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The War on Terror and The Imperial Imagination in Contemporary Global Anglophone Literature

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Dedication

To Cindy Macha, who has sacrificed many times in order to support my desire to learn. My mother, who is the other mother of my children.

To Mike and Diane Wallace, who love, care for, and guide my children while I am working to give them a mother to be proud of.

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To my ancestors, for ushering me toward presence.

For my babies, June and Rhys, who show me how to learn.

Most of all, this is for toren, who understands:

“we spread our entirety
on passion fields
that intersect and flex
under the bludgeoning burden
of scented planes
that fold over spheres
and link into timelessness

feeding the hunger
surrounded within
feasting
feasting feasting feasting
feasaing feasting feasting feasting feasting

until the carnal cry
calls for the cycle”

& for you too, dad.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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by

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Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in English
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Dr. Weihsin Gui and Dr. Padma Rangarajan, Chairpersons

This project explores a feedback loop between the State, military, terrorism studies, and the literary by examining how global anglophone literature concerning the War on Terror addresses the outcomes of surveillance, detainment, imprisonment, and torture upon the lives of Muslim subjects within cosmopolitan spaces across the world. I argue that Ishtiyaq Shukri's *The Silent Minaret* (2005), Tabish Khair's *The Thing About Thugs* (2010), Rajia Hassib's *A Pure Heart* (2019) Fatima Bhutto's *Runaways* (2019) are uniquely positioned to address the worldwide economic and social realities engendered by a discourse of the imperial imagination in which religion and race are constitutive of an ever-present and ever-elusive enemy from within. Each of the texts I explore in the chapters that follow take different approaches in portraying life within a Western secular paradigm, highlighting the resistance and consequences to their protagonists as they attempt to carve out space for faith, sovereignty, and political collectivity amidst the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

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Introduction

My dissertation explores a feedback loop between modern state governmentality, military power, terrorism studies, and literary culture by examining how global anglophone literature concerning the War on Terror represent and critique the outcomes of surveillance, detainment, imprisonment, and torture upon the lives of Muslim subjects within cosmopolitan spaces across the world. I argue that Ishtiyaq Shukri's *The Silent Minaret* (2005), Tabish Khair's *The Thing About Thugs* (2010), Rajia Hassib's *A Pure Heart* (2019) Fatima Bhutto's *Runaways* (2019) are uniquely positioned to address the worldwide economic and social realities engendered by a discourse of the imperial imagination in which religion and race are constitutive of an ever-present and ever-elusive enemy from within. Each of the texts I explore in the chapters that follow take different approaches in portraying life within a Western secular paradigm, highlighting the resistance and consequences to their protagonists as they attempt to carve out space for faith, sovereignty, and political collectivity amidst the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Historical and Theoretical Framework

This project understands the The War on Terror as a mechanism of governmentality that circulates globally, extending outwards through imperial metropoles and producing globalizing effects on imperial strongholds. Michel Foucault explains that, while governmentality formed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, it was in the nineteenth century that a decisive formation occurred in which political-military discourse around war convened with a racist-biological one to fragment the population, a tactic that Thomas Lemke helpfully points out, "answer[ed] to the social revolutionary

challenge"[1](41). The causal linkage between race and criminality was useful to the project of colonialism, through which the state was justified to extend domestic surveillance and security measures in the name of protecting its domestic space and population from subjects coded as malevolent black and brown others. Biopolitical discourse linking race and criminality during a "state of emergency" like the War on Terror also works to pivot allegiance away from anti-capitalist movements to re-align subjects toward the State. Unprecedented global movement by colonial subjects immigrating to Britain in large numbers fueled a biopolitical discourse that focused on black and brown immigrants to fracture social movements along racial lines and, in the process, homogenize the parameters of citizenship. Racism, inherent to the system of colonization, is constitutive of terrorism through what Junaid Rana calls "a racial liberalism" that organizes, manages, and distributes control through racial hierarchies (503). Rana helpfully illustrates the effects of these mechanisms by describing how channels of surveillance and punishment fortified the "good Muslim / bad Muslim dyad" in which racism worked to align the "bad Muslim" with extinction after 9/11[2]. At the same time, these measures also reinforce that to be a "good Muslim," one has to show allegiance to the War on Terror as a representation of democracy and freedom; to say nothing of its implicit presumptions about upholding the efficacy of free-market capitalism (513). Twenty years into the War on Terror, the West is experiencing the denouement of the war's hysteria in which we see, in terms of media saturation, very

[1] Lemke, Thomas. *Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction*. United Kingdom, NYU Press, 2011.
[2] Rana, Junaid. *Terrifying Muslims: Race and Labor in South Asian Diaspora*. Duke UP, 2011.

little on the development of terrorist groups or attacks today[3]. Those acts of violence, by and large, are relegated to battles within South Asian nations that Western nations have lost track of, where most terrorist attacks have taken place[4]. The contemporary novels I highlight in this dissertation call for the recognition of 9/11 as one node in a larger constellation of Western imperial domination. I examine how they create a valuable space between the terrorist as a character, circumscribed by War on Terror discourse, and the jihadist, a person drawn to military action for a multidimensional set of reasons. This is not to excuse or condone the actions of jihadist groups, but rather to parse out competing narratives of governmentality at work between the United States and the Taliban; two entities with a relationship that goes farther back than 9/11. In doing so, the novels I point to in my dissertation look at the War on Terror as a maneuver of colonial governmentality that circulates globally, extending outwards through imperial metropoles to produce globalizing effects, and it looks at the Taliban as a movement that responds to these forms of management through violence.

In order to examine the War on Terror as a global process rather than a domestic one, I reconfigure how "post 9/11 literature" is spatially conceptualized. To do so requires establishing how the existing canon currently memorializes national borders

[3] On July 31st, 2022, a leading official of Al-Qaeda named Ayman al-Zawahiri was killed by U.S. forces despite the withdrawal from Afghanistan. Al-Zawahiri was Osama bin Laden's surgeon and a political leader after his death. Schmitt, Eric & Helene Cooper. "Al-Zawahri's Death Puts the Focus back on Al Qaeda." *New York Times*, August 2, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/02/us/politics/al-qaeda-terrorism-isis.html?searchResultPosition=4. Accessed 21 August 2022.

[4] Lutz, Brenda & James Lutz. *Globalization and the Economic Consequences of Terrorism*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

through fictional representations of urban American life in ways that I argue ultimately serve to entrench the prerogatives of national security initiatives facilitating the continuation of the war. Much of the existing criticism about post-9/11 literature concerns the setting of New York City as a symbolic entry point for discussing the legitimacy of the War on Terror writ large. Such representations, I argue, often reaffirm the War on Terror as an international military campaign and in the process neglect to address it as a global process of securitization rooted in economic and political forms of colonial management. However, my goal is not solely to refigure how 9/11 is imagined in the literary through the circulation of power in dominant discourses, but also to point out the ways in which the twenty-first century novel is capable of addressing the culpability of American citizens to imperial violence. The landscape of literary criticism after 9/11 emphasized the role of empathy in grappling with a "new" War on Terror. Judith Butler's seminal *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (2004), established an ethical lens through which to critique the desire for retribution following the attacks of 9/11[5]. Fractures within academic circles became evident as various members of the "intellectual elite" were clearly divided on how to make sense of Al-Qaeda's justification of their actions[6]. Butler's work accounts for differences between cultures and nations by emphasizing a shared precarity between Iraqi and American civilians in place of the more solipsistic American sense of victimhood that saturated the broader political and social

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[5] Butler, Judith. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. London: Verso, 2004.

[6] Butler makes a valuable interjection amongst voices Samuel P. Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* (1996) and Martin Amis, whose pieces ultimately framed Islam, and by extension those who were Muslim, as the "Other" apart from multiculturalism.

landscape at the time. Butler explicitly conceptualizes a universality outside the liberal framework of multiculturalism, which she describes as too thoroughly tangled in identitarian norms to be truly universal.

Butler's work responds, in part, to a surge in bestselling novels of the mid 2010's that centered fictional survivors of the 9/11 attacks and their loved ones, including Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005), Ken Kalfus' *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country* (2006), and Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2007). These novels responded to a hunger amongst American readers for texts that would address feelings of fear, anger, and confusion for a primarily white, middle-class audience still engaged in a war that most did not directly experience or even see. Collectively, these novels work to integrate the traumatic experience of the attacks into historical consciousness and to process their place in American national identity. Because of the central role that visual media played in translating the war in Iraq for the American public, post-9/11 novels of this period frequently incorporated visual media into their characters' reception to the attacks. Some novels used the influence of technology to comment on the very global nature of the war, like Thomas Pynchon's *Bleeding Edge* (2013) and William Gibson's *Pattern Recognition* (2003). Butler accounts for the ways in which visual technologies of warfare determine affective responses in the public sphere in *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (2009), where she describes the "frame" as both supporting the Iraq War and excluding alternatives to violence (xii). By the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the attacks of 9/11 had already provided the discursive backdrop against which the "Shock and Awe" campaign in Baghdad entered the living rooms of

Americans. Through analyzing these images and videos, Butler is interested in how forms of media work to produce consensus about what makes warfare, and violence more broadly, legitimate. This critique, directed at the American public broadly, appealing to the same demographic readership consuming post-9/11 novels. Accordingly, her work did not encompass a critique of how race and class figured into affective responses to the War on Terror.

In 2008, Richard Gray's incendiary "Open Doors, Closed Minds: American Prose Writing at a Time of Crisis" permanently altered the landscape of post-9/11 criticism by chastising Kalfus' and DeLillo's novels, amongst others, for ineffectively "domesticating" the idea of 9/11 as crisis and entrenching a sense of "emotional numbness" with prose "similarly, symptomatically numb" (132). Gray helpfully elucidates how the novels evidence a "crisis" mentality bound to a sense of emasculation emanating from the novels' Anglo-American protagonists. The novels, as a result, were incapable of meeting a much greater need for a "fictional measure of the new world view," one capable of accounting for a more diverse readership than post-9/11 novels concerned with reconciling the traumatic experience (132). Gray's controversial challenge to the post-9/11 canon echoed Butler's call to unseat the First World's sense of exclusivity in suffering that simultaneously denies the grievability of others dying in the War on Terror. Gray's contribution is significant for its simultaneous critical focus on the influence of patriarchy, race, and eurocentrism at work in the post-9/11 canon, one of the first of such attempts to challenge what novels determined the historiographic narrative of the War on Terror.

In their mutual call for recognition of globalized interdependency, Butler and Gray helpfully initiated an interest in how literature grappling with the War on Terror through a transnational scope might offer other ways of conceptualizing multiculturalism outside the normative frame that centered feelings of victimization. However, Gray and Butler scaffold their critiques through a historical comparison with the Vietnam War, a decision I argue prevents the opportunity to think critically about the place of jihadism within postcolonial frameworks that are better suited to address the relationship between the U.S. and the Middle East. Where the U.S. intervention in Vietnam was based on the "domino theory," intended to stop the spread of communism in Asia, the War on Terror might be read in similar terms as part of a longer strategy to stop the spread of Muslim fundamentalism after the Cold War. These were wars waged in ideological terms, emphasizing a threat to the existence of democracy in what is often construed as the free world. Seeking to disrupt the universalism inherent to this line of thinking, Butler argues that war photography, which has routinely served to further nationalistic fervor by instilling a sense of collective unity, also has the capacity to change the tide of public opinion against war. If the American public were to see the graphic realities of Iraqi civilian life, the argument went, empathic passageways would make themselves available in a way that the rhetoric of the War on Terror occluded. Likewise, Gray points to literature about the Vietnam War set outside of America or by Vietnamese authors instead of American ones as a helpful vantage point for elucidating a more realistic understanding of the war in Iraq. Gray uses Deleuze and Guattari's strategy of "deterritorialization" to skirt nationalistic rhetoric surrounding the legitimacy of warfare,

calling for novels to "enact" difference by moving notions of here and there, home and abroad, us and them, by portraying a distinctly "internationalized" America. Moving the physical locus of terrorism to international spaces "within America's orbit" economically, politically, and culturally would more judiciously address the victimization of not only Americans, but many others (124). However, Butler's and Gray's investment in nation and nationality in relationship to memory, particularly to the memory of the Vietnam War as a statragic loss in American consciousness, hinders their ability to address the multivalent outcomes of the War on Terror beyond a military conflict between national actors engaged in a kind of mutual, and already defeated, embrace. If the goal of their works is to increase the empathic reach of the American public, that process relies upon Americans understanding themselves first and foremost as victims of violence. This approach addresses only a portion of the equation, for neither Butler, Gorman, or Gray give us the tools to address the jihadists themselves, their existence, their history, or their reasons for action. Gray's article concludes with a call for literature that gives readers the tools to get into history as well as get out of it, a claim that, within the context of the Vietnam War, certainly acknowledges American imperialism but is more precisely about the memory of a painful, protracted war on both sides. However, this is not the same as acknowledging and drawing from the imperial presence of America and Western Europe in the Middle East and South Asia. I argue that encouraging American readership to empathize with other victims of the War on Terror around the world ultimately limits avenues to address American culpability, distancing

9/11 from a longer imperial and colonial history connected to the occupations of West Asian countries today.

Additionally, Viet Thanh Nguyen effectively critiques the limitations of Butler's conception of empathy and the limited outcomes from thinking about 9/11 through the lens of victimization in *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War* (2016). Nguyen describes the limits of Butler's "ethical outrage," by pointing to how this stance, rooted in the subjectivity of the beholder, works counterintuitively to justify viewing the other as perpetual victim. Nguyen likens this to viewing Vietnam as a "war rather than a country," which covertly instills Western superiority over Vietnam through language suggesting the country is to be indefinitely pitied (1037). This does not claim that empathy is entirely futile; rather, Nguyen argues that the only way Americans, both its government and its citizens, can be truly culpable to the War on Terror is to redefine humanity as equally capable of "inhuman," abhorrent actions. In order to breach the dichotomy of human versus inhuman, violence must be seen as an essential condition of humanity, like reason and justice, in order to push forward our collective thinking around war. In doing so, Nguyen seeks to distance conceptions of the human from their usage in colonial logic that intertwined racism with notions of the enlightened liberal subject in order to justify power.

My contention is that understanding and accepting the stakes of acknowledging inhumanity, in Nguyen's terms, is a progressive step in addressing jihadism for what it is: not monstrosity, unthinkable "otherness," but a reaction to multi-faceted conditions of oppression, despite the fact that doing so feels dangerous because it challenges narratives

of liberal universalism. Nguyen helpfully points out that Butler does not intend to do away with liberal universalism; in fact, she advocates that precarity take the place of existing notions of the universal, to which Nguyen responds by pointing out that universality contains the mechanisms of war that retain totalities distinguishing who gets to claim humanity while denying the humanity of others. In the process, each person's own stake in the violence at hand, including American civilians watching the Iraq War passively on the news, are ironically relieved from assuming culpability. To understand American complicity in violence, a longer history of domination and coercion must be recalled. In telling the story of America's inhumanity, one also tells the story of jihadism.

Nguyen's urgency to establish culpability amongst Americans is explained succinctly by the phrase "The state, of course, is us" (1146). The state is "us" in the sense that it only functions through the composite efforts of its subjects while, at the same time, it maintains order by stratifying access to resources upon conditions of race, gender, sexuality, and class. Here, liberalism universalizes the narrative of national belonging that prescribes methods of discerning us vs. them. The preconditions of belonging to that "us" becomes much more problematic through representations in literature. For example, in *Fictions of the War on Terror: Difference and the Transnational 9/11 Novel* (2015) Daniel O'Gorman utilizes Butler's concept of precariousness to question the representation of Muslim subjects in hallmark works of post-9/11 fiction. O'Gorman's readings are representative of a more recent shift in post 9/11 literary criticism that favor studying the impact of 9/11 from a transnational perspective with the intention of unmooring literary representations of 9/11 that reinforce, through their portrayals of a

crisis of American national identity, narratives of assimilation as constitutive of national identity, what Junaid Rana calls a "racial liberalism" that defines "good Muslim / bad Muslim dyad" in "The 9/11 of Our Imaginations: Islam, the Figure of the Muslim, and the Failed Liberalism of the Racial Present"(513)[7]. The "bad Muslim" is, more obviously, a terrorist or terrorist-sympathizer, while a "good Muslim," more insidiously, is one that must support the War on Terror; The "good Muslim" is one whose allegiance must necessarily support interpretations of "freedom" and "democracy" as implicated in the military occupation of Iraq. O'Gorman calls attention to the positioning of cultural "difference" in these novels by pointing out that in order to make an empathic connection to the novels' Muslim characters, an "exacerbation of ethnic, racial, and religious tensions" is also present, further entrenching the "discourse of us and them" (16). Instead of investing in this "inverted liberal perspective," we should, O'Gorman argues, be more concerned with cultural difference and how it is framed in discourse.

To illustrate this change, O'Gorman compares novels that are set near the 9/11 attacks on New York City in space, but not necessarily in time. O'Gorman distinguishes "heteropathic" empathy from Butler's more unilateral, self-referential conceptualization in favor of an empathy rooted in the concerns of the alien "other" (17). O'Gorman's critique attempts to encompass the jihadist character into its reading of heteropathic empathy through a reading of Nadeem Aslam's *The Wasted Vigil* (2008) as introducing a Western audience to a multi-dimensional jihadist character in Afghanistan, where the

[7] Like Kristine Miller's *Transatlantic Literature and Culture After 9/11* and Susana Araujo's *Transatlantic Fictions of 9/11 and the War on Terror*.

novel takes place. Unmooring 9/11 from New York, O'Gorman argues, aids in the facilitation of heteropathic empathy, which allows the audience to see Aslam's character "Casa" not solely as a villain, but as a "traumatized, vulnerable and rootless young man" (136). While there is value in generating an empathic response from Western readers towards a jihadist character, the limitations of pity are illustrated by Gorman's characterization of Casa. While O'Gorman does not mean to imply that Casa is unaccountable for his actions, his thinking does invite Western readership to understand the young men who join the ranks of the Taliban as misguided victims displacing their own traumatic experiences onto others. This perspective is representative of a neoliberal response to jihadism in the years immediately following 9/11, but ultimately still supports the notion that the U.S.'s invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq were indeed a kind of civilizing mission intended to bring Middle Eastern and South Asian countries into modernity, a rationale that echoed narratives concurrent with the imperialization of the Middle East and South Asia in the nineteenth century. While O'Gorman centralizes the importance of empathy, he also acknowledges that more is required to truly understand terrorists as anything more than villains of the cultural zeitgeist. Borrowing from Dominick LaCapra, O'Gorman proposes the need for an empathy merged with critical self-inquiry called "empathic unsettlement" in which a "desirable affective dimension of inquiry…complements and supplements empirical research and analysis" (18). While educating readership on the "realities" of terrorism would perhaps be beneficial, empirical research and analysis, at least within the field of Terrorism Studies, is generally trapped within the same imperialist "frame" that Butler elucidates. Recalling Nguyen's

point, when O'Gorman reads Casa as "traumatized, vulnerable, and rootless," he grants him humanity based upon shared experiences of violent victimization between the Taliban and the United States rather than confronting a shared inhumanity that extends the possibility for acknowledging and confronting U.S. culpability. The limitations of O'Gorman's empathic reading are better understood as evacuating political meaning from the Taliban's actions. If Casa is "rootless," he also has no political stakes; ostensibly, he has no home. O'Gorman makes clear that he is not interested in discussing the efficacy of the Iraq War in his analysis, a surprisingly apolitical stance that prohibits the ability to meaningfully discuss what makes the novels under discussion distinctly postcolonial. Additionally, such a stance neglects the larger historic relationship between the United States and Iraq that precedes 9/11 (78). The works of global anglophone literature studied in this dissertation provide historically and culturally grounded perspectives in order to fully grasp the power dynamics they surface.

The limitations of empathy make necessary a de-centralization of New York as the locus of terrorism. Moving away from spatial and temporal associations with 9/11 makes alternative histories of the War on Terror visible, particularly when the texts are situated in postcolonial spaces. Important steps in this direction have already been made; for example, Arjun Appadurai's *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger* argues that terrorist attacks cannot be understood without studying the overlapping "geographies of anger" in which 9/11 is but one node in a larger constellation of "national politics, global alliances, [and] regional tensions" that seeks to ostracize the Muslim subject as "other." Appadurai reads various pogroms against Muslims in India

alongside the attacks of 9/11 and 7/7 (in the USA and UK respectively) to argue that they are all indicative of a "deep" colonial history, intimately bound to modes of governmentality that have shaped division between Hindus and Muslims to form a "gradually superimposed mental map, in which war, security, crime, and terror overlay the geography of commerce, transport, work, and consumption" (99). Appadurai's argument effectively turns linear, progressivist historiographies of terrorism on their head to reveal the ways in which imperialism works in tandem with a larger political economy doing business as "terrorism" to spread rhizomatically across time and space. By understanding jihadism through the lens of colonial history, "terrorism" appears as a method of exerting biopower proven strategically useful amongst contemporary world in targeting the Muslim subject as a racio-cultural demographic. Understood within this longitudinal framework, 9/11 appears as but one node within a larger constellation in which the West has made useful the figure of the "terrorist" as a radical, racialized other in order to extend its powerful security apparatus. In studying literature that is inherently transnational in its scope through a multitude of locations, dislocations, and relocations, we are unmoored from the project of recovering nationhood common in post-9/11 literature and can more clearly understand secularism and jihadism as competing universalist ideologies employing necropolitical tactics.

In *Terror and the Postcolonial*, Elleke Boehmer makes an important distinction between interpretations of postcolonialism that take on a "Rushdiesque" emphasis on transnational exchange representative of the globalized world, which O'Gorman's analysis pulls from, and another branch of postcolonialism which "correlates with

struggle, subversion, the nation, the region, [and] resistance to the global status quo" which, "unnervingly to some…aligns more closely with some of the theories and significations of terror (as an anticolonial violence…than it does with globalization)" (143). The novels discussed in this dissertation speak to the inhumanity of the Global War on Terror by holding it in tandem with a history of U.S. imperialism and European colonialism and, simultaneously, comparing the inhumanity of the violence that has responded to it in the form of jihadism. For the West to reconcile what jihadism represents to its own use of power, it cannot see Iraq or Afghanistan solely as victims. To do so verges on inadvertently replicating Orientalist assumptions of the Other's inherent "weakness" that reinforces those racialized signs and markers of the "Muslim" that register with the Imperialist frame. In these chapters, I think through the distinction between postcolonialisms that Boehmer advances by looking at novels that address terrorism in a way that align with Boehmer's conceptualization, as texts capable of mapping "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" (147). The chapters of this project do not pull from a defined century or propose a linear chronology of the terrorist; instead, the novels I provide as evidence of overlapping War on Terror geographies are anchored to moments of colonial and imperial history in which fanaticism becomes imperially useful. This is not to suggest that the power of nation-states is being watered down and subsumed by a nebulous world order united under a mobile form of empire as Hardt and Negri suggest, but that terrorist groups and nation-states represent two

different forms of universalizing frameworks vying for territory and resources that entrench boundaries between nation states[8]. This project aims to understand how terrorist groups and states mutually devastate and bolster one another by looking at works of global anglophone literature that portray terrorists not only as agents of disruption to some of the vital nerve centers of global capitalism, but also as integral functions of global capitalism itself.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter one provides a point of contrast to the novels that I read as critiquing the War on Terror as a form of globalized imperialism by exploring two highly regarded works of the post-9/11 canon, Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland* and Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*. In this analysis, I observe the ways in which city space is used ultimately to valorize liberal conceptions of multiculturalism and its attendant claim of tolerance; additionally, I examine how these texts represent the limited reach of empathy in addressing xenophobia brought forth 9/11 and the ensuing War on Terror because of their positioning of the novels' criminal subjects amidst War on Terror discourse that sought to contain the spread of terrorism. Despite adulation for O'Neill's *Netherland* as a long-awaited and supposedly postcolonial response to 9/11, the novel's upholding of a multiculturalism grounded in the tenets of the American dream limit its capacity to address question of culpability. In doing so, O'Neill's text bears more in common with the domestic novels of post-9/11 than other postcolonial novels like those explored in the

[8] Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri. *Empire*. Harvard University Press, 2006. Print.

subsequent chapters of this dissertation that are divested from recuperating American national identity.

In my second chapter, I investigate the disappearance of Issa Shamsuddin, central protagonist in Ishtiyaq Shukri's *The Silent Minaret* (2005). Issa's disappearance occurs in London at the inception of the invasion of Iraq in 2003. As other scholars have rightly pointed out, Issa's disappearance paradoxically establishes his agency while simultaneously highlighting the power of the state to erase the potential of anti-imperial movements in the post-9/11 world. However, scholars have also struggled to place Issa both geographically and stylistically by reading his enigmatic character through various rooted, national, or unlocatable cosmopolitan frameworks. This chapter intervenes in critiques of *The Silent Minaret* by arguing that Shukri's text instigates a postsecular critique within postcolonial studies that centers Islam instead of minimizing or abandoning its relevance in pursuit of new cosmopolitan modes of belonging. Attention has yet to focus on his dynamic engagement with T.E. Lawrence's seminal *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1922), an autobiography which I argue embodies the feedback loop between State, military, and literary forms of discourse. I chart the resurgence of Lawrence's memory in political and military discourse of the mid-2000's to point to Lawrence's position as figure of the imperial imagination. The relationship between Issa and Lawrence is pivotal to understanding how Issa's absence paradoxically functions as record of a kind of terror enacted upon the Arab world and Muslim communities.

My third chapter concerns Tabish Khair's *The Thing About Thugs*, a novel that reimagines Phillip Meadows Taylor's Victorian-era novel *Confessions of a Thug* (1839)

about a practice of banditry pre-dating the British colonization of India known as *thuggee*. More specifically, I focus on Khair's critique of the use of confession as a mode of eliciting truth, effectively calling into question the reliability of apparently truthful statements obtained under dubious circumstances in the post-9/11 zeitgeist. Khair's Muslim protagonist, Amir Ali, is an Indian colonial subject brought to London in the late nineteenth century by Philip Meadows Taylor about the murderous *thugee* of India that scandalized its Victorian audience and provided fodder for the British government to pursue imperial control over India despite anti-colonial resistance movements. Through a set of nested narratives, Amir Ali reveals he was never a thug at all. This unexpected twist points to the shaky and often coerced testimonies collected by the British East India Company that charged thugs with murder in India, instantiating the thug as terrorist to generate fear amidst a transition of power from the British East India Company to the British state. Khair's text skillfully dismantles the prior postmodern post-9/11 texts by utilizing its hallmarks, particularly metafiction and heteroglossia, to narrativize a colonial subject as its main character, a supposedly terrorist subject of the nineteenth century. The result is a text that willfully holds a mirror to the post-9/11 canon, reflecting back unacknowledged contradictions of liberalism.

The fourth and final chapter, I explore how Rajia Hassib's *A Pure Heart* and Fatima Bhutto's *Runaways* productively center the experiences of Muslim women in order to complicate Western assumptions of the Islamic female "Other" by working to discursively separate the Islamic religion from the accusation of fanaticism familiar to War on Terror discourse. The main characters of each novel challenge perceptions of

Islam by portraying faith as a dynamic form of social engagement containing economic practices, cultural thought patterns, and a system of valuable of political solidarity. *A Pure Heart* responds to War on Terror discourse by enmeshing jihadist characters within complex familial dynamics from transnational metropolitan spaces. I read the use of realism as described in Chapter One to discuss how global anglophone novels that grapple with the War on Terror utilize the genre to complicate Anglo-American renderings of jihadism. Both *A Pure Heart* and *Runaways* explore a sense of despondency rooted in the lingering absence of individual meaning that stems from the individualistic and materialistic modes of fulfillment promised by Western attitudes of consumption under global capitalism. I argue that in their respective searches for a social and political collectivity distinct from Western secularism, the characters of *Runaways* pursue jihadism in search of personal fulfillment and meaning making that ends up replicating a similar system of patriarchal oppression they were trying to escape. Through the characters of Sunny and Saaber, we witness what happens when despondency couples with a form of patriarchal dogma that utilizes individualistic sacrifice as a political weapon – the furthest extreme of self-negation intended to conquer personal chasms through retributive violence.

