovely twist, the novel comes around full circle, so that the end brings us back to the moments that took place immediately before the opening, as if the novel is starting all over again. This might suggest that replacing mourning with a resolute action like that of violence invites the occurrence of a similar September 11 attack. This is confirmed through closing the novel by an emphasis upon returning to what has been the case pre-9/11. Nothing really changes much in the wake of September 11, DeLillo seems to suggest. The United States continues on with its pre-9/11 foreign policy as DeLillo's characters continue on with their pre-9/11 style of life. Indeed, they are a reflection of their nation's response to September 11, which is based on warding off the process of mourning in order to keep trauma constantly present, and thus, providing justification for the country's own aggressive attitudes. To use Butler's words, they resist mourning by refusing "to undergo the transformation" brought about by the loss they have endured. Instead, they make helpless attempts to restore order or, to quote Butler again, "reinvigorate a fantasy that their world formerly was orderly," a view that results from an inadvertence of the historical taproots of their trauma. Before September 11, Lianne and Kieth were already estranged from each other, and in the days after,

rather than questioning the assumptions underpinning their previously shattered

existence and taking this tragedy as a chance to reunite, they retain their

uncompromising alienation. Like their nation which seeks its military adventures as a

reaction to the attacks, the Neudeckers allow themselves be compelled to react

exclusively in an amoral way and resort to violent actions. Other times, they choose to

avoid this trauma totally by retreating from their world and seeking solace in some other

world; Lianne, who finds no more comfort in her work with Alzheimer patients, seeks

some sort of spiritual relief by going to church, and Keith chooses traveling to avoid

everything that might remind him of that day. This total isolation or withdrawal from

their post-9/11 world by engaging into new forms of practices is not exactly a sign of

success in dealing with their trauma. On the contrary, it is a sign of failure. To use the

words of Žižek:

> [T]raumas we are not ready or able to remember haunt us all the time all the
> more forcefully. We should therefore accept the paradox that, in order really to
> forget an event, we must first summon up the strength to remember it properly.
> In order to account for this paradox, we should bear in mind that the opposite of
> *existence* is not nonexistence, but *insistence*: that which does not exist, continues
> to insist, striving towards existence.[86]

So, to overcome this trauma it is necessary to live through the phase of grief. It must be

admitted, it must be confronted and discussed rather than being repressed or avoided.

Prophetic of this, Justin is waiting for Bin Laden, for more planes, and for the attacks to

happen again.

Actually, the novel ends with DeLillo's characters left to live in their ruined

future. They continue on with their pre-9/11 style of life; Keith drifts away from any

history or memory of the attacks by traveling around the world and playing in

professional poker tournaments full-time. Gambling is his adopted strategy to achieve a

negation of history, as gambling, to use the words of Alain, "gives short shrift to [his]

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[86] Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*, 22. Emphasis in original

weighty past."[87] By doing so, in part, Keith is recalling his pre-9/11 weekly poker nights with poker-playing buddies, two of whom died in the towers' collapse. In part, he is adopting a less complicated, less threatening approach to existence, or, to put it more precisely, escaping the shock of what he witnessed in that terrible day in the towers into the meaningless rituals of shuffled cards and stacks of brightly coloured chips. Even three years after the attacks, he is avoiding Terry Cheng, one of the poker players of the pre-9/11 group, a sign of further isolation and inability to come to grips with his trauma. In short, this is how he spends his days and years after the planes, possessed by "a thousand heaving dreams, the trapped man, the fixed limbs, the dream of paralysis, the gasping man, the dream of asphyxiation, the dream of helplessness" (230). In a similar way, as throughout the novel, instead of getting over this aching trauma, Lianne prefers to avoid it totally by going back to the same way of life she used to lead before the planes, "to be alone, in reliable calm, she and the kid, the way they were before the planes" (236).

To sum up, the effect of September 11 on the Neudeckers is the same as its effect on their nation which resorts to its pre-9/11 policy in the aftermath of the attacks. It proves to be a negative one as it creates in them the desire for more violence and more death. In this sense, DeLillo seems to suggest that the event does not seem to change the way Americans, and the United States' government in a broader sense, think about themselves or even about the world around them. Hence, *Falling Man* does not reproduce September 11, but only represents it. It takes into itself the event, rather than protesting against it, and allows us to experience this historical moment as reenactment. In short, for DeLillo, it might be that September 11 cannot be yet reconceived in terms that are not about reenacting it, nor could it be for a long time since the sense of loss felt

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[87] Quoted in Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in *The Sociology of Risk and Gambling Reader*, ed. James F. Cosgrave (London: Routledge, 2006) 143-148, 143.

by characters constitutes a particular kind of tarrying with trauma that can be only reflected, which interprets why *Falling man* responds to the attacks as did numerous films, documentaries and programs.

Thus, the novel neither "rescues [the historical period it is representing] from its confusions," nor "attempts to provide a hint of order in the midst of all the randomness," but rather reflects them all.[88] In this manner of reenacting post-9/11 American society, *Falling Man* stands for the absurd condition of novelists and artists struggling to realign themselves politically in the aftermath of the attacks in a similar way the performance artist represents "an absurdist drama that provokes onlookers to share a comic understanding of what is irrational in the great scheme of being or in the next small footstep" (163). It is, to quote Anderson again, "a neat symbol of the problem of the very existence of 9/11 art." By opting for this technique, DeLillo eschews inventing a radical alternative to the existing counter-terrorism policies. It seems that he reaches the awareness that a novelist no longer has recourse to a privileged standpoint from which to judge or transcend the existing political order and its dominant codes. He cultivates a sensibility that, though critical of the September 11 official counter-narratives, he has to abandon any heroic oppositional impulses to project an alternative of his own and to posit his subjectivity, as a novelist, as a resource adequate to the threats posed by terrorists, the state, and mass culture. Whether his tactics of mimicry and appropriation prove to be double-edged or not, no doubt *Falling Man* is his vehicle to feel some form of agency over the story of September 11, and, most importantly, subvert "from within the culture itself" a post-9/11 society infested with violent counter-narratives.

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[88] DeCurtis, 64.

Chapter Four

From Monologue to Dialogue: *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and

Muslims in the Post-9/11 Era

[T]he political positions of both Osama Bin Laden and George W. Bush are
founded on failures of empathy, failures of compassion towards people who
seem different. By taking readers inside a man who both loves and is angered by
America, and hopefully by allowing readers to feel what that man feels, I hope
to show that the world is more complicated than politicians and newspapers
usually have time for. We need to stop being so confused by the fear we are fed:
a shared humanity unites us with people we are encouraged to think of as our
enemies.

Mohsin Hamid, Interview

[I]t is not always possible to restore one's boundaries after they have been
blurred and made permeable by a relationship: try as we might, we cannot
reconstitute ourselves as the autonomous beings we previously imagined
ourselves to be. Something of us is now outside, and something of the outside is
now within us.

Changez, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

With Hamid's post-9/11-novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, shortlisted for the 2007

Man Booker Prize, Britain's top literary award for fiction, a more definite view would

be given and a clearer light brought to the central theme of this thesis, concerned as it is

with examining alternate approaches to the post-9/11 world.[1] Though the theme of this chapter is the same as that of the preceding chapters, and it is to be regarded as the continuation of the argument commenced there, it proposes a fictional riposte to the 'war on terror' from the perspective of the victim of this war, the Muslim 'Other,' which provides the key. For as a successful immigrant and moderate Muslim, the protagonist presents a reverse of the stereotypical images with which 9/11 narratives are invariably bound up. Whilst the Muslim 'Other' in these narratives is the scourge of the attacks, he is evoked in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* as their victim.[2] This quest for a traumatic testimony, authenticity and grounding of the Muslim identity in the aftermath of the attacks is accompanied by a call for a more expansive human community achieved through the possibility of holding a cross-cultural dialogue that will challenge the bigotry of a mono-cultural nationalist perspective embraced by the United States. The question to be addressed in what follows centres on the importance of Hamid's novel in transcending the monologue of hegemonic 9/11 narratives and moving towards engaging in dialogue with the 'Other' of the war against terrorism. While the first-person rhetoric of such narratives precludes any chance of true communication with the 'Other,' drifting into the realm of stereotyping, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, it will be argued, succeeds in colouring their monologue dialogically.

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[1] Mohsin Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (Leicester: W.F. Howes, 2007). Further quotations will be cited in the text in parenthesis.
[2] The reference here is to the Muslim 'Other' as "the evil scourge of terrorism" in Ronald Reagan's terminology; quoted in Chomsky, "'The Evil Scourge of Terrorism': Reality, Construction, Remedy," Erich Fromm Lecture, International Erich Fromm Society, Stuttgart, Germany, 23 March 2010, 9 July 2013 <http://www.chomsky.info/talks/20100323.htm >.

Dialogizing the Monologue

In *Precarious Life*, Butler identifies the deployment of the first-person narrative in the aftermath of the attacks as a moment of slippage, or even dehiscence which forestalls public mourning. "In the United States," she contends,

> we begin the story by invoking a first-person narrative point of view, and telling what happened on September 11. It is the date and the unexpected and fully terrible experience of violence that propels the narrative. If someone tries to start the story earlier, there are only a few narrative options. We can narrate, for instance, what Mohammed Atta's family life was like, whether he was teased for looking like a girl, where he congregated in Hamburg, and what led, psychologically, to the moment in which he piloted the plane into the World Trade Center. Or what was bin Laden's break from his family, and why is he so angry?[3]

It is within this narrative's framework that the attacks are perceived as a ferocious 'wound' that needs to be healed rather than an event that warrants "coming up with a broader explanation."[4] Locating such a wound instead in the ego of the American national psyche, Butler further argues that the first-person narrative form "emerges to compensate for the enormous narcissistic wound opened up by the public display of our physical vulnerability."[5] The danger of such a narrative, she suggests, is that it avows profound narcissism and fetishism, an all too real consequence of the United States' fantasy of national mastery: "We relegate the United Nations to a second-order deliberative body, and insist instead on American unilateralism. And subsequently we ask, Who is with us? Who is against us?"[6] With this monologic narrative's drive towards grounding the American pain as necessarily the pain of others – which validates

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[3] Butler, *Precarious Life*, 5.
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] *Ibid.*, 7.
[6] *Ibid.*

seeking them as potential allies or enemies in the 'war on terror' – mourning becomes kitsch.[7]

Even more significant is the explicit racial edge that accentuating a mass identification with the event's tragic effects bears. As a result of the "with us or against us" rhetoric of the war against terrorism, Butler argues, "we respond to the exposure of vulnerability with an assertion of US 'leadership,'" a response that renders the 'Other's suffering and agency invisible, and leads to configuring them stereotypically as an 'evil' that must be uprooted.[8] At stake in such a process is the complementary relationship between the 'Self' and 'Other' which cannot be sustained because of the symbolic, or even literal dissolution of the latter. In this sense, the reality of the 'Other' as an irreducible entity is denied, and exchanges between the 'Self' and 'Other,' if any, occur in projective and identificatory ways. Hence, the danger of post-9/11 dominant narratives identifying with the first-person perspective resides in impeding the experience of mutuality and dialogic existence between the 'Self' and 'Other' as well as the potential to relate to each other. To avoid the subsequent violence against the 'Other' in favour of the homogeneity and absolute power of the 'Self,' Butler proposes that "we will need to emerge from the narrative perspective of US unilateralism and, as it were, its defensive structures, to consider the ways in which our lives are profoundly implicated in the lives of others."[9] In other words, it is only through the politics of dialogue that we can traverse the fantasies and "defensive structures" implicit to first-person perspectives, and take a more responsible approach to the attacks.

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[7] Kitsch here refers to Clement Greenberg's "ersatz culture" which provides "vicarious experience and faked sensations … another of the inexpensive way in which the totalitarian regimes seeks to ingratiate themselves with their subjects"; Clement Greenberg, *Art and Culture: Critical Essay* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1981) 10-19. Or, as Marita Sturken puts it, "the kitschification of events such as the Oklahoma City bombing and 9/11 allows for, if not facilitates, the means by which these events can be exploited for particular political agendas and incorporated into a continuum of kitsch political discourse"; Marita Sturken, *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007) 25.
[8] Butler, *Precarious Life*, 7.
[9] *Ibid*.

However, the first-person narrative pattern that Butler speaks out against has been embraced vehemently, as she puts it, "[i]n order to condemn [the attacks] as inexcusable, absolutely wrong, in order to sustain the affective structure in which we are, on the one hand, victimized and, on the other, engaged in a righteous cause of rooting out terror."[10] Even more provocative are the relentless efforts to preclude and de-authorize "accounts that might involve a decentring of the narrative 'I' within the international political domain" since such a decentring is to be "experienced as part of the wound that we have suffered."[11] It is against this background that Butler's call to dialogue with the Muslim 'Other,' as the terrorist or terrorist-in-the-making, could be perceived as a challenge to the developing canon of literature about the attacks and the following war against terrorism.

We have to acknowledge that one-sided accounts of September 11 and its aftermath, as Butler argues, "have to be told and they are being told, despite the enormous trauma that undermines narrative capacity in these instances."[12] The question, then, arises as to whether the amputation of such accounts could be a potent means of decentring the United States' unilateralism through which the voice of the 'Other' is retrieved and his capacity as an 'Other' to be related to is established. Butler, in this respect, refers to the powerful resonance this exclusionist technique exerts on the United States' unilateral discourse. She seems to believe that, like the first-person narrative, such a dismissing scenario is simply another way of "asserting US priority and encoding US omnipotence."[13] That is to say, the very use of the exclusionist approach by the 'Other' signifies its subordination, and thus, becomes a source of empowerment and validation to the United States' discourse. Accordingly, the key to "a consequential

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[10] *Ibid.*, 6.
[11] *Ibid.*, 6-7.
[12] *Ibid.*, 7.
[13] *Ibid.*, 9.

decentring of First Worldism," in Butler's words, can be found in "[t]he ability to narrate ourselves not from the first person alone, but from, say, the position of the third, or to receive an account delivered in the second, [which] can actually work to expand our understanding of the forms that global power has taken," rather than dismissing such a narrative perspective.[14] Hamid offers a similar strategy. In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, he concerned himself profoundly with the question of how to 'decentre' the monologic perspective of post-9/11 dominant narratives. It seems that, for him, such narratives have not yet attained the maturity that can succeed in establishing a dialogue, or a dialogic relationship with the 'Other,' and thereby, have no conduit to the future. That is why he believes that it is the responsibility of the 'Other' to take the initiative, or more precisely, that dialogue is an initiative taken by the 'Other' rather than the 'Self.'

Hamid attempts to resist the limitations imposed by the dominant frame of understanding the attacks, and thus the limited means available for evaluating and appropriating our post-9/11 world. His resistance involves the implementation of an alternative aesthetic, that of dialogue, as a synthesizing process which is aimed at uncovering the conventional binary of us/them one usually finds in the narrative 'I,' as well as bringing together both sides of this binary. To this end, in terms of the narrative construction, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* works at two fundamental levels, each of which corresponds to a different aim of the novel. It takes the form of a monologue that narrates the suffering of the Muslim 'Other' in the post-9/11 world as experienced by Changez. At the same time, the story of Changez is being addressed to a silenced American character. The entire novel is the account of a single evening as Changez tells his story to a taciturn American visitor, who may or may not be a CIA agent. Becoming

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[14] *Ibid.*, 8.

that of the 'Other,' the first-person narrative point of view, in the strict sense, could be construed as an attempt to avoid the impossible 'I' that results from the need to come to terms with the feeling of split identity Changez endures post-9/11. Hamid further stresses this point in an interview with Terry Gross, "[a]s someone who is naturally split between two cultures, the fact that the two cultures are becoming so increasingly hostile to each other makes me much more unsettled within myself."[15] As an 'Other,' Changez is not given the chance to make agency translatable to his discourse or his own representation in the aftermath of the attacks. It is the first-person account of his experience which gives vent to his resentment about his status as a Muslim in the post-9/11 era in the United States, and makes him heard by his American addressee as much as *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is meant to project Hamid's viewpoints concerning the 'war on terror' to the mainstream culture. In this manner, the 'Other' is rendered a 'Self' who possesses considerable agency of his own, who has his own preferences and grievances.

In the broader sense, Hamid's novel upsets the fundamental narrative 'I' established in the 'war on terror' discourse, a reversal of the order constructed through this discourse where the first-person perspective that used to belong to the 'Self'(United States) is displaced by the voice of the 'Other' (that of Changez) from the centre of power. Answering a question by Deborah Solomon as to his choice of the Pakistani character as the only narrator while silencing the American character, Hamid maintains: "For me, in the world of media, particularly the American media, it's almost always the other way around."[16] After all, the American's point of view is already contained and expressed in dominant narratives by journalists, media and politicians. This shift of

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[15] Hamid, "Interview with Terry Gross on *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*," *Fresh Air*, National Public Radio and WHYY, Philadelphia 3 April, 2007, 21 March 2013 <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=9312695>.
[16] Deborah Solomon, "The Stranger: Questions for Mohsin Hamid," *The New York Times*15 April 2007, 18 January 2013 <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/15/magazine/15wwlnQ4.t.html>.

perspectives has two interrelated dimensions. Firstly, although it would be less satisfactory for readers not to consider the viewpoint of the American character as someone who is physically present in the novel, for Hamid to do so is a reverse of stereotypes and racial hierarchy. Along with such implication of presenting a voiceless 'Self' comes the writing back to the post-9/11 canon. As a subversive text, the novel defamiliarizes stereotypes upon which post-9/11 dominant texts have been basically premised, or as Edward Said puts it, where "[t]he Orient was … not Europe's interlocutor, but its silent Other."[17] This is all the more true if one considers that by setting the novel in Pakistan, in which the American is the foreigner, Hamid aims at a reverse of the Orientalist gaze. Secondly, such an attempt to dislodge the monolithic US-UK centred discourses that have emerged since the September day, and which basically contribute to the construction of Muslims as 'Others,' could be read as a response to the 'war on terror' against those 'Others.' In other words, through the novel's monologue, Hamid seems to condemn the racism the hegemonic discourses' failure to understand or represent alterity engenders. This is even more so if one considers that the silence of the American character and the freedom offered by first-person narration are meant to shift the burden more entirely on Changez to articulate a minutely realized account of everyday Muslim life during the post-9/11 era. Within this context, the novel seems to be deeply concerned with validating the experience of hidden, marginalized victims of the attacks, particularly indigenous Muslims, who has suffered from post-9/11 political violence and whose suffering is doubled inasmuch as it is silenced. Laying bare such inadequacies and absences in the literature about the attacks and their aftermath implies that the 'war on terror' rhetoric, through the infiltration of a surveillance system into the domestic sphere, is on the same moral

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[17] Edward W. Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Literary and Cultural Essays* (London: Granta, 2001) 202.

footing as the September 11 attacks. It is within this context that reading the attacks and the subsequent 'war on terror' through the lens of a victim of them both, the Muslim 'Other,' helps further my argument that although proposing a model of fictional critique to the established dominant approach to terrorism might be the principal hallmark of *Falling Man* and *Saturday*, it is especially more visible, direct and rebellious in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, though the novel is wary of any direct engagement with particular representations of the attacks, whether offered literally or symbolically.