Chapter One

White Masculinity and the Criminal "Other" in Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland* and Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*

Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland* engages with the War on Terror and its more multifarious forms of power similarly to canonical work of post-9/11 literature *Falling Man* by Don DeLillo. These two novels center a privileged, postmodern white male ennui worked out through a postcolonial subject. It is the class difference separating the novels' protagonists, Hans and Keith, from the criminal subjects they attempt to empathize with that prohibits meaningful engagement with the undercurrent of intersecting class histories each novel attempts to bring to the surface. Staged through the divorce and reconciliation of heteronormative domestic partnerships, the novels observe a return to the status quo after disaster; an adherence to hegemonic norms that prohibits them from challenging dominant forms of power. These texts represent the limited reach of empathy in addressing xenophobia brought forth 9/11 and the ensuing War on Terror because of their positioning of the novels' criminal subjects amidst War on Terror discourse that sought to contain the spread of terrorism. Despite adulation for O'Neill's *Netherland* as a long-awaited "postcolonial" response to 9/11, the novel's upholding of a multiculturalism grounded in the tenets of the American dream limit its capacity to address question of culpability. In doing so, O'Neill's text bears more in common with the domestic novels of post-9/11 than other postcolonial novels like those explored in the subsequent chapters of this dissertation that are divested from recuperating American national identity. This chapter argues that the War on Terror be understood as a mechanism of governmentality that extends globally and that the events of 9/11 and the literature written in its wake are

representative of its culmination, its multifarious forms of dissemination, and its aftermath.

We're Separating: Fractures in the Neoliberal Landscape

O'Neill's *Netherland* is about the interior struggle of Hans van den Broek, a successful, Holland-born financial analyst in the oil futures market who moves to Manhattan after developing his career in London. Despite his success, Hans is a solemn and emotionally detached figure that describes himself as "a man with no friends or pastimes" (30)[9]. Hans' numbness is indirectly linked to the aftermath of 9/11 during the latter half of the novel, when he comes to the realization that the disruption in his personal life, including the dissolution of his marriage and relationship to his son, was instigated by the attacks. Unable to access the troubling scenarios happening right in front of him, Hans is preoccupied by painful periods of his childhood brought on by his mother's recent death. For his wife Rachel, 9/11 was a profoundly different experience. For her, it solidified that the United States was an unsafe and untrustworthy place based in equities; in short, America would never redeem itself because the "attack on New York had removed any doubt" about her decision to separate from Hans and move back to London with their young son (38).

O'Neill's observation of the duality of surface/netherland extends to American politics, with the relationship between Hans and Rachel acting as a metaphor for a growing political divide. Rachel is politically sure of herself; a quality of hers that Hans

[9] O'Neill, Joseph. *Netherland*. 1st American ed. New York: Pantheon Books, 2008. Print.

both admires and fears in her. She is devoutly left-wing, frequently making critical comments about America's political actors and actions. Fed up with what she understands as the rise of religious conservatism, Rachel explains to Hans during an argument that "Bush wants to attack Iraq as part of a right-wing plan to destroy international law and order as we know it and replace it with the global rule of American force. Tell me which part of that sentence is wrong, and why" (115). Hans is confounded by Rachel's certainty, ashamed to find he has no real "position" of his own to counter her. He simply remarks in return that he cannot find a reason to wholly believe it nor to believe it with as much conviction as Rachel does. The sense of arrested development that haunts Hans points to a larger constituency of American complacency disrupted after 9/11. Rachel emasculates and infantilizes Hans: "You're constantly flailing around and changing the subject and making emotive statements. It's the classic conservative tactic…"You are a conservative," Rachel said. "What's so sad is you don't even know it" (115). Rachel's critique of Hans combines the personal and the political; she ties together his emotional immaturity with his political apathy, an attitude Rachel points out would fortify America's participation in the war more broadly. O'Neill's depiction of Rachel and Hans illuminates a rift between Republicans and Democrats over the War on Terror by showing the ways in which Hans, as a moderate, middle-of-the-road citizen, faces increased pressure to align himself with a stance on the invasion of Iraq. The novel charts the growing discontent of the mid-aughts that followed the initial surge of American patriotism in the immediate aftermath of 9/11. A 2021 PEW Research Center study shows an increasingly partisan divide from March of 2002 through August of 2021 on

whether Islam is more likely than other religions to encourage violence, with 72% of Republicans and 32% of Democrats answering "yes."[10]

In a scene emblematic of the dissolution of their marriage, Hans and Rachel have an impassioned disagreement about the efficacy of the invasion of Iraq. For Rachel, the invasion of Iraq solidifies her desire to leave the United States and return to her former life in England. While she explains to Hans her disgust with American exceptionalism, Hans muses internally: "Did Iraq have weapons of mass destruction that posed a real threat? I had no idea; and to be truthful, and to touch on my real difficulty, I had little interest. I didn't really care" (O'Neill 108). Detached from reality, Hans could be read as detached because of his foreignness, thereby making him feel exempt from formulating an opinion. As an outsider, he does not consider himself to be informed enough to play vanguard to America's innocence or guilt. Criticism of *Netherland* reads such exchanges as indicative of Hans' status as an immigrant, albeit a very privileged one. For example, Stanley van der Ziel argues in "'Beneath the Surface: The Subterranean Modernism of Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland*'" writes that "*Netherland* thus continues the postcolonial drama of possessing only a borrowed tongue, one's own by birth yet belonging to a

[10]The article goes on to explain in further detail: "The partisan gap in views of Muslims and Islam in the U.S. is evident in other meaningful ways. For example, a 2017 survey found that half of U.S. adults said that "Islam is not part of mainstream American society" – a view held by nearly seven-in-ten Republicans (68%) but only 37% of Democrats. In a separate survey conducted in 2017, 56% of Republicans said there was a great deal or fair amount of extremism among U.S. Muslims, with fewer than half as many Democrats (22%) saying the same. Hartig, Hannah and Carroll Doherty. "Two Decades Later: The Enduring Legacy of 9/11." Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2021/09/02/two-decades-later-the-enduring-legacy-of-9-11/#CHAPTER-views-of-muslims-islam-grew-more-partisan-in-years-after-9-11. Accessed 1 July 2022.

foreign culture…" (213)[11]. This is a generous take on Hans' inability to articulate himself, reading it less as a sense of political engagement and more as a sense of alienation that links him to the immigrant experience. Hans is perhaps a "foreign" subject in the sense that he was born in Holland, and is indeed alienated in New York City, but it is also true that he is also a beneficiary of Holland's colonial past. This scene also indicates Hans' disillusionment and apathy is less a "postcolonial drama of possessing a borrowed tongue" and more a revelation of his privilege from experiencing the War on Terror in any substantial way (van der Ziel 213).

Hans quickly discovers he has no real evidence to counteract Rachel's claims, yet he desires to disagree with her, a motive we are invited to read as metaphoric of his desire to stay married rather than a desire to discuss politics. In this sense, *Netherland* can be read as nothing more than one man's struggle to re-invest himself in his marriage despite the lack of meaning that pervades all of his attachments. Yet, because this domestic strife plays out against a political background, Hans' detachment registers less as a man in psychological crisis and more as a wealthy white man so buffered by privilege as to avoid engaging empathically with the lives of others imbricated in the War on Terror that surround him in New York City, a reality that novels centering Muslim-identifying characters post-9/11 like Shaila Abdullah's *Saffron Dreams* (2009), Mohsin Hamid's *The*

[11] Ziel, van der Stanley. "Beneath the Surface: The Subterranean Modernism of Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland*. *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, 26 Feb 2015, Pgs. 207-222. https://doi.org/10.1080/00111619.2014.884992

Reluctant Fundamentalist (2007) and H.M. Naqvi's *Home Boy* (2009) address[12][13][14]. Afterwards, Hans lapses into a state that encapsulates what van der Ziel describes as a kind of "subterranean realism":

> "If your point is that the U.S. should not attack Iraq…I'm not going to disagree with that. But if your point is…" I trailed off, at a substantive loss. I was distracted, too—by a memory of Rachel and me flying to Hong Kong for our honeymoon, and how in the dimmed cabin I looked out of my window and saw lights, in small glimmering webs, on the placeless darkness miles below. I pointed them out to Rachel. I wanted to say something about these creaturely cosmical glows, which made me feel, I wanted to say, as if we had been removed by translation into another world. Rachel leaned across me and looked down to the earth. 'It's Iraq,' she said." (O'Neill 105)

Hans' "substantive loss" reiterates his sense of detachment from reality, a reality wedded not only to larger geopolitical happenings, but also to his relationship with Rachel. As his mind drifts, Hans remembers the experience of a profound moment of awestruck alienation from the world around him while looking outside of an airplane window, these "creaturely cosmical glows" somehow alive, present, and yet beyond nature. Trapped within a poetic image, Hans struggles to communicate the sublimity of the experience to

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[12] Abdullah Shaila. *Saffron Dreams*. Loving Healing Press, 2009.

[13] Hamid, Mohsin. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Bond Street Books, 2007.

[14] Naqvi H. M. *Home Boy: A Novel*. Shaye Areheart Books, 2009.

Rachel, whose responsibility throughout the novel, it seems, is to interpret the world for Hans. She quite literally gives meaning to Hans' "placeness" darkness as, in fact, "Iraq," gesturing not only to Hans' sense of historical amnesia, but also to an Orientalist reading of Iraq as technologically "dark," a place without referent to the modern Western world figuratively "above" it. Hans experiences the desire to communicate his feelings of foreignness to Rachel, sensing that he has been "removed by translation into another world," and thus losing the capacity for sense and meaning making while at the same time accepting that the reality that life in Iraq is beyond his comprehension. In one sense, we can read the American public's own sense of confusion and apathy surrounding the invasion of Iraq and its place in national politics. More importantly, Rachel is seen here attempting to awaken Hans to the mechanisms of American economic prosperity and privilege that have shielded Hans from the realities of America's actions towards others during the War on Terror. O'Neill's rendering of Hans illuminates the pitfalls of centering a novel concerning the War on Terror on an ambivalent figure unmoored from his own stake in the political realities that implicate him, the results of which fall short of providing a response to the global dimensionality of 9/11 capable of addressing modes of imperial domination that exceed America's borders.

Modernist Modes and the Administration of Forgetting

After her departure with their son to London, Hans experiences a physical and emotional severance from his family as an immaterial chasm in time and space, what he describes as an existence "lost in invertebrate time" (31). Outside of the novel, Hans' reaction echoes a larger response to 9/11 as an event outside of history; a sentiment

echoed by the Bush administration in addition to its broader public reception. Anne McClintock's "Imperial Ghosting and National Tragedy: Revenants from Hiroshima and Indian Country in the War on Terror" looks at this period of nationwide existential fogginess as a mode of memorializing national tragedy that also entails the "administration of forgetting as much as it entails the promises of remembrance" (820) [15]. What is forgotten, McClintock argues, is a legacy of wartime atrocities linked to imperial dominance. This state of detachment from history both incorporated 9/11 into national memory and instantiated America's status as "world-historic victim" with cart blanche to obtaining retaliation by any means necessary (824). While the genre of postmodernism may be partially to blame for Hans' existential dread and overarching fogginess, McClintock's argument provides a way to read literary characters as participants in national memory and the administration of forgetting. Where McClintock's historical anchors include Hiroshima and Nagasaki, my intention is to examine O'Neill and DeLillo's employment of techniques ascribed to modernist realism to argue that the protagonists' penchant for meditations on meaninglessness, alienation, and the corruption of the American Dream have permeated the text so thoroughly as to be complicit in the "administration of forgetting," which refers to both the subjective and collective ways of thinking about countering the terrorist threat in existential terms that inform the early twenty-first century socio-political and bureaucratic landscape.

[15] McClintock, Anne. "Imperial Ghosting and National Tragedy: Revenants from Hiroshima and Indian Country in the War on Terror." *PMLA*, vol. 129, no. 4, 2014, pp. 819–29. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24769517. Accessed 7 Aug. 2022.

DeLillo's *Falling Man* focuses on the estranged relationship of Keith Neudecker, a lawyer working in the World Trade Center, and Lianne, a listless language scholar working with patients suffering from Alzheimer's disease[16]. Keith is in the World Trade Center at the time of the 9/11 attacks. As he runs from the blast, Keith finds himself hurrying in a traumatized haze to Lianne's apartment, a home the two have not shared for some time. Despite the "extended grimness" of their relationship, Keith and Lianne continue their domestic partnership and eventually reconcile within the span of the novel, much to their family members' disapproval (7).

Like Hans, Keith is characterized by his meditative and reserved nature. Keith's inability to be emotionally available leaves Lianne to play the part of the interpreter of his experiences. Despite Keith experiencing the trauma directly of surviving the attack on the Twin Towers, it is Lianne that the narrative follows through her breakdown and recovery. As such, we learn much more about Lianne's inner world after 9/11 than we do Keith's. While experiencing a generalized anger towards Muslim-looking people that mirrors the American public's general stance, Lianne lashes out at a neighbor for listening to music in Arabic. After the outburst, she turns inward, marked by the desire, yet inability, to believe in anything outside of herself: "Lianne struggled with the idea of God. She was taught to believe that religion makes people compliant. This is the purpose of religion, to return people to a childlike state. Awe and submission, her mother said" (62). Lianne experiences the draw of spirituality pervading her life as paradoxical because of the

[16] DeLillo Don. *Falling Man: A Novel*. Scribner, 2007.

secular and atheistic view she has been immersed in for most of her life. The violence and spectacle of the attacks instills feelings of awe and submission, a sublimity of terror, that Lianne associates with religious conviction. DeLillo's treatment of Lianne's interiority exemplifies the sense of alienation and confusion about one's own identity that makes the text distinctly modernist. Unable to believe in God, Lianne's most approximate spiritual experience comes from artwork. After being confronted outside of the New York City subway by a performance artist imitating the infamous "Falling Man" photograph of a man jumping to his death from the Twin Towers, Lianne experiences sublimity of terror in relation to her whiteness:

> "Those nearby saw her, smiled, some of them, and spoke to her, one or two, and she was forced to see herself in the reflecting surface of the crowd. She became whatever they sent back to her. She became her face and features, her skin color, a white person, white her fundamental meaning, her state of being. This is who she was, not really but at the same time yes, exactly, why not. She was privileged, detached, self-involved..." (DeLillo 184).

The narrator defines Lianne's individuality as dependent upon how others perceive her. It is abject individualism that she "becomes" what others deem her to be. Her whiteness experienced existentially as a "state of being" that becomes her from the outside. Describing the awakening to privilege through the sublimity of terror in modernist terms creates a problematic in which external hypersensitivity surrounding consciousness mirrors what Stanley van der Ziel calls "subterranean modernism," a subgenre infused with characteristics of the realist novel that hold "up a smoothly polished mirror to a

multicultural world" (209). Such an aesthetic is only able, by design, to reflect its world rather than to interrogate it. In a complex and charged political and social period, such attitudes, in the wake of violence against minoritized groups, can be read as embracing the status quo or, at the very least, a resigned acceptance of one's position rather than a desire to understand the "Other." Tragedy, in O'Neill and DeLillo's texts, is circumvented through the modernist lens into a reflection on the self versus a reflection on the larger implications of whiteness on the invasion of Iraq, instilling the "administration of forgetting" that McClintock points out "lends itself to the seductions of historical amnesia and the denial of political guilt" because "to identify a tragedy as a political atrocity…is to allocate agency, identify political intention, acknowledge historical complexity, and claim ethical accountability" (821).

The post-9/11 canon, predominated by modernist sensibilities and white men concerning the experiences of middle to upper class white men, have limited capacity for engaging in meaningful empathy. Lianne's mother chides her for marrying Keith in order to feel "dangerously alive," and indeed Keith seems to surround himself with the risk-taking opportunities, from sexual liaisons outside his marriage to his penchant for gambling (11). As a survivor of the World Trade Center attacks, Keith avoids directly investigating how 9/11 traumatized him. Instead, he copes through his desire to take risks, eventually parlaying his intrigue with gambling into a career. Hans garners a similar reputation as professional risk-taker in banking; regarded as a "guru" within the oil and gas futures industry (34). Hans' domestic downfall is intertwined with a definitive upswing in his career: "on the last Friday of the week Rachel declared her intent to leave

for London, *Institutional Investor* ranked me number four in my sector—a huge six spots up from the year before" (34). Hans' own success in oil speculation amidst Rachel's self-proclaimed disgust with American imperialism points to the two-sidedness of America's economic fortunes following 9/11: an economic period bolstered by an economy of war coupled with rampant speculation eventually led to the stock market crash of 2008 and subsequent recession. Keith and Hans exemplify how the existentialist mode attempts to accommodate what John Carlos Rowe calls the "radical contingency of hypercapitalism" in "Global Horizons in *Falling Man*" instead of challenging its presence (236)[17]. Where the novels fail to address the global realities of the War on Terror lies in their abstinence from political engagement; both Hans and Keith are removed from the realities of warfare, seeing their own place in the aftermath of 9/11 as disconnected from the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. The socio-political seriousness and catastrophe of 9/11 have no apparent effect on the two men, and their personal economic profit after the event can be read as a parallel of the USA's economic incentives for the Iraq invasion and War on Terror. Keith and Hans resist direct political engagement, refusing to take an anti-war stance[18].

Within the novel, Hans' physical and emotional distance from his own sense of self also operates as a mechanism through which Hans observes "Americanness" from an

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[17] Carlos Rowe, John. "Global Horizons in *Falling Man*." *Don DeLillo: Mao II, Underworld, Falling Man*. Ed. Stacey Olster. London: Continuum, 2011. 121–134. Bloomsbury Studies in Contemporary North American Fiction. *Bloomsbury Collections*. Web. 25 Aug. 2022. http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781472542397.ch-008

[18] Ian McEwan's *Saturday* takes a surprisingly similar apolitical or even conservative stance in its depiction of the protagonist.

external vantage point. It is this quality of Hans' narration that has led some to argue O'Neill's work represents a long-awaited global post-9/11 novel willing to peer outside the American experience of 9/11 and to explore other perspectival positions; alternatively, others have concluded quite the opposite, claiming that Hans' rootlessness is the well-worn postmodern dread of a white male protagonist, pointedly expressed by Zadie Smith in "Two Paths for the Novel," an article published in the *New York Review*[19]. Smith describes *Netherland* as "absolutely a post-catastrophe novel but the catastrophe isn't terror, it's Realism." Smith contends that the novel's own hyperawareness of itself as an object within a simulacrum of other realist post-9/11 novels, and the genre of American realism more broadly, prohibits it from meaningfully addressing the War on Terror as a lived reality. Hans, buffered by privilege, reacts to 9/11 by spreading his money into different bank accounts. Afterwards, he sinks deeper into a fractured, purposeless identity disconnected from the Iraq War. Thus, for Smith, *Netherland* is only "superficially about September 11" and instead about a crisis within the "Anglo-American liberal middle class" (New York Review of Books). McClintock's argument broadens Smith's critique to encompass larger modes of biopolitical control at work in post-9/11 literature, pointing out how narratives of 9/11 memorialization worked to bolster support for the invasion of Afghanistan to the point that "seeing outside" of the necessity of the War on Terror becomes, as a citizen, difficult or impossible to imagine. Richard Jackson's "Sympathy for the Devil" in the anthology *Terrorism and Literature*

[19] Smith, Zadie. "Two Paths for the Novel." *The New York Review*. 20 November 2008. https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2008/11/20/two-paths-for-the-novel/. Accessed 25 August 2022.

points out that literature is the necessary vessel through which to address terrorism because counter-terrorism discourse produces its own fictions. Narratives like *Netherland* and *Falling Man* participate in the production of "fantasy and imagination" playing a central role in security policymaking" by assuming that the stakes of the war are rooted in retribution versus access to resources (377).

That modes of memorialization surrounding 9/11 are difficult to imagine an "outside of" is particularly striking in O'Neill's characterization of Hans. Where Zadie Smith reads the inadequacy of realism to address the Global War on Terror, van der Ziel argues that the novel cultivates its own distinct "subterranean modernism," a narrative simultaneously realist and postmodern, containing the postmodern penchant for abstraction in favor of prose teeming with significance underneath it's "deceptively simple" appearance (208). Van der Ziel compares O'Neill's piece to the likes of Marcel Proust, Virginia Woolf, and James Joyce, whose works addressed an overwhelming crisis of being and representation stemming, in large part, from the traumatic influences of the First World War. Associating O'Neill with this particular cast of twentieth century authors responding to war trauma asserts a shared mode of recuperative nationalism via national mourning, not unlike post-9/11 literary criticism that situated discussions of American nationalism in the memorialization of the Vietnam War. Anne McClintock observes that the "historical hinges" upon which cultural artifacts, like novels, are affixed, are revealing of larger narratives of national memorialization. McClintock points out that the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were the first site of "ground zero" that 9/11 effectively supplanted in cultural memory. Supplanting this metaphor marked an

important transition in historical narrative from "world-historic aggressor" after World War II to "world-historic victim with the right to permanent revenge" (824). Van der Ziel's reading of O'Neill's work as alongside an author like Woolf proposes a different, but arguably similar historical hinge, one that draws us back to the first World War, but again, relies on a rooted Western positionality that does not take into account the driving role of imperialism and the rapacious desire for accumulation that motivated the Great War in the first place[20]. If we are invited by these authors, including O'Neill, to revel on the precipice of meaninglessness then we are, at the same time, only capable of occupying that mode of national memorialization accompanied by the "administration of forgetting."

The Role of Heteronormativity in Staging the Criminal "Other"

Like *Netherland*, Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* centers a heterosexual male protagonist's disintegrating marriage to perform allegorically as a schism in American cultural identity following the 9/11 attacks. They also show how representations of the disintegrating nuclear family work to address national anxieties about what and who can be trusted amidst a threat seemingly everywhere and nowhere at the same time. The depiction of domestic relationships in novel form is particularly well-situated to address the political economy that employs terrorism to permeate reality hierarchically from the head of state to the family, a process that works in concert with other forms of

[20] Edward Said discusses this in *Culture and Imperialism* (335).

normalization (Foucault 91)[21]. The domestic lives of the novels' Anglo-American characters demonstrate how governmentality operates through a hierarchical stratum beginning with the head of state and ending with individual subjects and families. Hans and Rachel's disagreement about the war in Iraq is indicative of a larger fission in domestic security including the parameters of citizenship that assure cultural belonging, and thereby "activating 9/11's paranoid, Manichean rivalries" according to Elizabeth S. Anker's "Allegories of Falling and the 9/11 Novel" (465)[22].

Hammad's chapters act as temporal disruption points in the text that return the reader to before the attacks occurred and are braided into Keith's present struggle to heal. As Keith combats his own sense of existential meaningless in a New York ravaged by war, Hammad performs as a strange doppelgänger to Keith; the two equally conjoined in their pursuit of a "higher purpose of metaphysical contingency" (151). In DeLillo's rendering of Hammad's abject bildungsroman, a fictionalized member of the 9/11 hijackers turns from a rather insecure and conflicted young man into a jihadist, who "wore a bomb vest and knew he was a man now, finally, ready to close the distance to God" (172). In attempting to empathize with Hammad, a man DeLillo characterizes as not yet fully devoted to the cause he has found himself engaged in, DeLillo creates empathic connections based on signifiers of masculinity; namely, that both Keith and Hammad engage in sex for pleasure outside the prescribed norms of their cultures.

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[21] Foucault, Michel. *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-1978*. Trans. Graham Burchell, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
[22] Anker, Elizabeth S. "Allegories of Falling and the 9/11 Novel." *American Literary History*, vol. 23, no. 3, 2011, pp. 463–82. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41237451. Accessed 25 Aug. 2022.

Through the novel's description of Keith's own extramarital affair, the reader is invited to compare Keith and Hammad's "uncontrollable" sexual desires, their persistent flirtations with risk, and their joint venture to discover a meaning to life by nearing their proximity to death. DeLillo explores a fictionalized jihadist's subjectivity through Hammad, a rather lackluster jihadist prone to masturbating, praying half-heartedly, and engaging in premarital sex instead of dedicating himself to the cause. Hammad finds himself continuously distracted during indoctrination sequences by "that other woman [who] would come by on a bike…hair wet, legs pumping" or a Syrian woman he develops a sexual relationship with: "She had dark eyes and a floppy body that liked contact" (78). Both Keith and Hammad are rebellious figures in this sense, equally unsure of the prescribed roles that patriarchy has set up for them. While many of their actions are similar, the implications of their infidelities are inscribed differently upon their respective white and brown bodies.

Hammad's characterization is linked to a larger process of portraying the terrorist subject in American popular culture as sexually deviant, acting to discern, other, and quarantine the terrorist body, as described in Jasbir Puar's *Terrorist Assemblages*: *Homonationalism in Queer Times*, a process that both sequestered the terrorist subject as irretrievably damaged and deserving of exceptional punishment while, at the same time, reinforcing the terms of patriotism (75)[23]. Where Keith is redeemed from his bout of infidelity through the recuperation of his marriage at the end of *Falling Man*, Hammad's "unredeemable" waywardness is how American readership is invited to sympathize and

[23] Puar Jasbir K. *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Duke University Press 2007.

understand Hammad; his sexuality both makes him human and exceeds the boundaries of appropriate sexual desire. In the next scene, Hammad finds himself helplessly following two women walking in the park – "the way a man is pulled out of his skin and then the body catches up" (175). An innate desire has been made perverse because of the ideological constraints of jihadism. Up until the last few pages of Hammad's narrative he finds himself wondering why he has been charged with killing innocent people, and in this sense, he is never certain that murder is the right thing, but rather the only option he has. Hammad reads Atta's own ideological devotion through his sexual deprivation: "You look at Amir and see a life too intense to last another minute, maybe because he never fucked a woman" (175). Much of the same discourse surrounded American perceptions of the Taliban, framed as youthful male fanatics driven to violence out of a desire for sex that they were barred from experiencing. This circulated not only through depictions in popular culture, but also through academic fields and think tanks producing counterterrorism knowledge[24].

Hans and Keith's' emotional development is mediated by their sexual experiences with women; the extramarital relationships they engage in are plot devices that bring the protagonists closer to reunification with their partners. Keith shares a tryst with another

[24] The notion that terrorists are motivated by sexual repression is usually broadcast in concert with other wide-reaching theories that neglect to address the potential impact of U.S. culpability in the development of these groups. In a report by RAND Corporation, a "nonprofit, nonpartisan" thinktank contracted by the federal government. In Brian Michael Jenkins, Senior Advisor to the president of RAND, wrote: "These are individual actors answering only to their God: whether seeking to destroy all government, pursuing racial separation or genocidal goals, expressing sexual dissatisfaction, or simply wanting to leave their mark." The report originally appeared in the opinion section of FoxNews.com. Michael Jenkins, Brian. "Deadly Terrorist Threats Abound in U.S. and Abroad. Here Are Key Dangers." *TheRANDBlog*, https://www.rand.org/blog/2020/07/deadly-terrorist-threats-abound-in-us-and-abroad-here.html. Accessed 25 July 2022.

survivor of the World Trade Center attacks. DeLillo makes clear that, under normal circumstances, they never would have had a sexual relationship with one another. Their bond is narrated as a recuperation from trauma. In one exchange, Keith's lover Florence attempts to understand the motivations behind the attacks: "Those men who did this thing. They're anti everything we stand for. But they believe in God" to which Keith replies, "Whose God? I don't even know what it means, to believe in God. I never think about it" (90). Keith's emotional detachment mirrors Hans' sense of complacency with the "surface" of things, a mindset that situates itself, albeit in a depressive sense, as complacent within the existing hegemonic landscape. In *Netherland*, Hans has a sexual experience with a woman that invites Hans to whip her with a belt; a sadomasochistic experience that emboldens Hans later to find his "voice" with Rachel. According to Rowe, DeLillo's portrayal of jihad pairs the fates of Keith and Hammad through their degenerative fall into "aimless, stateless, socially determined beings following others' orders" (151), which Rowe argues aids in DeLillo's reading of jihadism as "the inevitable by-product of a system built upon unstable master-servant relations that inevitably prompt the servant's rebellion" (152). While this rendering of Hammad and Keith as kindred, to some degree, is an invitation to empathically read them both, Rowe's position is telling of a misunderstood power dynamic at work in post-9/11 fiction that attempts to address the interiority of the terrorist figure not only in terms of his errant sexuality, but also delimits American liberalism's ability to empathize with the Southwest Asian and North African region most impacted by the War on Terror as purely victimized. Marking Hammad as the "servant" in the "master-servant" relationship permits imperial hegemony

even as it acknowledges geopolitical overreach. While critique of the white male protagonist's limited engagement with the implications of the War on Terror has been well-established, what has yet to be explored are the ways in which O'Neill's *Netherland* and DeLillo's *Falling Man* not only fail to address the War on Terror outside the boundaries of nationhood, but also how their depictions of the "terrorist figure" within each respective text support efforts of counterterrorism aimed at surveilling, detaining, and incarcerating Muslim or Muslim-appearing subjects. Understanding the relationship between the protagonists and the terrorist figure in each text is revealing of the attitudes of the State towards jihadists themselves – a reflexive quality that echoes Defense Studies' scholar Benjamin Muller's "Securing the Political Imagination: Popular Culture, the Security Dispositif and the Biometric State" which explains that novels are both "mirrors of existing norms, ideas and identities" and "are mutually constitutive of those norms" (387).

Within the constellation of other post-9/11 texts that emerged at the same time as *Falling Man* and *Netherland*, the upholding of heteronormative values contributes to the larger sociopolitical zeitgeist concerned with redeeming national values. A prolific and commercially successful writer, readers of DeLillo anticipated that *Falling Man* would contain valuable reflections on the terrorists, which the public knew generally very little about; DeLillo's prior works, including *Mao II*, had already been credited with anticipating the attacks of 9/11[25]. Critical reception to the novel was underwhelming, as

[25] Cruz, Daniel Shank. "Writing Back, Moving Forward: Falling Man and DeLillo's Previous Works." *Italian Americana,* vol. 29, no. 2, 2011, pp. 138–152. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/41440392. Accessed 5 Mar. 2021.

DeLillo's portrayal aligned with a larger body of the 9/11 canon that explored the traumatic aftermath of the attacks through plotlines centering the domestic lives of white, privileged characters, including Jonathan Safron Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005), John Updike's *Terrorist* (2006), and Jay McInerney's *The Good Life* (2006)[26][27][28]. Richard Gray's critique of post-9/11 fiction called for a "fictional measure of the new world view" that had not yet been met by the post-9/11 literary canon because they had "simply assimilate[d] the unfamiliar into familiar structures" thus leaving the "crisis…in every sense of the word, domesticated" (134)[29]. Not only were these novels concerned with instilling the importance of the middle-class nuclear family, but also with safeguarding one's masculinity by maintaining an emotionally distant relationship to others; relationships with women were thus important insofar as they provided a means to sexual gratification and contributed to the order of the nuclear family. These novels, including *Falling Man*, represent the concerns of an American readership grappling with feelings of victimization and gave voice to a shaken sense of national security that held firm to conservative patriarchal values.

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[26] Foer, Jonathan Safran. *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*. Mariner Books, 2006.

[27] Updike, John. *Terrorist*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006. Print.

[28] McInerney, Jay. *The Good Life*. Knopf, 2006.

[29] Gray, Richard. *After the Fall: American Literature Since 9/11*. Wiley Blackwell, 2011.

Overlapping Narratives of Victimization

The narrative of Keith and Lianne's recovery charts the aftermath of the attacks. Interrupting those sections of the novel also are brief narrative interludes running the opposite direction in time that feature the training and deployment of the al-Qaeda members responsible for the September 11th attacks. Section "In Marienstrasse" describes the location in Germany known as the "Hamburg Cell" where Mohammad Atta and his recruits trained; "In Nokomis" refers to Nokomis, Florida, where Atta rented a house to prepare for the 9/11 attacks; and "In the Hudson Corridor" charts the final descent towards the Twin Towers on the Boeing 767 they highjacked. At the beginning, we witness Keith escaping the Twin Towers. Near the end of the text, we witness fictional member of al-Qaeda Hammad's final moments in the airplane heading down the Hudson corridor. These overlapping timelines work to bond Keith, a survivor, to the members of al-Qaeda that killed him despite their distance in place and time. The structure of the novel provides an opportunity to extend understanding between the characters, and while DeLillo takes care to depict Hammad as uncertain about his devotion to al-Qaeda, narratives of a shared victimization crowds out the possibility of a culpability capable of acknowledging the global and domestic forms of oppression wrought by a neoliberalism that the two characters might share.

For example, Hammad views himself as an assailant on American power rather than taking joy in the murdering of people, a perspective that would have been read by many, in 2007 at the novel's debut, as untenable. We witness Hammad question his own actions, stating "What about the lives of the others he takes with him?" (176). Hammad's

internal struggle is quelled by reminders of how his actions respond to larger networks of oppression: “The [American] state has fiber optics but power is helpless against us. The more power, the more helpless. We encounter through eyes, through word and look (80). This perspective acknowledges the role of capitalism in the extraction of resources and the development of those resources. As the attack draws nearer, American biopower is both reinforced and rendered futile several times within this short chapter (171, 173-174, 177). Each section emphasizes that United States intelligence should have or could have intercepted the plot of Atta and his team but failed to do so. These comments reflect the rhetoric of American politicians that floated frequently through mass media in the immediate aftermath of the attacks. When grainy video of Mohammad Atta walking through airport security at Portland International Airport on September 11th were revealed to the public, congresspeople emphasized that 9/11 could have been prevented if the U.S. were capable of collecting more data on airline passengers. If only we could have recognized Atta as a suspected terrorist, the argument went, we could have prevented the attacks. Their pleas lead to support for increased counterterrorism surveillance measures that eventually lead to the passing of the Patriot Act, which gave the U.S. government permission to tap domestic and international phone calls, detain suspects without trial, search financial records without court order, and increase border security measures, amongst other unprecedented formal extensions of government power. De Lillo portrays al-Qaeda members as conscious of the role of religion as secondary to political objectives: “The state knew how to read signals that flow out of your cell phone to microwave towers and orbiting satellites and into the cell phones of somebody in a car on

a desert road in Yemen. Amir had stopped talking about Jews and Crusades" (173). Marieke de Goude and Louise Amoore's *Risk and the War on Terror* examines how risk and terror are co-produced and asks more broadly how counterterrorism strategies can be better understood as an indication of the move from sovereignty to governmentality, from geopolitics to biopolitics[30]. De Goude and Amoore helpfully elucidate the ways in which the relationship between risk and terror circulated in War on Terror discourse is linked to a longer history within the colonial imaginary that marshals resources of premeditation to generate fear and administer appropriate responses to secure its geopolitical holdings. Keith and Hammad, importantly, do not challenging the larger political systems they remain a part of; the novel flirts with challenging contemporary American imperialism but does not link the actions of early 2000's al-Qaeda to a longer history of conservative ideology that the U.S. had cultivated in the Middle East for decades at that point[31]. Keith and Hans are both characters situated uniquely at the crossroads of risk and terror, echoed not only by their proximity to the World Trade Centers, integral hubs of global speculation, but also in how their intimate relationships to risk are intensified by 9/11 rather than stifled. DeLillo's novel straddles the strange space between geopolitics and biopolitics as the novel's chapters jump back and forth in time between international and domestic spaces regrettably out of reach by American intelligence, each interruption in Keith's narrative emphasizing the extended period Atta and his team had to plot and carry out their successful attack. What makes the relationship between Keith and Hammad

[30] de Goude, Marieke & Louise Amoore, eds. *Risk and the War on Terror*. Routledge, 2008.
[31] Mitchell, Timothy. "McJihad." *Carbon Democracy*. Verso, 2011.

ultimately unsuccessful in challenging the larger political paradigm that surrounds them is the emphasis on shared victimization. Hammad finds a channel for his frustration over the desire to have autonomy, money, status, and sex in al-Qaeda's promise of retribution in the afterlife; Keith's recovery promises the recovery of those same things through the persistence of his survival. Their fates, death and life, respectively, consecrate their desires to achieve masculinity and the heteronormative values that underscore it, a position deeply intertwined with the larger patriarchal systems that encircle their individual lives.

De Goude and Amoore's exploration of a longer colonial history between the United States and the Middle East sheds an important light on how DeLillo and O'Neill frame history, particularly as it relates to characters in each novel representing "terrorist subjects." In the first chapter of Hammad's narrative, he begins by featuring a conversation he has with a man outside of a mosque in Hamburg, Germany. This man describes how he fought at the *Shatt al-arab* for Saddam Hussein's army during the Iran-Iraq war. The man describes with passion how he witnessed "thousands of boys" emerging weaponless on the frontline, ostensibly committing suicide to the Iraqi army. The man is disturbed by this memory, but holds reverence for his fanatical enemies, who were "sounding the cry of history, the story of ancient Shia defeat and the allegiance of the living to those who were dead and defeated" (78). DeLillo links Hammad's drive to commit the attacks to a longer history of inter-Islamic conflict between Shia and Sunni sects, pointing the reader to examine Islam as the site of jihadist violence. Hammad listens respectfully to the man's story, admiring his sense of dedication and identifying

with his sense of devotion to ancient alliances. After this brief interaction, Hammad begins his education and training as a jihadist. This characterization of Hammad is in keeping with a troubling argument in Douglas Pratt's *Religion and Extremism: Rejecting Diversity, a work of c*ounterterrorism research that extrapolates discussions of what motivates radicalization into an indictment of politically conservative Muslim-majority nations[32]. Extreme religious ideology, Pratt argues, is responsible for the migratory influx across Southwest Asia. For example, "Syrians and Iraqis are exiting their countries in masse not because of economic hardships or the effect of famine that might be the case elsewhere. They are fleeing the imposition of extreme religion" (2). However, this perspective neglects to link colonial and imperial interference to social unrest, economic volatility, political conservatism, and climate change to the realities of war and migration in Southwest Asia, a fact that Timothy Mitchell's *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil* explains[33]. Mitchell argues provocatively that Jihadism is not publicly acknowledged to be part and parcel in the development of oil production in the Middle East and the West's tolerance, indeed reliance upon, conservative Islamic regimes to remain the flow of oil. Michell writes that the "mechanisms of what we call capitalism appear to operate, in certain critical instances, only by adopting the social force and moral authority of conservative Islamic movements", leading to "the crisis in Afghanistan [which] reflects the weaknesses of a form of empire, and of powers of capital, that can exist only by drawing on social forces that embody other energies, methods and goals

[32] Pratt, Douglas. *Religion and Extremism: Rejecting Diversity*. Bloomsbury, 2017.
[33] Mitchell, Timothy. *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil*. Verso, 2011.

(203-204). While the U.S. was vocally reproachful of the Taliban before 9/11, they continued to maintain alliances to secure the flow of oil since the Cold war, situating Aramco, which was financed through corporate and state companies akin to the British East India Company. Additionally, discourse about Islam that centers fanaticism as the driver for violence neglect to read the actions of jihadist groups, or the young soldiers that Hammad's friend witnessed, as acts of asymmetrical warfare, a tactic undertaken by a combatant facing a much larger and more resourceful enemy. Framing the motivations of jihadist characters in novels like DeLillo's frames the public's larger understanding of what constitutes an enemy and under what parameters they should be punished.

O'Neill and DeLillo's political ambiguity might be called reading modernism through terrorism rather than truly portraying jihadism. This effectively prohibits reading jihadism as a political movement and conceals the U.S. government's own relationship to jihadist groups during the Cold War. In the final section of Hammad's narrative called "In the Hudson Corridor," Hammad appears strapped into his seat, ready to hit the World Trade Center. He consoles himself during his final moments by thinking of the "Shia boys on the battlefield in the Shatt al-Arab" in which "he took strength…seeing them cut down in waves by machine guns, boys in the hundreds, then then the thousands, suicide brigades, wearing red bandanas around their necks and plastic keys underneath, to open the door to paradise" (238). DeLillo creates historical resonances between Hammad's decision to commit violence with a historical scene unrelated to the anti-colonial uprisings in North Africa during the nineteenth century that fostered the Taliban's contemporary aims. In other words, the actions of DeLillo's terrorists are not explained

through the group's explicit anti-colonial ideological framework, a fact acknowledged not only in Osama bin Laden's own writings, but in the group's historical trajectory. To do so would not seek to pardon al-Qaeda for their actions, but rather to provide fresh perspectives about the long but often obscured history of Western imperialism in a region tightly controlled by Western authorities since World War I. Instead, DeLillo links the actions of Hammad and Atta to the historic disagreements between Shia and Sunni Muslims, represented through the Iran-Iraq war. Hammad seems to be reading in this "suicide brigade" the determination and certitude that he wishes to embody himself. DeLillo's rendering of Hammad's interiority makes clear that he is not driven by political belief, but by a desire to prove that he is rooted to an act of religious devotion.

DeLillo provides a powerful rendering of the traumatic aftermath of 9/11 on the American psyche, but his work exhibits the limits of empathy to bridge a global gap and evidences a fundamental disenfranchisement of jihadist political mobilization through perpetuating a historical amnesia about America's role in the group's proliferation. Training to become a jihadi transforms Hammad "into a man," giving him a sense of purpose through "…the magnetic effect of plot…[that] drew them together more tightly than ever…Plot closed the world to the slenderest line of sight, where everything converges to a point" (173-174). In the book's own historicity, *Falling Man* is entrapped in what Benjamin Muller's "Securing the Political Imagination" notes as the literary texts "performances of nationhood" that also mark a shift from geopolitical to biopolitical modes by participating in the construction of new forms of securitized and surveilled

normalcy[34]. O'Neill sees New York's colonial history as the undergirding of the contemporary city, a recuperation of history that acknowledges the ways in which early settler colonialism in the Americas and twenty-first century American imperialism are intertwined. Despite these important moves, what maintains the Anglo-centric status quo of domestic post-9/11 literature is the protagonist's status as victim of the attacks. The character performing as the "Other," in both Hammad and Chuck's case, must perform excess in sex, business, and ideology, to be relegated to a state of deviancy and thus justifiably punished. DeLillo's own revelation prose about "magnetic effect of the plot" serves as ironically true: The desire that DeLillo and O'Neill have for a deeply personal or personalized narrative ends up tying everything or reducing everything else to a slender line or point. The deaths of Chuck and Hammad reaffirm what is safe: to maintain the U.S. government's modes of "emergency" surveillance, detainment, and detention.

The Great American Novel

In Netherland, Hans' pervasive ennui begins to change when he meets Khamraj Ramkissoon, or "Chuck," a Trinidadian immigrant living in the "netherland" of New York City. Hans meets Chuck while playing on an amateur cricket team soon after Rachel returns to England with their young son. Chuck is Hans' foil in nearly every sense; He is full of vigor, charismatic, and driven, as exemplified by his motto, "Think fantastic," an opportunistic mode underscored by Chuck's biggest dream: to build a

[34] Muller, Benjamin J. "Securing the Political Imagination: Popular Culture, the Security Dispositif and the Biometric State." *Security Dialogue*, vol. 39, no. 2–3, Apr. 2008, pp. 199–220, doi:10.1177/0967010608088775.

modern cricket stadium called “Bald Eagle Stadium” in New York (78). When Chuck and Hans meet formally for the first time, Hans asks Chuck where he’s from meaning his ancestral homeland, to which Chuck replies, matter-of-factly, “The United States,” prompting an awkward exchange between Hans, Chuck, and Chuck’s mistress over his actual country of origin (18). O’Neill is interested in probing the depths of America’s fascination with the narrative of the rags to riches immigrant figure, a possibility purportedly open to anyone despite racial difference. O’Neill observes the possibilities of multicultural tolerance as a facet of liberal democracy in such exchanges, creating tension and misunderstanding between the duo based on their different approaches to national belonging. Chuck and Hans’ pervasive misunderstandings of the role of citizen to the national ethos led Hans to conclude that Chuck is duplicitous, a feeling that pervades the span of the novel. Hans’ unease is heightened by Chuck’s extended extramarital affair: “and of course it struck me that they made an unusual couple: she, American and white and petite and fair-haired; he, a portly immigrant a decade older and very dark” (21). Despite Chuck’s attempts to saturate himself in “Americanness,” Hans, a white foreigner himself, reads Chuck’s white mistress as “American” but Chuck as “immigrant”; he her distasteful opposite in nearly every sense, hyperbolically “ugly,” including his “very dark” complexion. While O’Neill’s text observes the realities of racial difference, the limited analytical perspective of Hans leaves those observations where they stand. For example, within this same scene, Chuck refers to his own skin color as like “Coca-Cola,” an acknowledgement of racial difference rendered through an object denoting the role of capitalism in American culture (21). This moment amuses Hans but offers no insight as

to what extent Chuck negotiates the white gaze by compulsively performing an encyclopedic recall of all things Americana, for example. Despite the fact that Hans is having his own tryst with at least one other woman during his estrangement from Rachel, we are invited to judge Chuck's long-term extramarital relationship as a kind of distasteful sexual excess through Hans' eyes. The extension of empathy to DeLillo's Hammad and O'Neill's Chuck is marred by their hypersexuality, a role typical in depictions of the male brown "Other" via the Orientalist gaze. Chuck's love for America is never revealed to be untrue, yet it reads through Hans' narrative perspective as artificial or impossibly thorough, even saccharine. Chuck's eagerness to adhere to the American way is intriguing, even comical, but always unsettling, a characterization linked to his criminality. By the end of the novel, we are no more aware of Chuck's actual significance to Hans than we are of Hans' awareness of what it meant to befriend a man compelled to leave a formerly colonized country for his own safety. Such an understanding would perhaps question to what extent Chuck's adherence to the American Dream is predicated on fear.

Netherland's intertextual engagement with *The Great Gatsby* and, by extension, its use of World War I as historical hinge, make reading the importance of racial and class difference to the dynamics of Hans and Chucks' relationship unclear, effectively rendering invisible the surge in racial violence committed in the wake of 9/11, up by over 500% between the years 2000 and 2009 according to the Costs of War Project[35]. Chuck's

[35] Costs of War Project. "Racial Profiling and Islamophobia." *Costs of War Project*, 5 July 2022, https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/costs/social/rights/profiling

mysterious criminal behavior is reminiscent of the alluring and ultimately fraudulent Gatsby, but at the same time, it also recalls the extent to which Nick acts as an unreliable narrator, clouded during much of the novel by his admiration for Gatsby. Unlike with Nick, however, Hans never "lands" on a definitive understanding of what made Chuck criminal. Rather, through their extended time cruising the city together, Hans becomes privy to different sides of Chuck that hint at under the table business practices and a propensity for violence. For Hans, this shatters the illusion that Chuck was a "true American immigrant" with "bootstraps" mentality that had achieved the middle-class dream with integrity:

> "The decisive item, if I'm going to be honest about this, was that Chuck was making a go of things. The sushi, the mistress, the marriage, the real estate dealings, and, almost inconceivably, Bald Eagle Field: it was all happening in front of my eyes. While the country floundered in Iraq, Chuck was running. That was political enough for me, a man having trouble putting one foot in front of the other." (O'Neill 193)

We might read this scene as a moment of realization for Nick about the revelation of Gatsby's fraudulent nature. On one level, Hans realizes what he finds most distasteful: a man consciously striving for the qualities of masculinity he feels inept, unwilling, or forbidden to achieve. On another level, Chuck embodies how America's political landscape thrives on presenting surface-level identities and re-inventing those identities through endless hustling, as we see from Chuck "making a go of things" and trying to succeed in many different ventures while the country is involved in a spectacular but also

staggering war. But Chuck's superficial identity appears to be buckling for Hans, revealing a rotten core. Chuck is paradoxically "running" yet "having trouble putting one foot in front of the other," suggesting that the very American concept of personal as well as national self-reinvention is beginning to falter and risks being revealed as a ruse. Hans seems to intuit that there is a connection between America's "floundering" in Iraq and Chuck's increasing difficulty running his various ventures, but he lacks the political depth to comment on the larger workings of power (unlike Rachel).

In "Gatsby's Ghost: Post-Traumatic Memory and National Literary Tradition in Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland*," Katherine V. Snyder disagrees with James Wood and Zadie Smith, who argued that the novel was only superficially about 9/11 and instead more about the postmodern condition[36]. Snyder asserts that it is O'Neill's desire instead to "serially recalibrate an understanding of national identity" that links *Netherland* to novels like *Falling Man* and *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, and it does so through its linkage of history, literary production, and the political into the relationships of their characters (461). What Snyder, Wood, and Smith grapple with is the unstable distinction between surface and depth that O'Neill plays with throughout the narrative; a distinction that reads as confounding because of the unstable meaning generated by such a confluence of foci. Snyder attributes this quality to O'Neill's engagement with World War I through Fitzgerald's novel, generating an atmosphere at once brimming with the

[36] Snyder, Katherine V. "'Gatsby's' Ghost: Post-Traumatic Memory and National Literary Tradition in Joseph O'Neill's 'Netherland.'" *Contemporary Literature*, vol. 54, no. 3, 2013, pp. 459–90. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/43297919. Accessed 25 Aug. 2022.

idealism associated with speculation and, at the same time, weighted down by the devastation of war. The novel's adherence to a "closed-circuit" field of American literary enables our ability to read Hans as naïve and vulnerable, even "childish" to recall Rachel's critique, despite the power his positionality entails socially. This suggests the compromised state of masculinity within such a paradigm; a point only deepened by the clear intimacy the reader witnesses between Hans and Chuck, spending nearly every day together. Hans' denial of their homosocial bond reaffirms the tenet of masculinity that emphasizes independence at the cost of emotional isolation. After the reunification of Rachel and Hans towards the end of the novel, Rachel continues to probe Hans on his relationship to Chuck, noting how strange it was that Hans never discussed his family with him despite their supposed closeness: "You never really wanted to know him," she remarks, still crunching on her celery. "You were just happy to play with him. Same thing with America. You're like a child. You don't look beneath the surface" (196). Rachel's comments highlight here how speculation, as a future-oriented mode, also entails forgetting. Hans' experience of passive disillusionment is not a statement or position; it is only observation. Wood understands Netherland as a "postcolonial re-writing of *The Great Gatsby*" illustrating a confluence of traumatic experiences ranging from the trauma of colonialism and racism in addition to the traumatic experience of the 9/11 attacks (463). These traumatic national events form the backdrop against that the novels' characters navigate before ultimately realizing that their idealism is misplaced, and that they are doomed to repeat the past. Within the historical and literary parameters of the great American novel, a distinction in and of itself that celebrates whiteness that is

also written and narrated by privileged white people, however, makes the novel's ability to address the multivalent processes of colonialism severely limited[37]. Citing Kempner's reading of British post-9/11 novels, Snyder agrees that the return to traditional forms and themes, in this case O'Neill's return to postmodernism and the seminal *Great Gatsby*, can have both "exclusionary and democratic effects" that are linked to liberal humanism. The palimpsestic "rendering of New York and its colonial history" contained within the novel are funneled through the narrative of Gatsby, "scraped clean…yet retain[ing] the ghostly traces of a history of both utopian dreams and violent realities" (481). While the reality of colonial occupation is referenced in *Netherland*, it remains the "dark underbelly" of the American dream and not a present reality manifest in the very relationship between Chuck and Hans. For example, nowhere in the available criticism of *Netherland* is there a discussion of how Chuck's murder, or his love of America, might be tied to the Islamophobia rampant after 9/11. Hans' passing thoughts go unresolved, leaving serious questions in their wake: "I began to understand how he'd been able to extemporize an oration that first day we met: because he was constantly shaping monologues from his ideas and memories and fact-findings as if at any moment he might be called upon to address the joint houses of Congress" (192).

[37] A similar debate as the one described between scholars of O'Neill's work has waged between scholars of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* through the decades. Peter Gregg Slater's "Etnicity in *The Great Gatsby*" represents these concerns well, which debated over whether the *Gatsby* is critical of or exploring differences in ethnicity and anti-semitism. Slater, Peter Gregg. "Ethnicity in The Great Gatsby." *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 19, no. 1, 1973, pp. 53–62. JSTOR, https://doi.org/10.2307/440797. Accessed 7 Jul. 2022.

Even after Chuck's death, Hans explains to a reporter interviewing him that his "exotic cricketing circle…made no intersection with the circumstances of my everyday life" (21). Hans' impartial attitude highlights the stakes of representation in a novel grappling with the aftermath of 9/11. What are the costs of showing Chuck's dead body in the Gowanas canal as a "case closed" casualty of his own criminality? Through its recuperation of the Great American Novel, despite its criticisms of it, the novel's return to the Anglo-dominant canon instantiates a mode of memorialization that instils the administration of forgetting. What both *Falling Man* and *Netherland* allow us to observe is the house of mirrors ushered forth by capitalism, a reality in which understanding the "Other" results in a fragmentation preventing meaningful intersectional critiques capable of producing a class-conscious response to the War on Terror that many believed to be unethical. The ability of empathy to connect us to them, whether to Keith, Hans, Hammad, or Chuck, is thwarted by the lull of the status quo. As numerous articles have discussed, *Falling Man* employs a critique of capitalism into its narrative insofar as it obviates the conditions of a hypercapitalism in which privatization, re-regulation, and emphasis on the individual have commodified forms of culture. By the conclusion of *Falling Man*, Keith has receded into another form of speculation through petty gambling:

> "The casino spread behind him and to either side, acres of neon slots, mostly empty now of human pulse. He felt hemmed in all the same, enclosed by the dimness and low ceiling and by the thick residue of smoke that adhered to his skin and carried decades of crowds and actions" (188).

What the overlap between Keith and Hammad's lives might have meant is overshadowed by the pervasive sense of meaninglessness that awaits them both, their desires "hemmed in" by the confines of masculinity and patriarchy that dictate norms in sexual behavior and emotional capacity. Through the lens of modernity, America's "netherland" appears as a prism of empathy's shrapnel, a fragmentation, rather than a bridge to meaningful engagement with counterterrorism as a mode of governmentality intimately connecting the domestic and global spheres in unprecedented ways.