However, following Butler, it could be argued that the reverse-stereotyping approach has the potential to dampen the revolutionary charge of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, if not annul it completely. Such a proposition could not be better refuted than by Hamid's twofold narrative effect. On the one hand, his choice of the first-person narrative voice seems successful, or even perhaps indispensable, in a novel that is meant as a counter-narrative to the developing post-9/11 fiction with agency given to the 'Other.' On the other hand, in the way it is structured and closed, the novel remains intentionally indecisive in a postmodern fashion; a feature that functions to emphasize the ineffectiveness of the first-person narrative mode in approaching the post-9/11 context where it is rather essential, at least for the reader, to see not only what belongs to the sphere of the 'I.'[18] Actually, Hamid's approach could not be otherwise, since it lays claim to confounding the "us against them" reading of the 'war on terror.' Although the novel can be read as the product of its narrator's ability to establish a dialogue with his American counterpart, or perhaps at least, as an indication of having reached the point where he acknowledges the inevitability of such a dialogue, its emphasis on the denial of voice to the latter can be seen as pioneering in foregrounding and being more alert to the limitations involved. By highlighting the abortive nature of

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[18] Although the failure to represent the American character is explainable in terms of the limitation of this restrictive mode of narration, the denial of access to his thoughts and motivations works, though intentionally, at odds with the expectations of readers and the revolutionary message of the novel.

monologue in such a manner, the novel seems to propose that one-sided dialogue always makes a hopeless binary.[19] It is the ideological weapon of terror which delivers its own carriers into violence not only as targets, but also as executioners or accomplices. It is, as Hamid puts it in an interview with Michelle Blankenship, where "failures of empathy, failures of compassion toward people who seem different" mark "[t]he political positions of both Osama Bin Laden and George W. Bush."[20]

Being aware that moving beyond the first-person narratives of the hegemonic discourse involves more than a replication that only mirrors back the injustice, if not maintains its authority as an approach, Hamid challenges the stereotypical 'Otherness' of the terrorist, yet he does not simply reverse stereotypes. In spite of the freedom offered by first-person narration, he seems very careful not to limit the scope of his novel to the mere exploration of the suffering of the 'Other' in the post-9/11 era. Rather, Hamid takes a step further and delves into the ethical question on the relation between the 'Self' and 'Other' through embedding dialogue into the novel's monologue, a strategy that is effectively implemented to encode the American and Pakistani characters in a way that collapses the binary opposition between them. Along these lines, instead of presenting the American character's point of view in a third-person form of narrative, as did McEwan or DeLillo, where whatever the terrorist or terrorist-like character says or does reflects these novelists' point of view, Hamid presents his American character as someone in dialogue. The way such dialogue exists between a silent character and the protagonist could be a vehicle to convey the idea that there is a

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[19] What I mean here by a one-sided dialogue is a non-communal, or even imagined, form of discourse, the one which takes place between unequals where one party is feeling and practicing one's superiority and exclusionary authority over the other. The effect of such a 'dialogue' is, in this respect, not unlike that of monologue.

[20] Michelle Blankenship, "Interview with Mohsin Hamid on *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*," *Harcourtbooks* 2007, 20 March 2013
<http://www.harcourtbooks.com/reluctant_fundamentalist/interview.asp>.

kind of refusal to speak for the Western subject, putting into question the legitimacy of appropriating the point of view of the 'Self' by the 'Other,' or even, of the latter by the former. Such silencing assumes another dimension if one relates it to the limitations of Western political discourse and its hollowness in the days that followed the attacks.

With such embedded form of dialogue, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* engages three dialogues, or three levels of dialogue. The first is the primary dialogue that unfolds the general framework of the novel: The dialogic traits occur as Changez interrupts his monologue every now and then to make a deliberate address to the American character and mediate the latter's reactions. Modeled on Camus' *The Fall*, the novel's dialogized monologue serves as a framework for a shadowy dialogue which involves a third party, the reader. In his interview with Solomon, Hamid points out that "Camus taught me how to have a conversation that implicates the reader."[21] In *The Man Booker Prize* interview, Hamid further asserts that "*The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is a dramatic monologue, in other words a half-conversation, a half story. The reader is asked to provide the other half of the novel's meaning. And in so doing, by co-creating the novel, readers have an experience of themselves."[22] Hamid expands this point in "On writing *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*," arguing that by means of "the novel's permeable form," that of a dramatic monologue, "readers end up creating their own versions of what happens in the book, and the book in turn moves and shifts and reflects in response to the individual inclinations and world views of readers," and thereby, he arrived at what he hoped for, namely, maximizing what is called "the interactive nature of fiction."[23]Additionally, he contrives or even hopes to "contain within the fascination

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[21] Solomon, "The Stranger."
[22] Hamid, "Interview: 'We Are Already Afraid,' Mohsin Hamid on Tapping into the Reader's Imagination," *The Man Booker Prize* 2007, 26 June 2012 <http://www.themanbookerprize.com/perspective/articles/101>.
[23] Hamid, "On writing *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*," *The Guardian* 14 May 2011, 23 March 2012 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2011/may/14/mohsin-hamid-reluctant-fundamentalist-bookclub>.

and seduction of a fast-paced and emotionally powerful story the fascination and seduction of a strange-shaped and oddly reflective mirror," as he puts it again in his *Man Booker Prize* interview.[24] Hamid seems to consider the dialogic tendency of his novel's monologue, with its "fast-paced" sequence of events and emotional power that results from the stability of the time of their exposition, as a performance that might engender a radical change, or perhaps a different orientation in readers towards the relations between the American and Islamic world post-9/11.

Hamid's dialogic monologue also configures another scene of dialogue within Changez himself, or what could be called, Changez's dialogic perspective. In his interview with Hamish Hamilton, Hamid contends that he "decided on a frame that allowed two points of view, two perspectives, to exist with only one narrator."[25] Although this might seem a reference to the primary dialogue with the American's perspective being mediated by Changez, one could venture to say that it is more a reference to a dialogue implied by the multiple perspectives held by Changez himself. Much more to the point is what Hamid argues in his essay "My Reluctant Fundamentalist": "People often ask me if I am the book's Pakistani protagonist. I wonder why they never ask if I am his American listener. After all, a novel can often be a divided man's conversation with himself."[26] Such a "divided man's conversation with himself" reflects, or even emerges from, Hamid's acquaintance of both localities, America and Pakistan. It is this possibility of reading the 'war on terror' from both sides that makes a rather good point of departure for thinking heterogeneously and critically. In this light, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* could be viewed as a challenge to the orthodox interpretation of terrorism and September 11 not only due to Hamid's

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[24] Hamid, "Interview: 'We Are Already Afraid.'"
[25] Hamish Hamilton, "Interview with Mohsin Hamid," February 2007, 21 March 2013 <http://www.mohsinhamid.com/interviewhh2007.html>.
[26] Hamid, "My Reluctant Fundamentalist," *Powell's Books* March 2007, 3 March 2013 <http://www.powells.com/essays/mohsin.html>.

implementation of the story of the terrorist 'Other' narrated from his own perspective, but also, and perhaps most importantly, for weaving two perspectives into his narrator's voice.

Actually, Hamid is well situated to offer this insight. His insider-knowledge of Pakistan gives him the kind of familiarity inaccessible to other Anglo-American writers and, thus, enables him to bypass the trap of caricaturing and stereotyping terrorism or even 'Otherness.' His close acquaintance with America, cultivated through long-term social and cultural interactions, amounts to an additional advantage. In the face of the destructive discourse of the 'war on terror,' Hamid seems to alternate his autobiographical notes with episodes of an imagined account that turns into an allegorical description of a potential confrontation between America and the Muslim world which, reluctantly, might turn to fundamentalism. He further glosses in an interview that, with the attacks and their aftermath, "[a] wall had suddenly come up between my American and Muslim worlds. The novel is my attempt to reconnect those divided worlds."[27] Like Changez, the novel's title character, Hamid grew up in Pakistan, and attended Princeton before enjoying a financially prosperous career as a management consultant in a prestigious firm in New York. In a similar way also, Hamid decided to be one of the "Bush-era self-exiles from the United States," and moved back to Lahore with his family in the aftermath of September 11.[28] Yet, while Changez's first contact with American culture came with college enrolment, Hamid spent around six years from his childhood in America before returning to resume his education. Interviewed by Jennifer Reese, Hamid describes himself as having been "half-American

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[27] Solomon, "The Stranger."
[28] Hamid, "It had to be a sign. Time to move the family to Pakistan," *The Guardian* 23 November 2009, 19 January 2013 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/nov/23/london-family-pakistan-hope-tolerance>.

[and] … a full-fledged New Yorker."[29] Portraying Changez after him, as being privileged in terms of education and social status, the antithetical model of DeLillo's and McEwan's terrorists, Hamid seems to counter the archetype of the terrorist 'Other,' even deride the potential motives of fundamentalism discussed exhaustively in stereotyping narratives. What approve this reading are his words in "I Love This Dirty Town": "The 9/11 attacks placed great strain on the hyphen bridging that identity called Muslim-American. As a man rarely seen in a mosque, and not possessing a US passport, I should not have felt it. But I did, deeply. It seemed two halves of myself were suddenly at war."[30] However, what complicates Hamid's reading is *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*'s consideration of the genealogy of the United States' notion of 'Otherness' mostly featured in its war against terrorism.

In the following section, the focus will be on the two fundamental queries that serve as the organizing threads for Hamid's dialogic approach to the attacks and their aftermath in terms of the thematic concern of the novel: The first foregrounds the Muslim as an essential part of the American society, and, at the same time, concerns the Orientalist gaze as a pre-9/11 form of excluding Muslims; and the second centres on Hamid's deployment of exoticism in the face of the monologic approach of Orientalism.

From Orientalism to Strategic Exoticism

On the thematic level, Hamid's dialogic approach is situating, in the sense that it is essentially connected with pre-9/11 dialogues: Hamid mandates revisiting the United States' pre-9/11 monologic approach, or, in other words, its dialogic attempts at

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[29] Jennifer Reese, "Reluctant 'Success,'" *Entertainment Weekly* 13 June 2007, 29 June 2011 <http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,20042152,00.html>.
[30] Hamid, "I Love This Dirty Town," *NewStatesman* 9 October 2006, 17 April 2009 <http://www.newstatesman.com/node/154496?quicktabs_most_read=1>.

reconciliation with the Muslim 'Other' which have, to a large extent, failed, as he seeks to provide the background against which one could understand better the roots of Changez's post-9/11 'Otherness.' His dialogic approach is also situating in the sense that it is found on a further level, that of the pre-9/11 dialogic approach of the Muslim 'Other,' an effort to portray Changez as an active agent in relation to the monologic perspective assumed by the United States' hegemonic discourse at that phase. Hamid's narrator moves to America to study at Princeton, and secures a promising career as a financial analyst at a valuation firm in New York City, Underwood Samson. Nevertheless, as Changez becomes immersed in the recollection of his pre-9/11 life in America, he tells his unnamed, American interlocutor that although he initially enjoys his life in the United States, his intellectual and financial successes carry with them a potential resentment, a gnawing feeling that he is not fully incorporated into the dominant cultural paradigm. Prior to the xenophobia that gripped the United States in the aftermath of the attacks, he seems to be ingratiated into his host culture: "I felt bathed in a warm sense of accomplishment. Nothing troubled me; I was a young New Yorker with the city at my feet," Changez recalls (40). At the same time, with the benefit of hindsight and given the novel's post-9/11 mood, he thinks that the process of his integration into American society did not proceed smoothly; he realizes the susceptibility of his inclusion within this society. For instance, speaking of his pre-9/11 relation to America, Changez makes clear that from the moment of his admission to the university he was given a warm welcome as a successful immigrant:

> Looking back now, I see the power of that system, pragmatic and effective, like so much else in America. We international students were sourced from around the globe, sifted not only by well-honed standardized texts but by painstakingly customized evaluations … until the best and the brightest of us had been identified … students like me were given visas and scholarships, complete financial aid, mind you, and invited into the ranks of the meritocracy. In return, we were expected to contribute our talents to your society, the society we were

joining. And for the most part, we were happy to do so. I certainly was, at least at first. (3-4)

However, "at least at first" belies the continuation of such utopian America for Changez and indicates how he is stripped, belatedly, of his illusions and the dream of multicultural promise. As the novel suggests, Changez bears witness to certain aspects of the pre-9/11 America that estrange him. At Rhodes, his remark that there is "part of a wall against the East that still stands. How strange it was for me to think I grew up on the other side!" indicates that the "us/them" rhetoric is still at work, and thus, imbues him with doubts about the United States as a welcoming place (20). Answering a question at the Underwood Samson job interview as to where he comes from, Changez says: "I was from Lahore, the second largest city of Pakistan, ancient capital of the Punjab, home to nearly as many people as New York, layered like a sedimentary plain with the accreted history of invaders from the Aryans to the Mongols to the British. [The firm director] merely nodded. Then he said, 'Are you on financial aid?'" (6-7). Here, Changez comes face to face with the fact that history has been overshadowed by finance; that for his host culture, coming from Pakistan is not equal to having a rich historical and cultural background. Rather, it simply indicates belonging to one of the non-Western, even Third World countries, and thus, being an 'Other' who does not have access to public funds. After graduation, his holiday with his fellow Princetonians in Greece brings him face to face with the hollowness of his privileged accommodation to this society: "[They] were members of the university's most prestigious eating club, Ivy, and were travelling courtesy of gifts from their parents or dividends from their trust funds … I had cooked my own meals in the basement kitchen of my dormitory and was there thanks to my sign-on bonus from Underwood Samson" (14-15).

Changez's feeling of estrangement, however, is not limited to the fact that, being a non-citizen, he does not have a valid claim to his host society. More significantly, it is

manifested in his relations with university and work colleagues in particular, and the American public at large, where the visibility of his 'Otherness' has never been escapable. From the beginning, we are told that Changez becomes aware that he is adulated "as an exotic acquaintance" (15). Recruited by a prestigious American corporate financial firm, Changez suspects the invisibility of his 'Otherness': "I was the only non-American in our group, but I suspected my Pakistaniness was invisible, cloaked by my suit, by my expense account, and – most of all – by my companions" (64). Hence, although he does not adhere to the conventions of his native culture in terms of dressing, as do his counterparts in Pakistan, Changez still seems to appeal to his American colleagues' lust for exotica. From their perspective, his manners add or must be related to his exotic appeal, and prove him an asset to the corporate system. Both Erica, his American girlfriend and a Princetonian, and his boss Jim offer a cultural-background interpretation of his behaviour, a mode of 'othering' where his subjectivity is being obliterated. Erica remarks, "'You give off this strong sense of home,' … 'you know that? This I'am-from-a-big-family vibe. It's nice. It makes you feel solid'" (17). Later Jim tells him, "'You are a watchful guy. You know where that comes from?' I shook my head. 'It comes from feeling out of place,' he said. 'Believe me. I know'" (38). Obviously then, Changez's 'othering' experience testifies not only that a successful immigrant does not guarantee being fully included into American society, but also that the process of inclusion itself is intersected by racial considerations.

Accordingly, the novel seems to support an Orientalist reading: Changez's visibility of 'Otherness' is to be read against an Orientalist backdrop through which racially different people are made visible as sites of desire. This exemplifies the claim that Said made in *Orientalism*, according to which the Western approach to the Orient

"vacillates between the West's contempt for what is familiar and its shivers of delight in – or fear of – novelty."[31] We see that the Americans embraced this approach so thoroughly in the pre-9/11 world to the extent that Changez feels that his foreignness obscures, or even amputates the human, familiar aspect from their consideration. For them, it seems that to acquire any knowledge of Changez, as a combined projection of their desires and anxieties, to define and pin down this exotic object, would end their pleasurable experience of encountering alterity.[32] This is because it is such "vacillations, [with] their tempting suggestiveness, their capacity for entertaining and confusing the mind, that are interesting," according to Said.[33] The troublesome task of identifying the 'Other,' therefore, would never be in question. Such an attitude makes it possible for exoticism to become, potentially, the only interpretative tool for reading the 'Other' at the expense of a suspended, genuine meaning. Within this context, Changez is transformed into a resource of entertainment by projecting a superficial knowledge of his culture based purely on the stereotypical perceptions of the exotic 'Other.'

Not only could this frame of thinking be seen as continuous with an Orientalist discourse of 'othering,' but it also works with its system of status-seeking and distinction. "In a quite constant way," as Said puts it, "Orientalism depends for its strategy on this flexible *positional* superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative

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[31] Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Routledge, 1978) 59.

[32] However, it is not my contention here to equate Orientalism with exoticism, but to depend on the former as a point of departure for understanding the latter. Said's work, *Orientalism*, is considered to be immeasurably influential for thinking about encounters with the exotic 'Other' in its capacity as a groundwork in postcolonial and race studies, and other related fields. However, as Kateryna Longley observes, "[e]xoticism signals a special form, a politically and sexually charged form, of *othering*, one that has come to be associated with European colonialism through its close relationship with orientalism"; Kateryna Olijnyk Longley, "Fabricating Otherness: Demidenko and Exoticism," in *'New' Exoticisms: Changing Patterns in the Construction of Otherness*, ed. Isabel Santaolalla (Amsterdam: Rodolpi, 2000) 21-39, 23. Emphasis in original.

[33] Said, *Orientalism*, 58.

upper hand."[34] In this respect, the novel offers a critique of the manner by which

Princetonians deal with those who might be considered as 'Others.' During his vacation

in Greece, we are told that what annoyed Changez is,

> their self-righteousness in dealing with those whom they had paid for a service. 'But you *told* us,' they would say to Greeks twice their age, before insisting things be done their way. I, with my finite and depleting reserve of cash and my traditional sense of deference to one's seniors, found myself wondering by what quirk of human history my companions – many of whom I could have regarded as upstarts in my own country, so devoid of refinement were they – were in a position to conduct themselves in the world as though they were its ruling class. (18-19, emphasis in original)

In view of that, what further undergirds the Americans' appropriation of Changez is that

his alluring difference confirms their civilization and superiority. In the face of such a

monologic enterprise of Orientalism, rigorously constructed to consume as well as

subordinate 'Otherness, Hamid calls for a dialogic approach in which the 'Other' has a

stake. For him, it seems, such an Orientalist enterprise reflects only a desire to renew

older strategies of colonialism which are no longer pertinent to our age. While

Orientalism is tied to Western colonialism and imperialism, our post-colonial age

inaugurates a phase where those previously colonized are agents in the West, or more

precisely, they are the ones who initiate the encounter with the 'Self.'[35]

Hamid's point could be illustrated in view of Jonathan Smith's notion of the

'proximate other,' which also seems to dovetail nicely with Said's "flexible positional

superiority" as a key feature of the relationship between the Orient and the Occident.

Proximate 'Otherness,' as Smith defines it in *Relating Religion*, is "a matter of relative

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[34] *Ibid.*, 7. Emphasis in original.