Cricket, Colonialism, and The End of Multiculturalism

By situating Chuck and Hans as an unlikely duo in terms of temperament, race and class, O'Neill stages the possibilities of multiculturalism and meritocracy in a post-9/11 world. *Netherland* seems to be answering Richard Gray's polemical call for post-9/11 works to centralize the "immigrant encounter" instead of American national identity[38]. Despite Hans' hesitations, Chuck remains the pivotal figure of the novel -- the sole reason that Hans finally becomes a man "with a pastime" or even a person meaningfully connected to other people at all. It is the comradery between Hans and Chuck that leads to Hans' breakthrough in emotional awareness that transports him back to his family in London at the end of the novel. From the very moment we meet Chuck, the "oddball umpiring orator" of the Staten Island Cricket Club, Hans is determined to keep him at arm's length. Even though Chuck's intrigue with business and speculation mirrors Hans' own involvement in the stock market, he nevertheless views Chuck with a

[38] Gray, Richard. "Open Doors, Closed Minds: American Prose Writing at a Time of Crisis." *American Literary History*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2009, pp. 128–51. JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20492291. Accessed 25 Aug. 2022.

persistent suspicion, worried that Chuck will ask him for money. Hans is equally circumspect about probing into Chuck's inner life; He explains without further remark that Chuck told him he was "a descendent of indentured laborers and had little firm information about such things" (19). Despite Chuck's decidedly postcolonial background – both Trinidad and Madras (now Chennai) were former British colonies – The novel does not indicate Chuck's sense of identification with these spaces. Indeed, Chuck knows more about United States history and culture than Hans, even fancying himself a kind of modern Benjamin Franklin. As Ilka Saal argues in "Post-National American Dreaming in Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland*: The Adversity of Hans van den Broek," Hans' journey to emotional awareness is also Hans' realization that his strange romance with Chuck is a metaphor for his own romance with an idyllic America, which he experiences as "a surrogate for his nostalgia for a utopian chronotope beyond history" (337)[39]. When Hans decides to leave the U.S. and return to London to be with his family, he therefore also indicates the end of this idealization. Where Hans' lack of memory might be read as a refreshing ambiguity towards narratives of imperial mastery, characteristic of War on Terror discourse that promised the invasion of Iraq would ensure freedom for the world writ large, his emotional elusiveness and ineffective memory can also be read as indicative of a historical amnesia for imperial and colonial influence manifested in his treatment of Chuck. If Hans' journey represents a larger metaphysical relationship to

[39] Saal, Ilka. "Post-National American Dreaming in Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland*: The Adversity of Hans van den Broek." *Canadian Review of American Studies*, vol. 47 no. 3, 2017, p. 333-352. *Project MUSE* muse.jhu.edu/article/677486.

time, Chuck's experience is that one's adherence to Americanness necessitates forgetting one's past. They are decidedly different subjects of history; where Hans' privilege allows him to woefully yearn for a "chronotope beyond history," Chuck's sense of history has been effectively erased or forcefully forgotten. Part of Chuck's willful forgetting of Trinidad is attributed to the ways in which Chuck became frustrated with the country for being hospitable to cricket, a hobby that comes to represent the modern, and white, world. Growing up, Chuck listens to cricket commentators via BBC radio, a source he credits with teaching him about the game of cricket and "grammatical English" (196). Chuck reflects on Trinidad as nation with frustration, referring to it as a "jungle island" containing a difficult "black earth" that made it hard to cultivate into an even cricket field (195). Chuck understands the difficult landscape as reflective of a Trinidadian mindset: "It's just full of people against this, against that. Negativity is a national disease…they never call a glass half full" (195). Chuck's adherence to the American ethos is indicative of his belief in unbridled progress and the possibilities of speculation, what he sees as an antidote to the "national disease" of the Trinidadian ethos, a criticism tinged with colonial narratives associating colonized spaces with the historically backward unmodern, and slow. O'Neill plays with our perceptions of Chuck by making him so unabashedly whitewashed as to effectively erase his cultural history. The consequence of such depictions, however, is that is effectively erases the postcolonial subject and the possibilities of addressing a colonial history in 9/11 at the same time.

As cricket plays a central role in the dynamic between Hans and Chuck, the majority of criticism on *Netherland* considers O'Neill's use of cricket an allegory for

contemporary multiculturalism. Karolina Golimowska, Claire Westall, and Katherine Snyder credit O'Neill's work with augmenting traditional conceptualizations of American multiculturalism that emphasize tolerance as the gold standard for interracial and intercultural cohabitation by arguing that O'Neill's emphasis on America's colonial history provides a more global conceptualization of multiculturalism that exceeds national boundaries[4041]. However, O'Neill's work bears more resemblance to DeLillo's in its use of New York City to represent the circulation of global capital while not attaching that reality to colonialism in any meaningful way. A global novel is not one that depicts the mere immersion of a white immigrant into a group of multiethnic immigrants, but a willingness to address the impact of global capitalism in that collective possibility. As Walter Benn Michael effectively points out in "Homo Sacher-Masoch: Agamben's American Dream," O'Neill's incorporation of colonialism into his depiction of New York City "circles around questions of immigration, probing the free trade and the mobility of capital and labor that helped make the world trade center a target" (29). In one such encounter, Hans regularly eats with a Bangalorean-American man that seems to have lost his connection to his job in the food service industry. He expresses frustration with the sheer amount of immigrant food available. Hans experiences the man's anxiety over surplus as the "seemingly bottomless history and darkness out of which the dishes of

[40] Golimowska, Karolina. "Cricket as a Cure: Post-9/11 Urban Trauma and Displacement in Joseph O'Neill's Novel *Netherland*. *The Journal of American Culture*. Vol 36:3, 2013. Print.

[41] Westall, Claire. "Cricket and the world-system, or continuity, 'riskless risk' and cyclicality in Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland*. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 52:3, 287-300, DOI: 10.1080/17449855.2016.1203102.

New York emerge," a revelation that results in deepening "suspicion that his work finally consisted of…circulating misconceptions about his subject and in this way adding to the endless perplexity of the world" (66). Thus, *Netherland* might be better understood as reflective of the conditions of capitalism after 9/11 than a novel capable of providing a postcolonial critique of America post-9/11. For example, as Hans' personal relationships begin to disintegrate, he finds himself unable to connect to the "meaning" of his work as an oil futures analyst: "It forcefully struck me as a masquerade, this endless business of churning out research papers…of listening to oil executives glossing corporate performance in tired jargon…cooking up myths from scraps and peels of facts (67). For Hans, whose *bildung* is distinguished by confusion and awe, the exploitative labor of the restaurants' cooks or the realities of its immigrant patrons who, as Vinay tells him, "are on a three-dollar budget" never meaningfully connects in Hans' mind to the artifice he senses at his white-collar job which, as an oil futures analyst, quite literally fuels the flow of labor and migrants around him. Hans might be said to represent how the culture of financial speculation was disrupted by 9/11, but ultimately not changed in any fundamental sense. Both *Falling Man* and *Netherland* fit within the parameters of Elizabeth Anker's assertion that "the 9/11 novel is troubled not so much by the unresolved trauma of 9/11, as the ideological landscape of capitalism and the many species of speculation that sustain it" (474)[42]. To modify Hans' own words, problematic

[42] Anker, Elizabeth S. "Allegories of Falling and the 9/11 Novel." *American Literary History*, Fall 2011, Vol. 23, No. 3, The Twenty-First-Century American Novel (Fall 2011), pp. 463-482.

9/11 novels are myths cooked up from scraps and peels of speculation often passed off as facts.

For Golimowska, Westall, and Snyder, cricket performs as an effective allegory for colonial history and American diversity existing in the present, thus offering a more honest framework through which to address the harm of racism, both past and present. In the section that follows, I question whether the metaphoric and allegorical potency of cricket as representative of a postcolonial and revolutionary perspective is possible precisely because the narrative is encased in Hans' perspective rather than Chuck's. Membership in the Staten Island Cricket Club provides a valuable sense of belonging Hans, the newly minted "American," allowing him to rub shoulders with a multiethnic brotherhood of recent immigrants from Trinidad, Guyana, Jamaica, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. This sense of brotherhood leaves Hans drawn into Chuck's dream of creating Bald Eagle Stadium, where he "began to dream in all seriousness of a stadium, and black and brown and even a few white faces crowded the bleachers, and Chuck and me laughing over drinks…and everything is suddenly clear, and I am at last naturalized" (200). America's acceptance of cricket, and the brotherhood of immigrants integral to its success, form an idealized liberal multiculturalism, a literal "equal playing field" in which racial difference is made surmountable, understandable, "suddenly clear." Hans anticipates the relief of "naturalization," his identity morphing from alien to citizen and, we are to infer, Hans' literal feelings of alienation finally finding place, making sense. Chuck and Hans' dreams of cricket, and everything it represents, are eventually dashed by Chuck's murder – a fact the reader is already aware of at the outset of the novel.

O'Neill's ultimate denial of this possibility by murdering Chuck asserts an ultimate incompatibility between America's colonial past, its imperial present, and a multicultural society symbolized by Hans' cricketeering dream.

It is because of O'Neill's detailed use of the history of cricket that the novel is praised for its postcolonial perspective which, according to Snyder, makes *Netherland* uniquely both post-9/11 and postcolonial. It is Hans' experience of the game that operates as a larger allegory for multicultural belonging. For Chuck, however, multiculturalism represents something different. Golimowska suggests that O'Neill's characterization of Chuck channels the ethos of C.L.R. James, perhaps the most famous thinker on the significance of cricket both historically and culturally. *Beyond a Boundary*, published in 1963, is both an autobiographical account of the impact of the game on James' identity and a historical account of cricket as a colonial export that transformed cultural life in Trinidad[43]. Best known for its political and cultural commentary, James makes the provocative assertion that the popularity of a distinctly West Indian cricket, unique from British cricket, is an enactment of the relationship between colonists and colonial subjects amidst a "clash of race, caste, and class" that "contained elements of universality that went beyond the bounds of the originating nation" (James 164). As Chuck describes the history of the game to Hans, he echoes this notion by explaining that the game "forced them [the colonized] to share a field for days with their enemies…that kind of closeness changes the way you think about somebody" (212). For James, cricket is a powerful

[43] James C. L. R. *Beyond a Boundary*. 1st American ed., Pantheon Books, 1963.

example of colonial and postcolonial subjects reformulating colonial systems for their own revolutionary potential – for Chuck, who understands the sport as a "crash course in democracy," the goal is to modernize the colonized subject (212). In a pivotal scene occurring not long after Hans joins the Staten Island Cricket Club, a violent altercation occurs between players and a gun is drawn. Hans experiences the spectacle as "a kind of emptiness" and remains frozen. Chuck manages to diffuse the situation by emphasizing the rules of cricket. He firmly tells the gunman to "Leave the field of play, sir…You are interfering with play" (19). Rather than acknowledge the potential violence at hand, Chuck reaffirms the man's status as a player – seeing him as an umpire would rather than as a criminal. This seems to appeal to the disgruntled player's sense of dignity; a decisive moment that draws Hans to Chuck. At a group luncheon after the incident, Chuck provides an inspirational speech that urges the team to solidarity:

> "In this country, we're nowhere. We're a joke. Cricket? How funny…what this means is, we have an extra responsibility to play the game right. We have to prove ourselves. We have to let our hosts see that these strange-looking guys are up to something worthwhile. I say 'see.' I don't know why I use that word. Every summer the parks of this city are taken over by hundreds of cricketers but somehow nobody notices. It's like we're invisible. Now that's nothing new, for those of us who are black and brown…You want a taste of how it feels to be a black man in this country? Put on the white clothes of the cricketer. Put on white to feel black. (O'Neill 18)

Here, Chuck describes the burden of responsibility placed onto people of color to "play the game right" in order to prove the validity of the sport, but also to appear relevant, or appear human, in public space. Chuck also acknowledges how racism informs America's perspective on the sport, describing how black and brown cricketers are "invisible," gesturing again towards the racialized invisibility of immigrant labor in New York City and America more broadly. In this instance, Chuck echoes C.L.R. James, who understood West Indian cricket's unique style as a decolonial response to English perceptions of the West Indian style of playing as disorderly, in excess, and irresponsible (Lazarus 348)[44]. Chuck's insistence that the team must "prove themselves" indicates that in order for cricket to become an American commodity, their actions as a team need to prove the validity of their worth to American culture, who see them as "strange looking guys." Yet, Chuck's assertion that the Staten Island cricketer must "put on white to feel black" also indicates Chuck's perceived sense of failure in striving for American assimilation despite his devotion to all things Americana. Neil Lazarus' examination of James' work in *Nationalism and Cultural Practice in the Postcolonial World*, ultimately doubts whether cricket could become a form of anti-colonial solidarity, as it "express[es] the social ethos of a residual and increasingly marginal combination of class fractions into a 'moral discipline' disseminated above all…and serving the interests of the middle-class rise to hegemony" (348). In the same sense here, Chuck acknowledges that the sport will have to adapt to America's dominant attitudes towards race and class to become valuable to it. As

[44] Lazarus, Neil. *Nationalism and Cultural Practice in the Postcolonial World*. Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Chuck emphasizes, in order for both the sport and its players to prove themselves to America and as Americans, they need to possess and exhibit a moral discipline that comes from the extra responsibility of being strange-looking guys wearing white clothes seeking approval from those who are white.

Netherland is not the first post-9/11 text to use the sport as an approach to discussing nationalism and identity, citing H.M. Naqvi's *Homeboy* and Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist,* as Golimowka notes. However, what differs significantly in *Netherland* is that, unlike Hamid and Naqvi's portrayals, the Muslim or Muslim-appearing subject is the protagonist of the story, framing their own relationship to cricket and its impact. Despite capturing moments of Chuck's captivating oration, the reader still relies on Hans' interpretation of these events in order to make sense of Chuck's thoughts. For example, Chuck frequently proselytizes about the significance of cricket through the language of colonization. In one particular exchange with Hans, Chuck claims that "…the U.S. is not complete, the U.S. has not fulfilled its destiny, it's not fully civilized, until it has embraced the game of cricket" (211). Chuck's understanding of civility reads as ironic because America, and the West more broadly, has already assumed itself the bastion of the "civilized" world. This characterization of the sport could also distinguish Chuck's interpretation of civility as a global community of players, gesturing towards a vision of multiculturalism apart from neoliberal tolerance. Chuck turns to Hans a moment later and asks if he knows the story of the "Trobriand Islanders," to which Hans replies in mockery, "It's all people talk about." Chuck replies "professorially" with a narrative that explains how British missionaries in Papua New Guinea transformed the native

inhabitants, "these Stone Age guys and gave them cricket bats and cricket balls and taught them a game with rules and umpires…That's like a crash course in democracy" (211). Chuck mimics the colonizer's perspective by reading the indigenous community as technologically "Stone Age," a narrative frequently used to describe sites of colonization around the world. He champions the British for bringing cricket to New Guinea, citing the game as the reason for their collective transformation into democracy – a narrative familiar to the invasion of Afghanistan, often described as a military humanitarian mission aimed at "modernizing" the nation in the name of establishing democracy. While *Netherland* does acknowledge how racism impacts America's way of seeing Chuck, it does not overtly connect his understanding to the post-9/11 climate. In fact, the novel does the opposite as it turns Chuck into a spokesperson who professes the virtues of colonialism and the American imposition of apparently democratic attitudes on other peoples. Although he speaks little about the military invasion of Iraq or the War or Terror, Chuck's cricket-based multicultural and civilizational beliefs are of a piece with the ideas driving to "sensitive warfare" in Iraq, which treated a military occupation that bears more in common with a police force than a belligerent offensive. This "civilized" form of military occupation would then be understood as "the best we can do"; it sets the limits of empathy under liberalism that claims multicultural tolerance to be the zenith of our capacity to belong to one another.

All or Nothing: Patriarchal Universalities

This chapter has explored *Falling Man* and *Netherland* captured social discourse surrounding the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. It explored the limitations of an empathic

treatment of the criminal "Other" by examining the secular and patriarchal "playing field" through which the protagonists attempt to reach them as a method of exploring the motivations behind the attacks of 9/11. The results of this treatment confirmed heteronormativity, strengthened the nuclear family, and as works indebted to modes of modernism, contributed to the administration of forgetting brought on by the traumatic nexus of New York City where the two novels took place. For this final section, I point to how social discourse surrounding 9/11 captured by the two novels highlights the need for critical attention to warring patriarchal universalities at play in the War on Terror. In the chapters that follow, I hope to show how postcolonial global anglophone texts, by contrast, are actively cultivating modes of resistance based upon that understanding. Exchanges about the relationship between the United States and al-Qaeda like the following between Lianne's mother, Nina, and her stepfather, Martin, are emblematic of the early 2000's zeitgeist:

> Martin: "One side has the capital, the labor, the technology, the armies, the agencies, the cities, the laws, the police, and the prisons. The other side has a few men willing to die" (47).
>
> Nina: "God is great," she said.
>
> Martin: "Forget God. These are matters of history. This is politics and economics. All the things that shape lives, millions of people, dispossessed, their lives, their consciousness."

> Nina: "It'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 course, of necessity. They haven't advanced because they haven't wanted to or tried to."
>
> Martin: "They use the language of religion, okay, but this is not what drives them." (47)

Lianne and her family understand the motivations of al-Qaeda and to what degree the United States can be implicated in those motivations. And while the ramifications of imperialism are suggested here, what is fundamentally missing is an understanding of how Enlightenment rationality, liberalism, and secularism are deeply intertwined, acting as a system of thought that prohibits them from understanding how the Western gaze has centered, in large part through colonization, perspectives on time, history, and politics that Lianne and her family take as objective truth. As Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi describes in her work detailing Western perceptions of the Iranian Revolution, we see Al-Qaeda's violence as without temporality, senseless, unrelated to instrumental rationality; the mechanisms and ways of seeing that proliferated colonialism[45]. Ghamari-Tabrizi goes on to explore how "Enlightenment rationalist fundamentalism" might be compared to to religious fundamentalism in that "there is culture-transcending knowledge…" (15). The West saw Iranian Revolution as totalitarian utopianism and, after 9/11, the actions of terrorist groups were characterized by a radical, outlandish utopianism that daydreamed about the spread of jihad around the world.

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[45] Ghamari-Tabrizi, Behrooz. *Foucault in Iran: Islamic Revolution after the Enlightenment*. U of Minnesota P, 2016.

To understand *Netherland* and *Falling Man* is to comprehend a looming blind spot filled by the outline of terrorism. Hans is unwittingly dedicated to a secular worldview that entails refraining from asking what someone believes, under the auspices that to do so would be a breach of one's privacy. In one exchange about Bald Eagle Stadium, Chuck explains:

> The precise content was top secret. "I can't tell you anything about it," he said, "except that it's going to be dynamite." Dynamite? Clueless Chuck! He never quite believed that people would sooner not have their understanding of the world blown up, not even by Chuck Ramkissoon (192).

Hans attributes the lack of emotional depth to their relationship because of their dealings as "businessmen," the tacit assumption being that the other man is suffering from a "peculiar male strain of humiliation" at being addressed as a multidimensional being outside of the surface-level interactions they shared. To Hans, their relationship was "transactional" in the sense that Hans took from Chuck what he needed, and assumed the Chuck did the same. But as the title of the novel also implies, there is a consequence to existing on the surface, a "netherland" of unknown truths begging for acknowledgement. Chuck introduces to Hans that netherworld – of someone whose life is quickly spiraling out of control in pursuit of his dreams, or perhaps because of his dreams. Hans witnesses Chuck's life veer out of control, out of the bounds of his marriage, out of the bounds of speculation, and out of the bounds of business and into violence. As such, he is no longer playing the "game" and he is no longer a worthy opponent – their love of cricket no longer capable of creating a field of equal play between them.

Chapter Two

The Resurgence of T.E. Lawrence After 9/11: Ishtiyaq Shukri's *The Silent Minaret* and the 'Postsecular Turn'

In Chapter One, I situate Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland* and Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* within the post-9/11 canon by emphasizing how national memorialization interferes with Richard Gray's call for authors to address the impacts of American imperialism in their works[46]. All too frequently, this has meant attempts to understand the impact of the Iraq War on Iraqi civilians through the specter of the Vietnam War, producing a flawed conceptualization of empathy that does not adequately address American culpability and distances the acts of 9/11 from a longer imperial and colonial history. In this chapter, I explore how Ishtiyaq Shukri's *The Silent Minaret* is uniquely positioned within the 9/11 canon to make alternative histories of the War on Terror visible through its constellation of historical "hinges" that link the War On Terror to colonial violence[47]. One of the historical hinges, a term I borrow from Anne McClintock's argument about the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as the first "ground zero," is the Arab Revolt that spanned 1916-1918. This revolt was coordinated in part by the British and French, who saw what would become soon become the "Middle East" as not only a significant site of global trade but also as a rapidly evolving source of petroleum production. Shukri asserts the significance of the Arab Revolt as a strategic ploy of Western imperial conquest and

[46]Gray, Richard. *After the Fall: American Literature Since 9/11*. Wiley Blackwell, 2011.

[47] McClintock, Anne. "Imperial Ghosting and National Tragedy: Revenants from Hiroshima and Indian Country in the War on Terror." *PMLA*, vol. 129, no. 4, 2014, pp. 819–29. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24769517. Accessed 7 Aug. 2022.

connects it to 9/11 by evidencing how, in the process of cultivating and securitizing oil reserves, Muslim people have been subject to a state of exception in which their legal and human rights are jeopardized.

Shukri's 2005 novel is about a young man named Issa Shamsuddin who has already disappeared before the novel begins. The novel is not a mystery, however, as Shukri makes no attempt to recover Issa's body or his whereabouts. Composed of a patchwork of memories expressed by Issa's closest friends and family members, the text is broken into sections by themes or places significant to Issa. Constructing the narrative in this way means that Issa is both present and absent within the narrative, existing in an in-between state that leaves his loved ones' inquiries into his whereabouts unresolved[48]. Since its publication, criticism about the novel has posited that the significance of Issa's disappearance lies in direct relation to various cosmopolitan frameworks associated with Issa's religiously, racially, and culturally diverse relationships; a diversity that many see as indicative of revolutionary possibility. Accordingly, scholars have rightfully drawn attention to the novel's uniquely "global" narrative perspective amongst other novels of the post-9/11 canon that memorialized a territory-based sense of nationality, as in *Netherland*. However, postcolonial critics have yet to investigate Issa's dynamic engagement with T.E. Lawrence, better known as "Lawrence of Arabia." In this chapter, I chart the resurgence of Lawrence's memory in political and military discourse of the mid-2000's to point to Lawrence's position as figure of the imperial imagination. The relationship between Issa and Lawrence is pivotal to understanding how Issa's absence

[48] Shukri dedicates the book to the National Missing Persons Helpline in the UK.

paradoxically functions as record of a kind of terror enacted upon the Arab world and Muslim communities. Issa's absent presence can be considered a symbol of this oppressive history that appears to be (on the one hand) erased by the official rhetoric of the War On Terror, and yet (on the other hand) simultaneously revealed by the places and people who are touched by this war. As a Muslim man in his mid-twenties at the epicenter of post-9/11 Islamophobia in London, we can only assume, without definitive proof, that his absence is tied to counterterrorism measures. In other words, Issa has probably suffered rendition or been detained without trial by British or US security agencies. The novel witnesses an awakening within Issa's friends and family, whose prior complacency or confoundedness about the War On Terror transforms into an anti-imperialist consciousness about the dual processes of silencing and historical amnesia that facilitate War On Terror discourse. Ultimately, Shukri utilizes Lawrence as a figure of the imperial imagination to point to the frustrated longings of Islamic anti-colonial movements in the past and present that are overshadowed by imperial forces. This chapter intervenes in critiques of *The Silent Minaret* by arguing that Shukri's text instigates a postsecular critique within postcolonial studies that centers Islam instead of minimizing or abandoning its relevance in pursuit of new cosmopolitan modes of belonging.

Meeting in the Desert: Issa and Lawrence of Arabia

This section explores how Shukri focalizes the importance of T.E. Lawrence to the imperial imagination, in order to connect British Imperialism of the 19th century to the twenty-first century War On Terror. The importance of Lawrence to Issa's developing

emotional landscape is reinforced by the testimonies of his loved ones throughout the text, who remember Issa as figuratively "in the desert" with Lawrence, providing a metaphor that crisscrosses time and space to layer nineteenth century orientalist beliefs about Arab communities with the evolving Iraq War Issa protests. *The Silent Minaret* features excerpts from *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* as well as *Lawrence of Arabia*, denoting the various channels through which the idea of Lawrence, rather than his actual station, have been broadcast through the imperial imagination and to what ends his character has been useful. In his memoir published in 1926 titled *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, Lawrence writes extensively of his fascination with a portion of the Arabian desert known as The Empty Quarter, or *Rub'al-khali*. Fascinated by ancient history, Lawrence understood the Empty Quarter as the "…true centre of Arabia, the preserve of its native spirit, and its more conscious individuality" (14). Edward Said skillfully dismantles the longstanding Orientalist trope of projecting such fantasies onto the desert. Describing Chateaubriand's writings of the early nineteenth century, Said writes that Orientalist intellectuals frequently center themselves as intermediaries between the desert and the Middle Eastern peoples around them, drawn to "what it lets happen…what it allows his spirit to do, what it permits him to reveal about himself, his ideas, his expectations…" (173). This romantic mindset, fueled by exoticism, informs how Lawrence and his contemporaries in the Arab League, a group of British intellectuals hired by the government to participate in military endeavors during World War I, viewed not only the natural landscape, but also the people who live within that land. Despite its name, this portion of the desert is not empty; rather, the indigenous inhabitants, or Bedouin, have traversed this portion of the

Arabian desert for thousands of years[49]. Knowing this, Lawrence reads the desert as the preserve of the land's "native spirit" -- stretching between what is now Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Oman -- precisely because the Bedouin, whom Lawrence reads as pure, are untouched by the perceived incivility of the Ottoman empire.

As imperial powers converged in the Arabian desert, Lawrence got what he hoped would be his chance to make history amongst an ancient people. Robert Bolt, who adapted Lawrence's memoir into the 1962 film *Lawrence of Arabia*, reinforced Lawrence's relationship to the desert in the filmic adaptation. Shukri inserts a portion of the screenplay into *The Silent Minaret* in which Lawrence is being questioned by a fictional American journalist:

> Bentley: ... May I put two questions to you, straight?
>
> Lawrence: I'd be interested to hear you put a question straight, Mr. Bentley.
>
> Bentley: One. What, in your opinion, do these people hope to gain from this war?
>
> Lawrence: They hope to gain their freedom. Freedom.
>
> Bentley: "They hope to gain their freedom." There's one born every minute.
>
> Lawrence: They're going to get it, Mr. Bentley. I'm going to give it to them. The second question?

[49] During the nineteenth century, British explorers used the aid of the Bedouin to traverse the desert with some frequency, including St. John Philby, Lawrence's contemporary in the Arab Bureau. In his memoirs, Philby wrote about how he ingratiated himself within Ibn Saud's royal court and made himself indispensable in negotiations over oil production between Britain, the U.S. and what was to become Saudi Arabia.

Bentley: Oh. Well. I was going to ask... erm... What is it, Major Lawrence, that attracts you personally to the desert?

Lawrence: It's clean. (Shukri 56)

Bentley's glib response about the possibility of Arab sovereignty ["there's one born every minute"] is met with Lawrence's signature, sense of rebellious panache: that he will "give it [freedom] to them [the Arabs]" (56). Lawrence saw himself at the center of the Arab Revolt despite the fact that, as a British officer stationed in the "Middle Eastern Theatre," Lawrence was far from alone or even, conceivably, in charge of much. Yet, in every iteration of Lawrence's story, from memoir to film, Lawrence is figured at the center of the Arab Revolt, portrayed as a catalyst point in the rebellion against the Ottoman Empire. The exchange with Bentley also suggests that Lawrence, unlike his military counterparts, could be sought out for his understanding of the Arab peoples and their political will.

As a child, Issa is enthralled by Lawrence's captivating presence as an unconventional leader driven by his own desire for the desert. Issa's mother, Ma Vasinthe, and Kagiso, his childhood friend and adopted brother, separately recount their memories of Issa's childhood fascination with this scene from *Lawrence of Arabia*. Kagiso remembers how Issa would recite dialogue from the film "over and over again," insisting on doing his geography assignments on deserts until, one day, his teacher challenged him to explain why he was so interested in them. Issa replies by echoing Lawrence's character in the film: "because they're clean, teacher" (55). Later, Ma Vasinthe recalls that, amongst the "countless images" she has of Issa growing up, the

most prominent are of Issa in front of the television, watching "Lawrence…[and] crossing the Empty Quarter with him" (180). Issa would "tens[e] himself, rocking anxiously backwards and forwards…rewinding his favourite scenes over and over again until he could recite whole stretches of dialogue. She can still hear him ritualistically emulating Lawrence, their voices in overlay: "What is it, Major Lawrence, that attracts you to the desert?"/ "It's clean" (Shukri 180). That Ma Vasinthe describes Issa as physically "with" Lawrence testifies to Issa's enthrallment, but it also shows the extent to which this relationship, at least for Issa, transgressed the limits of imagination and bordered on the real. For Issa, a young Muslim boy feeling estranged in post-Apartheid South Africa, mimicking Lawrence's character allows him to imagine himself as the particular kind of hero that Lawrence, played by Peter O'Toole in the film, embodies. By outlining Issa's character through his own projections, Shukri invites us into an imaginative space in which the past and present are unstable; a space in which, at least for Issa, the relationship he had with Lawrence bordered on the real. Issa and Lawrence both understand the desert as "clean" slates, but where Lawrence foresees a place of underdeveloped potential, Issa sees an actualization of the racial dynamics that inform his life growing up in Apartheid South Africa.

Lawrence's placement of himself as integral to the Arab Revolt was a fantasy easily adopted by many. In *Lawrence of Arabia,* he reads as a queer, anti-establishment rebel and to the U.S. government a hero that successfully drove out the Ottoman empire from Arab tribal land. Since his death in 1935, he has been regarded as a specialist of British military intelligence. Lawrence reads as alluringly strange: a British officer, and

yet, in his imagination, indefatigable to the cause of Arab sovereignty, even at the expense of the British. Integral to Lawrence's mythical quality is his seeming lack of patriotism to any nation, whether to England, Arab tribes, or others. The narrative about Lawrence's life is more powerful than his actual contribution to the Arab Revolt, a movement that is typically understood as successful in terms of warfare, but a decisive moment of loss in Arab sovereignty, whose cooperation with the British and French during World War I ended in new imperial and colonial territories for the Western powers. Despite his own reported ambiguity about allegiance to England and its Imperial endeavors, Lawrence has been adopted within the American Imperial imagination as a kind of cowboy, a rebellious figure working alone to push boundaries and open new frontiers. To Issa, influenced by Lawrence's memoir and the film adaptation of that memoir, he is a rebel against Imperial power. To the British State, he is a figure of national honor. The desert, within this imagination, plays an integral as the meeting point between Lawrence, Issa, and their desires.

In *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, the autobiography that inspired the 1962 film *Lawrence of Arabia*, T.E. Lawrence reflects on his time as a British military officer between the years of 1916-1918. His initial assignment involved assessing a portion of the Egyptian desert for future battle; a mission that was disguised as an archeological expedition. From there, he was sent to assist, and eventually lead, the Arabs in their revolt against the Ottoman empire under the guise that England would secure political sovereignty for the Arabs after World War I. His memoir begins with an explanation of what he understands to be the trials and failures of Semitic history. Through the physical

geography of the Arab region, he writes, one can more fully grasp the "social and political differences" between the Arabs and the British (13). Lawrence frequently asserts that the proximity of the city to the Arabian desert can be tied to distinct, observable modes of Arab thinking, acting, and feeling. According to Lawrence, even Arab people that were born in cities would ultimately experience an "unintelligible passionate yearning [that] drove them out into the desert" (18). This reflection falls in line with Lawrence's general portrayal that the desert was a sacred space that "nativized" even city-born peoples. This paradoxical mode of thinking also meant Lawrence could point to a specific deficiency, this lack of engagement with the desert, to provide a rather metaphysical "answer" to the "failure" of the Arabs to become a nation as advanced and formidable as England; a perspective reflected by paternalistic rhetoric that sustained British colonization more broadly.

Lawrence was not alone in these presumptions. Travel narratives by university-educated British were instrumental to forming perceptions of foreign spaces to an expanding audience of readers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Travel narratives combined pleasure reading with historical and cultural musings, giving Western readers an "inside glimpse" into exoticized renderings of endeavors abroad. The anthropological "knowledge" gleaned from these scholars informed how the public perceived Arabs as an ethno-social group. Gertrude Bell, another well-regarded Orientalist historian, describes in her published letters metropolitan Damascus' grandeur, "with its gardens and its domes and its minarets," is compared to the more formidable desert "…almost up to its gates, and the breath of it blowing in with every wind, and the

spirit of it passing in through the city gates with every Arab camel driver. That is the heart of the whole matter"[50] (Bell 321). The "spirit" emanating from the imagined center of the desert travels undetected into the city center, infusing it with a kind of vitality that the Arab people experience, but do not themselves contain. Bell does not reveal what the "the whole matter" is directly, but nevertheless she seems to understand the desert as a conclusion, an answer, to something mysterious about the Arab peoples themselves[51]. This "haunted" prose infuses both Bell and Lawrence's texts, insinuating that there is something about the proximity of the city to the desert that makes the space particularly uncanny. As Said describes, the Orient is haunted by "representatives" and "representations" of the Orient, including Lawrence, that participate in mythologizing "a locale suitable for incarnating the infinite in a finite shape" (145). This speaks to the Orient, and more specifically the desert, as a land at once full of possibilities and yet foreclosed to modernity, trapped in the past. Holly Edwards describes in her analysis the forms of "creative cartography" that imbued paintings of Arab peoples from the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries[52]. Characterized by "vivid realism," artistic portrayals

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[50] Bell, Gertrude. *Gertrude Bell: The Arabian diaries, 1913-1914*. Syracuse University Press, 2000.

[51] Orientalist depictions frequently echoed these same sentiments about the desert. In Robert Hichens' popular travelogue *The Holy Land*, published in 1910, he writes with nearly the same diction to describe the uncanny proximity between Damascus as the desert to Bell. In a chapter called "The Spell of Damascus" Hichens writes that the city was "…ephemeral, to be blown away by a breath like a tuft of thistledown…For the desert is very near to Damascus—so near that it is like a town set in a lovely oasis…through which there sometimes filters a breath from the burning wastes, like a Bedouin passing through a throng of chattering townsfolk" (Edwards 113). Edwards, Holly. "Creative Cartography: From the Arabian Desert to the Garden of Allah." *All things Arabia: Arabian Identity and Material Culture*.

[52] *Arts and Archeology of the Islamic World*, Vol. 16. Edwards provides a material analysis of the paintings that diachronically addresses how Orientalist imagery worked alongside realism in the nineteenth century. In terms of describing the power between viewer and artwork, "the path is neither simple nor linear nor even really topographical. Rather it has been a globalizing route through a multi-centric and heterochronic landscape, trailing behind some powerful pictures and stretching from somatic to spiritual experience"

of the Arabian desert and the Bedouin within it were not merely passive imaginaries, but that they acted as cartographies that described the potential of certain spaces to be colonized and to facilitate the "place-making" imaginary. Evidence of such place-making can be seen in Lawrence and Bell's melancholic prose lamenting the Arabian desert both as a "disappearing frontier" at the hands of the Ottoman empire and as a space of history yet to be written, effectively overlaying the Middle East onto existing tropes of the Wild West (111). For Lawrence are his contemporaries, the desert was a stage onto which they imagined themselves as integral figures capable of shaping the social and political possibilities within those spaces. As a child, Issa is captivated by such a notion because the desert that he grew up near in South Africa known as "The Karoo," posed similar possibilities for thinking through the "Otherness" he experienced as a Muslim person of color during South African apartheid.

In the section of *The Silent Minaret* aptly titled "The Karoo," Issa's love of the desert is recalled amongst various family members and friends that span Issa's life. The "Great Karoo" is an expansive, arid space that borders Cape Town, a space populated by indigenous inhabitants for thousands of years. The desert performs as a counterpoint to the hollow artifice Issa perceives in city space. In the desert, by contrast, he sees a "harsh, honest isolation…where everything is exactly as it appears, unforgiving, dry, vast, desolate…He prefers it. Can position himself in relation to it" (54-55). Like Lawrence

(123). While Edwards is invested in the visual domain, I find this perspective instructive for my own thinking about how Lawrence's perspective of the desert as object have traversed time, space, and geography.

and Bell, Issa understands the desert as a space of greater truth and potential; although, the "truths" that Lawrence and Issa read from that space are vastly different. Where Lawrence and Bell, as Orientalists, see the desert as an encapsulation of the Arab world's Otherness, both alluring and haunting, for Issa the desert is a more approximate rendering of the racialized power dynamics informing his life. For Issa, the desert makes clear delineations of race and class, providing a clarity and relief "finally to have left behind all the deceptive liberal prettiness of the Cape…whose residents know little of the squalor and violence that afflicts their neighbours in the slums of the Cape Flats" (54-55). The city is a space obscured by the mask of liberal multiculturalism; a space shrouded by the artifice of a post-racial national imaginary. Issa's relationship to the desert is one of mutual recognition; his ability to "place himself in relation" to it an indication of his preference for its harsh reflection of reality.

In 1977, Issa's mother "Ma" Vasinthe travels through the Karoo with a young Issa, his stepbrother Kagiso, and their nanny, Gloria. While Ma Vasinthe sleeps in the car, Gloria has an altercation with the owner of a small general store in Victoria West, a small town within the Great Karoo, over their unwillingness to serve her at the same window as other customers because of her race. As the encounter unfolds amongst the adults, Issa is provoked by an incredulous white child from Victoria West who refuses to believe he and Kagiso are from wealthy Johannesburg because of their brownness, explaining, "Maar hy's'n coolie en jy's 'n kaffir" (52). After they return to the car, Issa stops communicating with his family and stares deeply into the desert, preferring to engage with the space itself versus discuss the altercation. While the encounter goes

unarticulated by Issa in that moment, it clarifies for Issa how he is seen as a racialized Other due to the white child's use of racial slurs. Ma Vasinthe finds herself meditating on this experience after Issa's disappearance. This moment is indicative of what Tina Steiner pinpoints as the novel's crucial method of connecting historical, geographical, and political realities to pre-1994 South African apartheid and the War On Terror. These connections evidence how modes of "human categorization and organization" are coeval with colonialism and have literally "whitewashed" history. Steiner's point is elucidated in "The Karoo," as Gloria, Ma Vasinthe, and Kagiso reflect on their experience of racial segregation against the backdrop of Issa's disappearance during the War On Terror. However, Steiner later suggests that "whereas in South Africa, apartheid was defeated, and…representations of cultural and racial Others were radically re-assessed: the 'War On Terror' in Britain…falls back into the worst categorizations of people" (58). This position misinterprets Shukri's depiction of Apartheid as an "open and closed" case of racial segregation into which the War On Terror regretfully lapses. This stance relies implicitly on seeing the War On Terror and Apartheid as two distinct events in history bearing little relation to one another, neglecting to read them as dual forms of colonial management reliant upon the reproduction of difference based in race. Use of the slur "coolie" only emphasizes this point, as the word originated from colonial exploits before Apartheid, the words wielded against those from not only Africa, but more expansively throughout Asia and the Caribbean. Issa ability to "position himself in relation to" the desert hinges upon this experience because Issa is hailed as "kaffir," a term used in South Africa by British and Dutch colonizers to refer, in part, to South Africa's indigenous

inhabitants[53]. Issa understands, in this moment, how he is seen as a racialized subject long before the War On Terror; his own experience tied to longer forms of colonial domination over indigenous groups. Apartheid and the War On Terror thus cannot be understood as two unrelated events. To do so echoes the persistent refrain of post-9/11 discourse that the attacks ushered in "a new phase of history," a claim dependent upon the notion that such attacks against the United States were unprecedented and that such threats pointed to the need for a new form of global security to guard against the persistent threat of terrorism. Read more closely, Shukri's use of the desert instantiates a longer history of Dutch settler colonialism:

> Now, more than a decade later with Issa at the wheel, they are able to anticipate every ridge and bend, peak and valley, as the road cuts its dramatic path from Paarl across the Hottentots' Holland Mountains – eventual refuge of the indigenous Khoi expelled from the ever-growing Dutch settlement – and into the picturesque valleys of the hinterland, before eventually reaching up through the Hexrivierberg Pass and out onto the great escarpment. (54)

By the time Issa becomes a young adult, the journey from the Cape to the desert has been committed to memory, and in traversing of the land separating city and desert, Issa sees the both the historical past and present of settler colonialism simultaneously at work in the "ever-growing Dutch settlement." Lawrence's relationship to the desert influence's Issa sense of "place" and broadens the scope of Frankel, Steiner, and Jayawardane's

[53] The word "kaffir" itself has a much longer and more complex history disconnected from British and Dutch colonialism in South Africa. However, for the use of this argument, I am only discussing its application within the context of the novel.

arguments by incorporating Dutch colonial occupation, African apartheid, and World War I imperialism onto a deeper colonial and imperial mythology surrounding physical space. To Ronit Frankel's point, Issa and Kagiso's narratives reveal the "instability of national identities based on notions of indigeneity in a world with a history of mass migration, exodus, and colonization"[54] (930). Lawrence's prose on the Arab peoples' engagement with the desert contains similar efforts to safeguard racial "purity" turned outward so as to manage and preserve the "inherent" qualities of the Arab. The desert calls forth various forms of subjugation to further colonial projects, entrenching Manichean rivalries between us and them, here and there, human and other, through imperial fantasies surrounding indigeneity, the past, and the West's control over the future of those spaces.

Arjun Appadurai's *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger* is instructive in observing how Shukri renders an individual, Issa, at the center of much larger forms of governmentality. Appadurai reads global outcroppings of ethnocidal violence from the twentieth through the twenty-first centuries as evidence of a shifting development between nation-states in which minority groups act as visible reminders of a nation's incompleteness, generating anxiety exacerbated by the "volatile morphing" of globalization over the eroding relationship between identity and territory (83). Appaudrai sees this theory at work in various pogroms against Muslims in India alongside the attacks of 9/11 and 7/7 (in the USA and UK respectively) to argue that they are all

[54] Frenkel, Ronit. "Reconsidering South African Indian Fiction Postapartheid." *Research in African Literatures* 42.3 (2011):1-16. Web. 28 Oct. 2013.

indicative of a "deep" colonial history, intimately bound to modes of governmentality that have shaped division between Hindus and Muslims to form a "gradually superimposed mental map, in which war, security, crime, and terror overlay the geography of commerce, transport, work, and consumption" (99). As Issa "anticipate[s] every ridge and bend, peak and valley," eventually finding a sense of place in the desert, the reader is familiarized with the shared routes of colonial, imperial, and personal memory that appear on a "superimposed mental map" upon which Issa places himself at the crosshairs of identity and territory in discourses of security, crime and terror. Where Lawrence and Bell's depictions of the desert assume a racialized way of overdetermining the impact of the environment on the Bedouin, effectively isolating them, Issa understands the desert as a space in which settler colonialism and white supremacy are "clearly" expressed. Issa is able to physically and ontologically "place" himself in the desert in contrast to the "deceptive liberal prettiness" of the Cape because its record of settler colonialism is much more clearly rendered[55]. Thus, Steiner's conclusion that the novel ultimately evidences "pockets of connection" that resist "us versus them" binaries facing Muslims around the world today is not incorrect but rather incomplete, because it is missing the very precarious position Shukri calls us to recognize[56](5). Where Issa's relationships to characters like Katinka and Kagiso do represent "intercultural

[55] Coeval to imperial takeover in the Arabian Desert, the arid Karoo was colonized in the late 1800's leading to the Second Boer War in which colonial powers would fight for access to African land Issa's mention of the "Hottentots' Holland Mountains" references the term "Hottentot," a racial term used by South Africans to refer to the indigenous inhabitants of the Karoo and surrounding mountains.

[56] "Pockets of Connection Against the Backdrop of Culture Talk in Ishtiyaq Shukri's novel *The Silent Minaret*,"

connections" that defy a racially, culturally, and socially homogenous national body, Issa's disappearance serves as an overarching warning about the increase in power ushered forth by the global War On Terror in apprehending political imaginations of "place" that fall outside the city, a space representative of modernity, sociality, and nation.

The Reanimation of T.E. Lawrence Through the Invasion of Baghdad

Shukri's text, published in 2005, cleverly positions Issa's relationship to Lawrence within the dynamic space of the desert in order to highlight his resurgence within the American political and military imagination that coincides with the invasion of Baghdad in 2003. While depictions of Lawrence, including his own memoir, suggest he operated largely alone, Lawrence was actually part of a network of British agents known as the Arab Bureau. Gertrude Bell was also an operative of the Arab Bureau frequently referred to as the "female Lawrence," for her well-regarded prose and knowledge of ancient history[57]. Indicative of their value to the British government, both Bell and Lawrence were asked by the British to render their own maps of what would become the modern Middle East. For this reason, the two are frequently seen as responsible for "making the modern Middle East," a phrase reiterated as recently 2017 in *The Telegraph* (Driscoll) [58]. The written reflections of Bell, Lawrence, and other members of the Arab Bureau have contributed to a broader mythos that has served to obscure the colonial

[57] Bell's exploits have also been adapted into Hollywood features. See the film *Queen of the Desert* (2015).

[58] Driscoll, Margarette. "How the forgotten 'female Lawrence of Arabia' helped create the modern Middle East." 6 April 2017, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/life/forgotten-female-lawrence-arabia-helped-create-modern-middle/. Accessed 25 August 2022.

nature of their endeavors. The power of Bell and Lawrence's figurative "lines in the sand" have a direct impact on not only Orientalist discourse within British society as esteemed heroes in post-World War II nationalism, but also in their direct influence as operatives of the British state. In *Seven Pillars*, Lawrence portrays himself as advocate for the creation of new states under Arab control despite the fact that the British and French had already secretly divided control of the Arabian Peninsula amongst themselves, securing imperial control over the region and thus greater access to oil production and distribution[59]. Britain had promised Arab leaders the ability to govern their own states in exchange for fighting the Ottomans, but the Sykes Picot agreement secretly foreclosed the possibility of Arab sovereignty and caused significant economic and social turmoil in its wake.

It is worth noting that debate over how much Lawrence knew, and to what extent he was duplicitous, are continued topics of debate amongst scholars. For example, some claim that Lawrence was unique amongst his Arab Bureau contemporaries and did not always represent the Arab troops he worked with as backward and anti-modern[60]. Edward Said maintains that Lawrence was myopically consumed by his own journey rather than

[59] Britain gained Imperial control over Jordan, southern Israel and Palestine, amongst other smaller strategic territories; England and France split Iraq, but they gained all of what is today Syria and Lebanon.

[60] In "Representations of Lawrence of Arabia," Alexander Lyon Macfie argues that the typical harbingers of Orientalism in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* are concentrated primarily in the introductory chapters; the sections that attempt to provide a historical frame for the narrative. The latter half of his autobiography contains a shift in Lawrence's perceptions as he becomes more ingratiated into the Arab groups he travels and fights with. Where Lawrence begins his narrative by regurgitating Orientalist notions of "unchanging eternality," he then devotes the remainder of the narrative to describing how he believed, and worked toward, Arab independence (79). Lyon also points to the intense shame and sense of failure that Lawrence carried with him for the rest of his life and questions whether Lawrence could truly be said to have only invested himself in representing the Orient, as Said proposed.

the freedom of the Arabs and capable of "extreme courage, violence, and cruelty" (86). Outside of *Seven Pillars*, Lawrence's writings show less the hallmarks of Oriental romanticism and more the desire to colonize the Middle East. In a letter to a London newspaper published during the 1920 Arab Revolt, Lawrence mused: 'It is odd that we do not use poison gas on these occasions... Bombing the houses is a patchy way of getting the women and children, and our infantry always incur losses in shooting down the Arab men. By gas attacks the whole population of offending districts could be wiped out neatly"[61]. Lawrence's commentary endorses not just the eradication of Arabs troops, but the annihilation of an entire population. As such, they exemplify what is at stake in how Lawrence is memorialized in contemporary culture. While my argument is not concerned with arbitrating who Lawrence "really was," With such outright endorsements to eradicate an entire population in service of continued colonial control, it is important to examine to what extent the post-9/11 United States government has utilized Lawrence's reputation to advance their own ends in Iraq and Afghanistan. In 2003, the U.S. military took a renewed interest in *Seven Pillars*, which they broadly interpreted as the reflections of an intelligence operative amongst insurgents. Within the American military imagination, Lawrence's reputation as a renegade British soldier who galvanized Arab support for the British is concretized in a way that others, most notably Edward Said, would vehemently disagree with. Nevertheless, Lawrence is remembered as uplifting the

[61] Lawrence, T.E. "1920 Dog Fight in Downing Street 313." *Letters of T.E. Lawrence*. Eds. Malcolm Brown & Thomas Edward Lawrence. Alden Press, 1938. https://archive.org/stream/in.ernet.dli.2015.176370/2015.176370.The-Letters-Of-T-E-Lawrence_djvu.txt. Access 25 August 2022.

Arabs from the scourge of inter-tribal warfare to a more "modern" confederation. This narrative fed into a humanitarian narrative that was part of a multi-pronged approach to invade Iraq in 2003. Trinh T. Minh-ha's *Lovecidal: Walking with the Disappeared* charts the narrative approach that characterized the rhetoric of the Bush administration during this same period of Lawrence's resurgence[62]. Repeated emphasis on victory at all costs, in terms of not only funding of the war machine, but also in terms of Iraqi lives, overlapped with the invocation of what Trinh calls the "specter of Vietnam" (25). Engaged in another protracted battle against counterinsurgency groups, the narrative of victory was intended to bolster the American public's pride about engaging in a rightful war of retribution for the attacks of 9/11. Despite the fact that this narrative "failed" in the sense that the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq only spread instead of ending in climatic, decisive defeat, Trinh calls attention to the ways in which the specter of Vietnam supports the continuation of Imperial pursuits in Iraq by enforcing a "permanent state of wartime at home" (26). The horror of "carpet bombing, advanced technological firepower, and colossal artillery deployment" were not so much indicators of American "defeat," though they were in terms of telling the triumphant "story" of war, but rather a valuable glimpse at the "long game" of colonialism to extract and compile resources (43). Lawrence's letter recalls the bureaucratic logics that determine how the lives of colonized subjects' figure into the process of warfare as inhuman: to be "wiped out neatly," a phrase that echoes chillingly against the iconic line from *Lawrence of Arabia* claiming the desert as "clean."

[62] Minh-ha, Trinh T. *Lovecidal: Walking with the Disappeared*. Fordham University Press, 2016.

In 2004, Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* was ranked number two of the top one hundred recommended books within the Defense Department. The list contains three primary categories, including "Accounts of the effort to build empire in the region [Iraq], general looks at counterinsurgency, and histories of the Vietnam War" (Knickerbocker)[63]. Major Niel Smith, Operations Officer for the U.S. Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Center from 2007-2009, acknowledged that a renewed interest in T.E. Lawrence's work presented the temptation of "reading too much into Lawrence's characterization of Bedouin Arabs in World War I." Despite what Smith likely infers here about the fictional qualities of Lawrence's narrative, he ultimately concedes that "T.E. Lawrence has in some ways become the patron saint of the U.S. Army advisory effect in Afghanistan and Iraq," adding, "…There are many more stories of effective advisers in Vietnam…However, none have quite the dramatic scope of Lawrence's experience in Arabia" (Christian Science Monitor). Smith's comments indicate an awareness of the "literariness" that Lawrence's narrative contains, acknowledging that the work is not wholly factual, but captivating enough to mirror what the U.S. military *wants* to see from the work, thereby creating its own kind of truth. In other words, the question becomes, what desires does T.E. Lawrence's narrative fulfill within the imperial imagination? The use of fiction to the U.S. military, particularly during the War On Terror, has been documented extensively elsewhere[64]. However, to "read too much into" something

[63]Knickerbocker, Brad. "Classic guerrilla war forming in Iraq." *Christian Science Monitor*, 20 September 2004. This particular constellation of categories, "empire-building, counterinsurgency, and the Vietnam War" recall the conversation surrounding empathy in post-9/11 discourse discussed in the introduction to my dissertation.

[64] See Lindsay Thomas' work, particularly *Training for Catastrophe: Fictions of National Security After 9/11* (2021).

implies that one's own contribution, as reader, has the capacity to inform not only one's reading of the narrative, but what it goes on to condone in reality. That this is something the U.S. military is cognizant of and unbothered by is indicative of the importance of Shukri's work in contesting the space of the imperial imagination.

Lawrence operated as a figure of the imperial imagination for the entirety of President Bush's administration. In 2009, when Bush awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Ambassador of Iraq to Ryan Crocker, he introduced him as "America's Lawrence of Arabia." During his speech, Bush credited Crocker with turning Iraq into "…a rising democracy, an ally in the War On Terror, [and] an inspiring model of freedom for people across the Middle East" (ABC News)[65]. Bush's rhetoric is indicative of how Lawrence performs as "patron saint" for the United States military. His positionality as a white military officer of the democratic, "free," and superior West operating as points of valuable comparison. Emblematizing Lawrence in this way attempts to overshadow the specter of the "failed" Vietnam War with a more desired outcome for the War in Iraq; one in which America will be able to say it turned Iraq into a "model a freedom." Lawrence and Crocker are compared as valued interlocuters that ultimately taught the Arabs and Iraqis how to achieve democracy and freedom, thus bringing them closer to achieving modernity while validating the U.S.'s invasion at the same time. Bush's award speech exhibits a rhetorical shift that Trinh locates in the transition between Bush and Obama's presidencies in which the "message" about the Iraq War no longer relied upon

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[65] "Bush honours 'America's Lawrence of Arabia.' *ABC News*. https://www.abc.net.au/news/2009-01-16/bush-honours-americas-lawrence-of-arabia/267762.

the narrative of victory but emphasized instead "empathy…under what has been called 'Obama's liberal neoconservative administration" that was "moving eerily toward colonialism" (45).

Approaching the War On Terror through the Vietnam War, as discussed in Chapter One, provides limited possibilities for addressing American culpability because the emphasis on empathy encourages the American viewer to address the lives of Iraqi civilians via the centering of American victimhood, delimiting historical memory to the Vietnam War, another American-led imperial venture that, while shrouded in a familiar sense of shame and "defeat," is not capable of addressing the global nature of American imperialism and, to Trinh's point, its ties to Western colonial occupation. Lawrence is a conduit through which the United States inherits the long journey of the West in "civilizing" the Middle East and, as a valued figure of hegemonic discourse, he makes possible what Elleke Boehmer and Stephen Morton describe in *Terror and the Postcolonial* as "reinstat[ing] [of the] condition, presumably taken from colonial times, of wielding sovereignty *through war-without-end*" (144)[66]. The circulation of War On Terror discourse is thus a space in which:

> "The ending, like the beginning, turns out to be already somewhere in the middle: there, where the pendulum swings back and forth, between victory and defeat, from one desert, one marshland of hostility to another. Colonialism—by other means—rather than the much-taunted withdrawal, has been said to be proceeding apace" (Trinh 45).