[35] Pondering the implications of the term 'post-colonial,' Hamid points out in his interview with Ahmede Hussaine: "I was born in Lahore 24 years after Pakistan's independence. I had no memory of a 'colonial' period as such, and so found the idea of being 'post-colonial' oddly limited and anachronistic. It seemed something that my parents' generation was preoccupied with, not mine. My tendency was to reject the term, and even to find it oddly demeaning, as though it denied people like me the right to be responsible for our own problems by relying on an external actor to blame. I have since come to view the term more positively, and to understand its (possible) potency. Speaking truth to power is an important function of literature, and to the extent that this is a 'post-colonial' exercise, it is an aspect that I embrace; Hamid, "An Interview with Ahmede Hussain on *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*," *Black and Gray* July 28 2007, 27 March 2013 <http://ahmedehussain.blogspot.co.uk/2007/07/reluctant-fundamentalist.html>.

rather than absolute difference … [It] entails a hierarchy of prestige and ranking [of subordination and super-ordination]. Such distinctions are found to be drawn most sharply between 'near neighbors.'"[36] As follows, it is proximate rather than radical 'Otherness' which inaugurates "a variety of ideological posture, ranging from xenophobia to exoticism, from travel, trade, and exploration to military conquest, slavery, and colonialism. The 'other' has appeared as an object of desire as well as an object of repulsion."[37] Taking this a step further, Smith makes it clear that proximate 'Otherness' is dialogic: "[It] is necessarily a term of interrelation. [It] is not so much a matter of separation as it is a description of interaction."[38] This is because when the 'Other' is proximate, as it is the case with Changez,

> when he is TOO-MUCH-LIKE-US, or when he claims to BE-US … It is here that the real urgency of a 'theory of the other' emerges. This urgency is called forth not by the requirement to place the 'other,' but rather to situate ourselves. It is here, to invoke the language of a theory of ritual, that we are not so much concerned with the drama of 'expulsion,' but with the more mundane and persistent process of micro-adjustment.[39]

Moreover, in its relativistic and shifting moods, Smith adds, the relation with the 'Other' takes the form of "a relational theory of reciprocity."[40] Such form registers, by way of a detour, the prevalence and tenacity of this relation being amongst those who might be considered antagonists otherwise. This is even more so if one considers that 'Otherness' becomes something in which the 'Other' has a stake. Ironically, this suggests that the 'Other' might evince consciousness of his own role in this symbiosis and, willingly, exercise his enticing difference, which is also his stigma.

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[36] Quoted in Smith, Jonathan Z. Smith, *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004) 27.

[37] Jonathan Z. Smith, *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004) 256.

[38] *Ibid.*

[39] *Ibid.,* 275.

[40] *Ibid*., 256.

In "Fabricating Otherness," Kateryna Longley highlights this perspective with her observation that "orientalism is mono-directional because it is geographically tied, at least to some degree, to colonial concepts of Asia and the Orient while exoticism is less specific, more open-ended, and, therefore, reversible."[41] It is within this context that Hamid's dialogic approach of Exoticism, adopted in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, is set against the mono-directionalism of the Orientalist hegemonic discourse: coming from a postcolonial background, Changez is depicted as strategically employing his self-conscious exoticism as an attempt not only to resist the grip of Orientalism, but also to exceed, and "go beyond [its] parameters" and the inadequate means it habitually offers in reference to the 'Other,' to quote Rey Chow in *Ethics after Idealism*.[42] This approach is a way "of thinking about cross-cultural exchange that exceed[s] the pointed, polemical framework of 'antiorientalism' – the lesson from Said's work – by continually problematizing the presumption of stable identities and also by continuously asking what else there is to learn beyond destabilized identities themselves."[43] Accordingly, Hamid's stance involves the employment of an alternative aesthetics to the problematic of Orientalism by filtering Changez's character through an irresoluteness that refuses to let him be easily reduced to the stereotypes affiliated with the role he plays and the post-9/11 shifting of his identity summed up by his name,

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[41] Kateryna Olijnyk Longley, "Fabricating Otherness: Demidenko and Exoticism," in *'New' Exoticisms: Changing Patterns in the Construction of Otherness*, ed. Isabel Santaolalla (Amsterdam: Rodolpi, 2000) 21-39, 23.

[42] Rey Chow, *Ethics after Idealism: Theory, Culture, Ethnicity, Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998) 2. It is noteworthy that Said's theory left out any discussion of the role of the 'Other' with regard or in response to their Western style representation. In critique of his work's mono-directionalism, Chow bemoans that although "*Orientalism* alerts us to the pernicious effects of an ongoing ideological domination of the West by way of *culture and representation*, it does not exactly offer viable alternatives. Said's work leaves us with an impasse in which the issue of subordinated otherness, and with it, the other's right to participate in the representation of itself, has irrevocably being raised, without being followed by any practicable notion of how such representation could go beyond the parameters of Orientalism. Instead, … his logic seems to foreclose the possibility of the ['Other'] ever having its own 'culture.' Said's work [left unexamined] the question as to how otherness … could become a genuine oppositional force and a useable value" (Ibid. Emphasis in original).

[43] *Ibid.*, 75.

something which is partly reflected in the fact that *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* shies away from closure.[44]

Right from the beginning, the novel presents the American society's celebration of 'Otherness' as firmly underpinned by a homogeneous trajectory. This is reflected in Changez's commentary on Underwood Samson's new hires while celebrating their induction:

> Two of my five colleagues were women; Wainwright and I were non-white. We were marvelously diverse … and yet we were not: all of us, Sherman included, hailed from the same elite universities – Harvard, Princeton, Stanford, Yale; we all exuded a sense of confident self-satisfaction; and not one of us was either short or overweight. It struck me then – no, I must be honest, it strikes me *now* – that shorn of hair and dressed in battle fatigues, we would have been virtually indistinguishable. (34, emphasis in original)

The image of the warriors here seems to reinforce the idea that, in the pre-9/11 period, Changez and his colleagues were trapped in fixed identities by which their host country seeks solidarity and security. Similarly, at the personal level, one might say that Changez has been locked in the role imposed on him in his relationship with Erica. Like America, Erica welcomed him as a lover only in her own terms. She was infatuated by his exoticism: "'I love it when you talk about where you come from,' she said, slipping her arm through mine, 'you become so *alive*'" (74, emphasis in original). However, her love for Chris, her American childhood sweetheart who died recently of lung cancer, or more precisely, for someone who is American, prevents her from being physically intimate with Changez until she imagines that he is Chris. Thereby, Changez was "an

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[44] The characteristic that best serves my argument in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is the exotic as being "elusive and ungraspable, more slippery and less stably positioned than the 'oriental' and more capable of sliding away or striking back" (Longley, 28). This is because it represents an exemplary model of how Changez, or the novel in general, "slips out from under the heavy apparatus of the dominating knowledge machine defying [the West's] representation and refusing to be contained" (Ibid., 29). In its capacity to make a way out and go beyond the parameters of the Orientalist one-way system of power relations, the exotic makes containment "a fiction. It is in this context of the limits of representation that the idea of the exotic can be put to use to suggest that which cannot be captured or tamed by the dominating structure. It is therefore also the element, which has the capacity to pop up unexpectedly and puncture the whole picture, showing it to be just another picture" (Ibid., 29).

exotic foreigner given to role-playing" (123). During this experience, Changez starts to

be aware of his in-between identity: "I cannot, of course, claim that I was *possessed*, but

at the same time I did not seem to be myself. It was as though we were under a spell,

transported to a world where I was Chris and she was with Chris" (96, emphasis in

original). Furthermore, his use of violent words – 'wound,' 'violent undertone' and

'blood' – in describing such experience carries with it mixed feelings:

> I felt at once both *satiated* and *ashamed*. My satiation was understandable to me;
> my shame was more confusing. Perhaps, by taking on the persona of another, I
> had diminished myself in my own eyes; perhaps I was humiliated by the
> continuing dominance, in the strange romantic triangle of which I found myself
> a part, of my dead rival; perhaps I was worried that I had acted selfishly and I
> sensed, even then, that I had done Erica some terrible harm. (97, emphasis in
> original)

This is, however, the first and last time Changez feels such confusion.[45] Afterwards, it

seems that *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*'s configuration of his private life becomes

suggestive of and mirrored in the political public sphere. Changez's personal-level

experience with Erica, one might even say, simply appears to provide him with a fertile

ground to recuperate agency in his relation with the host culture.

Changez's attitude suggests the terms of Bill Ashcroft, one of the founding

theorists of *Post-Colonial Studies*, as he expands on the notion of 'mimicry':

> When colonial discourse encourages the colonized subject to 'mimic' the
> colonizer, by adopting the colonizer's cultural habits, assumptions and values,
> the result is never a simple reproduction of those traits. Rather, the result is a
> 'blurred copy' of the colonizer that can be quite threatening. This is because
> mimicry is never very far from mockery, since it can appear to parody whatever

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[45] In a fascinating repetition of the colonial scene, the novel employs the "friction-producing moments between sexual and national hierarchies, particularly as encapsulated through the relationship between Third World men and First World women," which usually affirms that the national identity associated with the latter remains more privileged than the sexual identity associated with the former; Matthew Bernstein and Gaylyn Studlar, eds., *Visions of the East: Orientalism in Film* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1997) 41. However, as a site of resistance, the novel suggests that having an Eastern male protagonist in the face of a Western female character also corresponds to the "chromatic sexual hierarchy in colonialist narrative, typical of Eurocentric racial conventions" in which Third World men lure and even rape First World women, representing, more symbolically, the West itself (Ibid.).

it mimics. Mimicry therefore locates a crack in the certainty of colonial dominance, an uncertainty in its control of the behaviour of the colonized.[46]

Putting Ashcroft's words within the context of the pre-9/11context of the novel, one could argue that even though 'mimicry' is to a large extent beset by the United States as a host culture with its claim of unreasonable assimilation, it is taken up by Changez as a means of expressing his agency. That is, he demands that his agency be acknowledged even within the same context by which he is disqualified in the first place, his 'Otherness.' Or, even ironically, he seems to advertise himself as benefiting from the very concept Hamid sets out to criticize in this novel, namely the commodification of an orientalised 'Other.' To this end, the formation of Changez's identity is to be viewed as a combination of 'mimicry' as a coping mechanism, and 'mimicry' as a point of resistance: he combines his rational desire to be integrated with an irrational desire to be the object of the targeted culture's desire by actively playing his ethnicity with the intention to subvert rather than reproduce existing power relations within the Orientalist frame of thinking.[47]

Hence, as a substitute to downplaying or even obfuscating his 'Otherness,' an unthinking tendency – almost a reflex – among immigrants who seek to be integrated into the host society, Changez's choice was what Graham Huggan calls "strategic exoticism,"[48] to keep up with and enact this ineluctable difference for the purpose of

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[46] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 2000) 124-125.

[47] My argument here is that within the Orientalist line of vision, the inferiority of the 'Other' and superiority of the West are secured. But because of its bi-directional system, exoticism has the capacity to change positions, turn the tables, and potentially render the exotic 'Other' powerful. In other words, the conscious performance of exoticism is meant to call into question the power hierarchy; it acts as a catalyst which interrupts that hierarchy by motivating the West to re-evaluate its self-image, and provoking a process of de-centring whereby the focus on the West as the centre is displaced by a more comprehensive vision in which this centre is seen *only in relation to the 'Other.'* This re-establishment of the power hierarchy confirms, in the first place, that despite the differences in status, the 'Other' still could dictate the responses of the West.

[48] According to Huggan, this term denotes a process "designed as much to challenge as to profit from consumer needs"; Graham Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic*: *Marketing the Margins* (London: Routledge, 2001) xi.

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getting personal mileage out of it.[49] Admitting this new approach, Changez says: "I was

aware of an advantage conferred upon me by my foreignness, and I tried to utilize it as

much as I could" (37-38). Consequently, he never tries to escape the visibility of his

difference. Rather, Exoticism appears to give him such confidence that he learns to

manipulate its cultural codes and customs. While visiting Erica's family, we are told,

Changez "took advantage of the ethnic exception clause … and wore a starched white

kurta of delicately worked cotton over a pair of jeans." (44). His embroidered top

succeeded in leaving a deep impression on Erica. Additionally, exoticism proves to be

also his vehicle for success at Underwood Samson. As Changez acknowledges, his

mannerisms appeal to his senior colleagues:

> [I] stood out from the pack … [M]y natural politeness and sense of formality,
> which had sometimes been a barrier in my dealings with my peers, proved
> perfectly suited to the work context in which I now found myself … Or perhaps
> it was my ability to function both respectfully and with self-respect in a
> hierarchical environment, something American youngsters – unlike their
> Pakistani counterparts – rarely seem trained to do. (37)

Describing his sense of accomplishment and self-satisfaction while in his first work

assignment, Changez recalls: "I was in my own eyes, a veritable James Bond – only

younger, darker, and possibly better paid," which further signifies role-playing as the

key to his success at work (57). In this manner, Hamid offers Changez as a Muslim who

managed to fit effectively within American society, and exert agency in the process.[50]

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[49] The theme of minorities performing their 'Otherness' is addressed in a number of immigrants novels. Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, V. S. Naipaul's *The Enigma of Arrival* and Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* are examples of what Huggan calls "staged marginalities" where "marginalised individuals or minority groups dramatise their 'subordinate' status for the imagined benefit of a majority audience. Staged marginality, far from being a form of necessary self-subordination, may function in certain contexts to uncover and challenge dominant structures of power" (Huggan, xii).

[50] Muslims as terrorists or future terrorists in the Anglo-American novel are usually associated with stereotypical traits that contribute to their ineligibility for inclusion, or even socialization, within the American society, leaving them easy preys for fundamentalism. The grounds for their exclusion varies from their intolerance to the 'Godless' culture of the West, as embodied by Updike's Ahmad, or their rigidity, something which fits Amis's terrorist in "The Last Days of Mohammad Atta," who abhors music, women and laughter.

However, despite his compliant outlook, Changez has lost his exotic aura, and thus, the agency in the formation of his identity in the aftermath of the attacks. In what follows, the focus will be on how he becomes implicated in the stereotypical representations of the Muslim 'Other' perpetuated by the hegemonic discourses post-9/11, with a special focus being given to pre-9/11 mimicry as a means of unmasking the United States' mechanisms of inclusion.

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The Genealogy of the 'war on terror'

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In the aftermath of September 11, Changez becomes acutely aware that his inclusion into American society is simply an ideological fiction. Overnight, his racial difference turns into a source of threat rather than that of desire. Such a shift in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*'s trajectory seems to be the outcome of the "with us or against us" rhetoric that redefines the identity of Muslims racially. As Hamid points out it in an interview with Jane Perlez, this is where "[the] traditional immigrant novel … about coming to America," is twisted under "the 21st-century polarity when the magnet switches and pushes [the 'Other'] away."[51] Upon flying to New York, Changez starts to feel the effect of this change as new security measures have been implemented at the airport:

> I was escorted by armed guards into a room where I was made to strip down to my boxer shorts … and I was, as a consequence, the last person to board our aircraft. My entrance elicited looks of concern from many of my fellow passengers. *I flew uncomfortable in my own face: I was aware of being under suspicion; I felt guilty*; I tried therefore to be as nonchalant as possible; this naturally led to my becoming stiff and self-conscious. (67, emphasis added)

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[51] Jane Perlez, "The Saturday Profile: A Pakistani-American Voice in Search of a True Home," *The New York Times* 13 October 2007, 18 January 2013
<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/13/world/europe/13hamid.html?pagewanted=print&_r=0>.

Similarly, on arrival, "being of a suspect race," Changez is "quarantined and subjected to additional inspection," which engenders suspicion in his team (143). On the one hand, such an excluded post-9/11 status proves that, whether imposed by the United States' inclusion mechanism, or inhabited to subvert stereotypes and power relations, pre-9/11 role-playing does not emancipate Changez. Trying to convince himself that the immunity from post-9/11 racial prejudices would be granted by his social and economic status, Changez maintains:

> Pakistani cabdrivers were being beaten to within an inch of their lives; the FBI was raiding mosques, shops, and even people's houses; Muslim men were disappearing, perhaps into shadowy detention centers for questioning or worse. I reasoned that these stories were mostly untrue; the few with some basis in fact were almost certainly being exaggerated; and besides, those rare cases of abuse that regrettably did transpire were unlikely ever to affect me because such things invariably happened, in America as in all countries, to the helpless poor, not to Princeton graduates earning eighty thousand dollars a year. (86)

However, New York transformed into a space where this Princeton graduate is hailed a "Fucking Arab" (107). Role-playing, on the other hand, leads Changez to an awareness of the politics of inclusion into the United States. It is not until September 11 that it becomes clear for him that his accommodation has been subject to abrupt disavowal:

> I wonder now, sir, whether I believed at all in the firmness of the foundations of the new life I was attempting to construct for myself in New York. Certainly I wanted to believe; at least I wanted not to disbelieve with such an intensity that I prevented myself as was possible from making the obvious connection between the crumbling of the world around me and the impending destruction of my personal American dream. (85)

He even comes to the realization that he "was a form of indentured servant whose right to remain was dependent upon the continued benevolence of [his] employer" (143).

The challenge of approaching the post-9/11 world which lies in understanding the present by opening paths to the past, therefore, appears to be taken up by *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Hamid subjects the Anglo-American novels about the attacks and their aftermath to a historical gaze, and in so doing, releases their repressed

historical dimension. In particular, and within the context of this work, he seems to enact DeLillo's call to return to history proposed in *Falling Man* by Martin, the alleged European terrorist. Of a particular interest is that this sublimated relation to the past is itself a dialogue. Premised on a reinterpretation of the racial profiling of the 'Other' which links the past and the present, Hamid's approach illuminates the latter by focusing on the former and vice versa, and thus, works against the monologue of post-9/11 nationalism. As the novel suggests, the 'othering' practices Changez encounters are concomitant partners to the homogenization of the American national community after September 11. Therefore, a critique of these exclusionist attitudes must in the first instance question the homogeneity that underpins them. Expressing this idea, Changez tells his American visitor that the mourning inaugurated with "photos, bouquets, words of condolence – nestled into street corners and between shops and along the railings of public squares," has been developed into an explicit assertion of national identity:

> Your country's flag invaded New York after the attacks; it was everywhere. Small flags stuck on toothpicks featured in the shrines; stickers of flags adorned windshields and windows; large flags fluttered from buildings. They all seemed to proclaim: *We are America* – not New York, which in my opinion, means something quite different – *the mightiest civilization the world has ever known*; *you have slighted us*; *beware our wrath*. Gazing up at the soaring towers of the city, I wondered what manner of host would sally forth from so grand a castle. (71-72, emphasis in original)

Here, Changez seems to address the Machiavellian manipulation and kitschification of pain inflicted by the attacks by impugning a strong popular belief in the positive effect or the redemptive fallacy of what cultural critic and queer theorist Lauren Berlant calls "national sentimentality."[52] For him, what the decontextualized and de-historicized

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[52] Lauren Berlant, "The Subject of True Feeling: Pain, Privacy, and Politics," in *Transformations: Thinking Through Feminism*, eds. Sara Ahmed, Jane Kilby, Celia Lury, Maureen McNeil and Beverley Skeggs (London: Routledge, 2000) 33-47, 34. Berlant has written about the significance of "the place of painful feeling in the making of political worlds" (Ibid., 33). More precisely, her concern is the political role of feeling in in centring and re-conceptualizing discourses of national belonging and social antagonism. See also, Wendy Brown, "Wounded Attachments," *Political Theory* 21.3 (August 1993):

approach to September 11 engendered is a collective majority of loss that becomes

entangled in the deadlock of pain.[53] Within this frame of post-9/11 nationalization, the

American self that belongs to the ostensible shaken mainstream is endorsed as "the true

self, the self that must be protected from pain or from history, that scene of unwelcome

changing."[54] What seems to occupy a pivotal place in this edition of national

identification is the claim that the pain of the event is confined to the majority's own

sphere. On the other hand, the 'Other,' whether indicating minorities or immigrants, are

not only disadvantaged from being the subject of the attacks' pain, but they are also

perceived to be stereotypically threatening to the dominant society and prejudice

towards them is often disguised with maintaining public security. This propensity to see

the 'Self' as "virtuous in the face of bad, unethical power" serves to connect the United

States' plans for implementing violence to a sense of innocence and virtue.[55] It is an

identification on behalf of ressentiment which takes "from pain the energy for social

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390-410; and Mark Seltzer, "Wound Culture: Trauma in the Pathological Public Sphere," *October* 80 (Spring 1997): 3-26.

[53] On the role of the rhetoric of pain in freeing September 11 from its historical and political ties, see Marita Sturken, *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007). See also Berlant, *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); and Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, trans. Steven Concoran (London: Continuum, 2010).

[54] Berlant, "The Subject of True Feeling," in *Left Legalism/ Left Critique*, eds. Wendy Brown and Janet Halley (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002) 105-133, 110. The privatization of the American public sphere is closely pertinent to the "common national 'character'" and "National Symbolic" referred to in Berlant, *The Anatomy of National Fantasy: Hawthorne, Utopia, and Everyday Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991). See also Rancière, "Democracy, Republic, Representation," *Constellations* 13.3 (2006): 297-307; and Phil Cohen, "Homing Devices," in *Resituating Identities: The Politics of Race, Ethnicity, and Culture*, eds. Vered Amit-Talai and Caroline Knowles (Ontario: Broadview Press, 1996) 68-82.

[55] *Ibid.*, 110-111. Such a linkage between the wounded 'true' citizen and innocence, or even children, in the post-9/11 era can be best considered in the light of Berlant's theory of the "infantilized citizen"; Berlant, *The Queen of America goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997). This exposes the United States as "a deeply paradoxical nation, wanting to be the super-cop of the world, but intolerant of any criticism of its self-image of pure virtue [would never acknowledge as it sticks to its] impossible desire to be both omnipotent and blameless"; Arvind Rajagopal, "Real and imagined enemies," *OpenDemocracy* 14 September 2001, 17 April 2012 <http://www.opendemocracy.net/conflict-us911/article_121.jsp>.

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transformation beyond the field of its sensual experience,"[56] and thereby, "can hold out no future – for itself or others – which triumphs over this pain."[57]

Resisting the grip of such immature monological nationalism, or monologue about nationalism, then, involves the struggle against the privatization of the event assumed by the dominant discourse. According to Changez, this struggle entails enlarging the context in which the attacks are happened to be expressed by means of a transferrential relation to history which "allows us to put the present into much better perspective" (41). This brings with it a reconsideration of the United States' history as a place of cultural diversity and ethnic tolerance. Fuelled by intensified nationalist feeling post-9/11, the process of homogenization, which enabled the United States to conceive of itself as an "imagined community" in relation to the Muslim 'Other,' seems to be, after all, only a variation of earlier failed 'experiments' of accommodating 'Otherness,' or perhaps, their aporia.[58] Throughout the novel, we are led to make associations between the protagonist's pre- and post-9/11 status within American society. Of moving comfortably in New York in his Pakistani outfit, Changez comments that, ostensibly, this could be a potential "testament to the open mindedness and – that overused word – *cosmopolitan* nature of New York in those days [before the attacks]" (44, emphasis in original). Changez is led to scumble the matter by considering it as cosmopolitanism

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[56] *Ibid*., 127. Here, I argue, within the scope of my study, that the Nietzschian concept of ressentiment, the "inversion of the value-positing eye," is an essential component of the master's identity rather than the slave's, as Nietzsche himself argued; Quoted in Vikki Bell, "Owned Suffering: Thinking the Feminist Political Imagination with Simone de Beauvoir and Richard Wright," in *Transformations*, 61-76, 68. Emphasis in original. In this sense, the 'Other' seems to function the same as what Žižek calls the Thing: "the Thing is not simply a foreign body, an intruder which disturbs the harmony of the social bond: precisely as such, the Thing is what 'holds together' the social edifice by means of guaranteeing its fantasmatic consistency"; Žižek, *Enjoy your symptom! Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and Out* (London: Routledge, 1992) 123; See also Žižek, "Melancholy and the Act," *Critical Inquiry* 26.4 (Summer 2000): 657-681, 662. Here, national assertiveness with pain as the main integrative principle serves as a release of frustration for the majority, evolving into a kind of melancholic "positivization of a void or lack" (Ibid., 660).
[57] Quoted in Berlant, in *Left Legalism/ Left Critique*, 126.
[58] Writing the national identity in the Andersonian sense of 'imagined communities,' especially in its limitedness, inevitably implies establishing its own rules for inclusion and exclusion, for defining the boundary between the 'Self' and 'Other,' between its members and non-members.

since America's promise of unconditional inclusion pre-9/11 seems appealing for him. Yet, such a 'cosmopolitan' tendency needs to be viewed with some suspicion and its appeal should be tentative especially in the days that followed the attacks where America did not keep up with all that she seems to promise. "Those days," it seems, it is not so clear whether cosmopolitanism is different from the postcolonial exotic gaze or whether it is simply the latter's ethical supplement. In such a case, it would be a mistake to consider the boundaries between cosmopolitan attitudes and exclusionist reactions as clearly delineated. This is reflected in the complex pre-9/11ties that bind Changez with his American counterparts.[59] What becomes evident, in Changez's case, is that cosmopolitanism glosses over the politics of exclusion, more precisely, the subtle and discreet forms of anxiety and desire at work within American society where the 'Other' is 'consumed' rather than treated on equal terms, something which the novel displays openly given its post-9/11 awareness.

Although such superficial celebration of diversity, the negative form of cosmopolitanism, or what can be referred to as cosmopolitan abjection, is more apparent and extreme in times of crises where the 'Other' becomes a prime candidate for threat, its visibility in the pre-9/11 era calls into question the normative status of cosmopolitanism so that an underlying incompatibility arises between political measures and cosmopolitan values devoted to the interests of humanity. Put differently, Changez's post-9/11 status, his displacement from the central position he claims for himself within the process of self-marketing, simultaneously, even dialogically, could be better understood by considering earlier forms of exclusion. It is, in this sense, a glaring example of the return and the reconfiguration of the exclusionist attitude

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[59] Textually speaking, such blurring of boundaries and complexity is, above all, reconcilable with Hamid's placing of himself, as a novelist, on a safe distance from his characters avoiding to stereotypically polarize them as victimizing or victimized, as evil or good, or establish definite demarcations along these lines.

towards the 'Other' in terms that seem to have a confrontational tone. More precisely, the logic of exclusion and the characteristics that assigned Changez as 'Other' post-9/11 pre-exist the event, though fraught by its occurrence. According to sociologist Ulrich Beck, "The nationalist perspective is a monologic imagination, which excludes the otherness of the other. The cosmopolitan perspective is an alternative imagination, an imagination of alternative ways of life and rationalities, which includes the otherness of the other."[60] However, such a reflection does not resonate with Changez's cosmopolitan mediations. For him, cosmopolitanism seems to align itself with nationalism, and thereby, it is more likely to find monologic proclamations rather than dialogic renderings of the former.

The same view is forwarded by sociologist Gerard Delanty for whom the cosmopolitan outlook reduced to 'us' versus 'them' only suggests affinities with the dominant political discourse and its nationalist logic.[61] Taking this a step further, it could be argued that although the valorization of 'singularity' endemic in such cosmopolitan forms of domination is strongly implemented in times of national crises, it is still there in other times and could be only uncovered through the lens of the 'Other.' This idea finds a resonance in Peter Nyers' "Abject Cosmopolitanism," where he argues that "to upset much of the received knowledge we possess on the subject [of cosmopolitanism]," one should "think of cosmopolitanism in the plural."[62] That is, what Nyers calls for is defining cosmopolitanism in relation to the experiences of "those who

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[60] Ulrich Beck, "The Cosmopolitan Society and its Enemies," *Theory, Culture and Society* 19.1-2 (February 2002): 17-44, 18.

[61] Delanty holds that "the separation of the social from the political in the modern imagination had the implication that cosmopolitanism was equated with the political in opposition to the social. Cosmopolitanism thus reflected the revolt of the individual against the social world, for to be a 'citizen of the world' was to reject the immediately given and closed world of particularistic attachments. Not surprisingly it became associated with the revolt of the elites against *the low culture of the masses*"; Gerard Delanty, "The Cosmopolitan Imagination: Critical Cosmopolitanism and Social Theory," *The British Journal of Sociology* 57.1 (March 2006): 25-47, 26. Emphasis added.

[62] Peter Nyers, "Abject Cosmopolitanism: The Politics of Protection in the Anti-Deportation Movement," *Third World Quarterly* 24.6 (December 2003): 1069-1093, 1072.

have been *de-connected*, subjected to often *violent detachment*"; in particular, the

reference here is to immigrant and refugee groups.[63] He refers to such revealing

cosmopolitanisms as 'abject cosmopolitanism,' a term indicative of "the abject-subject"

having "an important constitutive role in self/other encounters and relationships –

including those of the cosmopolitan variety. The 'moral cartography' of abjection is,

however, riddled with *some familiar us/them power relations*."[64] It is along these lines

that Changez's pre-9/11 'othering' experience bears witness to the reliance of

"cosmopolitanism's high value … on a relationship with an abject non-value for its

condition of possibility," and thus, foreshadowing the intention of cosmopolitan

subjects to keep abjection in place at whatever cost.[65]

Changez realizes that his exclusion in the aftermath of the attacks has its roots in

being welcomed as a stranger pre-9/11, his "intimate exterior" position within the host

culture, as Jacques Lacan coined it, which could simply be read, again, within the

context of a restricted, conditional accommodation of a subject who is identified in

advance as 'Other.'[66] Reflecting on his at-the-borders identity pre-9/11, Changez

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[63] *Ibid*. Emphasis in original. In a similar way, many theorists hold on to the idea that for cosmopolitanism to live up to its original principles, its purview should be extended beyond the 'above' cosmopolitan experiences – that is, to take into account cosmopolitan experiences from 'below.' For more elaboration, see Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins, eds., *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998). For example, Bruce Robbins argues that "[l]ike nations, cosmopolitanisms are now plural and particular. Like nations, they are both European and non-European, and they are weak and underdeveloped as well as strong and privileged. And again like the nation, cosmopolitanism is *there* – not merely an abstract ideal, like loving one's neighbour as oneself, but habits of thought and feeling that have already shaped and been shaped by particular collectivities, that are socially and geographically situated, hence both limited and empowered"; Robbins, "Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism," in *Cosmopolitics*, 1-19, 2. Emphasis in original. See also, Bonnie Honig, *Democracy and the Foreigner* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). Honig asserts the need for "democratic cosmopolitanism" in which "cosmopolitans risk their cosmopolitan (and nationalist) principles by engaging others in their particularities" (Ibid., 67, quoted in Nyers, 1076). With his notion of "critical cosmopolitanism," Delanty conceives of cosmopolitanism "as socially situated and as part of the self-constituting nature of the social world itself" (Delanty, 25).
[64] *Ibid.,* 1703. Emphasis added.
[65] *Ibid.*
[66] Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-1960: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan*, Book VII, ed. Jacques-Allain Miller, trans. Dennis Porter (London: Routledge, 1992) 139. Lacan remarks that the 'Other' "is at the center only in the sense that it is excluded. That is to say, in reality [it] has to be posited as exterior, as the prehistoric Other that is impossible to forget – the Other whose primacy of position Freud affirms in the form of something *entfremdet*, something strange to me, although it is at the heart of

comments: "I felt I was play-acting when in reality I ought to be making my way home, like the people on the street outside" (61). However, it is in relation to Erica that he could evaluate the implications of his inside/outside position, or perhaps, the unstable pattern of his accommodation, on his relation with the United States in the aftermath of September 2001: "It occurred to me that my attempts to communicate with her might have failed in part because I did not know where I stood on so many issues of consequence; I lacked a stable *core*. I was not certain where I belonged – in New York, in Lahore, in both, in neither" (135, emphasis in original). To such interpretation there corresponds Derrida's deconstruction of the concept of hospitality to which the idea of an immigrant 'stranger' or 'Other' is linked inextricably. Put simply, the "lack of stable core" Changez experienced pre-9/11 could be also ascribed to the paradoxical, aporetic character of hospitality Derrida discusses in *Of Hospitality*,[67] and which seems to be analogous to the "the *secret* or *cryptic* character" of 'incorporation' referred to in his explanation of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok's concepts of 'incorporation' and 'introjection,' the two modes of relating to the loss of the love object, in his foreword to *The Wolf Man's Magic Word*.[68] What is offered to Changez upon his entry into

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me" (Ibid., 71. Emphasis in original). Following that, with the simultaneous attempts to integrate and exclude Changez before the attacks, it becomes hardly possible to define his position within American society; there is no clear-cut definition or place for him, he is not an insider nor an outsider, neither a 'Self' nor an 'Other.' Thus, his position does not so much correspond to an abjection as to an "intimate exteriority or 'extimacy'" where the object of desire "is always maintained at a certain distance … But this distance is not complete; it is a distance that is called proximity, which is not identical to the subject, which is literally close to it" (Ibid., 76).

[67] Derrida, *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000) 75-77. For more elaboration on Derrida's understanding of hospitality, see Derrida, *Paper Machine* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005) 132-133; see also Hans Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross: Reappropriating the Atonement Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004) 31.

[68] Derrida, "Fors: The Anglish Words of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok," trans. Barbara Johnson, foreword to Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Wolf Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonymy*, trans. Nicolas T. Rand (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986) xi-xlviii, xvii. Emphasis in original. For Derrida, Abraham and Torok's psychoanalytic examination of 'introjection,' which marks an effect of the submission to mourning, and 'incorporation,' as the resistance to mourning, seems to be one way of approaching the aporia of hospitality, more precisely, its unconditional and conditional forms, successively. Recognizing an inherent contradiction within incorporation, Derrida contends that the crypt, "as the incorporated object's 'monument' or 'tomb'" (Ibid., xvii), is "always an internalization, an inclusion intended as a compromise, but since it is a parasitic inclusion, an inside heterogeneous to the

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American society, to use the words of Derrida, is a hospitality of '*invitation*' rather than '*visitation*.'[69] Thus, marked by its own controversies, hospitality, in the best of cases, takes the conditional, mobilized and politicized form, a relation of power where it is entirely up to the host to decide when and to whom hospitality is offered. It remains, hence, "a scrutinized hospitality, always under surveillance, parsimonious and protective of its sovereignty," which is offered "only on the condition that the other follow our rules, our way of life, even our language, our culture, our political system, and so on. That is hospitality as it is commonly understood and practiced."[70]

Second and most important, a relation of 'Otherness,' such hospitality performs the violence of abjection insofar as the condition of its possibility lies in the pre-identification of Changez as 'Other': the subject to whom welcome is offered has been already excluded by such predetermined identification. Accordingly, quite ironically, hospitality which is expected to accommodate the 'Other' fails to do so fully because of being simultaneously a defence mechanism – it defends the incorporating 'Self' against the threat of the incorporated 'Otherness' by appropriating the latter as 'Other,' or more precisely, by imposing an identity to mitigate the effect of their threat. This reliance on initially identifying Changez's identity as an 'outsider' brings into focus another significant aspect of hospitality; that it has its roots in the Self/Other binary opposition through which the host nation defines its borders. Here, hospitality emerges as a mechanism whereby a host nation affirms itself, in the manner of Derrida's account of the dependence of the hospitable 'Self' on the guest 'Other' in its own identification,[71]

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inside of the Self, an outcast in the domain of general introjection within which it violently takes its place, the cryptic safe can only maintain in a state of repetition the mortal conflict it is impotent to resolve" (Ibid., xvi). For more elaboration on the aporetic nature of 'incorporation,' see also, Abraham and Torok, "Mourning or Melancholia: Introjection versus Incorporation," in *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis*, Volume 1, ed. and trans. Nicholas Rand (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994) 125-138.
[69] Derrida, "Autoimmunity," 128-129. Emphasis in original.
[70] *Ibid*., 128.
[71] Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, 61.

something which concurs in turn with Hegel's notion about the significance of the slave to the master.[72] Precisely, this logic of dependence suggests the agency of the 'Other' as a guest as well as the ambivalence in the sovereignty of the 'Self' as a host.

These two ways of thinking about hospitality reveal that the United States is disposed to embrace Changez and is perfectly willing to do so given that the latter remains an 'outsider,' making the process of accommodation never complete, and thus, subject to be suspended as soon as he fails to adhere to 'our' conditions, or bring 'us' face to face with the ambivalence of its sovereignty. Such a line of reasoning holds particularly true in the context of intrusions like that of September 11, Derrida maintains: "Wherever the 'home' is violated, wherever at any rate a violation is felt as such, you can foresee a privatizing and even familialist reaction, by widening the ethnocentric and nationalist, and thus xenophobic, circle," directed against the 'Other' "which threatens, with the 'home,' the traditional conditions of hospitality. The perversion and pervertibility of [this law of hospitality] … is that one can become virtually xenophobic in order to protect or claim to protect one's own hospitality, the own home that makes possible one's own hospitality."[73] This point is developed in the main plot of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* through the experiences of Changez as a desperate lover of Erica and America. Although in principle the boundary that separates his pre-9/11 location within American society from his post-9/11 exclusion looks rigorous, a latent interconnectedness is informed by the former's ambivalent nature:

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[72] According to Hegel, "the object in which the lord has achieved his lordship has in reality turned out to be something quite different from an independent consciousness. What now really confronts him is not an independent consciousness, but a dependent one. He is, therefore, not certain of *being-for-self* as the truth of himself. On the contrary, his truth is in reality the unessential consciousness and its unessential action. The *truth* of the independent consciousness is accordingly the servile consciousness of the bondsman"; G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller, with an analysis of the text and foreword by J. N. Findlay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) 116-117. Emphasis in original. Hence, "just as lordship showed that its essential nature is the reverse of what it wants to be, so too servitude in its consummation will really turn into the opposite of what it immediately is … a truly independent consciousness" (Ibid., 117). In this way, the master is the one who turns out to be dependent on the servant and not vice versa.
[73] Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, 53.

Changez's 'strangeness' makes it impossible for Erica and his host country to be unconditionally accessible, and thereby, the welcome offered to him was not credible enough and could not live.

Much in the same way that hospitality works to maintain such internal contradictions, multiculturalism, another form of welcoming 'strangers,' remains always trapped within power relations, out of which it essentially came, as difference in colour or race that seemingly does not matter actually does. Though these contradictions escape notice, they pursue a trajectory that will bring about their crisis, dismantle, and revelation. In the aftermath of the attacks, Changez starts to find that New York is no longer the multicultural city where he could express the distinction of his uni-dimensional identity without feeling completely different: "Living in New York was suddenly like living in a film about the Second World War; I, a foreigner, found myself staring out at a set that ought to be viewed not in Technicolor but in grainy *black and white*" (105, emphasis added). Here, drawing a connection between the attacks and World War II, as a moment of solidarity in the American history, Changez seems to cast light on the fact that classifying the 'Other' as more than different, and constructing clear-cut ethnic barriers have become clearly overstated. In the initial scenes of the novel, however, he feels at home given that New York is a place where different cultures are accommodated beyond the Manichean rhetoric of nationalism: "for me moving to New York felt – so unexpectedly – like coming home," taking into his account "the fact that Urdu was spoken by taxi-cab drivers; the presence, only two blocks from my East Village apartment, of a samosa-and channa-serving establishment called the Pak-Punjab Deli" (29). He further adds: "In a subway car, my skin would typically fall in the middle of the color spectrum. On street corners, tourists would ask me for directions. I was, in four and a half years, never an American; I was *immediately*

a New Yorker" (29-30, emphasis in original). Given how things changed in the aftermath of the attacks, this multiculturalism becomes what Huggan defines as "a form of wilfully aestheticising exoticist discourse" – "a discourse which inadvertently serves to disguise persistent racial tensions within the nation; and one which, in affecting a respect for the other as a reified object of cultural difference, deflects attention away from social issues – discrimination, unequal access, hierarchies of ethnic privilege – that are very far from being resolved."[74]

In "Multicultural Liberals and the Rushdie Affair,"[75] the political scientist Daniel O'Neill clearly refers to one aspect of the pre-9/11 multicultural practices presented in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* when he argues that weak multiculturalists "do not argue for differential citizenship rights, but seek a range of different goals. In the United States, these have included, for example, expanding the academic curriculum to reflect more fully the contributions of minorities."[76] This is demonstrated by Changez's admission into Princeton which was, for him, the first step in pursuing his American dream: "*This is a dream come true*. Princeton inspired in me the feeling that my life was a film in which I was the star and everything was possible. *I have access to this beautiful campus … to professors who are titans in their fields and fellow students who are philosopher-kings in the making*," he contemplates (3, emphasis in original). However, a more comprehensive view of the multiculturalism that dictates the United

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[74] Huggan, 126.