[66] Boehmer, Elleke & Stephen Morton, Eds. *Terror and the Postcolonial*. Wiley Blackwell, 2009.

The intellectual response to 9/11 shows what is perhaps a surprising consistency between the American military, novelists, and literary critics of the mid-2000's. The war on terror and terrorism itself must be situated within and tied to a long history of European colonialism and now US imperial control. The aim of this dissertation is to prove that Post-9/11 literature centering the territoriality of nation through the specter of Vietnam, amongst other tactics of memorializing nationhood, is an unsatisfactory method of addressing what it is to live in the age of the global War On Terror, a system of imperial rule that defies territorial boundaries through the shifting permeability of "terror" itself. Thus, where I have argued that in the first chapter that *Netherland* fails to produce a more "global" reflection of life under the War On Terror, *The Silent Minaret* more successfully captures, through the novel's permeating sense of indeterminacy and disappearance in various colonial and postcolonial States, the artifice "of victory and defeat" that marshals conquest "from one desert, one marshland of hostility to another."

Islam, Fanaticism and Framing Counterinsurgency

In the previous section, I elucidated a connection between various forms of discourse that utilize Lawrence to support practices of governmentality in which "institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations and tactics" work to bolster the imperial, global mode of biopower known as the War On Terror (107-108)[67].

[67] Foucault, Michel, Michel Senellart, Franc ois Ewald, and Alessandro Fontana. *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Colle ge De France,* 1977-1978. New York, N.Y: Picador/Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. Print.

Lawrence's position within the imperial imagination proceeds along a hierarchical chain of transference starting from the State's rhetorical approaches to terrorism and ending with literary depictions of terrorism. Acting in conjunction with one another, these forms of biopolitical management inform the State's approach to punishing terrorism via legal forms of surveillance and punishment, but also inform quotidian acts of Islamophobia between subjects, a process that legal scholar Khaled Beydoun terms "dialectical Islamophobia."[68] Through the reanimation of Lawrence, Shukri's text disrupts modes of reading Islam stemming from Orientalist knowledge production that live on in War on Terror discourse.

Orientalist discourse relied not only on depicting the desert in Romanticized terms, but also as a physical marker of difference that necessitated the conquest and management of what would become the Middle East. The desert itself was said to echo the Arabs' proclivity to "preach bareness, renunciation, [and] poverty" which was responsible for "stifl[ing] the minds of the desert pitilessly" (Lawrence 18). The Arab Bureau, including T.E. Lawrence and Gertrude Bell, portrayed the desert as an ethno-social marker of inferiority, delimiting the humanity of the "Arabs" and their capacity to govern themselves after World War I. What the desert "lacked" in terms of resources, the Arab mindset "showed," resulting in commentary throughout *Seven Pillars of*

[68] Khaled Beydoun. *American Islamophobia*. Dialectical Islamophobia is "the very thread that binds the private and structural forms together…the process by which structural Islamophobia shapes, reshapes, and endorses views or attitudes about Islam and Muslim subjects inside and outside of American borders" (40). In her most recent book, *Epidemic Empire: Colonialism, Contagion, And Terror, 1817-2020*, Anjuli Fatima Raza Kolb offers that "Dialectical Islamophobia" might be understood as a "literary effect" produced by writers writ large; journalists and novelists alike. For Kolb, that means reading metaphors of epidemic contagion in War On Terror rhetoric as linked to a longer colonial history in which accusations about who the terrorist subject is brought together literary, medical, and political rhetoric.

Wisdom that depicts the Arab subject as having "no industry, no philosophy, and such little artistic production that there is no art to be had at all (18). Despite being deemed anti-modern, Lawrence concedes that they are adept at one form of production: religion. Using metaphors of mass production and market dominance, he claims the Arab's "largest manufacture was of creeds: almost they were monopolists of revealed religions" (17). Their exclusive possession of spiritual production was also owed to the powers of the desert, which "pointed to the generation of all these creeds" (17). While Lawrence is unclear about the process of production itself, he illustrates the desert as a wasteland in which the "…wrack of fallen religions lay about the meeting of the desert and the sown" (18). In Bell's book of published letters similarly titled *Desert and the Sown*, she explains that "Islam is the bond that unites the western and central parts of the continent, as it is the electric current by which the transmission of sentiment is effected, and its potency is increased by the fact that there is little or no sense of territorial nationality to counterbalance it" (228). Situated within the metaphoric space of the desert, Bell describes Islam as a pre-existing form of national cohesion inferior to the territorialized sense of nation she knows.

Lawrence and Bell's triangulation of religion, land, and subjectivity worked to position practices of Arab political solidarity as fundamentally incompatible with Islam. This allowed the British government, via Bell and Lawrence, to position the British military intervention as a necessary "counterbalance." Romanticizing the desert works in conjunction with these more overt proclamations of inferiority to achieve what David Spurr describes as the aim of colonial discourse, which is not to create an oppositional

relationship between the colonizer and colonized, but to "dominate by inclusion and domestication" (32)[69]. Perceptions of Islam worked within this triangulation to distinguish what was flawed, but could be replaced, within Arab political consciousness. A similar triangulation remains at work in contemporary perceptions of Iraq and Afghanistan in which Lawrence's writings figure in as evidence. In a section of the 2006 Counterinsurgency Manual published by the United States Army called "Evolution of Counterinsurgency," the authors lay out a brief, linear history of how guerilla warfare has evolved historically, noting that the creation of guerilla groups often stems from situations in which "conditions are changed by force or circumstances." This broad language serves to cleave "good" counterinsurgency efforts, exemplified by Lawrence and his Arab forces, from "bad" ones like al-Qaeda (Section 1-21)[70]. Lawrence's purported techniques, including the targeted bombing of Ottoman supplies via train, are discussed at numerous points throughout this section. Lawrence's observations about the central importance of "lethal and portable killing technologies" are interpreted as prophetic remarks that exemplify today's "new" kind of insurgency in which "…new forms of old, strongly held beliefs define the identities of the most dangerous combatants in these new internal wars. These conflicts resemble the wars of religion in Europe before and after the Reformation of the 16th Century. People have replaced nonfunctioning

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[69] Spurr, David. *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration*. Duke UP, 1993. Spurr goes on to explain that dominating in this way avoids direct confrontation, which would require recognizing "the independent identity of the Other" (32).

[70] *Counterinsurgency*. Headquarters of the Army, 2006. https://irp.fas.org/doddir/army/fm3-24fd.pdf. Access 25 August 2022.

national identities with traditional sources of unity and identity[71]" (Section 1-23). Describing the wars as "internal" and the source of conflict in Iraq as related to "nonfunctioning national identities" takes removes the onus on America for initiating the War in Iraq and skirts the significance colonization in creating conflict within the region historically. Instead, the authors echo a position that resounded throughout broader intellectual communities after 9/11 essentializing terrorist groups as fanatical because of their religious zealotry described as a crazed obsession with re-staging the Crusades and indicative of their historical backwardness. These "traditional sources of unity and identity," referring to Islam, serve to delineate between what distinguishes effective from ineffective counterinsurgency efforts.

That the West has long feared Muslim statehood is not a revelation. Martin J. Bayly charts the frequency with which British colonial authorities of the eighteenth century described their fears of the Ottoman Empire in 1877 in the form of a pan-Islamic conspiracy with the potential to give "the first Mahometan State in the world…renewed vigour to the impulses of fanaticism which in these countries are never in complete repose" (248)[72]. However, what is if use to us as literary community is the recognition that attitudes seeking to relegate and contain Islam through the guise of viewing Muslims as illogical, the "impulses of fanaticism" clouding their ability to think clearly for themselves, is a dangerous mindset that permits a state of exception. That state of

[71] Signed by Lieutenant General and U.S. Army Commander and James F. Amos, Lieutenant General of the U.S. Marine Corps Deputy Commandant.

[72] *Taming the Colonial Imagination: Colonial Knowledge, International Relations, and the Anglo-Afghan Encounter, 1808-1878*.

exception exceeds the nineteenth century and stretches to the twenty-first. As a method of production that stood in the way of modernity, depictions by Bell and Lawrence of religious leaders in the region were characteristic of the descriptions throughout the 19th Century that Bayly describes. In *Letters from Baghdad*, Bell writes with distain about the "extremist" *Mujtahid*, or religious leaders of the Shia Muslims. These "grimly devout citizens" whose leadership "rests on an intimate acquaintance with accumulated knowledge entirely irrelevant to human affairs and worthless in any branch of human activity" are relics of the past that anchor the Arabs down[73]. They "sit in an atmosphere which reeks of antiquity and is so thick with the dust of ages you can't see through it – nor can they" (124). The closer one aligns with the tenets of Islam, deemed as illogical, "irrelevant" and "worthless," the more obscure history, time, and space one becomes. Bell portrays here a compounding of both a hallmark of Orientalist discourse, i.e., Islam as relegated to the past, and the association between Islam and "extremism," a tactic that has become well-defined today. Lawrence's reflections on military leader Emir Abdelkader, who led an anti-colonial movement against the French invasion in Algeria, is equally reproachful: "an Islamic fanatic, half-insane with religious enthusiasm and a most violent belief in himself" (302).

The association between the Islam and fanaticism is part of a larger mode of asserting colonial power over India and the Western Asia more broadly in the early nineteenth century. As Alex Padamsee describes in *Representations of Indian Muslims in*

[73] Bell, Gertrude. *Letters from Baghdad*. Gertrude Bell, 2021.

British Colonial Discourse, the criminalization of Indo-Muslim "fanatics" sought to delegitimize pan-Indian political collectivity (56)[74]. How these "fanatics," or "thugee," were then portrayed by travel writers and colonial actors of the same period provided narratives infused with Gothic sensationalism that struck fear into their readers in Victorian England. Anti-colonial movements in India that happened to be led by Muslims could be easily denounced as the work of "fanatics," what Padamsee describes as a "retroactive characterization" that sought to legitimate English colonization and, more specifically, purported to bring Enlightenment and industrial modernity to the region for the benefit of all. Moreover, the linkage in discourse between fanaticism and Islam allowed the British to destroy networks of anticolonial resistance in service of protecting the larger social body (56). After 9/11, a "retroactive evidential search" would ensue for evidence of the connection between Islam and terrorist violence. Foundational scholars of Critical Terrorism Studies like David Rapoport pointed to the *thugee* of India as the predecessors of Jihadist terrorism, using colonial records and sensationalized accounts upon which to base their contemporary counterterrorism research.

Ultimately, the narratives of both Bell and Lawrence are infused with a sense of lamentation and frustration with the stunted potential of the peoples they travelled with. The desert both repels and entices them for its exotic qualities, causing a strange discord between the colonial subject and the Arab as "other," echoing Homi Bhabha's observation that colonialism was "haunted by anxieties in which Self and Other could

[74] Padamsee, Alex. *Representations of Indian Muslims in British Colonial Discourse*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

become…fused/reversed" (Boehmer and Morton 183)[75]. The paradoxical entanglements of T.E. Lawrence's writings reveal a larger fear of cultural change projected onto the colonial, and now imperial, environment in which the desert is at once empty and unproductive, yet at the same time a highly-contested space of productive potential – the very reason Western states have intervened in the region, both then and now. Islam performs within this space of "manufactured people" as a phantom infrastructure; a kind of hyperbolized mode of production that threatens Western intervention (Lawrence 13). Through metaphors of manufacturing and telegraphic communication, Bell and Lawrence respectively highlight the potential dangers of Islamic fanaticism despite their insistence on the Arab world's technological backwardness. Left unchecked by European control, the projected fear is that religious vigor could generate an adversarial socio-political collective that threatens Europe's imperial power. A 2006 Counterinsurgency Manual published by the Headquarters Department of the U.S. Army emphasizes that what makes a group like al-Qaeda so threatening is their ability to link virtually with allied groups throughout a state, a region, or even the entire world. It explains that today's insurgents have "common objectives but different motivations and no central controlling body, which makes identifying leaders difficult" as al-Qaeda ultimately seeks to "transform the Islamic world and reorder its relationships with other regions and cultures"[76] (1-23). This responds directly to Appadurai's point that "[Terrorist Groups] …threaten the system of

[75] Quoted by Alex Tickell in his article, "Excavating Histories of Terror: Thugs, Sovereignty, and the Colonial Sublime" in *Terror and the Postcolonial*.
[76] Headquarters Department Of The Army. *Counterinsurgency*. Marine Corps Warfighting Publication, 2006.

nation-states by eroding its overall monopoly over the means of large-scale devastation of human life. By working outside the existing frameworks of sovereignty, territoriality, and national patriotism, they attack the moral framework of the nation-state as a global form and system" (130). While the military frequently describes the form of counterinsurgency that defines contemporary jihadist terrorist groups as "new," it bears many of the same hallmarks as Orientalist discourse in its emphasis on religious fanaticism and the inherent dangerousness of Islam to the West.

Issa, "Indianness," and Manifest Destiny

Shukri's depiction of Lawrence makes a crucial historical linkage between World War I imperialism in the Middle East to control the productive capacity of Western Asia, connecting Orientalist knowledge production to War On Terror discourse. Within this imaginary, the desert acts as a dynamic interchange for Issa, providing him not only with the ability to more clearly "see" the tensions between identity and territory he exists within but also to find potential allies within that vulnerable space. While driving through the Karoo, Issa and Kagiso meet Katinka, a white woman hitchhiking towards Cape Town to escape her family. Katinka remembers the inception of her friendship with Issa through their shared journey out of the desert. In her memory, she picks up a copy of *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* lying face up in the back seat of the car and reads the following passage quoted within *The Silent Minaret*:

> ...we had ridden far out over the rolling plains of North Syria to a ruin of the Roman period which the Arabs believed was made by a prince of the border as a

> desert-palace for his queen. The clay of its building was said to have been kneaded for greater richness, not with water, but with the precious essential oils of flowers. My guides, sniffing the air like dogs, led me from crumbling room to room, saying, 'This is jessamine, this violet, this rose'. But at last, Dahoun drew me: 'Come and smell the very sweetest scent of all', and we went into the main lodging, to the gaping window sockets of its eastern face, and there drank with open mouths of the effortless, empty, eddyless wind of the desert, throbbing past. That slow breath had been born somewhere beyond the distant Euphrates and had dragged its way across many days and nights of dead grass, to its first obstacle, the man-made walls of our broken palace. About them it seemed to fret and linger, murmuring in baby-speech. "This," they told me, "is the best: it has no taste." My Arabs were turning their backs on perfumes and luxuries to choose the things in which mankind had had no share or part. (Shukri 108-109)

Lawrence's sensuous prose romantically portrays the desert as a landscape alive with intention and meaning. Free to project his desires onto the desert, Lawrence sees the space itself as a frontier imbued with a familiar fantasy of settler colonialism. The Arab, for Lawrence, like the American Indian, haunts empire; simultaneously not there, "empty," and yet an essential "native" element of the landscape. He regurgitates the Orientalist conceptualization of the desert as a place of greater purity through the unadulterated pleasure of "effortless, empty, eddyless" desert winds. Perseverating on the purity or "cleanness" of the desert allows him to claim the inherent superiority of the region's geography, and its metaphysical locus, in contrast to the "limited, narrow-

minded" people, "whose inert intellects lay fallow," an observation he offers not long after the quoted passage (Lawrence 13). Shielded in romantic prose, Lawrence aligns the Arabs around him with the inhuman, "like dogs," while at the same time referring to them paternalistically as "His Arabs," responsible for this brave cadre "turning their backs" on "luxuries," representative of the Ottoman empire, rendered metaphorically within the desert. Edward Said adeptly describes the way in which the Arabian desert operates as a focal point within the Oriental imagination to amplify how the region "appears historically as barren and retarded as it is geographically" (655). Echoing Said's point, Lawrence describes the Arabs as entreating him to "come and smell" the alternative possibilities transpiring through the desert breeze, personified as a "slow breath" that was "born somewhere beyond the distant Euphrates," a phrase that positions the Arabs and their desert as stagnant, waiting to emerge again from the long past greatness of the Roman empire, a Western empire. Arab intellect remains uncultivated and underutilized while under Islamic rule. Through the imagery of the decrepit Roman castle, Lawrence's fantasy is linked to a relic of the ancient Western past; a former Empire in ruins he associates with their luxurious consumption. What is recalled for Lawrence is a Western historical marker in Rome; but what the future holds only "his" Arabs seem to know. It is an uncanny experience for Lawrence to see a space in which luxury once existed in such a barren and inhospitable place. In his mind, the desert is a relic of history preserved at a kind of crossroads of past, present, and future. However, it also conjures a history yet to be written through the "gaping" window and the wind's

proliferation of "baby-speech," signifying an as-yet unintelligible, but developing, crawl towards the "human."

In less illustrious passages of *Seven Pillars*, Lawrence is more forthright about his claim that the Bedouin are on the precipice of great potential: "I meant to make a new nation, to restore! A lost influence, to give twenty millions of Semites the foundations on which to build an inspired dream-palace of their national thoughts…but when we won, it was charged against me that the British petrol royalties in Mesopotamia were become dubious, and French Colonial policy ruined in the Levant" (Lawrence 7). Recalling the scene near the ancient castle, Lawrence explains his position as the necessary interlocuter between the Arabs and the British, someone devoted to the project of establishing a nationhood, or "dream-palace," that would be united by an ethnic, or "Semitic" language and tradition. By commending "His Arabs" who "choose the things in which mankind had had no share or part," Lawrence infers that the post-Ottoman empire be reconstituted under new parameters of political ownership. In doing so, he also gestures towards the resources that have yet to be cultivated. In his autobiography, he urges the Arabs, who have "lost their geographical sense, and their racial and political and historical memories" to reclaim a sense of cultural identity capable of handling the influx of industry (Lawrence 22). Lawrence uses paternalistic rhetoric to claim British validity in exporting a more modern government to the needy Bedouin. He writes of an empty, but fertile landscape awaiting cultivation while paradoxically alongside its indigenous inhabitants, echoing the settler doctrine of Manifest Destiny that justified the colonization of North America.

He describes the Arabs themselves as matching the land in their "fallow" minds, echoing what Jodi Byrd describes in *Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* as characterizations of the "non-discriminating, proto-inclusive 'merciless Indian Savage'" (xxi)[77]. "Discourses of savagery, Indianness, discovery, and mapping that served to survey a world into European possession by transforming indigenous peoples into the homo nullius inhabitants of lands emptied and awaiting arrival" (xxi). For Byrd, the form of homo nillius was not limited to indigenous people of North America, but rather acted as a kind of blueprint made useful to other projects of settler colonialism in which the U.S. "makes 'Indian'" those peoples and nations who stand in the way of U.S. military and economic desires" (xx). Lawrence understood the Arab Revolt as an opportunity to reestablish the Bedouin to the former greatness of Mesopotamian civilization, also serving to cleave them from unproductive ties to Islam. The perception of Islam as archaic and backwards are another hallmark of Orientalist thinking, a reality that continues to permeate the West's perception of its wars in Iraq and Afghanistan today. In reality, because of Issa's participation in anti-colonial movements, he becomes the double-sided coin of "indianness" at once romanticized as a "disappearing" rarity, and, on the other hand, the troublesome "terrorist, externalized from 'our frontiers,' and function[ing] as abjected horror through whom civilization is articulated oppositionally" (Byrd xxi).

Understanding the implications of Lawrence's speech is relatively more straightforward than determining Issa's perspective on *Seven Pillars*. Because we are not

[77] Byrd, Jodi A. *Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism*. University of Minnesota P, 2011.

privy to his interior thoughts, all we have to determine his true intentions are the artifacts of his life, including his interest in Lawrence's text. That Katinka remembers reading this passage from *Seven Pillars* and joins it to her memory of Issa's disappearance suggests multiple possibilities. In one sense, we might read Lawrence and Issa as both mistakenly lured by the romantic implications of the desert, both discovering that the battle they imagined themselves to be engaged in was ultimately not grounded in reality as their own sense of freedom and accomplishment was never or could not be fulfilled. Following this line of thought, Issa may have been lured by Lawrence's invitation to "become native," as the passage indicates the limitations of yearning for ancestral belonging[78]. However, Issa's self-described understanding of the desert as an honest landscape capable of more accurately rendering the racialized hostility he faces as a Muslim subject is reinforced by the nearly complete thesis he was working on for graduate school when he disappeared. Discovered by Kagiso, it examines the impact of Dutch colonization in South Africa, focusing on "the sanitised invention of 'man's most dangerous myth: the fallacy of race', and the synthetic fabrication of inviolate national identity" (64). Issa's critique of national identity recalls his characterization of the city as the locus of nefarious duplicity, a "synthetic" space that contrasts with the desert. Where the landscape of national identity has been "sanitized" by the "invention" of race, the desert is a place where, presumably, identities would cohere through what the desert simply is: difficult, honest, "clean." That

[78] A reading that *Lawrence of Arabia* gestures toward in its opening scene by depicting the motorcycle crash that would take Lawrence's life not long after returning to England after the Arab Revolt and in *Seven Pillars* when Lawrence expresses his own misgivings and remorse at having failed the Arabs in achieving sovereignty.

Issa grapples with the concept of national identity has been attributed to a larger phenomenon in South African literature described by Pallavi Rastogi in "Looking Out in Ishtiyaq Shukri's *The Silent Minaret*." In post-Apartheid fiction, Rastogi claims that literature predominantly focused on a strong adherence to nationalism in order to establish a sense of belonging within South African culture[79]. This was of particular importance to South Africans with South Asian ancestry, as Shukri's family was, who were routinely dehumanized on the basis of race within the South African nation-state. Rastogi examines the treatment of national belonging in post-Apartheid literature to explain that *The Silent Minaret* ultimately searches for a "global pan-Islamic confederation" that resists absolutist identities carved out by the nation state (18). While Issa's faith contains the rituals in which he finds spiritual respite, his global vision is more complex and less centralized than Rastogi's "confederation" seems to allow for. Issa's thesis is aimed specifically at a brief pocket of history spanning fifty years between European contact of the African continent and the establishment of a permanent Dutch settlement. He explores historical moments of "heterogenous bartering" that occurred between cultures in the seventeenth century that had since been "obliterated from memory" (64). To Rastogi's point, Issa does focus on the importance of anti-colonial Muslim figures during these moments of heterogeneous mixture. However, Issa's overarching interest is to reveal periods of cooperation that defied the project of the

[79] Rastogi, Pallavi. "International Geographics: Looking Out in Ishtiyaq Shukri's *The Silent Minaret*." *Research in African Literatures*, vol. 42 no. 3, 2011, p. 17-30. *Project MUSE* muse.jhu.edu/article/445968.

Western, secular nation-state, which sought organize its sense of belonging through racial identification. If we read Issa as seeking an identity devoted to Islamic collectivity, we must also honor his devotion to the South African Communist Party and to his friendships, which reveal a diverse set of beliefs and practices. As Jayawardane helpfully illustrates, Issa is ultimately concerned about the ways in which "…bodies were moved, removed, and erased" under the project of colonization in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and "disappeared as collateral damage in the struggle to control the production and distribution of today's worth-its-weight-in-gold commodity, petroleum" (9). Issa's primary objective is to abandon the global displacement and destruction that the spread of capitalism entails. On the verge of another war to assure access to oil in 2003, the colonial ventures of the past would prove crucial to Issa as a twenty-first century subject when Arabs and Muslims became paradoxically both unidentifiable terrorist threats and at the same time coded as hyper-identifiable, racialized terrorist subjects. As Said articulates presciently in *Orientalism*, there is an "almost total absence of any cultural position making it possible to identify with or dispassionately to discuss Arabs or Islam" (54)[80]. What Issa and Lawrence share is a historical positioning that stems from the university; Lawrence, among many so-called Arabists of the nineteenth century, was selected by the British military for his investment in ancient Eastern history. The imaginative link between Lawrence and Issa represents the "closed circuit" process of knowledge production that links education, politics, and military action. Issa's

[80] Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978. Print.

disappearance thus makes him part of that constellation of historical figures taking part in Imperial history; however, Issa's disappearance also signals that his reading against the grain of history in search of anti-colonial rebellion also makes him a threat to processes of Western knowledge production that brings us to the War On Terror, a reality Shukri alludes to in his foreword to the novel. Issa's public persona as an intellectual, writer, and revolutionary actively working against formulations of empire makes him threatening to the British State.