[75] Daniel I. O'Neill, "Multicultural Liberals and the Rushdie Affair: A Critique of Kymlicka, Taylor and Walzer," *The Review of Politics* 61.2 (Spring 1999): 219-250, 222. In this article, O'Neill criticized the political philosophers, Will Kymlicka, Charlez Taylor and Michael Walzer, for their interpretations of the Rushdie affair "converge on a defense of strong multiculturalism under the auspices of what [he calls] 'multicultural liberalism,' … [a form of multiculturalism] that makes allowances for minority cultural rights, while remaining simultaneously committed to a core set of individual rights incapable of being trumped in the name of culture" (Ibid.). Conversely, O'Neill reflects on how the Rushdie affair makes clear that the multicultural liberal project "is a perfectionist moral doctrine grounded on a commitment to maximizing a particular, culturally rooted, interpretation of the good life. The Rushdie affair also illustrates the serious difficulties involved in attempting to synthesize strong multiculturalism with this type of individual rights-based liberalism" (Ibid., 249-250).

[76] *Ibid.*

States' relation to Changez and its changing dynamics is offered by the American academic Stanley Fish. A weaker form of O'Neill's weak multiculturalism, Fish's "boutique multiculturalism" offers little reason for optimism about the future relation with the 'Other' with "its superficial or cosmetic relationship to the objects of its affection."[77] Put differently, though adherents of boutique multiculturalism "admire or appreciate or enjoy or sympathize with or (at the very least) 'recognize the legitimacy of' the traditions of cultures other than their own," they "will always stop short of approving other cultures at a point where some value at their center generates an act that offends against the canons of civilized decency as they have been either declared or assumed."[78] Accordingly, the 'boutique' multiculturalist "will accord a superficial respect to cultures other than his own, a respect he will withdraw when he finds the practices of a culture irrational or inhumane."[79] Such construction has very real consequences for how pre-9/11 accommodation of Muslim immigrants in the West generated anti-Muslim racism post-9/11. Fish's words are especially revealing in relation to Changez whose Pakistaniness turns out to be no more a site of appeal, but a source of threat to his 'boutique,' rather than 'weak,' multiculturalist society. The aura that surrounded him as an exotic object prior to the attacks appears to be transformed as perceptions of the 'Other' have become fraught with fear and suspicion in their aftermath.

Solidarity of Strangers: Nationalist and Economic Fundamentalism

The return to history that situated *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* in areas overlooked by dominant narratives occurs on two levels, personal and political, or local and global. On

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[77] Stanley Fish, *The Trouble with Principle* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999) 56-74, 56.
[78] *Ibid.*
[79] *Ibid.*, 60. Emphasis in original.

the local level, one can argue that Erica represents the nationalist, isolationist tendencies of the United States that hinder the accommodation of the 'Other.' Commenting on his role as Erica's "official escort at the events of New York society," Changez gives one of the many hints in the novel about the non-durability of his accommodation:

> This role pleased me indeed. I was presumptuous enough to think that this was how my life was *meant* to be, that it had in some way been inevitable that I should end up rubbing shoulders with the truly wealthy in such exalted settings. Eric vouched for my worthiness; my way of carrying myself – I flattered myself to believe – suggested the impeccability of my breeding; and, for those who inquired further, my Princeton degree and Underwood Samson business cards were invariably sufficient to earn me a respectful nod of approval. (77, emphasis in original).

Unfortunately, Changez's relation with Erica, and Americans in general, does not get the chance to develop into much further than "rubbing shoulders" since, in line with September 11, his physical intimacy with her is thought of in terms of intrusion. Indeed, in his attempt to create symmetry between the public and private, Hamid seems to present Changez's sexual experience with Erica as parallel to the attacks in many ways. For example, the "violent undertone" Changez becomes aware of during this experience alludes to the intrusion into the American space on September 11. They are also made to be similar in terms of effect. After the attacks, Changez detects a revival of America's imperialist inclinations: "I was struck by how traditional your empire appeared" (142). America was destabilized spatially and temporally, and thus,

> was increasingly giving itself over to a dangerous [nationalist] nostalgia … There was something undeniably retro about the flags and uniforms, about generals addressing cameras in war rooms and newspaper headlines featuring such words as *duty* and *honor*. I had always thought of America as a nation that looked forward; for the first time I was struck by its determination to look *back*. (105, emphasis in original)

 The same holds true for Erica who was "disappearing into a powerful *nostalgia*, one from which only she could choose whether or not to return" (104, emphasis in original). Changez's in-between status makes him of no use to Erica when she reached him out

for help: "I had nothing of substance to give her. Probably this was why I had been willing to try to take on the persona of Chris, because my own identity was so fragile" (135). That is why, rather than offering her "an alternative to the chronic nostalgia inside her," his physical intimacy pushed her "deeper into her own confusion," and reinforced the image of Chris as an object of nostalgic attachment (Ibid.). Above all, Changez realizes that Erica is assuming a mono-directional stance under the terms of which she is rendered unwilling to attend to the change, or perhaps the rootedness, that he potentially represents: "For it was clear Erica needed something that I – even by consenting to play the part of a man not myself – was unable to give her. In all likelihood she longed for her adolescence with Chris, for a time before his cancer made her aware of *impermanence and mortality*" (104, emphasis added).

Equally, Changez observes that the 9/11-terrorists have instigated Erica's memories, a clear reference to the parallel between the attacks and their affair:

> Like so many others in the city after the attacks, she appeared deeply anxious. Yet her anxieties seemed only indirectly related to the prospect of dying at the hands of terrorists. The destruction of the World Trade Center had, as she had said, churned up old thoughts that had settled in the manner of sediment to the bottom of a pond; now the waters of her mind were murky with what previously had been ignored. (75)

Erica's nostalgic feelings are further heightened to the extent that she is propelled into a nervous breakdown. At the clinic where she retreats, Changez is informed: "[Y]ou're the hardest person for her to see. You're the one who upsets her most. Because you're the most *real*, and you make her lose her balance" (122, emphasis added). The words of the nurse suggest that Erica's feeling that she is tainted by her dependency on Changez makes her particularly resistant to meeting him as this might remind her of, or even further confirm, her weakness. One might even say that her inner struggle over her lack of autonomy impairs her ability to maintain a relation with Changez that would otherwise provide her with relief. Yet, even when she accepts to meet him, Changez is

struck by "the certainty with which she placed [him] in the *past* tense" (124, emphasis added). It is not until reading the manuscript of Erica's novel, upon her literal disappearance that he becomes totally convinced that he never had a place in her life: "I had begun to understand that she had chosen not to be part of my story; her own had proven too compelling, and she was – at that moment and in her own way – following it to its conclusion, passing through places I couldn't reach" (151-152). At one point in the novel, Erica regrets that she could no more turn to writing to "get something out that was stuck inside," in reference to her grief over Chris' death (102). However, when ready, her novel, like most post-9/11 dominant narratives, gives no room for Changez, the 'Other,' and thereby, seems to be detached from reality, from the "most real," to use the nurse's words. In a similar perception of his place within post-9/11 America, Changez maintains:

> What your fellow countrymen longed for was unclear to me – a time of unquestioned dominance? of safety? of moral certainty? I did not know – but that they were scrambling to don the costumes of another era was apparent. I felt treacherous for wondering whether that era was fictitious, and whether – if it could indeed be animated – it contained a part written for someone like me. (105)

Erica's supposed suicide by jumping naked in the Hudson River only mirrors the immaturity and isolating nature of America's military response to the attacks where the 'Other' is not part of the solution, nor of the future of the country, and thereby no real transformation or solution is offered. Thus, in his attempt to have "a stable core," to step out of his inside/outside space, Changez is singled out as a lover the same as he is excluded as a Muslim 'Other' in the aftermath of the attacks.

  While Erica symbolizes the melancholic, isolationist aspect of America, Underwood Samson represents its imperialist, expansionist tendencies. The thrust of this return to history is that to make sense of the post-9/11 world the violence of the American capitalist political-economic system, or what Žižek names as "systemic

violence," must be taken into account.[80] Persistently, the ruthless nature of the United States' neo-liberal capitalism, as embodied by Underwood Samson, a consultancy firm that supports the state's political projects of hegemony and globalization by wading into brutal wars of acquisitions of business around the world, is referred to through war imagery. It is along these lines that Changez's recruitment in this firm is associated with an exercise of military service or duty, and the firm's building is used as a symbol of superiority and domination:

> I remember my sense of wonder on the day I reported for duty. Their offices were perched on the forty-first and forty-second floors of a building in midtown – higher than any two structures here in Lahore would be if they were stacked atop the other – and while I had previously flown in airplanes and visited the Himalayas, nothing had prepared me for the drama, the *power* of the view from their lobby. This, I realized, was another world from Pakistan; supporting my feet were the achievements of the most technologically advanced civilization our species had ever known. (30, emphasis in original)

Within this context, new recruits at Underwood Samson are referred to as soldiers in a battlefield (34). Not only does this image reinforce the juxtaposition between economic and military power, but also it refers to the consistency of the firm's members. Underwood Samson is said to embrace workers who are usually defined as outsiders, due to their nationality, race, gender or social status, and makes them insiders in the world of business, to the extent that Changez comments upon his recruitment: "On that day, I did not think of myself as a Pakistani, but as an Underwood Samson trainee" (31). Here, Changez seems to be suffused by a desire for the normality promised by the firm, "making [his] concerns about money and status things of the distant past" (13). "Certainly," he further adds, "much of my early excitement about New York was wrapped up in my excitement about Underwood Samson" (30). Thus, Underwood

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[80] Žižek, *Violence* (London: Profile Books, 2008) 1.

Samson, with its neo-liberal market-policies, employs cosmopolitanism or universal humanism rather than nationalism as a ground for solidarity.[81]

Similarly, Jim and Wainwright, Changez's close allies and who identify with him in terms of being not really fit within American society, are given equal welcome as members of Underwood Samson. Like Changez, Jim, his American senior at work, comes from a poor background: "[H]e had grown up outside the candy store, and I had grown up on its threshold as its door was being shut," Changez remarks (64). Jim even notices that they are both "hungry" (8). Quietly as he could, Changez had more than one on-campus job to conduct himself "in public like a young prince, generous and carefree" (9-10). For Jim, who is also a Princeton graduate, working night shifts and keeping the matter a secret was his way to cultivate an air of self-sufficiency or even conceit. What is more, Jim shares Changez's sense of being an outsider since his supposed homosexuality could be said to mirror the former's immigrant status. Yet, both chose not to let their social and economic backgrounds define their future by joining the meritocracy of Underwood Samson: "You're a shark ... It's what they called when I first joined. A shark. I never stopped swimming. And I was a cool customer. I never let on that I felt like I didn't belong to this world. Just like you," as Jim points out (63). Through the character of Wainwright, Hamid reflects Changez's ethnic difference. Although an American citizen, Wainwright is "non-white" – his family descends from Barbados, so most likely he is black – and thus, belongs to the class of outsiders. However, like Changez, he transcends his racial difference by becoming a member of Underwood Samson. He is even ranked second to Changez, and they both stand apart from the crowd at the firm.

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[81] See for example Jonathan Friedman, "Globalization, Dis-integration, Re-organization: the Transformations of Violence," in *Globalization, the State, and Violence*, ed. Jonathan Friedman (Oxford: Altamira Press, 2003) 1-34,13-17.

Underwood Samson, then, becomes a recourse, an anchor providing inclusion, identification and identity to the point that Changez "felt *empowered*, and besides, all opportunities were opening up to me" (33, emphasis added). Ostensibly, with this empowerment, he becomes reassured to think that he is no more an outsider, but really one of them, an American. He even decides to test and exercise the power of this alleged Americanness in his first assignment to value a recorded-music business in the Philippines, an ex-American colony: "I attempted to act and speak, as much as my dignity would permit, more like an *American*. The Filipinos we worked with seemed to look up to my American colleagues, accepting them almost instinctively as members of the officer class of global business – and I wanted my share of that respect as well" (58, emphasis in original). However, it is not very long that Wainwright's warning – "Beware the dark side, young Sky-walker" – starts to ring true for him (34).What confirms this warning is that like taking on the persona of Chris, playing the role of an American made Changez feel ashamed though he showed no sign of that. Besides, he starts to feel the hostility of the local people towards him, a hint at the violence inherent in the ethos of his work of valuation. Riding a limousine with his American colleagues in the streets of Manila, Changez becomes disoriented as a jeepney driver returned his gaze and "his dislike was so obvious, so *intimate*, that it got under my skin" (60, emphasis in original). Trying to pursue several possibilities about the reason for this resentment, "perhaps he resents me for the privileges implied by my suit and expensive car; perhaps he simply does not like Americans," Changez becomes suddenly aware how pretentious he is (Ibid.). It strikes him that he shares "a sort of Third World sensibility" that sets him apart from his American colleagues: "Then one of my colleagues asked me a question, and when I turned to answer him, something rather strange took place. I looked at him – at his fair hair and light eyes and, most of all, his

oblivious immersion in the minutiae of our work – and thought, you are so *foreign*. I felt

in that moment much closer to the Filipino driver than to him," an epiphany that

unsettled him to the extent that he could not sleep that night (61, emphasis in original).

Such epiphany underpins his being "remarkably pleased" by the destruction of the

World Trade Center, the symbol of America's economic power: "I was caught up in the

symbolism of it all, the fact that someone had so visibly brought America to her knees"

(66, emphasis in original).

Nevertheless, in the aftermath of the attacks, Underwood Samson still seems the

only safe haven for Changez. With the destructive nostalgia, which has been fomented

in the country, he remarks, "one notable bulwark continued to hold firm against this

sentiment: Underwood Samson, which occupied most of my working hours, and which

was – as an institution – not nostalgic whatsoever. At work we went about the task of

shaping the future with little regard for the past" (106). Yet, doing a valuation for a

cable company in New Jersey that involves layoffs, Changez starts to feel the ruthless

nature of his job. It is even reflected in Wainwright's advice to "*Focus on the*

fundamentals. This was Underwood Samson's guiding principle … It mandated a

single-minded attention to financial detail, teasing out the true nature of those drivers

that determine an asset's value" (90, emphasis in original). Jim's call to look forward as

the world of business is future oriented with no room for sympathy is another indication

of such ruthlessness. What further nurses Changez's resentment is that the other key

rule to success in Underwood Samson is to forget about one's country. As Jim asserts:

> 'The economy's an animal' … 'It evolves. First it needed muscle. Now all the
> blood it could spare was rushing to its brain. That's where I wanted to be. In
> finance. In the coordination business. And that's where *you* are. You're blood
> brought from some part of the body that the species doesn't need anymore. The
> tailbone. Like me. We came from places that were wasting away.' (88, emphasis
> in original)

Such a rule exposes the firm's claims of unconditional welcome as ideological lies or cover-ups. In view of that, the US-led 'war on terror' which is launched in Afghanistan 2001 marks a major phase in the revival of the "Third World sensibility" in Changez: it signifies that he is steeping more and more in the bind of conflicted loyalties. As the novel reads, Changez's reaction to America's bombing of Afghanistan for what is defined as a raid to topple down Taliban caught him by surprise: "Afghanistan was Pakistan's neighbor, our friend, and a fellow Muslim nation besides, and the sight of what I took to be the beginning of its invasion by your countrymen caused me to tremble with fury … I was no longer capable of so thorough a self-deception … and that day I found it difficult to concentrate on the pursuit … of fundamentals" (91). Here, the reader is put on notice that for Changez to focus on fundamentals, he should be in a competitive relation with where he comes from; otherwise, he will be no match for his position in the firm. Accordingly, he withdraws into cynicism as a means of protection and a source of resistance to change. He feels the need to hide his conflicting allegiances because, in his words, "I had heard tales of the discrimination Muslims were beginning to experience in the business world – stories of rescinded job offers and groundless dismissals – and I did not wish to have my position at Underwood Samson compromised" (110).

However, the impending war between Pakistan and India appears to be the compelling case for Changez. It is the one that, understandably, culminates his interior struggle over his utopian, deeply optimistic project of double allegiance. Above all, America's decision not to fight at Pakistan's side despite the latter's assistance in Afghanistan fills him with anger, which signifies the domination of his Pakistani side and its imminent triumph over the capitalist forces which have so far held him firmly

away. Returning back to Lahore, he comes to realize exactly what is at stake with the "Americanness of [his] own gaze,"

> *I* had changed; I was looking about me with the eyes of a foreigner, and not just any foreigner, but that particular type of entitled and unsympathetic American who so annoyed me when I encountered him in the classrooms and workplaces of your country's elite. This realization angered me; staring at my reflection in the speckled glass of my bathroom mirror I resolved to exorcise the unwelcome sensibility by which I had become possessed. (114, emphasis in original).

It is crucial that it is only after expelling his ungenerous American outlook, as a bad spirit, that Changez comes to appreciate the historical richness of his country, a reference to *The Reluctant Fundamentalist'*s principle of displacing the dominant narratives in the post-9/11 world as a prerequisite to historical understanding of the attacks and the 'Other,' and thus, a prerequisite for the possibility of rational responses. Reflecting on his position in Underwood Samson, he becomes disturbed by what his new awareness implied about its politics of inclusion: "I was a man lacking in substance [that is, Third World sensibility] and hence easily influenced by even a short sojourn in the company of others" (114-115). He begins to identify more with his people to the extent that he seriously considers not returning to America as doing otherwise in such pre-war circumstances makes him a coward, even a traitor in his own eyes. However, he returns and decides not to shave his two-weeks-old beard despite his knowledge of the difficulties he will face there:

> It was perhaps, a form of protest on my part, a symbol of my identity, or perhaps I sought to remind myself of the reality I had just left behind; I do not now recall my precise motivations. I know only that I did not wish to blend in with the army of clean-shaven youngsters who were my coworkers, and that inside me, for multiple reasons, I was deeply angry. (119)

What becomes clear is that by wearing a beard Changez refuses to conform to the capitalist system's universal order of difference; his Pakistaniness will not be invisible anymore, and he will not also be a soldier again in the army of Underwood Samson which secures such invisibility.

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In a visual/material culture like that of the United States, where grief is manifested in a ubiquitous use of flags and anger is staged in violent spectacles, the beard as a visible identity marker challenges the concept of loyalty and poses a priori danger particularly in times like that of post-9/11. In this sense, in a parallel metaphor with the attacks, the beard is considered a reflection of religious fundamentalism that disturbs the discourse of the 'end of history.'[82] Accordingly, bearded Changez is "greeted with considerable – although often partially suppressed – consternation" by his fellow employees:

> It is remarkable, given its physical insignificance – it is only a hairstyle, after all – the impact a beard worn by a man of my complexion has on your fellow countrymen. More than once, traveling on the subway – where I always had the feeling of seamlessly blending in – I was subjected to verbal abuse by complete strangers, and at Underwood Samson I seem to become overnight a subject of whispers and stares. (Ibid.)

The presence of such unwelcoming hosts adds to the fact that the kinship developed within the context of the firm is fragile and subject to be collapsed at any time in as much as it buttresses an 'assimilationist ideal' rather than a 'politics of difference.'[83] This fragility is further highlighted in relation with Jim and Wainwright: Despite being Changez's close friends, we are told that they are typical Underwood Samson members in their ultimate allegiance to the firm but not to one another. They both cannot accept Changez for what he is and consider his new appearance an unpalatable choice. With this new look, Jim views Changez as having an irrational preoccupation with the past and a focus on the grievances of his own people, both of which do not comply with the

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[82] For criticism of Fukuyama's thesis in relation to its celebration of hegemonic liberal democracy and capitalist market, see Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (London: Routledge, 1994); and Susan Willet, "Insecurity, Conflict and the New Global Disorder," *Institute of Development Studies Bulletin* 32.2 (April 2001): 35-45. For an expanded critique of the universalization of Western liberal democracies and their blindness to ethnic differences and its disastrous effects, see Kishore Mahbubani, *The New Asian Hemisphere: The Irresistible Shift of Global Power to The East* (New York: Public Affairs, 2008). See also Fareed Zakaria, "The End of the End of History," *Newsweek* 23 September 2011, 12 May 2013 <http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2001/09/23/the-end-of-the-end-of-history.html>.

[83] Fred Dallmayr, "Democracy and Multiculturalism," in *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political*, ed. Seyla Benhabib (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) 278-294.

firm's rules: "I know you have stuff on your mind. But if you walk out on this now you undermine our firm. You hurt your team. In wartime soldiers don't really fight for their flags, Changez. They fight for their friends, their buddies. Their team" (139). What Wainwright discourages in Changez's beard is an ethnically distinct look that invites negative associations and discrimination. For him, one must be willing to hide his own race, his difference, in order to be identified with in the world of business: "'I don't know what's up with the beard, but I don't think it's making you Mister Popular around here' … 'Jerk chicken is common where I come from … but I don't smear it all over my face. You need to be careful. This whole corporate collegiality veneer only goes so deep. Believe me'" (120). In the face of his unyielding insistence on his difference, or what can be named 'dissociation,' and in a last attempt to put him back on the track, Changez is sent to value a book publisher in Valparaiso, Chile, a country associated with recent history of American imperialism.[84]

Again, Hamid gives Changez the chance to look in the mirror of the Third World for a reflection of the "dark side" of the American capitalist system, that is, its imperialist agenda. While Manila causes the awakening of his "Third World sensibility," and Lahore exorcises his demonic American side, it is Valparaiso that endows him a clear view of the darker underside endemic to America's capitalist political-economic system and his complicity in its dishonorable projects around the world. Hamid presents Juan-Bautista, the chief of the publishing company, as the agent of this change with the opposition he serves to set between literary and capitalist dogmas as two modes of approaching the post-9/11 world. In other words, unlike the defying stare of the Filipino driver in Manila, or the hostility of employees in New Jersey, the dialogic approach of Juan-Bautista is the one that prompts Changez to

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[84] Here, 'dissociation' is used positively to indicate the productive nature of the duality of allegiance and its role in what is called 'cultural pluralism.'

consider America's monologic, impersonal capitalist approach. In his first meeting with Jim and Changez, the valuers from Underwood Samson, Juan-Bautista raises a question that Jim cannot answer in his own radical capitalist terms: "'What do you know of books?'...'I specialize in the media industry,' Jim replied. 'I've valued a dozen publishers over two decades.' 'That's finance,' Juan-Bautista retorted. 'I asked what you knew of books.' 'My father's uncle was a poet,' I found myself saying. 'He was well-known in the Punjab. Books are loved in my family'" (129). Like the 'Other' of *Saturday*, Baxter, who is set to value "Dover Beach," Changez seems to have in him an inclination to appreciate literature. This gives a sign for Juan-Bautista that his violence, though being an agent of neo-liberal capitalism, is not in any meaningful sense rooted, given that literature has the potential to enhance empathy and promote ethical standards. That is, for him Changez's answer signifies the domination of moral tendency over capitalist laws and the former's imminent triumph over forces which have for so long held him away from his own people. Juan-Bautista's insight could be further augmented by Changez's words to his American interlocutor: "[I]n the stories we tell of ourselves we were not the crazed and destitute radicals you see on your television channels but rather saints and poets and – yes – conquering kings" (93). Although here Changez's account of himself and his people comes to disturb complacent stereotypical narratives about Islamic radicalism, it also hints at the potent power abiding at the heart of their culture.

On the other hand, according to Juan-Bautista, Jim's answer marks his lack of empathetic feelings, and thereby, his inherent violence, something which Changez seems to be attentive to in his first meeting with Jim: "His eyes were cold, a pale blue, and *judgmental* … in the sense of being professionally appraising, like a jeweler's when he inspects out of curiosity a diamond he intends neither to buy nor to sell" (6, emphasis

in original). Prominently, as a valuer, his answer is vital for understanding the capitalist

impersonal indifference to everything but the quest of gaining the maximum profits

ever. His failure to attend to the human cost of his decisions as juxtaposed to his

insensitivity to invaluable literary values is further highlighted by Changez:

> Juan-Bautista was not pleased to have us there. Although he had run the
> company for many years, he did not own it; the owners wanted to sell, and the
> prospective buyer – our client – was unlikely to continue to subsidize the loss-
> making trade division with income from the profitable educational and
> professional publishing arms. Trade, with its stable of literary – defined for all
> practical purposes as commercially unviable – authors was a drag on the rest of
> the enterprise; our task was to determine the value of the asset if that drag were
> shut down. (129-130)

Such deliberate attempts to dilute the cultural discourses of historically located sites of

American imperialism amounts to mourning which, as Berlant explains,

> takes place over a distance: even if the object who induces the feeling of loss
> and helplessness is neither dead nor at any great distance from where you are. In
> other words, mourning can also be an act of aggression, of social deathmaking:
> it can perform the evacuation of significance from actually existing subjects.
> Even when liberals do it, one might say, 'others' are ghosted for a good cause.[85]

This conforms well to Žižek's definition of the innate violence of capitalism where "the

fate of whole strata of the population and sometimes of whole countries can be decided

by the 'solipsistic' speculative dance of Capital, which pursues its goal of profitability

in blessed indifference to how its movement will affect social reality."[86] More precisely,

along with the materialist dogma and inhuman ideologies, the passage seems to refer to

the real danger which resides in the universality of capitalism with its attempts at

drastically affecting different people and cultures by dissolving and replacing their

particularities and frames of representation to "sustain relations of domination and

exploitation, including the threat of violence."[87]

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[85] Berlant, in *Left Legalism/ Left Critique*, 106.
[86] Žižek, *Violence*, 11.
[87] *Ibid.*, 8. According to Žižek, "[c]apitalism is not just universal in itself, it is universal for itself, as the tremendous actual corrosive power which undermines all particular lifeworlds, cultures and traditions, cutting across them, catching them in its vortex. It is meaningless to ask 'Is this universality true or a

Hence, Juan-Bautista with his power of empathy could observe in Changez a dissonance between his values and those of his job. To help Changez find a way out of this dilemma, he suggests visiting the house of Pablo Neruda, the Chilean poet whose works evoke the revolutionary aspirations against imperialist capitalism and the return to one's roots. The effects of this visit becomes discernible as Changez affirms that "[he] was clearly on the threshold of great change; only the final catalyst was now required" (137). Juan-Bautista's reference to janissaries implicitly points to his role within American capitalism and the latter's role in the world:

> 'Does it trouble you … to make your living by disturbing the lives of others?'… 'Have you heard of the janissaries?' … 'They were Christian boys … captured by the Ottomans and trained to be soldiers in a Muslim army, at that time the greatest army in the world. They were ferocious and utterly loyal: they had fought to erase their own civilizations, so they had nothing else to turn to.' (137-138)

Yet, Juan-Bautista makes it clear that Changez does not meet the full criteria for a janissary in terms of age, and thus, could absolve himself from such condemnation if he has the will to do so: "The janissaries were always taken in childhood. It would have been far more difficult to devote themselves to their adopted empire, you see, if they had memories they could not forget" (138). This could be also read as another reference to Changez's non-inherent violence, a reading which, arguably, suggests two interrelated interpretations. First, by marking Changez's difference from janissaries, Hamid implicitly signals that his violence is something to be abated by dialogue rather than by more violence. In one way or another, this interpretation could be linked to September 11 and the following 'war on terror' where the non-inherent, visible violence of the attacks, or what Žižek terms as the "subjective violence," has been inappropriately countered by the inherent, invisible, "objective violence" which is not

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mask of particular interests?' This universality is directly actual as universality, as the negative force of mediating and destroying all particular content" (Ibid., 132).

innocent of visible violent manifestations.[88] In addition, through the idea that Changez

is not a janissary, Hamid seems to highlight his critical distance to America's economic

and political system. Unlike the 'infantile' employees of Underwood Samson, whether

American citizens like Jim and Wainwright, or even residents, Changez does not enjoy

what Berlant calls the "overidentification with national icons"[89] of America or belong to

its "National Symbolic," and thereby, he is not a strong proponent of or a blind follower

to its global capitalist agenda.[90] Rather, his inside/outside status gives him the privilege

of questioning and unmasking its ideological violence.

   With his readiness for change and Juan-Bautista's effective approach, Changez

comes to reckon that the domination of the capitalist dogma signifies a blurring of

ethical and critical reasoning: "I saw that in this constant striving to realize a financial

future, no thought was given to the critical personal and political issues that affect one's

emotional present. In other words, my blinders were coming off, and I was dazzled and

rendered immobile by the sudden broadening of my arc of vision" (132). As a result, he

plunges into the reality of his job and its implications on his people, a reality from

which there seems to be no escape:

> I was a modern-day janissary, a servant of the American empire at a time when
> it was invading a country with a kinship to mine and was perhaps even colluding
> to ensure that my own country faced the threat of war … I had thrown in my lot
> with the men of Underwood Samson, with the officers of the empire, when all
> along I was predisposed to feel compassion for those, like Juan-Bautista, whose
> lives the empire though nothing of overturning for its own gain. (139)

Through this explicit association between Underwood Samson with its "focus on the

fundamentals" motto, and America with its imperialist agenda, what Hamid succeeds in

referring to is that America has its form of fundamentalism, what could be referred to as

capitalist or free-market fundamentalism. The fact that its fundamentalism is

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[88] *Ibid*., 2.
[89] Berlant, *The Queen of America goes to Washington City*, 15.
[90] Berlant, *The Anatomy of National Fantasy,* 5.

'objective,' "inherent in the social conditions of global capitalism, which involve the 'automatic' creation of excluded and dispensable individuals from the homeless to the unemployed," seems to subtly suggest the non-inherent, 'subjective' nature of the easily-allocated "violence of newly emerging ethnic and/or religious, in short racist, 'fundamentalisms,'" in Žižek's words.[91] More precisely, the implication here is that the former fundamentalism renders the latter 'fundamentalisms' second to be taken into account by dominant narratives discussing the attacks and the war against terrorism. Thus, although its title ostensibly taps into stereotypical accounts of fundamentalism, the novel itself disturbs, and even perhaps challenges their monologic, religious, and inherently violent conception of the word as well as its association with the so-called terrorists, a strategy which adds to its dialogic approach. One of the ways Hamid creates this effect is through the name of his protagonist:

> Changez is the Urdu name for Genghis, as in Genghis Khan. It is the name of a warrior, and the novel plays with the notion of a parallel between war and international finance, which is Changez's occupation. But at the same time, the name cautions against a particular reading of the novel. Genghis attacked the Arab Muslim civilization of his time, so Changez would be an odd choice of name for a Muslim fundamentalist. In fact, Changez is something of a secular nationalist, and not particularly religious.[92]

It is against this background that, becoming reluctant to be anymore an agent of the American empire acting against his people, Changez realizes that "[his] days of focusing on fundamentals were done," and hence the reluctant fundamentalist of the novel (140). More to the point is that his reluctance to be a fundamentalist is itself condemned as fundamentalism: "[If colleagues at Underwood Samson] bothered to look at me at all, did so with evident unease and, in some cases, a fear which would not have been inappropriate had I been convicted of plotting to kill them rather than of abandoning my post in mid-assignment" (145).

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[91] Žižek, *Violence*, 12.
[92] Hamid, "Interview: 'We Are Already Afraid.'"

Resolved to adopt "an ex-janissary's gaze," "the analytical eyes of a product of Princeton and Underwood Samson, but unconstrained by the academic's and the professional's various compulsions to focus primarily on parts, and free therefore to consider also the whole of your society," Changez becomes more and more confronted by the intimate link between America's fundamentalist free-market ethos and its projects of domination around the world:

> I had always resented the manner in which America conducted itself in the world; your country's constant interference in the affairs of others was insufferable. Vietnam, Korea, the straits of Taiwan, the Middle East and now Afghanistan: in each of the major conflicts and standoffs that ringed my mother continent of Asia, America played a central role. Moreover I knew from my experience as a Pakistani – of alternating periods of American aid and sanctions – that finance was a primary means by which the American empire exercised its power. (142)

Furthermore, Hamid seems to refer to America's history of imperialism and the place of the war on Afghanistan within it. The 'war on terror,' Changez comes to realize, is a telling instance of the inextricable link between America's imperialist agenda and its strategic and financial interests: "A common strand appeared to unite these conflicts, and that was the advancement of a small coterie's concept of American interests in the guise of a fight against terrorism, which was defined to refer only to the organized and politically motivated killing of civilians by killers *not* wearing the uniforms of soldiers" (162, emphasis in original). Here, Changez seems to explore many of the interwoven aspects of the 'war on terror' and their implications. In Žižek's words, he exposes "the hypocrisy of those who, while combating *subjective violence*, commit *systemic violence* that generates the very phenomena they abhor."[93] With his insightful critique of dominant narratives' definition of terrorism, Changez gives a clear view of how in the United States, which acts out of self-interest, death is justified under the banner of counterterrorism:

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[93] Žižek, *Violence*, 174. Emphasis in original.

> I recognized that if this was to be the single most important priority of our species, then the lives of those of us who lived in the lands in which such killers also lived had no meaning except as collateral damage. This, I reasoned, was why America felt justified in bringing so many deaths to Afghanistan and Iraq, and why America felt justified in risking so many more deaths by tacitly using India to pressure Pakistan. (162-163)

The fact that even Pakistan, who pledged alliance to the United States, was not exempted from the accusation of terrorism, and was therefore sent to face the latter's proxy war in India, only adds to the 'war on terror' being a political tool used blindly to advance interests. More alarming, for Changez, is the perception that such war and the likes are being covered up in dominant narratives: "[It is] little noticed by the media in your country, which was focused at that time on the first anniversary of the attack on New York and Washington" (162). If any, media coverage for the US-led war on terrorism takes the form of "the partisan and sports-event-like coverage given to the mismatch between the American bombers with their twenty-first-century weaponry and the ill-equipped and ill-fed Afghan tribesmen" (90). All these rules followed in the so-called war against terrorism are highly relevant to the conclusion that American imperialist capitalism is not simply a form of fundamentalism, but rather the most dangerous one, or as Tariq Ali puts it in *The Clash of Fundamentalisms* "the mother of all fundamentalisms."[94]

Henceforth, in the face of the United States' inherent nationalist and imperialist tendencies, Changez decides to leave. With this voluntary exclusion, he seems to point to an intention to adopt the "procedure of *identifying with the symptom*" – to assert and identify with "*the point of inherent exception/exclusion, the 'abject', of the concrete positive order as the only point of true universality*."[95] In what follows, the focus will be on how his decline of the bids for a slave/master relationship develops into an aspiration

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[94] Tariq Ali, *The Clash of Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jihads and Modernity* (London: Verso, 2003) 307.
[95] Žižek, *The Universal Exception* (London: Continuum, 2006) 178-179. Emphasis in original.

to problematize the boundaries between the 'Self' and 'Other' through political agency which is centred on a desire to see Pakistan as an anti-colonial space in resistance to American imperialism.

Double Allegiance, Resistance and Agency

Undoubtedly, Changez's status in the aftermath of the attacks describes what most Muslim immigrants live through these days; the marginalization and exclusion befalling them out of their religious backgrounds. But is there any room for political agency with such context today? Do these excluded 'Others' qualify for being inserted into political time in their own terms? Confronted by such questions, Hamid seems to be not entirely pessimistic. In an attempt to take the novel away from the dominant logic of pathologizing the 'Other,' of non-agency and stereotyping, he sets Changez's new subjectivity as the key reference point for any desired political change in the post-9/11 world. What Hamid seems to propose here is that although to focus on the possibility of the subject is one thing, it is quite another thing to consider the ways in which other identities are constituted in specific historico-political contexts, like that of September 11, not only as an 'outside' that secures the borders of the subject. This is best afforded at first glimpse of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. With the opening sentences, the novel sounds this conception in such a way that readers will be clued in immediately: "Excuse me, sir, but may I be of assistance? Ah, I see I have alarmed you … Don't be frightened by my beard: I am a lover of America … and since I am both a native of this city and a speaker of your language, I thought I might offer you my services" (1). Confronting readers with such depiction is meant to call their attention, right from the beginning, to the anti-stereotypical role of the 'Other' which is enacted by his dialogue in the face of

the post-9/11 silence of securitization. Particularly, in its reversal of Althusser's interpellation scene, these introductory lines present Changez as the one who hails the alleged CIA agent, which is also revealing for what it suggests about the way the agency of the subject, in the aftermath of the attacks, has been taken over.[96] According to Hamid, then, it is only through the locus of abjection, which affirms the autonomy and intelligibility of the nationalist subject in the aftermath of the attacks, that one might be able to recover a potent debate about the possibility of the critical intelligibility of the 'Other.' In this sense, dominant narratives on the attacks and the 'war on terror' which "desire to caption the mute image of exotic suffering with an aversively fascinated mourning (a desire for the image to be *dead*, a ghost)" have been crossed over in Hamid's novel "into other domains, the domains of what we call identity politics, where the wronged take up voice and agency to produce transformative testimony," if I may borrow and extend Berlant's words.[97]

Inviting a focused sociopolitical reading of abjection, Hamid seems to line himself up with Butler who aligns abjection with agency. Reviving the ruled-out possibility of the interpellated's agency, in *Bodies That Matter*, she stipulates: [98]

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[96]Althusser understands individuals as being constructed as subjects through ideology, and thus, recognize themselves as being dominated by ideology. According to him, ideology "'recruits' the individuals into subjects" by means of "*interpellation* or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: 'Hey, you there!' Assuming that the theoretical scene … takes place in the street, the hailed individual will turn around. By this mere one-hundred-and-eight-degree physical conversion, he becomes a *subject*"; Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatues (Notes towards an Investigation)," in *Mapping Ideology*, ed. Slavoj Žižek (London: Verso, 2012) 100-140, 130-131. Emphasis in original.

[97] Berlant, in *Left Legalism/ Left Critique*, 107. Emphasis in original. It is in such a space where the 'Other' could find a voice which helps formulating and circulating counter-hegemonic discourses about their identity.