Memory and Collective Possibilities

As the novel progresses, the memory of Issa gradually helps his loved ones learn to read England as a security regime that places them all in a state of precarity. This realization is most clearly experienced by Issa's confidant, Katinka. Towards the end of the novel, a series of interconnected memories are filtered through Katinka's consciousness that suggest formative collective possibilities for Issa's loved ones because of the triangulation between Lawrence, Issa, and the desert, where Issa meets Katinka on the side of the road in the middle of the Karoo. As Katinka remembers their initial meeting, the narrative perspective switches briefly to incorporate Issa's perspective, making it sound as though he were suddenly alive. In this brief lapse into Issa's subjectivity, we meet a mind filled with a familiar medley of past, present, and future echoing Lawrence's experience of the decrepit desert castle discussed earlier in his chapter:

> Dawn will usher in a long-awaited new era. And steering the car between the flashing white lines on the freeway, a quote comes to hover in front of Issa's tired,

> driving eyes: "The morning freshness of the world to be intoxicated us." That is all he wishes to remember of it and tries hard to ignore the rest of it. But the passage lingers, demanding to be recalled in its entirety: "yet, when we achieved and a new world dawned, the old men came out again and took our victory to re-make in the likeness of the former world they knew. (Shukri 110)

Issa remembers Lawrence's words of profound disillusionment; the "morning freshness of the world to be" representing the promise of a new government after World War I, a statement that, while non-descript, points to hope for a more representative government. The devastating cost for victory is experienced most acutely by youthful soldiers rattled and disturbed by their experience in the "war to end all wars." Despite the Oriental lens through which he continues to see the Arab people, Lawrence writes of his desire to see the Arabs have their own nation rather than see the West colonize the space. This is why Said characterizes him as "…a special but extreme form of life: The decentered one (112). Lawrence's prosaic statement reflects the optimism that the end of World War I would promote a "New World Order" in accordance with Woodrow Wilson's famous promise; a promise that dissipated following the 1919 Paris Peace Conference when the "old men who came out again" to "re-make" the world as it was. *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, written in 1926, had already witnessed the fallout of optimism during the war. This perhaps explains why the deviation between Lawrence's telling of himself in his memoir, as someone dedicate to Arab Sovereignty, from the actuality of his military persona. In *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, Said writes that Lawrence's "contradictory gifts" ultimately still point to the fact that Lawrence was an operative of

the British State, "useful in getting the Arabs to a position that they could be *nationally* identified and then pushed around by the Franco-British *entente*" [Said's emphasis] (114). Written from the indeterminate space of the desert, Lawrence can combine a past, present, and future of Arab sovereignty after history has already been written. Lawrence, and other figures like him, would find renewed use by Western powers, ready to be reinstated as arbitrator, translator, sage, hero, et al. of Arab sovereignty once again during the War On Terror, which called for securing oil pipelines, redrawing cities, and building infrastructure under the guise of bringing "modernity" to the Middle East in the same way that the British claimed to some hundred years earlier. His usefulness as a white man both "here and there" skirting the line between British and Arab in cultural allegiance, allows Lawrence to perform as a reconciliatory character for the Americans and British, aiding in the negotiation between invasion and advancement in War On Terror discourse. The outcome of such efforts contributes to what Naseem L. Aumeerally's describes in "Rethinking recognition" as the surveillance of Muslims post-9/11 that hinges on the implementation of technologies of recognition that make Muslims knowable[81]. Shukri pushes back against such reanimated Orientalized frameworks by exhibiting the afterlife of surveillance and disappearance in Issa's family and friends, who grow to understand, through his absence, the ways in which racist dynamics of the nation state are connected through time and place. Katinka reflects in the present: "I wonder what he must be

[81] Aumeerally, Naseem L. "Rethinking Recognition in Muslim diasporic writing. From an 'ethics of responsibility in *The Reluctant* Fundamentalist to an 'ethics of dispersion' in *The Silent Minaret*." *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 2017, 4:1386396.

feeling now," she says reflectively (110). Katinka's memory reanimates Issa despite his physical absence, a process that causes her to realize that their lives as comrades in anti-capitalist activism retrospectively began during this first meeting in the car, when Katinka told Issa and Kagiso that if she were to be discovered associating with a "communist terrorist kaffir," referring to Issa, her family would kill her[82] (113). Aumeerally points to Orientalist tropes in *Minaret* like references to *One Thousand and One Nights*, the significance of the hookah café as one of Issa's primary haunts, and "recognition of patterns of multiculturalism" to argue that the novel disrupts Orientalism and liberal multiculturalism as normative frames of reference that set forth a "pre-determined ontology" in which Muslims' "alterity can be articulated within delimited boundaries" (6). While the novel does make visible those elements of Orientalism and liberal multiculturalism contributing towards the infringement of Muslim rights, the assumption that the indeterminacy of Issa's position is hegemonically disruptive misreads the intentionality behind his inability to be "placed." Aumeerally reads Issa as "will[ing] himself to remain within a realm in which he cannot be 'known,' suggesting a sense of agency derived from his disappearance (9). This description unintentionally recalls Donald Rumsfeld's remarks from a Pentagon news briefing in February 2002 in which Rumsfeld was asked about the tenuous assertion that the government of Iraq was supplying weapons of mass destruction to terrorist groups, to which he replied in a new

[82] This is a particularly interesting insult, as "communist terrorist" links *Minaret* 1980's and 1990's Cold War rhetoric, pointing to the period in which the Taliban were enlisted by the U.S. to fight against the Soviets during the Cold War. It also acknowledges that jihadists represent an alternative political system, or alternative universality, to democratic liberalism. Darryl Li's *The Universal Enemy: Jihad, Empire, and the Challenge of Solidarity* is an invaluable analysis of what makes jihadism so threatening to contemporary imperialism.

infamously cryptic comment that, "…there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know…"[83]. Rumsfeld's remark, in conjunction with Issa's disappearance, points poignantly to the indeterminate space that the body of Issa, and many others, have been relegated to under the state of exception. The assertion that Issa's disappearance is indicative of an agential shift is highly suspect. It is not Issa's disappearance in and of itself, the "black hole" left in the place of his subjectivity, that constitutes the novel's ability to address the colonial and imperial histories alive the War On Terror. Rather, it is how Issa's disappearance motivates those that love him to ontologically re-orient in the wake of their collective grief that provides a path forward.

Katinka's memory of reading about Lawrence's desert palace bookends the first time she met Issa and last time she saw him. She remembers being awakened by a text from Issa that says, "In bagdad dis is an emgncy. Fuk da bastad brats. Kids r dying here. Get u gat ova here asap. & Fuk lemonde – we r all afghanarabs now!" She heads toward their favorite hangout, The Baghdad Café, where Issa sits staring in awe at the television (Shukri 193). As the memory occupies her mind, she is suddenly overwhelmed by the scent of "jessamine, violet, [and] rose," the same fragrances that filled Lawrence's

[83] In recently declassified memo from 2003 sent to Steve Cambone, Under Secretary for the Secretary of Defense for Intelligence, Rumsfeld provided this telling rejoinder to his comment about "known unknowns": "I have no visibility into who the bad guys are in Afghanistan or Iraq. I read all the intel from the community and it sounds as thought [sic] we know a great deal but in fact, when you push at it, you find out we haven't got anything that is actionable. We are woefully deficient in human intelligence." "Office of the Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld 'snowflake' to Steve Cambone, no subject, September 8, 2003, not classified, 1p., ("I have no visibility into who the bad guys are")." National Security Archive. https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/24553-office-secretary-defense-donald-rumsfeld-snowflake-steve-cambone-no-subject. Accessed 25 August 2022.

nostrils during his exploration of the decrepit Roman ruins, a memory that reminds Katinka of reading Lawrence's text in the back of Kagiso's car (60). As past and present meld together, Lawrence's writing becomes a sensory reality and reanimates a disappeared Issa. Katinka then remembers an explosion on the television screen that captured a "vision" of Issa's profile as he gazed at grainy images of the Iraqi desert being bombed. For Issa, this pivotal moment represented the dream of collective possibility dashed. Jayawardane reads Issa's reaction as an indication of his awareness that "these are simply the first steps to annihilating and erasing Baghdad's existence and the records of people who built it…[and] the intellectual and technological history on which its own advances are based…" (8). As an avid reader of history, this is likely. Just as Lawrence experienced the Roman ruins, Issa too mourns the loss of history. However, Issa's reaction to this specific war, informed by his relationship with Lawrence, offers that Issa was cognizant specifically about how the War On Terror spells the obvious loss of human life, but also the loss of an intellectual history containing alternative collective formations outside of capitalist exploitation, the focus of his thesis. However, Issa's text message prior to their rendezvous at the Baghdad Cafe indicates more than grief. He urges Katinka to "Get u gat ova here asap …we r all afghanarabs now," suggesting a call to arms responding to the killing of Baghdadi civilians on behalf anti-imperial collective, a collective comprised of members that exceed the boundaries of race, religion, or nationality (192).

Returning to her memory of seeing Issa at The Baghdad Café, Katinka homes in on her recollection of Issa's face and recalls what is written on his shirt: "I am a standing

civil war" (61). This saying originates from Lawrence's collected letters when he writes that "man was 'a civil war,' from which he explains that the "end of this…is that man, or mankind, being organic, a natural growth, is unteachable'" (Said 110). Despite his proposed willingness to give his life for Arab "freedom," in the end, Lawrence expresses dejection at the realization that his efforts made him a pawn to the larger British scheme that sought to determine politically and economically the "new Middle East." Similarly, as an activist and scholar of anti-colonial rebellions, Issa contains the possibilities of anti-imperial activism that he seeks. At the same time, his existence, up until he confronts the reality of the invasion in Iraq, is predicated on a fundamental complicity with the institutions that he most desires to upend. Said critiques Lawrence's use of the phrase by claiming that Lawrence never rooted himself to anything; rather, he is "…a victim of his writing, a project, like the Arab revolt, which must be completed despite his efforts to withdraw. Lawrence's failure as a sincere man is balanced by a fanatical sincerity in rendering his own hypocrisy. In short, a 'standing civil war'" (Said 123). If we are invited to compare Issa and Lawrence through their shared use of language, we might read Issa as a "victim" of his own writing, his own thesis; very literally he becomes a victim of colonial and Imperial history that is "withdrawn" from hegemonic discourse; the "Civil War" a metaphor for the internal fission of subject and state but also of a fission between what is possible and real within a security regime.

After leaving the Baghdad Café that night, Katinka reproaches herself for parting with Issa, retrospectively concluding that he "was clearly disoriented" (62). Katinka's narrative arc is characterized initially by a sense of directional loss within her own life in

terms of her career and activism. As the novel progresses, Katinka learns to inhabit the unfinished work of anti-colonial activism left in the wake of Issa's absence. At the conclusion of the novel, we see Katinka move to Palestine with her lover and become a schoolteacher, a decision she links directly to the series of memories she has of Issa. She sends him a text message despite the fact that Issa has been gone for at least a year. She explains: "Im by da wal@qalqilia. Wen jan landd @cape he plantd a hedj 2 sepr8 setlaz frm locls. Da histry of erly urpean setlmnt @da cape is unversly&eternly pertnt x" (Shukri 242). From Qalqiya, a Palestinian city in the West Bank, Katinka references the Dutch founder of Cape Town, South Africa, named Jan van Riebeeck. Riebeeck was "Commander of the Cape" from 1652 to 1662, and in the process, initiated a number of changes on behalf of the Dutch East India Company that institutionalized racial difference, representative of the "hedj" that separated settlers from locals, according to Katinka. Additionally, van Riebeeck urged for the importation of slaves to cultivate the land and exploration beyond the Cape that resulted in colonization of the entire region. Katinka understands that what is "universally and eternally pertinent" in the colonization of this space has become true in every space touched by colonial and imperial occupation; a fact realized through the disappearance of Issa due to the War On Terror.

The Space of Cosmopolitanism and Religion Within It

As Weihsin Gui describes in *National Consciousness & Literary Cosmopolitics: Postcolonial Literature in a Global Moment*, conversations around cosmopolitanism have

tended to work toward "loosening of the hyphen between nation and state," suggesting less that we are approaching a new form of cosmopolitanism and more that we are still invested in nationalism as a "contested space worth thinking, feeling, and writing about" (2). Reorienting the conversation in this way helps us to imagine the sense of place that Issa seeks: one that maintains space for faith. Because the novel requires that we form our understanding through Issa's loved ones, and never through Issa directly, we are also asked to believe them when they describe a fundamental shift in his character that takes place before his disappearance. Not long before Katinka saw him at the Baghdad Café, Issa's neighbor Frances describes how Issa was impacted by the story of an Afghani family that had been forcibly deported while praying in their local mosque: "That's when the anger started…After that, there was very little talk of stars or deserts or forgotten histories, no more tears shed over sad books, just an intense, brooding silence" (Shukri 89). Where Issa's desert was once the imagined locale of anti-Imperial resistance or a "forgotten history" through which he engaged with the cosmopolitan ideal, his hopes have been dashed by news of the deportation, which signals the persecution of Muslims under a state of exception. After Issa's disappearance, Frances suffers a fall and is close to dying. She instructs a volunteer from her church to forward an envelope addressed to "Professor V Kumar," Issa's mother. She tells the volunteer that "In this envelope…are the details of his star." We are not told what the contents of the envelope are, nor what the "details of his star" might be. However, at an earlier point in the novel, Frances pulls the article on the mosque raid from a white envelope and shows it to Kagiso, explaining that Issa was obsessed with studying it (Shukri 88). After Frances instructs the volunteer

to send the white envelope, she "stares into a faraway place beyond the ceiling." and says, approaching death, "I wrote my will across the sky in stars" (Shukri 238). In doing so, Frances recalls Issa's investment in Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* by reciting a portion of its opening poem:

> I loved you, so I drew these tides of
> Men into my hands
> And wrote my will across the
> Sky and stars
> To earn you freedom, the seven
> Pillared worthy house, (1-6)

While the stanza is romantic, if not saccharine, it proposes to do what Lawrence could not, provide a sovereignty to the Arab people that, for now, will have to remain in the "sky and stars" but which is firmly placed within a "worthy house" (4). This is the factor that has distinguished Lawrence from his Arab League counterparts; a passion that persisted and extended beyond familiar modes of Orientalist exoticization and romanticism. The poem has garnered significant amount of attention based on the argument that the sensual and romantic tone of the poem, dedicated to "S.A.," is directed at Lawrence's Arab guide, Selim Ahmed, who died before he could see the outcome of the Arab Revolt[84]. What is crucial about the fact that Lawrence dedicates his work to an

[84] There are a number of problematic aspects to Lawrence's relationship to Selim, nicknamed "Dahoun," who was fourteen years old when Lawrence met him, that cannot be discussed here, but should be given greater scholarly attention.

Arab person that he claims to love, however problematically, he thereby explains his desire to secure Arab "freedom" through romanticized means, a tactic that may have made his slippery proclamations of rebellion against Western interests palatable to a Victorian audience. In fact, the dreamlike scene of Lawrence in the decrepit Roman castle that appears and reappears in *The Silent Minaret* depicts Dahoun as the subject inviting Lawrence to "smell the very sweetest scent of all," the arcane power of the desert (108-109). In a familiar paternalistic fashion, Lawrence writes himself at the helm of the Arab Revolt, claiming he "drew…tides of / Men into [his] hands", referring to the Bedouin he accompanied on his mission to help the Arabs repress the Ottoman empire (1-2). In the final stanza of the poem, Lawrence writes "Men prayed me that I set our work, / The inviolate house, / As a memory of you" (24-26). From Lawrence's perspective, he had tried, but failed, to create a new political and social reality in service of the one, or ones, he cared for.

When Frances explains that the envelope contains Issa's "star," she suggests that its contents contain a guiding force for Issa and the subject of his love. If we can assume that the large white envelopes mentioned at different points in the novel are the same, we can read the moment Frances says, "I wrote my will across the sky in stars," as a constellation of love from Issa to the Muslim community that surrounding him. By giving "his star" to his mother, Frances seeks to not only share her love for Issa with Ma Vasinthe, thereby comforting her, but also to invoke Issa's call to action within his loved ones. By invoking Lawrence as a writer of the past concerned, albeit problematically, with an Arab sovereignty very much grounded in geography, *The Silent Minaret*

evidences Friedman's call to reevaluate discussions around cosmopolitanism to more fully recognize religion's power to function as an zone of cross-cultural, cross-border connection that can be understood as of the present, not relegated to an anti-history encased within the "fanatical" past. Issa's "star" is likewise a transitional space, a "standing civil war" paradoxically static and yet full of movement, battle for geographic space held in time and, moreover, a global call to action for a world a violent present: the War On Terror and the invasion of Southwest Asia. This is particularly important as the largest diaspora of the twenty-first century is composed of Muslim refugees escaping conflicts that stem directly from Western interference. If cosmopolitanism is to make tenable the consequences of a colonial and imperial past, it must also find space for faith as a source for "collective imagination that provide[s] the foundation of 'tolerance' and foster[s] the 'cosmopolitan spirit'" of "universalism plus difference" (Friedman 217).

Critical conversation on *The Silent Minaret* explores how the global nature of the novel provides a method of resistance to the insidious globality of War On Terror discourse. Issa's close relationships transverse race, religion, and borders and, even after his disappearance, his memory continues to impact the choices that his loved ones make. In studying the globality of the novel, scholars have turned to theories of cosmopolitanism to explain the way in which Shukri simultaneously maintains a global perspective while also emphasizing the distinct power of the local, which scholars interpret via Kwame Anthony Appiah's definition of the ideal cosmopolitan space as one of "universality plus difference" (209). Jane Poyner suggests that Appiah's "rooted cosmopolitanism" is evident in the novel as the text understands history as "already

shaped by colonialist-imperialist structures of power" and thus rejects the post 9/11 installation of liberal democracy in countries deemed technologically and philosophically backward[85] (316). It is the "worldly" quality of the novel that evidences a rejection of "terror" rhetoric because "[a]nxiety amongst Western and colonial powers has always masked the economic and strategic interests" of those powers (314). Accordingly, the concept of terror is deployed in political rhetoric to deflect from the ways in which groups like the Taliban or al-Qaeda are shaped by colonial and imperial historical processes as well. Likewise, Jaya Shakira Kamlesh Madhvani argues that Shukri treats the physical space of the house as representative of cosmopolitan space and, in doing so, emphasizes the shifting permeability of multiculturalism. Madhvani understands Shukri's depictions of city space as representative of a nexus of constant global motion, at once local and global, or "glocalised" (439)[86]. Because the city is always experienced in movement and flux, it opens the reader to new ways of conceptualizing possibilities for the "literary regeneration of London" at the same time as it is remembered through the text as a traumatic entrypoint to colonialism. As the physical realms of the novel are accentuated and even hyperbolized in these readings of the text, the ability to read the novel cross-culturally is compromised because the novel is not necessarily "rooted" anywhere. As a result, Issa manages to create a sense of community amongst disparate locations, times, and identities. The novel's shifts in temporality, space and narrators

[85] Poyner, Jane. "Cosmopolitanism and Fictions of 'Terror': Zoë Wicomb's *David's Story* and Ishtiyaq Shukri's *The Silent Minaret*." *Safundi: The Journal of South African and American Studies*, 12:3-4, pp. 313-330, 2011.

[86] Madhvani, Jaya Shakira Kamlesh. "The Representation of London in Ishtiyaq Shukri's The Silent Minaret: Home, Neighborhood, Travel." *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*. 51:3, 2015, pp. 432-445.

enable us to see London and South Africa as spaces composed of many other places throughout time, and thus challenges nationality itself as a structure of white patriarchal control. What the critiques of Jayawardane, Madhvani and Poyner ultimately propose through their distinct readings of cosmopolitan space is that Shukri seeks an elsewhere outside the racist and ultimately imperialist confines of citizenship as defined by nationality that is not constituted strictly by the physical space of its inhabitants. Instead, they argue that the novel understands the cohesion of its subjects through a wider historical and geographic lens that is paradoxically centers the potential of the local (the neighborhood, the house, or the city) against the global to reveal the ways in which hegemonic discourse threatens Issa's existence.

However, in the process of orienting the novel towards an elsewhere beyond nation, these readings neglect to grapple with how Issa's faith participates in placing his imaginary into the present and is thus invested in the project of nation to some degree. In "Cosmopolitanism, Religion, Diaspora: Kwame Anthony Appiah and Contemporary Muslim Women's Writing," Friedman summarizes via David A. Hollinger that critical conversations surrounding cosmopolitanism have turned away from the determinants of Enlightenment universalism insofar as they require racial and nationalistic modes of cohesion invested in the geography of the land itself and instead toward alternative modes of belonging that attempt to amend traditional definitions of cosmopolitanism by attaching terms like "rooted," "critical," or "national" to it (203). These modified cosmopolitanisms propose it is possible to connect to a home or homeland while, at the same time, maintaining a general sense of communal justice on a global scale. At the

same time, they do not articulate how faith is formulated into that configuration of the cosmopolitan space. Friedman critiques Appiah for positioning religion as opposed to the project of cosmopolitan nationalism rather than understanding it as a tool of tolerance. Religion, in this sense, is not only understood as an institution of the state but more universally as a set of communal practices that can cohabitate with other belief systems. Without further examination, religion's lack of place in the cosmopolitan ideal reflects a privileging of the secular that bears closer resemblance to Enlightenment conceptions of nationalism than an ideal cosmopolitan space yet to come.

Looking Ahead: Postsecular Possibilities

In *Terror and the Postcolonial*, Elleke Boehmer writes that the postcolonial novel or poem has the capacity to seize upon the moment, in the present, and define it without negating the future at the same time. In doing so, it "undoes the compression of time that is represented by a sudden death or bomb blast, by looking at processes" (148-149). Issa's life and his political commitment to a more inclusive humanity have formed an indelible imprint onto the ones he loved, despite his paradoxical absence. Issa's disappearance is a sudden death, a "bomb blast" experienced by those that loved him. In the wake of their despair, they discover the shrapnel of Issa's insights, his ways of being, thinking, critiquing, praying, and of loving. Issa's textual relationship to Lawrence is also dispersed amongst the people he was closest to, echoed in their memories of him and his fascination with the desert as an imagined space of cosmopolitan difference that rejects the notion of Orientalized "Arab" figure as irrational, and anti-modern. Issa's disappearance encourages us to examine nationality as a socio-political consciousness

paradoxically constituted through transnational cultural elements and actors rather than a national identity restricted to a specific territory or ethno-racial group. The reader is asked to constitute Issa through intersecting narratives of transnational characters coming together in London to retrace his final steps: his adoptive brother Kagiso, his close friend Katinka, his mother Vasinthe, and his neighbor, Frances. By retracing Issa's life, these characters (and by extension the reader) also trace the longer and darker history of imperialism and its impact on our contemporary world, which is both the subject of Issa's thesis and his political conviction. While these traces of Issa in concert with a greater understanding of imperial history and its place in contemporary hegemony are unable to recuperate Issa's body, the characters are nevertheless changed by their encounter with Issa's consciousness to see how race is both a force of cohesion and exclusivity within the nation-state, a space perpetually concerned with preserving the lives of some and silencing the lives of others.

The Silent Minaret responds to the Enlightenment ideal of cosmopolitanism as a free-floating, unfettered subjectivity without ties to any nation or community by offering that spiritual belief may actually provide greater possibilities for communal belonging than the guise of secularism as a form of objective thinking unfettered by religious constraints. Western conceptualizations of the secular circulate around ideologies of liberal humanism, the university acting as an accumulation and dissemination point of the knowledge produced on secularism that influences how Western societies conceptualize the human. Secularism works to expand capitalism by promoting the expansion of private property, privatization, and consumption to reflect ideologies of sovereignty, rationality,

and utilitarianism. The history of Western secular thinking also informs interventions into capitalism rooted in Marxism. Postcolonial studies of the 1980s and 1990s based in Marxist theoretical approaches concerning politics and sociality. In accordance with secular thinking, religion was deemed a "private" matter incompatible with cosmopolitanism. Various movements in the 1980s, including the Iranian Revolution of 1979 began to change intellectual discourse on the place of religion in politics due in part to a religious awakening occurring throughout Muslim-majority nations. The global resurgence of conservative or fundamentalist religious adherence After 9/11 spawned critical conversations on "post-secular societies," according to Abdelaziz El Amrani[87]. Amrani notes specifically that the "Muslim anticolonial liberation movements cannot be found in the postcolonial canon" due largely to a reticence to engage with conservative approaches to liberation such as Sufi brotherhoods and Salafist movements of the late twentieth century (9). While the patriarchal nature of these movements deserves critique, the suggestion that secularism provides the least oppressive mode of resistance is no longer generally accepted by postcolonial scholars who increasingly invest in indigenous spiritual forms of knowledge capable of responding to colonization. Amrani calls for the development of a "postsecularism" that acts as an "epistemology that merges reason and revelation in that both secular and religious voices are calling for a rapprochement between faith and reason" (19). Key to this mode of analysis is the integration of both traditions, the secular and religious, rather than the privileging of one over the other. As

[87] El Amrani, Abdelaziz. "The Postsecular Turn: Interrogating Postcolonialism after 9/11." *Interventions*, 2021, DOI: 10.1080/1369801X.2021.1892504

other scholars of *The Silent Minaret* have pointed out, Issa's engagement with religion and the secular is a blended one, most evident in his cultivation of relationships that display a myriad of religious and secular characters.

Towards the end of the novel, Frances remembers how Issa explored a postsecular cosmopolitan space, explaining of a mosque within eyesight "That it was the largest mosque in the southern hemisphere. That it stands so close to the Catholic cathedral that from certain angles the two buildings almost seem one. I rather liked the sound of that. Yes Frances, imagine that, a sky that echoes simultaneously with *azaan* and the Angelus" (77-78). Issa's cosmopolitanism moves rhizomatically, punctuating the city as important representations of spiritual value. Their physicality, sonic resonance, and proximity to one another denote that they be understood as within and of the existing blend of cultures and classes as equalizing forces. Issa's postsecular cosmopolitanism pushes against the fallacy of secular Western traditions in which the State's assumed status of having "no religion" is undermined by the influence of conservative Christianity in American and British politics nowhere better illustrated than the repeal of *Roe v. Wade* in 2022. Through Frances, we see that Issa's narrative arch can be encapsulated by how he negotiates the division between city and desert. Where once he assumed the desert to be the preferred locus of "truth" for its brutal and rational delineation between belonging and exclusion, he now understands the importance of resisting the duplicitous assumptions of the "neutral' and private secular space because of the Islamophobic crimes against mosques experienced around the country in the wake of 9/11.

Conclusion

The circumstances surrounding the disappearances of Issa in *The Silent Minaret* and Chuck in *Netherland* point to the stakes of writing a supposedly postcolonial narrative about the post 9/11 social landscape without incorporating a critique of nation and nationality as they relate to the lived experiences of people of color. Spatially speaking, O'Neill's preference for engaging with colonization and racism as subterranean historical phenomenon that haunt the text prohibits the novel from addressing the through line between strategies of colonial management and imperial management today. Both Issa and Chuck work to confirm the futility of neoliberal multiculturalism, but only *The Silent Minaret* affirms the danger facing the Muslim body in the "Everywhere War". His disappearance is remembered by his comrades, and Chuck's is grieved by only his wife, a shadowy figure we never follow. Chuck is lost to the black hole of subjectivity that the War On Terror propagates, a security regime invested in concealing suspects. O'Neill's text shows Chuck as the victim of his own criminality as part of a black market, unsanctioned form of capitalism, and to that end, he reads as a character to which justice was served. Issa's disappearance confirms that what makes a Muslim or Muslim-appearing subject seem dangerous also encompasses their proximity to interrogating the mechanisms of imperial imagination. Chuck meets his demise, essentially, by his own hand, while Issa, on the other hand, proves the more formidable threat to U.S. Imperialism by attempting to see outside of capitalism via his dissertation, activism, and his relationships. Other post-9/11 works have tried to address the danger facing the Muslim subject, but those have frequently entered the literary sphere through nonfiction. Most famous amongst these is *Guantánamo Diary*, a memoir by prisoner Mohamedou

Ould Slahi. Released in 2015, the memoir made "human" the ramifications of being held without due process and enduring torture for fourteen years. The work formulated a crucial counter-narrative the bipartisan rationale that the detainees were being held for the safety of the world[88]. Shukri's text evidences the unique position that postcolonial novels occupy in promoting transhistorical and anti-colonial perspectives, offering much more than the opportunity to empathize with the characters depicted, but a way of framing the state of exception that enfolds religious difference instead of ignoring or downplaying it to satisfy a secular status quo.

[88] Public support of Guantánamo has since split along party lines, with democratic presidents expressing desire to close the detention center and Republican party leads promising to keep it indefinitely. As of June 2022, there are still 36 prisoners at Guantánamo Bay.

Chapter Three

Truth, Confessions, and Survival After 9/11: Tabish Khair's *The Thing About Thugs* and the Use of Historiographic Metafiction in Addressing Global Terrorism

"If the displaced become instruments of terror it is as much because we, who have decided to stay at home or who have the privileged option of making the entire globe our home, have for too long averted our eyes from those who are 'elsewhere' or who come from 'elsewhere'"
- Tabish Khair[89]

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I evaluate how O'Neill's *Netherland* aligns with the "postmodern" tendences of the post-9/11 canon by comparing its method of addressing xenophobia to Don DeLillo's depiction of terrorist figure Hammad in *Falling Man*. I argue that both texts ultimately recapitulate Junaid Rana's "good Muslim / bad Muslim" paradigm despite their attempts to depict the immigrant/terrorist paradigm as empathically available. Instead of expanding the vision of terror to include State surveillance and the ability to arrest without warrant, O'Neill and DeLillo reify the "bad Muslim," conforming to the broader post-9/11 zeitgeist, what Kolb calls the "naturalization of terrorism as a category of identity and being" (214). This prohibits *Netherland* from achieving a postcolonial critique of the political and social aftermath of 9/11. Chuck's death, linked to an eventual revelation of his hidden criminality, leaves him on the "bad Muslim" side of the dichotomy despite the novel's use of cricket to link Chuck with both his postcolonial identity and the multicultural space of New York City. While the novel avoids depicting the actual falling of the twin towers, its traumatic impact reverberates through detailed descriptions of subterranean New York City to

[89] "'Literature is the best antidote to fundamentalism': Tabish Khair in conversation with Goutam Karmakar." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*. Vol. 55:2, 27 December 2018, https://doi.org/10.1080/17449855.2018.1552887. Date accessed 16 August 2022.

metaphorically instantiate the suppression of Hans' and Keith's experience of the attacks. The trauma-centered underpinning of both stories undermines the authors' attempts to link Western readership to the plight facing Middle Eastern civilians, as they might have hoped to. Instead, they signal the limited capacity of empathy as a narrative construct capable of bridging geopolitical, global, colonial, and imperial dimensions of the War on Terror.