[98] The reference here is to Althusser's structuralist view of individuals as "*always-already subjects*"; Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatues (Notes towards an Investigation)," in *Mapping Ideology*, 132. Emphasis in original. For Butler, "[a]lthough [Althusser] refers to the possibility of 'bad subjects,' he does not consider the range of *disobedience* that such an interpellating law might produce. The law might not only be refused, but it might also be ruptured, forced into a rearticulation that calls into question the monotheistic force of its own unilateral operation"; Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (London: Routledge, 1993) 122. Emphasis in original. As she contends, "the performative, the call by the law which seeks to produce a lawful subject, produces a set of consequences that exceed and confound what appears to be the disciplining intention motivating the law. Interpellation thus loses its status as a simple performative, an act of discourse with the power to create that to which it

Although the political discourses that mobilize identity categories tend to cultivate identifications in the service of a political goal, it may be that the persistence of *dis*identification [that is, the founding discourse of the subject] is equally crucial to the rearticulation of democratic contestation. Indeed, it may be precisely through practices which underscore disidentification with those regulatory norms by which [abjection] is materialized that [the abject is] mobilized. Such collective disidentifications can facilitate a reconceptualization of which bodies matter, and which bodies are yet to emerge as critical matters of concern.[99]

Or, as Nyers puts forward:

As the embodiment of exclusion, the abject are prime candidates for 'hidden, frightful, or menacing' subjectivities to define their condition. Understood politically, they stand in contrast to the purity of citizenship, ie the authoritative, articulate, visible and political subjectivity … In a twisted reversal, the impurity of abjection becomes the purity of the abject.[100]

refers, and creates more than it ever meant to, signifying in excess of any intended referent. It is this constitutive failure of the performative, this slippage between discursive command and its appropriated effect, which provides the linguistic occasion and index for a consequential disobedience" (Ibid.). Similarly, in *Excitable Speech* Butler holds that "[t]hose who argue that hate speech produces a 'victim class' deny critical agency and tend to support an intervention in which agency is fully assumed by the state"; Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (London: Routledge, 1997) 41. For more critique of Althussers's interpellation, see also Ranciere, "Politics, Identification, and Subjectivization," *October* 61 (Summer 1992): 58-64. For example, his idea of "emancipation" as "a set of practices guided by the supposition that everyone is equal and by the attempt to verify this supposition" (Ibid., 58). He asserts that the 'Other' is most likely to make an emancipatory claim; that "the logic of political subjectivization, of emancipation, is a heterology, a logic of the other" (Ibid., 62). For critique of constructionist theory in relation to gender, see Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," in *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Amelia Jones (London: Routledge, 2003) 392-402. See also Butler, "Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex*," in *Simone De Beauvoir: A Critical Reader*, ed. Elizabeth Fallaize (London: Routledge, 1998) 29-42.

[99] Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 4. Emphasis in original. Bulter expresses a similar perspective in her appropriation of gender formation where she identifies the homosexual as a potential site of resistance being the condition of normative gender's im/possibility; Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997). Likewise, her theorization on 'hate speech' as a self-affirmatory discourse is rather a case of calling into question the issue of the abject "survival" and, hence, the "initiating moment of a counter-mobilization," "an instrument of resistance" that produces "a scene of agency from ambivalence, a set of effects that exceed the animating intentions of the call" (Butler, *Excitable Speech*, 163).

[100] Nyers, 1074. Nyers' understanding of 'abject cosmopolitanism' takes into account the critical cosmopolitan practices of abject migrants and their 'acts of citizenship.' Hence, the understanding that abjection indicates, in some sense refers to, a space defined as finite, immutable, subdued, discrete and apolitical is largely illusory. Above all, such conception is the antithesis of the normative accounts of cosmopolitanism as a universal, or even political, project. In other words, for Nyers cosmopolitanism is not synonymous with universality; rather, its purview is inter-national as well as international. For more elaboration on this perspective, see, for example, Honig's "democratic" version of cosmopolitanism where universalism is global as well as located (Honig, 67). In a similar way, Delanty's "critical cosmopolitanism" signals "a post-universalistic kind of cosmopolitanism, which is not merely a condition of diversity but is articulated in cultural models of world openness through which societies undergo transformation" (Delanty, 25). A further example is Beck's notion of "internal, cosmopolitan globalization"; Beck, *Cosmopolitan Vision*, trans. Ciaran Cronin (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006) 92; Beck, "A New Cosmopolitanism is in the Air," *Signandsight.com, Let's talk European* 20 November 2007, 30 December 2012 <http://www.signandsight.com/features/1603.html>. Benhabib's "Interactive universalism," equally, "regards difference as a starting point for reflection and action," which is not akin

Accordingly, abjection, against which "the purity of citizenship" is defined, identifies

new or emergent subjectivities, and "becomes a critical moment of [their] cosmopolitan

dissent."[101] It is within this context that the abject assume the status of the political

agent, "taking up the cosmopolitan call and, with their practices, recasting the

possibilities for local/global political life … Here, abject cosmopolitanism describes not

a *problematic cosmopolitanism for the abject*, but rather a *problematising*

cosmopolitanism of the abject."[102]

Simultaneously, the novel's opening lines call readers' attention to the

dreadfulness of the abject being fundamentally what is presented in Bhabha's analysis

of the narratives and counter-narratives of the nation as an "*internal* liminiality," an 'in-

between' space upon which rests the subject's failure to independence.[103] Hamid

thereafter unfolds this idea with reference to Changez's pre-9/11 status within American

society that enables him to contest the autonomy of the 'Self.' Perhaps this is put more

clearly in the post-9/11 stage of the narrative where the exclusion of Changez from

Erica's life results in her suicide, which could symbolically refer to the potential demise

of the American empire that responds to the 'Other' in this manner. Basically, what

Hamid tries to emphasize here is the importance of a kind of a double movement in the

formation of the abject, an equivalent to what Bhabha calls the "double-writing or

dissemi-*nation*."[104] Particularly revealing in this respect for *The Reluctant*

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to post-nationalism; Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992) 153. See also, Bruce Robbins for whom cosmopolitanism "should be extended to transnational experiences that are particular rather than universal and that are unprivileged – indeed, often coerced" (Robbins, 1).

[101] *Ibid.*, 1071.

[102] *Ibid.*, 1075. Emphasis in original.

[103] Bhabha, "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation," in *Nation and Narration*, 291-322, 300. Emphasis in original.

[104] *Ibid.*, 299. Emphasis in original. In terms of the nation's double-time, Bhabha argues that "[t]he pedagogical founds its narrative authority in a tradition of the people … a moment of becoming designated by *itself*, encapsulated in a succession of historical moments that represents an eternity produced by self-generation. The performative intervenes in the sovereignty of the nation's *self-*

Fundamentalist in general, and the opening lines in particular, is Butler's remark, in

"Universality in Culture," that "the provisional and parochial versions of universality

currently encoded in international law" can be extended and rendered "substantive" by

those "who have been excluded from enfranchisement by existing conventions

(including racist conventions) governing the exclusionary definition of the universal"

when they "seize the language of enfranchisement"[105] and set into motion a counter-

discourse which,

> exposes the alterity within the norm (an alterity without which the norm would
> not assume its borders and 'know' its limits): exposes the failure of the norm to
> effect the universal reach for which it stands, exposes what we might underscore
> as the promising ambivalence of the norm … Such double-speaking is precisely
> the temporalized map of universality's future, the task of a postlapsarian
> translation the future of which remains unpredictable.[106]

Engaged with the complexity of the question of autonomy and its implications for

political contexts, Changez exposes the United States' claims to wholeness in the

aftermath of the attacks as untenable: "[I]t is not always possible to restore one's

boundaries after they have been blurred and made permeable by a relationship: try as we

might, we cannot reconstitute ourselves as the autonomous beings we previously

imagined ourselves to be. Something of us is now outside, and something of the outside

is now within us" (158). His words could be better explained by Žižek who maintains

that "every boundary proves itself a limit: apropos of every identity, we are sooner or

later bound to experience how its condition of possibility (the boundary that delimits it

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generation by casting a shadow between the people as 'image' and its signification as a differentiating sign of Self, distinct from the Other or the Outside. In place of the polarity of a prefigurative self-generating nation itself and extrinsic Other nations, the performative introduces a temporality of the 'in-between' through the 'gap' or 'emptiness' of the signifier that punctuates linguistic difference. The boundary that marks the nation's selfhood interrupts the self-generating time of national production with a space of representation that threatens binary division with its difference. The barred Nation *It/Self*, alienated from its eternal self-generation, becomes a liminal form of social representation, a space that is *internally* marked by cultural difference and the heterogeneous histories of contending peoples, antagonistic authorities, and tense cultural locations" (Ibid., 299. Emphasis in original).

[105] Butler, "Universality in Culture," in *For Love of Country? On the Limits of Patriotism*, eds. Martha C. Nussbaum and Joshua Cohen (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002) 45-52, 47-48.
[106] *Ibid.*, 47-50.

conditions) is simultaneously its condition of impossibility."[107] Or to put it more

precisely, the fact that "the identification of the subject of cultural discourse is

dialogical or transferential in the style of psychoanalysis. It is constituted through the

locus of the Other," only indicates that "the object of identification is ambivalent, and,

more significantly, that the agency of identification is never pure or holistic but always

constituted in a process of substitution, displacement or projection," to quote Bhabha.[108]

Being aware of the impossibility "to restore one's boundaries after they have

been blurred and made permeable," Hamid seems to speak of the inevitability and

critical importance of a shared ground between the 'Self' and 'Other' in the aftermath of

September 11. Consequently, his counter-narrative is not one that simply counters the

discourse of the 'war on terror,' neither is it "an assimilation to an existing norm," to

quote Butler.[109] Rather, what is assumed to be politically promising is to be found in

what Butler calls a "performative contradiction"; a disruption of the secured boundaries

between the subject and abject, or more precisely, an intervention into the subject realm

to effect mutual recognition.[110] Such process of "radical resignification"[111] only serves

to affirm that the abject "is not an absolute 'outside,' an ontological thereness that

exceeds or counters the boundaries of discourse; as a constitutive 'outside,' it is that

which can only be thought – when it can – in relation to that discourse, at and as its

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[107] Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do*: *Enjoyment as a Political Factor* (London: Verso, 2002) 110.

[108] Bhabha, "DissemiNation," 312-313. Emphasis in original.

[109] Butler, "Universality in Culture," 50.

[110] *Ibid*., 48. This recalls Bhabha's remark that "[c]ounter-narratives of the nation that continually evoke and erase its totalizing boundaries – both actual and conceptual – disturb those ideological manoeuvers through which 'imagined communities' are given essentialist identities. For the political unity of the nation consists in a continual displacement of its irredeemably plural modern space, bounded by different, even hostile nations, into a signifying space that is archaic and mythical, paradoxically representing the nation's modern territoriality, in the patriotic, atavistic temporality of Traditionalism. Quite simply, the difference of space returns as the Sameness of time, turning Territory into Tradition, turning the People into One. The liminal point of this ideological displacement is the turning of the differentiated spatial boundary, the 'outside,' into the unified temporal territory of Tradition" (Bhahba, "DissemiNation," 300. Emphasis in original).

[111] Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 22.

most tenuous borders."[112] It is "a critical resource in the struggle to rearticulate the very terms of symbolic legitimacy and intelligibility,"[113] what Bhabha calls "the crossroads to a new transnational culture."[114] In Butler's words, it is "the politicization of abjection in an effort to rewrite the history of the term, and to force it into a demanding resignification. Such a strategy, I suggest, is crucial to creating the kind of community in which surviving with … ['Otherness'] becomes more possible, in which … [abject] lives become legible, valuable, worthy of support."[115]

The Reluctant Fundamentalist seems to respond to Butler's call. Speaking the abject of the 'war on terror' discourse, the novel itself can be considered as a performative disruptive act that is set to reevaluate the hegemonic, preconceived conceptions about this very abject proposed in Western writings. As "a minority discourse," to use Bhabha words, it "sets the act of emergence in the antagonistic *in-between* of image and sign, the accumulative and the adjunct, presence and proxy. It contests genealogies of 'origin' that lead to claims for cultural supremacy and historical priority."[116] As such, the novel "acknowledges the status of national culture – and the people – as a contentious, performative space of the perplexity of the living in the midst of the pedagogical representations of the fullness of life."[117]

Within this context, the novel takes as its subject matter the Muslim 'Other' as embodied by Changez, whose exclusion becomes the condition of the United States' hegemonic discourse im/possibility. As a racial being who fails to conform to the norms and terms of the host nation's social and political intelligibility, Changez can be said to

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[112] *Ibid*., 8.
[113]*Ibid*., 3.
[114] Bhabha, "Introduction: Narrating the Nation," in *Nation and Narration*, 1-7, 4. Bhabha contends that because "[t]he 'other' is never outside or beyond us; it emerges forcefully, within cultural discourse, when we *think* we speak most intimately and indigenously 'between ourselves'" (Ibid., emphasis in original).
[115] Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 21.
[116] Bhabha, "DissemiNation," 307. Emphasis in original.
[117] *Ibid.*

produce "a scene of agency" in the aftermath of the attacks in response to the United

States' fresh endeavour to retrieve its hegemonic power through the anti-terrorism

legislations. His space is not "of a celebratory, or utopian, self-marginalization"; rather,

"[i]t is a much more substantial intervention into those justifications of modernity –

progress, homogeneity, cultural organicism, the deep nation, the long past – that

rationalize the authoritarian, 'normalizing' tendencies within cultures in the name of the

national interest or the ethnic prerogative," as Bhabha asserts.[118] It is, basically,

Changez's incoherent or liminal space that can be said to energize his performative

productivity; an attempt to reinscribe his identity with the potential to subvert and

displace borders installed by the normative and reified notions of the terrorist Muslim

'Other' that support the hegemonic discourse in the first place. To use the words of Iain

Chambers in *Migrancy, Culture, Identity*, "experiencing a constantly challenged

identity," Changez "threatens the 'binary classification deployed in the construction of

order', and introduces us to the uncanny displacement of ambiguity. That stranger, as

the ghost that shadows every discourse, is the disturbing interrogation, the estrangement

that potentially exists within us all."[119] Crucially then, Changez's intervention is a

challenge to the unipolar nationalist narrative from within rather than from without the

realm of the nation.

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[118] Bhabha, "Narrating the Nation," 4.

[119] Iain Chambers, *Migrancy, Culture, Identity* (London: Routledge, 1994) 6. Chambers believes that the "drama of the stranger" where "[t]o come from elsewhere, from 'there' and not 'here', and hence to be simultaneously 'inside' and 'outside' the situation at hand, is to live at the intersections of histories and memories, experiencing both their preliminary dispersal and their subsequent translation into new, more extensive, arrangements along emerging routs" is not self-inflicted (Ibid.). In line with Julia Kristeva, Chambers believes that the effect of such drama is rarely about preserving the space of 'strangeness'; rather, it is about undoing such space by interrelating the 'stranger' with the community: "As 'the symptom that renders our 'selves' problematic, perhaps impossible, the stranger commences with the emergence of the awareness of my difference and concludes when we all recognise ourselves as strangers'. This decentring of the classical 'individual; leads also to the weakening and dispersal of the rationalist *episteme*, of the Western *cogito*, that once anchored and warranted the subject as the privileged fulcrum of knowledge, truth and being" (Ibid., 6-7. Emphasis in original).

However, and perhaps most importantly, setting Changez to adopt "pervormative subversion," what Hamid seems to assert is that such approach can never be an image of the discourse it seeks to counter; it is, rather, that which reinscribes such discourse, hence its dialogic nature.[120] Put simply, Changez's is never a "reverse-discourse" inasmuch as it is what Butler refers to as "citationality"[121] for the purpose of resignifying his abject space into legitimacy and intelligibility as a precondition for creating a community where the abject do not assume "bare life."[122] As Bhabha points out, the minority groups' discourse, the supplement in the Derridian sense, should "not simply confront the pedagogical, or powerful master-discourse with a contradictory or negating referent … Insinuating itself into the terms of reference of the dominant discourse, the supplementary antagonizes the implicit power to generalize, to produce the sociological solidity."[123] Rather, "[t]he power of supplementarity is not the negation of the preconstituted social contradictions of the past or present; its forces lies … in the renegotiation of those times, terms, and traditions through which we turn our uncertain, passing contemporaneity into the signs of history."[124] In view of that, what Hamid suggests is that a proper tone for his post-9/11 novel should not be a moralization of equality of suffering so much as that of the 'Self' and 'Other.' Realizing the limitations of the rhetoric of pain and its political and social implications, he seems to believe that for his novel to destabilize the constraints and conventions of Western literary discourses formulated under the hegemony of the pain of September 11, it should not

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[120] The notion of 'performative subversion' is elaborated in Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990).

[121] Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 21.

[122] According to Agamben, "bare life, that is, the life of *homo sacer* (sacred man) … is included in the juridical order [*ordinamento*] solely in the form of its exclusion (that is, of its capacity to be killed) … At the same time, however, this ancient meaning of the term *sacer* presents us with the enigma of a figure of the sacred that, before or beyond the religious, constitutes the first paradigm of the political realm of the West" (Agamben, 8-9. Emphasis in original).

[123] Bhabha, "DissemiNation," 306.

[124] *Ibid.*

simply fall within what Berlant refers to as the "traumatic identity form,"[125] or the pure

testimony model; rather, it should be a "transformative testimony."[126] Undoubtedly, his

decision not to embrace "an analogous conviction about the *self-evidence* and therefore

the *objectivity* of painful feeling" is central in the first place to his choice of

protagonist.[127] Rather than containing and manipulating the female or child character as

the moral victim of September 11 and the 'war on terror,' Hamid's counter-narrative is

based on a male adult, which is even proposed to invoke a sexual identity, that of the

Third World man, Changez, in the face of the national identity associated with Erica,

the First World woman. Nor is the novel a familial inscription of minority groups'

suffering. In this sense, the novel counteracts the hegemonic literary discourse that is

rooted in the 'family drama' genre featuring the event of September 11 as a disruption

of the emotional territory of the family, with special focus being given to children (as is

the case in *Falling Man*) or adolescent characters (as in *Saturday*), something which

corresponds with Berlant's notion of the "intimate public sphere."[128]

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[125] Berlant, in *Transformations*, 33.

[126] This is not to underestimate the testimony and rhetoric of pain derived from subordination, but rather to suggest that embracing a self-contained or pure testimonial form often unwittingly renders it banal rather than a political map for agency. Berlant admonishes that the "traumatic identity form" of minority discourse subjugates them anew to the state, and thus, precludes the critique of the hegemonic discourse "stories of trauma that were deemed to exemplify a population's subordination [and which] not only tended to confirm the state and its law as the core sites of personhood, but also provided opportunities to divide further dominated populations by inciting competitions over whose lives have been more excluded from the 'happiness' that is constitutionally promised by national life" (Berlant, in *Transformations*, 33). In her view, however, testimonial narratives of subordination that both represent pathos and offer possible ways out of the deadlock of pain that often afflicts encounters with minority groups seem best equipped to challenge the hegemonic discourse.

[127] Berlant, in *Left Legalism/ Left Critique*, 107. Emphasis in original.

[128] Berlant argues that "there is no public sphere in the contemporary United States," and that questions of defining American citizenship within this context of the "intimate public sphere" has been of concern since the Reagan Revolution whose "patriotic nationalism … sought to shrink the state while intensifying identification with the Utopian, symbolic 'nation'" (Berlant, *The Queen of America goes to Washington City*, 3-4). That is, the United States seeks to infantilize, or more precisely privatize, the public sphere in order to mitigate challenges pitted against its antidemocratic practices: The more the public sphere shrinks, the more expansive will be the domination of the oligarchic state. See note 65. See also Phil Cohen, "Homing Devices," in *Resituating Identities: The Politics of Race, Ethnicity, and Culture*, eds. Vered Amit-Talai and Caroline Knowles (Ontario: Broadview Press, 1996) 68-82. For Cohen, "domestic metaphors and images of privacy are frequently used in constructing common-sense arguments for the exclusion of those who are held not to belong within the public domains of the body politic … the alien presence" and home is "where structures of national and racial sentiment are connected to daydreams of

In addition, avoiding a pure testimonial form, Hamid decides for his novel to read as a pursuit of the process of "enlarging the public sphere," to put it in Rancière's terms.[129] Such an approach seems to be most clearly underpinned at the level of the plot where, unlike the Muslim 'Other' in Pakistani novels like Naqvi's *Home Boy* for example, Changez is not represented as someone who suffers, or has endured violence intimately, but rather as someone with agency.[130] Returning to Butler's notion of performativity, one can say that even in the pre-9/11 phase of the novel he is depicted as someone who is extremely conscious of his empowering space. That is to say, Changez's assertion of his difference might be reclaimed as a form of agency, "one sense in which 'race' might be construed as performative."[131] The point is that such performance is not an arbitrary, purely descriptive tool aimed at articulating his experience of 'Otherness.' Rather, it is a systematic practice through which Changez confirms the gap and desire of the hegemonic subject. In other words, his is a restaging of racial difference that is not monologic, but rather dialogic; it is not produced or performed in isolation, but in relation to the 'sameness' of the "imagined community" of America. Likewise, in the aftermath of September 11, as Muslims come to represent a potential source of threat to the United States' security and peace, Changez is not identified as a compliant subject either. In other words, the event does not make him simply a victim of the 'war on terror' so much as it brings him to reconsider his own

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self-empowerment … [it] makes possible a process of splitting whereby the external environment can come to be seen as uniformly undesireable and dangerous; meanwhile, behind the symbolic lace curtains 'personal standards are maintained' " (Ibid., 68-72).

[129] According to Rancière, "[t]he spontaneous practice of all government tends to shrink this public sphere, to make it into its private affair and, for that purpose, to consign the interventions and the places of intervention of non-state actors to the side of private life. Democracy, then … is the process of struggle against this privatization, the process of enlarging the public sphere. Enlarging the public sphere … means struggling against the distribution of public and private that secures the double domination of the oligarchy in the state and in society"; Jacques Rancière, "Democracy, Republic, Representation," *Constellations* 13. 3 (2006): 297-307, 299.

[130] The reference here is to the protagonist in *Home Boy*, Chuck, and his two friends who are simply rendered victims in the aftermath of September 11.

[131] Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 275.

position within American society. The implication here is that Changez's disaffection with America post-9/11 is not simply the result of his exclusion, but, more essentially, it is the culmination of his awareness of the political and economic assumptions of its foreign policies; hence comes the significance of the novel's exploration of America's nationalist as well as economic fundamentalisms.

What becomes clear in the second phase of the novel, that of post-9/11, is that Changez's critique of the established hegemonic order based on Berlant's notions of "national sentimentality" and "cruel optimism,"[132] or what Changez calls "self-righteous rage," is felt more strongly and directly (85):

> It seemed to me – then and to be honest sir, seems to me still – that America was engaged in posturing. As a society, you were unwilling to reflect upon the *shared pain* that united you with those that attacked you. You retreated into myths of your own superiority. And you acted out these beliefs on the stage of the world, so that the entire planet was rocked by the repercussions of your tantrums, not least my family, now facing war thousands of miles away. Such an America had to be stopped in the interests not only of the rest of humanity, but also in your own. *I resolved to do so, as best I could*. (152-153, emphasis added)

What becomes even clearer is that his resistance is not informed by religious, or more precisely, Islamic fundamentalism, something which could be set against the 'war on terror' as well as DeLillo's stereotypical terrorists' fundamentalist-backed rhetorics.[133] Essentially, Changez is portrayed as a "secular nationalist," rather than religious or religiously oriented Muslim, as Hamid points out in *The Man Booker Prize* interview.[134] As the novel suggests, he does not have emotional identification with the September 11

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[132] Berlant, "Cruel Optimism: On Marx, Loss, and the Senses," *New Formations* 63 (Winter 2007/08): 33-51. Connected to the United States' deployment of pain in the name of the 'war on terror' is Berlant's "cruel optimism" which is described as "the centrality of optimistic fantasy to reproducing and surviving in zones of compromised ordinariness" (Ibid., 49). Based on this perspective, the purported emancipatory project of the war against terrorism finds itself in the impasse of this attempt to rescue the sense of collectivity and cohesiveness of the pre-9/11 period which could only breed monotonous reiteration of aggression.
[133] In general, the role of religion in the novel, if any, does not seem of critical importance. Such a reductive appropriation of religion reflects Hamid's view that "religion is not pivotal in the tensions between the United States and the Muslim world … Rather, 'there's a sense of being humiliated and then threatened – that's what makes it insufferable'" (Perlez).
[134] Hamid, "Interview: We Are Already Afraid."

attackers as Muslims or as people who simply belong to his sphere of 'Otherness.'

Above all, he never supports the violent approach these people adopted in their counter-hegemonic discourse. As Changez himself asserts, "I am a believer in non-violence; the spilling of blood is abhorrent to me, save in self-defense … I am no ally of killers" (165). In the first place, Hamid made an important point about the need to avoid reading the novel as "anti-American."[135] After all, his critique of America is offered from the standpoint of someone who, very early in the novel, declares himself to be "a lover of America." It is along these lines that Changez's strategy 'to stop America' could be perceived as, considerably, inspired by "shared pain" and identified with "the interests of the rest of humanity."

In an interview with Decca Aitkenhead, Hamid highlights the inevitability of a common-ground approach for his post-9/11 novel:

> Well, I think if you want to persuade people, it's a hell of a lot more effective to try to persuade them as friends, than it is to yell at them as enemies. I think the most effective forms of critique are ones that establish a common ground for people to occupy, and then appeal to the best nature of people on that common ground. You know, that's the Martin Luther King approach – as opposed to the Malcolm X approach, which says you are a bunch of oppressors, and we will kill you if we have to. I think there's plenty of people on the Malcom X side right now, and many fewer effective Martin Luther Kingians.[136]

Hence, invoking the "Martin Luther King approach" of non-violent resistance, Hamid succeeds in craving out a shared space for although *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* offers its critique of America from a first-person perspective, it does so "from a standpoint of enormous affection. Changez is in love with America, and with an American woman, after all. Critique that mocks or offends is easily rejected, but critique that comes from a position of shared desire has the potential to start a conversation," as

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[135] Perlez.
[136] Decca Aitkenhead, "Occupational Hazards," *The Guardian* 11 August 2007, 9 July 2013 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2007/aug/11/fiction.bookerprize2007>.

he insistently points out.[137] The "Malcolm X approach," he adds, is at the core of the failures of the September 11 and 'war on terror' discourses:

> [T]he political positions of both Osama Bin Laden and George W. Bush are founded on failures of empathy, failures of compassion towards people who seem different. By taking readers inside a man who both loves and is angered by America, and hopefully by allowing readers to feel what that man feels, I hope to show that the world is more complicated than politicians and newspapers usually have time for. We need to stop being so confused by the fear we are fed: a shared humanity unites us with people we are encouraged to think of as our enemies.[138]

Departing from this point, Changez is presented as someone whose double allegiance is an abiding feature, who remains faithful to both countries, Pakistan and America, even though he is "angered" by the latter: "I had returned to Pakistan, but my inhabitation of your country had not entirely ceased. I remained emotionally entwined with Erica, and I brought something of her with me to Lahore – or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that I lost something of myself to her that I was unable to relocate in the city of my birth" (156-157).[139]

"[M]oving beyond state-centric accounts of political agency,"[140] Changez presupposes his as grounded in in "ways different (and presumably less violent) than that of the sovereignty dynamic," in Nyers' parlance.[141] This involves the moment when, in Pakistan, his agency translates into "political speech," an attempt to "*interrupt* the dominant political (speaking) order" and betray the simplistic approach of first-person perspective.[142] Lecturing at a university in Lahore, Changez avers: "I made it my

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[137] Hamid, "Interview: We Are Already Afraid."
[138] Blankenship.
[139] Hamid expresses a similar perspective in his *Powell's* essay: "I am still split between America and Pakistan. But I feel more comfortable with my relationship to both places than I have in a long time" (Hamid, "My Reluctant Fundamentalist").
[140] Nyers, 1071.
[141] *Ibid*., 1079.
[142] *Ibid*., 1078. Emphasis added. One of the principal aims of interrupting the dominant political speech is to bring out the voice of the abject and recast his political space. The other is to recuperate the relationship with the subject to its full, original articulation by opening the possibility for dialogue that ensures the continuing revision of both sides' practices and performs a valuable democratic work in the future. To put the point simply, Hamid thinks of the abject recuperated agency as that which can no

mission on campus to advocate a disengagement from your country by mine" (163). He quickly amasses enthusiastic followers of his peaceful resistance against American power and his office hours become overrun by meetings with "politically minded youths" (164). Describing his students' ethos, Changez emphasizes that they are "bright, idealistic scholars possessed of both civility and ambition. We call each other comrades … but I would not hesitate to use the term *well-wishers* instead" (165, emphasis in original). He succeeds in persuading them "of the merits of participating in demonstrations for greater independence in Pakistan's domestic and international affair, demonstrations that the foreign press would later, when our gatherings grew to newsworthy size, come to label anti-American" (163). Consequently, Changez receives official warnings on several occasions as his political activities come to be considered a major challenge and threat to the United States and its alliance with Pakistan. Addressing his American interlocutor, he recalls the first demonstration to receive much attention: "Your country's ambassador was in town, and we surrounded the building in which he was speaking, chanting and holding placards. There were thousands of us, all of possible affiliations – communists, capitalists, feminists, religious literalists" (Ibid.). In the face of such anti-stereotypical demonstration, in which all parties – not only the religious ones – have not been denied their political space and which amounted to a peaceful resistance, the Pakistani police intervened violently and Changez as many others "spent the night in prison, nursing a bloody lip and bruised knuckles" (164). The level of challenge that this mode of resistance to America poses is further manifested by the false allegations and disappearance of one of Changez's students on account of being allegedly involved in planning to assassinate a coordinator of America's "effort to deliver development assistance to [Pakistani's] rural poor" (165). Changez believes that

longer be articulated from a single point of view, that which, if unalloyed by democratic politics, offers a rather simplistic approach to our post-9/11 world. This is to suggest that Changez's resistance "works on behalf of a democratic cosmopolitan project," to quote Nyres (Ibid.).

"the boy in question had been implicated by mistake" (Ibid.); nevertheless, "he had disappeared – whisked away to a secret detention facility, no doubt, in some lawless limbo" between American and Pakistan (166). This provides an insight into the protest that the post-9/11 dominant rhetoric defines as terrorism, or more precisely, it is an insight into terrorism as defined by the post-9/11 dominant rhetoric.

The arrest and detention of the student activist does not daunt Changez. Rather, it prompts him to declare his convictions against America in an interview with the international television news networks. Among other things, he states forcefully: "[N]o country inflicts death so readily upon the inhabitants of other countries, frightens so many people so far away, as America" (Ibid.). His words may not be viewed as an expression of his or his students' dismay with America, or perhaps a universalization of their suffering, as much as "a firefly's glow bright enough to transcend the boundaries of continents and civilizations" (Ibid.). Strikingly, Changez's articulation of the impact of the United States' foreign policies upon the rest of the world seems to resonate widely so much that "[the interview] was replayed for days, and even now an excerpt of it can be seen in the occasional war-on-terror montage" (Ibid.). This leads him to be viewed as a direct threat to America: "I was warned by my comrades that America might react to my admittedly intemperate remarks by sending an emissary to intimidate me or worse" (166-167). In view of that, Changez is gripped with feeling "rather like a Kurtz waiting for his Marlow. I have endeavored to live normally, as though nothing has changed, but I have been plagued by paranoia, by an intermittent sense that I am being observed" (167). What becomes evident from these words is that, although like Kurtz he is experiencing palpable horror before his imminent death, he still maintains

allegiance and love to America, his likely executioner.[143] Being aware that love per se is not the central point in the relationship between the 'Self' and 'Other,' Changez decides not to submit to his fears and retains a sense of agency till the end: "I have come to realize that all this serves no purpose. I must meet my fate when it confronts me, and in the meantime I must conduct myself without panic" (Ibid.).

Along these lines, through lecturing, organizing protests, raising awareness about the American project of domination, and televised interviews, Changez affords new dimensions and contingent anti-stereotypical approaches to the counter-hegemonic discourses, ones that make room for political agency. Above all, had he appealed to the rhetoric of pain, this would have levelled his and the state's, and even the 9/11 attackers' discourses onto the same realm of terrorism which only promises to escalate violence. The novel ends with the reluctant fundamentalist of the title telling the American addressee "you should not imagine that we Pakistanis are all potential terrorists, just as we should not imagine that you Americans are all undercover assassins" (Ibid.). That is to say, imposing preconceived identities on one another only engenders mutual suspicion and, thus, dangerous situations become more predictable. Before the Pakistani lecturer leaves, he extends his hand for a handshake although it is not quite clear whether his American counterpart, who maintains a post-9/11 securitization's cold silence throughout the conversation, is an agent of terror enlisted to shoot him or a tourist who will acknowledge this new start with the 'Other' with a handshake.

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[143] With such reference to Josef Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* the theme of double allegiance is further underpinned. That is, aligning himself with Kurtz the European rebel, Changez seems to celebrate his 'in-between' space, between Pakistan and America, and affirm himself as someone who is rebelling from within rather than from without the United States; Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (London: Everyman, 1995).

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Examining possible tones of post-9/11 fiction, this thesis reads McEwan's *Saturday*, DeLillo's *Falling Man*, and Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* as a trend of fiction that works, in one way or another, against placing the terror of September 11 at the centre of their narratives. In varying degrees, these novels instantiate the agonizing necessity of envisioning an ethical alternative, in an attempt to encapsulate, even safeguard, a moral landscape in the aftermath of the attacks. As the thesis proposes all of these novels offer a 'deterritorialised' perspective either directly or indirectly. Clearly, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* offers this perspective as a novel written by a Muslim Pakistani. Equally, it is argued, *Saturday* and *Falling Man* introduce this perspective, though indirectly. Apart from being themselves novels that problematize the 'war on terror,' they endeavour to locate the perspective of the 'Other' voiced openly by one of the characters but never by the terrorist-like figures. That is to say, neither Baxter, nor Hammad or Amir Atta is given the agency or voice to express their perspectives other than in stereotypical manners. Mainly, criticism in this context is directed at their 'decentring' of the terrorist 'Other' which leads to their failure to engage directly in proposing alternative approaches to our post-9/11 world or attending to its cruelest realities. However, the tactics of promoting distance and allegory in DeLillo's and McEwan's representations of terrorists, consecutively, highlight their ambivalent approaches to terrorism and counter-terrorism, and save them from potential imputations of unpatriotism. For example, DeLillo takes the primal terror of the attacks as the starting point for his approach to the 'war or terror,' a strategy that seems to feed the United States' unilateral and nationalist discourse. Hence, it is not by chance that the structure of *Falling Man* is formulated on dedicating separate chapters for terrorists. This decision of making a barrier between them and the rest of characters seems to be

heavily influenced, simultaneously, by the need to acknowledge the complexity of the terrorists' position in the Anglo-American novel and the unwillingness to encounter or engage in dialogue with them. The impossibility of dialogue here is premised on the process of 'selving' and 'othering,' on the so-called incompatibility of the terrorists' and other characters' discourses in which case they could not coexist. To put it differently, terrorists figure so prominently in DeLillo's novel, but concurrently, somewhat paradoxically, he seems to realize that true dialogue is only possible among equals, or more precisely, that dialogue reinstates equality between the 'Self' and 'Other,' which, if were to be applied, might be taken seriously as an explicit expression of sympathy or even support for the terrorists in question.

Similarly, the incompatibility of the 'Self' and 'Other' discourses, and the intolerance towards 'Otherness' are re-visited in *Saturday*. The novel offers an instance in which the subversion of the agency of the 'Other' still informs the representation of terrorists: the terrorist-like figure, Baxter, falls into the category of those who are powerless, who have no stake in dialogue. Accordingly, the possibility of true dialogue with the 'Other' is largely concealed, relegated by Henry's First-World way of solving the conflict, and smothered by Baxter's mental illness. Consequently, any attempt to establish dialogue based on these rationales would only degenerate into farce. This is, of course, a commentary on the 'Self's belief in self-reflective, monologic agency as the best strategy assumed for appropriating the dilemma of the post-9/11 as much as it is on its negation of the 'Other's agency.

The other common point of critique for the discussed Anglo-American narratives is that, prompted by fleeting sympathy and 'hasty research,' they are prone to view the terrorist through stereotyping lenses. While in *Saturday* the terrorist-like figure is represented as an ill-minded European – whose mind is inaccessible, terrorists in

Falling Man are constructed as either misguided like Hammad, or evil by nature as it is the case with Amir Atta. In this light, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* could be viewed as a challenge to *Saturday* and *Falling Man* not only due to Hamid's implementation of the story of the terrorist 'Other' narrated from his own perspective, but also, and perhaps most importantly, for weaving two perspectives into his narrator's voice.

Furthermore, this thesis charts a 'deterritorialized' perspective being offered by the poet Daisy in *Saturday* and Martin the art dealer in *Falling Man*. Although the elevation of art over politics in these novels can be called hardly surprising, given their national backgrounds, the explicit and detailed treatment of politics in these novels by the artist or the novelist complicates the predictable positioning of art. The politics voiced in these novels pose a threat to the role of literature and art as an appropriate response, or more precisely, as a substitute approach to politics. Daisy, the poet whose recitation of "Dover Beach" tames Baxter, herself asks her dad to make an ethical decision concerning the war on Iraq. In a similar way, the art dealer, Martin in *Falling Man* expresses a similar concern when he called Lianne's mother to have a clear view of the attacks and the 'war on terror.' Accordingly, in both novels art acquires value not so much as an expressive practice, but because its potential for autonomy secures some distance from reality, and thereby, opens up a space for critical thinking on the characters' experiences of the reality of our post-9/11. Therefore, one cannot feel justified in dismissing these works as merely another variant of the civilizing missions of the 'war on terror.'

On the other hand, neither art nor fiction features in Hamid's novel as something that can be set against terror or secure critical distance. Rather, through the novelist Erica, fiction is presented as a way of avoiding the real world. The challenge of approaching the post-9/11 world which lies in understanding the present by opening

paths to the past, therefore, appears to be taken up by the novel of the 'Other,' *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Hamid subjects the Anglo-American novels about the attacks and their aftermath to a historical gaze, and in so doing, releases their repressed historical dimension. In particular, and within the context of this work, he seems to enact DeLillo's call to return to history proposed in *Falling Man* by Martin. Of a particular interest is that this sublimated relation to the past is itself a dialogue. Furthermore, unlike the involved Anglo-American narratives, which treat the terror of the post-9/11 theme as the cataclysmic end of civilization and modernity, *The Reluctant Fundamentalis*t arrives at the same juncture having comprehended the world as always conflicted and contradictory. Where *Falling Man* and *Saturday* work to trace the contemporary world as degenerating into modern and regressive, peaceful and violent, educated and illiterate, secular and fundamentalist, literary and scientist, Hamid's novel begins with a world already disillusioned and fragmented along these lines. Thus, modernity in this novel is disturbed by a return to history that probes the constitutive elements of September 11.

As a conclusion, by privileging the approach found in the novel of the 'Other,' represented by *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, this thesis reflects on the limitations of post-9/11 Anglo-American literary tradition. At the same time, it intends to show that although *Saturday* and *Falling Man* could not sustain 'Otherness,' the ethical, the political and the historical, they could still be considered as proper tones of approaching the post-9/11 theme for their faint attempts to take up the challenge of proposing strategies to move beyond the terror and violence of the post-9/11 world.

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