DeLillo and O'Neill's works also betray the reticence of American and British publishing companies to disseminate works that appeared sensitive to the motivations of jihadist groups. From 2003-2008, the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan fractured the U.S. body politic, solidifying Republicans' contentment to emulate President Bush and Vice President Cheney's narrative that the capture and detention without trial of suspected terrorists must be done at all costs to protect American freedom. The tenor of Barack Obama's presidency determined a new script for the War on Terror's continuation from 2009-2017 that emphasized the necessity of occupation as a form of peacekeeping. Under the banner of a more cultured and diverse liberalism, markets for American fiction became more inclusive of global texts; invariably, those same tenets of postmodernism evident in American texts (written by and featuring primarily white men), including metafiction, heteroglossia, and hypermobility, emerged from global Anglophone authors from former British colonial metropoles in decidedly different ways. The second chapter charts the limitations of a secular cosmopolitan imaginary through the disappearance of Issa Shamsuddin in Ishtiyaq Shukri's *The Silent Minaret*, arguing that the novel calls for a postsecular critique of the War on Terror. Khair's *The Thing About Thugs* similarly

pushes against the boundaries of cosmopolitan nation-building within the postcolonial canon to draw different conclusions about the future of sovereignty and political representation under global capitalism.

This third chapter explores Khair's reimagining of Phillip Meadows Taylor's Victorian-era novel *Confessions of a Thug* (1839) about a practice of banditry pre-dating the British colonization of India known as *thuggee*. More specifically, I focus on Khair's critique of the use of confession as a mode of eliciting truth, effectively calling into question the reliability of apparently truthful statements obtained under dubious circumstances in the post-9/11 zeitgeist. Taylor's novel is the fictional rendering of a what appears to be a confession elicited by a member of the British East India Company. Lengthy and lurid descriptions of Ameer Ali's murders fuel a sense of anticipation that justice must and will be obtained, a narrative strategy that fueled British political discourse during the nineteenth century seeking to criminalize the "thug" as a matter of public health and enabling the British to detain and punish a variety of crimes based on the hearsay[90]. The release of photographs of the detained prisoners of Abu-Ghraib prison in Iraq of 2004 provides a telling backdrop for Khair's 2010 book. Seen in this context, one can read Khair's narrative as part a critique of how the formal and epistemological qualities of the contemporary novel are capable of soliciting terror (in the sense of both fear and terrorist acts) via necropolitical control. I contemporize these concerns by comparing Taylor's fictionalized devotion to a phrenological society and its rapacious

[90] Page 299. Kolb, Anjuli Fatima Raza. *Epidemic Empire: Colonialism, Contagion, and Terror, 1817–2020*. U of Chicago P, 2020.

desire for human skulls from the colonies to declassified documents from the U.S. government on the uses of torture from the early 2000's. By elucidating this connection, I explain how the charge of terrorism or being a terrorist, and Western powers' attendant desire to suppress and control terrorism via metaphors of contagion, work to support a larger Imperial economy reliant upon the subjugation of colonial and postcolonial subjects that began in the nineteenth century and persists in the twenty-first.

History, Truth and Postcolonial Nationalism after 9/11

From a small, imagined town named "Phansa" in Bihar, India, the unnamed narrator of *The Thing About Thugs* introduces his grandfather's library that contains fictional and nonfictional British classics, including Jane Austen, Rudyard Kipling, and Joseph Conrad, alongside Phillip Meadows Taylor's *Notes on a Thug: Character and Circumstances* (1839), Samuel R. Wells' *How to Read Character: A New Illustrated Hand-Book of Phrenology and Physiognomy* (1869), and Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851). Sprung from newspaper clippings, books, and a self-described predilection for storytelling inherited from his grandfather, the author situates the telling of Amir Ali's life within a flurry of cultures, languages, histories, and identities. The life of colonial subject Amir Ali parallels the narratives by Taylor, Wells, and Mayhew. Each of these texts integrates knowledge from newly emerging social and biological sciences of the Victorian era that, when read alongside Amir Ali's truth, appear as doubtful, if not misguided, approximations. *The Thing About Thugs* uses canonical British literature to self-referentially construct its relationship to historical and political events of the nineteenth century. In doing so, the novel highlights its own relationship to history and

the larger place of storytelling in historical narratives more broadly. This "novelized history" is assembled through buried references within the plot as well as embedded quotations from esteemed authors of the British canon (Khair 20). Enmeshing the apparently true story of Amir, colonial subject of the British raj, into the predominant historical narrative of the nineteenth century disrupts the veracity of and exposes how the canonical novels are complicit with nineteenth-century British attitudes of colonization as a necessary force of progress. Once Amir's life, and truth, has been unveiled, the veracity and reliability of the actually existing historical texts integrated into Khair's fiction are brought to question for directly and indirectly profiting from the modes of colonial extraction enabling their success. And by extension, the sublimated ideologies and practices of imperialism present in the historical texts can be understood as undergirding the conscious dealings of the fictional characters in Khair's book. The result is a narrative that highlights the precarity of truth underpinning fiction as much as it highlights the precarity of truth underpinning history.

The narrators of both *The Thing About Thugs* and *Confessions of a Thug* provide a sense of authoritative continuity that facilitates the straddling of both fictional and nonfictional genres to very different ends. Roland Barthes' claim that the realist novel and narrative history evolved in tandem over the desire to found a representative but immovable experience of knowledge production helps us unpack this ironic sense of authority. Mary Poovey's critique, "Ambiguity and Historicism: Interpreting *Confessions of a Thug*", asserts that the ambiguous nature of Phillip Meadows Taylor's narrator is intentional, inviting the reader to view the Englishman as the "implied author" (8).

However, Taylor's novel is narrated primarily by Ameer Ali and therefore positions the Englishman as a passive listener. To that end, it is important to acknowledge that *Confessions of a Thug* can also be read as Taylor critiquing the process of criminalization he himself took part in on behalf of the East India Company. The aim of this chapter is not to determine the narrator's real identity, whether in the case of Khair's or Taylor's work. What I am more interested in is how, regardless of Taylor's intent, the Victorian public received *Confessions* as a way of understanding and digesting Indian culture and customs. To that end, this chapter is concerned with how the pipeline of criminality responsible for circulating the figure of the thug was formulated with the help of *Confessions* and to what extent Khair's disruption of that same pipeline was successful in evaluating what the representative but immovable process of modernity has wrought in a post-9/11 and postcolonial landscape. Further, this chapter considers to what extent the ambiguity of the narrators in both *Confessions* and *The Thing About Thugs* reflect ruptures surrounding what constitutes as truth in discourses of nationhood and national belonging.

The ambiguous narrator in *The Thing About Thugs* is an important tool to the novel's disruption of narrative history. The unnamed author of Khair's text uses literary and historical sources, he explains, to observe and fill the fragmented "gaps" of history "with voices that, surprisingly, [were] found to hand" (12). His identity as a postcolonial Indian subject parallels the larger, ambiguous "gaps" within a Eurocentric history sewn together to form the story of Amir Ali's life, a process that mirrors Taylor's own depiction of the unnamed British soldier assigned to interview Ameer Ali, known only as

"The Englishman" for the entirety of *Confessions of a Thug*. The ambiguity of "The Englishman" operates as a kind of conscription into colonialization, implicating the average British reader, any "Englishman," into the processes of power that assume the right to adjudicate over colonial subjects. Khair's use of ambiguity coupled with metafictional techniques serves to delineate the placement of *The Thing about Thugs* within a larger colonial storytelling tradition. Khair's text fits within the more refined postmodern category of "historiographic metafiction," a term coined by Linda Hutcheon in the foundational *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (1998*)*; this type of writing is distinguished by its willful transgression of the boundary between fact and fiction, coupled with hyper-awareness of its own status as a literary artifact and narrative. The postmodern novel typically concerns itself with questions of identity and representation and one observable and well-traveled path for addressing the complex workings of subjectivity is through engagement with intertextuality. Hutcheon reads the distinction between this form of historical engagement against a more refined conceptualization in historiographic metafiction that "acknowledges the paradox of the *reality* of the past" while, at the same time, calling to the forefront its "*textualized accessibility* to us today" (114, original emphasis). Accordingly, the historiographic metafiction is not a novel imagining and depicting a location and time period from the past in a present form, as a work of historical fiction would; instead, it reveals and considers what remains unknowable about that past place and time. Historiographic metafiction contains is a kind of playful irony that could even be considered a parody of the notion that there is a one single history to any object or relationship. The pursuit of a more clear, accurate, or

truthful history is an acknowledged fallacy. At the same time, what *The Thing About Thugs* reveals about being the target of racialized Orientalist discourse in nineteenth-century London contributes to a different form of knowledge that runs counter to War on Terror discourse that reanimated Orientalist depictions of the Middle East. Within this paradoxical mode of eliciting a prescient truth, Amir Ali's narrative perspective is an opportunity to question what constituted a thug, their supposed crimes, and the motivations behind their violence in the first place.

The unnamed narrator's attentive gaze in *The Thing About Thugs* allows us to observe the author in the very process of writing the history of Amir Ali's life, an act admittedly undertaken despite unbreachable gaps of knowability:

> "In the little light afforded by the fire, which is augmented by a candle stub, Amir sits writing in his journal. He is penning one of the letters that he has been writing to Jenny in the elaborate and silenced strokes of cursive Farsi. The letters she will not, cannot read. The letters which, more than a century later, across continents and seas, will be read, with some difficulty and assistance, by a teenager in his grandfather's library in a whitewashed house." (Khair 86)

The unnamed author of the text imagines the protagonist, convicted "thug" Amir Ali, writing to his lover, a housemaid he fell in love with after being brought to London by "Captain Meadows," alluding to William Meadows Taylor. His native language of Farsi is "silenced" even as it emerges within the present moment the scene contains, alluding to the precarity of Ali's telling. If not for the author's undertaking, Ali's story would have been extinguished, an alternative history overshadowed by other, more popular English

narratives like Taylor's. Jenny, illiterate, cannot read the love letters Ali keeps for her that explain his true identity. Nevertheless, his writing is directed toward a more hopeful future; a future in which his story may be read by a more receptive and understanding audience. Khair's playful, and rather accidental, method of sourcing the truth of Ali's life reflects the vulnerable and threadbare quality underpinning the assumed facts of history. Historiographic metafiction works, here, to familiarize the reader with the notion that the historical narrative concerning the thug may have been misunderstood and untrue. It also allows the reader to witness how stories circulate around the world, "across continents and seas" and take on lives of their own in the hands of others.

Importantly, Hutcheon's analysis does not account for how, or to what end, authors of the postcolonial canon use historiographic metafiction to critique modes of power. While postcolonial analyses of historiographic metafiction do exist in reference to specific novels, the broader implications of how it might be applied to specific periods of history are understudied. Hutcheon looks at a variety of works separated by geography and historical period, including García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Günter Grass's *The Tin Drum*, John Fowles's *A Maggot*, Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, and Salman Rushdie's *Shame*, among others. If novels that addressed the imperial ventures of the United States in the Middle East beginning with the Gulf War of the early 1990's and extending through the Iraq War were analyzed, a much richer understanding emerges of how historiographic metafiction implements what Hutcheon describes as the genre's primary objective: satire of the assumption of a linear and progressivist history. Key to that satirical imperative is a widening of the available

resources by which history is commonly constituted, a technique that Khair makes evident in the epistles shared by Ali and Jenny. On the formation of historical narratives, E.L. Doctorow writes that history itself is "[a] kind of fiction in which we live and hope to survive" that orchestrates within the novel itself "a kind of speculative history…by which the available data for the composition is seen to be greater and more various in its sources than the historian supposes" (Doctorow 25). The implications of what it is to "survive" within a linear and progressivist history and how that mode of survival extends into the realm of fiction are of particular significance to the postcolonial novel and their respective authors. Khair's invocation of canonical British authors can be understood as a way of ensuring that minor or minoritized life stories can survive the effacement of a linear and teleological history, and also as a means to pinpoint how characters and events in a fictional narrative are imbricated with the political and historical processes surrounding them.

Khair uses historiographic metafiction to question how the literary canon plays a part in constructing the accepted truth about postcolonial subjects. Despite the narrative patchwork that comprises the ensuing story of Amir's life, the author makes clear that what determines a narrative's truth is not its factuality, but the extent of its circulation:

> "To me, these voices are as authentic as the voices of other characters in books about other places, say, about midnight India in the light of English. Like the authors of those other characters, I write from between texts and spaces, even though I am located in the space of their narration and they in mine. Our mutual commerce runs in opposite directions — and hence, perhaps, your doubts about

my authenticity. I accept your doubts with a doubtful smile. And I answer: whether authentic or not, these voices are true. For, in a very basic sense, any story worth retelling is a true story." (Khair 11)

Anticipating the assumption that English intellectual superiority forged Indian freedom, the unnamed narrator of Khair's text places his story against the power paradigm inherent to this relationship by pointing out that a story's truth is dependent upon the reader's willingness to observe the way that power moves through narrative portrayals, particularly in narratives involving the colonial subject. In describing "midnight India in the light of English," Khair makes explicit reference to a central text from the postcolonial canon, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. In Rushdie's novel, protagonist Saleem Sinai metaphorically embodies post-independence India through a polyphonic and telepathic consciousness. Rushdie's text, like Khair's, orchestrates its political and history and reality through the identity of a singular, and rather extraordinary, character.

As Patel Chattopadhyay Mukherjee describes, novels including Rushdie's about nationalistic optimism accompanying a newfound sense of sovereignty contain "identities in the process of 'being' natives and 'becoming' cosmopolitans[91] (188). In telling the story of Amir Ali's life outside the confines of Phillip Meadows Taylor's perspective, Khair also coproduces a history through fiction. Where Rushdie seems to point to cosmopolitan space as the destination of these histories and identities, Khair asserts the

[91] Mukherjee, Payel Chattopadhyay & Arnapurna Rath. "Children of the Midnight in the Maximum City: Cosmopolitan Polyphony in the Bombay of Salman Rushdie and Suketu Mehta," *South Asian Review*, 2014, 35:1, 187-206, DOI: 10.1080/02759527.2014.11932962

opposite. With reference to the earlier quotation from Khair's novel, although the telling of Amir Ali's life may be "located in the space of" the postcolonial canon, and although he may also acknowledge and attribute his work to his literary predecessors, "and they in mine," the unnamed narrator's desire is to provide a counterpoint to the established canon so that "our mutual commerce runs in opposite directions." If we can say that postcolonial texts such as Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* concerning Indian nationalism also coproduced histories of postcolonial India through their fictional works, we might view Khair's *Thing About Thugs* as producing a history of colonialism that underlines its relationship to twenty-first century imperialism in South Asia.

Unlike Khair's unnamed author, Rushdie's Saleem Sinai is imbued with magical traits that exceed the capacities of what is humanly possible. His desire to establish a network of consciousness connecting people from India and exceeding India a metaphor for the ushering in of a global cosmopolitanism. The predilection for magical thinking is what enables Rushdie's text to encompass history, time, place, and all people into its wake. Without its fundamentally optimistic gaze, the novel's proposed cultural syncretism would read as untrue. This future-oriented gaze is made possible by its simultaneous grounding in the present and past:

> "Understand what I'm saying: during the first hour of August 15th, 1947 – between midnight and one a.m. – no less than one thousand and one children were born within the frontiers of the intact sovereign state of India. In itself, that is not an unusual fact (although resonances of the number are strangely literary) – at the time, births in our part of the world exceeded deaths by approximately six

> hundred and eighty-seven an hour…it was as though…history, arriving at a point of the highest significance and promise, had chosen to sow, in that instant, the seeds of a future which would genuinely differ from anything the world had seen up to that time." (Rushdie 164)

Time acts as an auspicious metaphor in Rushdie's conceptualization, the birth of its main character occurring "between midnight and one a.m.," when "no less than a thousand and one children were born" with magical abilities. Like Khair's text, Rushdie connects "history," as both a political and governmental domain, to literary history. Adding to that auspicious quality of time is the "thousand and one children" born, an allusion to *A Thousand and One Nights*. The translation of *Arabian Nights* achieved unmatched popularity amongst Western audiences, spawning a number of associated art forms in the nineteenth Century. Rushdie's reference to this seminal text, responsible for introducing a highly stylized Arab world to the modern Western literary imagination, is both a tribute to its imaginative grandeur and a conjuring of the magical quality contained in the story's telling. In doing so, Rushdie effectively links his text to a canonical predecessor from an Eastern tradition rather than a Western one.

If Taylor's *Confessions of a Thug* responded to the desire of the British public to know India through its criminals, Khair's *The Thing About Thugs* mirrors that objective by portraying the network of phrenologists, headed by Lord Batterstone, responsible for murdering, collecting, and circulating skulls of the dead for their purported scientific use. Borrowing Rushdie's title, one might say Khair portrays a midnight England through

vivid depictions of nighttime murder, gravedigging, and skull collecting and figuratively through the flow of commerce from India that profited colonizers and disembodied them:

> "Night descends on London once again. Descends? No. It rises slowly, in the overlooked nooks and crannies of this teeming metropolis…It is only when the land has been conquered that night rises up into the sky, the cloudy, smoky London sky, and snuffles out the last traces of day. The city is at home in this night. It knows the night as one of its own. Night makes the city more of a city, stretches its expanse, deepens its anonymity. At night, the city dons a mask and steps out in another character, whether it is in a room full of skulls and candles, the room of a thousand and one flames in Lord Batterstone's mansion, or in the feeble light of a fireplace in Qui Hy's dhaba…if night is not sheer blankness, surely it is a place for masquerade." (Khair 185)

Arabian Nights is understood as one of the most popular tales to emerge from the Middle East. In the nineteenth Century, those tales functioned alongside other Orientalist stereotypes through music, drama, and literary references as a way of producing knowledge the Arab subject. Whereas Rushdie references the tales metaphorically in "a thousand and one children," Khair's telling places these tales in Lord Batterstone's mansion of "thousand and one flames"; the colonist who, at the end of the novel, departs on a voyage to "darkest Africa," where he intends to "collect more specimens" of human skulls for his collection (109). While the tales themselves share a complex history with oral tradition from South and West Asia, the first English translation from the 1800's made the text a popular source of adaptation into numerous other (Orientalized) art

forms. As Edward Said describes in *Orientalism*, the text became a frequent Western cultural touchpoint through which to critique the inferiority of Arabs by European scholars of Oriental history[92]. To Said's point, the unnamed narrator's proposal that the "mutual commerce," or shared domain, of postcolonial novels by Indian authors runs in opposite direction to the story told in *The Thing About Thugs* suggests that fiction about India itself constitutes its own domain of knowledge with its own truth claims. That the allusion to *Arabian Nights* is buried within this claim supports Said's observations about how the tales have been co-opted by the British through their circulation. While there were many critical positions on *Arabian Nights* apart from Said's, his criticism informs Khair's reliance on certain literary devices to underscore how fiction is representative of reality and constitutes its own truth if the reader is complicit in larger circulations of shared historical, political, and social thought.

Khair complicates Saleem Sinai's cosmopolitan vision by incorporating allusions and overt historical references that surround Amir Ali that prohibit his incorporation into British society. Khair responds to Rushdie's notion that India create its own "frontiers" of an "intact sovereign state" with a message paradoxically provided from the "past" of the nineteenth century" and the "present" of the twenty-first century simultaneously: that to build such frontiers would also mean enjoining India to the Western-dominant nation states (Rushdie 164). Published in 2010, *The Thing About Thugs* witnesses India's

[92] Said describes of Alexander William Kinglake's *Eothen, or Traces of Travel, Broguth Homem from the East* (1844), "We are told, for instance, that the Arabian nights is too lively and inventive a work to have been created by a 'mere Oriental, who, for creative purposes, is a thing dead and dry—a mental mummy" (Said 193).

integration in the Western counter-terrorism regime spurred by the War on Terror and its concurrent political and social fragmentations that have resulted in a deepening chasm between Hindus and Muslims within the country. Therefore, Khair's Amir Ali cannot be made magical; he is a representative of the treatment of Muslims as an ethno-religious minority within that sovereign state. Where Rushdie's *Midnight* witnesses India's emergence onto the stage of liberal democracy through a forward-looking cosmopolitanism, Khair's novel portrays the fallout of such attempts at belonging by portraying a diverse metropole in which the sheer diversity of experiences is covered by the "blankness" of night, producing only "anonymity" and a "masquerade" in which no one is authentically recognizable (Khair 185). This can be read as questioning the egalitarian promise of cosmopolitanism, which oftentimes inadvertently erases difference in exchange for a sense of collective representation inherent to State-sponsored nationhood. By blurring the temporal boundary between nineteenth century London and the twenty-first century narrator in India, Khair forecloses the possibility of a cosmopolitan belonging via multicultural tolerance considering the War on Terror.

Historical realities form the contextual footholds for Khair's novel in concert with references to British and postcolonial classics. Khair captures casual conversation from ancillary characters that serve as the collective voice of London, paying particular attention to exchanges between the working class. For example, when "A drunken pig at the docks" tells another man that "the English have won in Afghanistan," or when "A street Arab…attempting to hustle last week's…newspaper…says something about the death of the Ottoman emperor," these exchanges mark discourse about Arabs both within

and outside of British borders, and they offer evidence of a political awareness amongst the working class otherwise undermined by other Victorian-era texts (244, 253). These passing references to the protracted Anglo-Afghan War, which included three separate conflicts between roughly 1839 and 1842 and resulted in a profound loss for the British, nest Amir Ali's story within a chronology linking the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan to a prior war in which the British sought to exploit Afghanistan for its resources. Zarena Aslami's ""We cannot conquer it — we cannot leave it alone": Victorian Afghanistan and Its Afterlives" links the significance of the prolonged Anglo-Afghan War to Victorian-era thinking on racial and cultural superiority of the period. The Sepoy Rebellion of 1857 caused increasing anxieties over claiming a formidable land mass capable of staving off the potential of Russian encroachment into India. As a result, the Anglo-Afghan wars marked a transition from colonial occupation to imperial management in the Middle East, as the British did not have a desire to settle in Afghanistan, but rather to control it[93] (2). According to Aslami, "Afghanistan was an excess that worked to exalt British India as the scene of law and order, as well as moral and economic progress. It was, at once, wild frontier, the margin that produces the center, and the colonial other's *other*" (2, original emphasis). British participation in the protracted battle in Afghanistan from 2001-2014 was framed as overseeing the security and redevelopment of a newly protected Afghanistan under American control.

[93] Aslami, Zarena. "We cannot conquer it – we cannot leave it alone": Victorian Afghanistan and Its Afterlives." *Post45 Contemporaries: Extraordinary Renditions*. 11 September 2020. https://post45.org/2020/09/we-cannot-conquer-it-we-cannot-leave-it-alone-victorian-afghanistan-and-its-afterlives/#identifier_1_12190. Accessed 16 August 2022.

Afghanistan was again positioned to play "the colonial other's *other*" as 9/11 brought the relationship between India, the United States, and England as counterterrorism regimes to the fore.

Understood within this constellation of historical references, alluding to *Arabian Nights* is less about conjuring the magical qualities of creation, as in Rushdie's work, and more about drawing attention to how those stories travelled and circulated within discourse to inform what and how people understood about the Orient and its histories. In another exchange, a taciturn white-European cook that Ali's love interest works with flippantly remarks: "Oy Jenny, yer back', says the old woman in a voice, like her life, of bits and pieces, saving and borrowing and patching and hoarding. An' ain't no Injun prince wi' yer, m'gul? Wuz't 'is granpa the Great Mogul they ses just upped and died in Inja?" (Khair 81). The old white woman in "bits and pieces," whose poverty is such that her material and bodily means are reflective of one another, act as important foregrounding to the superiority she feels in mocking Amir for his racial difference. She mocks Amir by referring to him as the "Great Mogul," or the last Islamic Mughal Emperor that was deposed by the British and exiled to Burma following the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857. By interrogating a period prior to Indian independence, Khair is returning to a time in which the colonial occupation of India was an ongoing reality while also carefully interweaving two periods of time in which being Muslim-appearing was suspect and made one vulnerable to violence, arrest, and ostracization. The children in Rushdie's text act as a metaphor for a budding postcolonial generation, and Khair's text questions whether political sovereignty might genuinely differ (Rushdie 164). In the face

of xenophobia and Islamophobia after 9/11, Khair must locate the ways in which things "genuinely differ" by refusing to "ground" Ali (Rushdie 164).

After compromising his safety by confessing to murders he did not commit in order to stay in England, Amir finds himself destitute. Captain Meadows has taken all of Amir's confessions and has been released into the English population as neither British citizen nor Indian national. Despite the rather miraculous coming-together of racially and ethnically diverse working-class immigrants that band together to secure Amir's safety in London, the ending to Amir's story is not pleasantly resolved. His beloved Jenny is abruptly murdered by white men involved in a skull-trading scheme lead by wealthy phrenologists. Her death prompts Amir to reconcile with the outcome of playing the character of the thug: "Amir has imagined many possibilities. Getting married to Jenny, not marrying her, leaving her behind in London while he makes a fortune elsewhere, taking her with him, perhaps even to India, staying on in London and seeing her occasionally, as he already does, as he moves from job to job" (144). As an outsider, Amir has no real economic prospects outside of his duty to Captain Meadows. The outcome of Amir's life reflects what Arjun Appadurai calls the "grey zone" of migrancy, in which an immigrant attempting to enter the Western world undocumented may only perform a limited set of prearranged archetypes: stranger, victim, or criminal, and often oscillates between the three depending on the tenor of political discourse at that time. Appadurai understands modes of citizen-making through literary metaphors, explaining that the "character" of the migrant is fundamentally at odds with what constitutes citizenship because refugees are not legible to the parameters of blood, language,

religion, and territory that certify belonging. Individual identity performs as the stabilizing mechanism that supports the plot surrounding their arrival (Appadurai 6). As a colonial subject (and a criminal one at that), Amir's rootless existence both recalls and amplifies the incongruity between plot and character facing postcolonial subjects of the globalized world. It also reflects how racialized discourse determines tightening parameters of citizenship that resulted from the War on Terror, also commonly referred to as the "everywhere war," in pursuit of terrorists that occurred in formerly colonized spaces while, at the same time, contributing to refugee crises that oftentimes stemmed from those same spaces[94]. His unshakable sense of dignity in the face of numerous racialized acts of violence leave Amir disillusioned with the hope that England represents an opportunity to cultivate a new identity. He decides instead to depart on a ship bound for Africa to seek revenge on Lord Batterstone, a British colonialist and chief phrenologist responsible for Jenny's murder. Amir is reminded of his Otherness as an immigrant of South Asia, even as he learns the news of Jenny's death: Qui Hy's husband, an Irishman, chides Amir by simply saying: "'This ain't inja.'" Amir's illusion of belonging thus shattered at the death of his love, Amir "feels like shouting, yes, it is, this is the India that Captain Meadows wants from me. This is India as you people imagine it. You have made it come alive here in the streets of London" (145). Consistently hailed by London commoners for his status as an outsider, Amir highlights the power of the

[94] This term entered academic discourse in 2011 with Derek Gregory's "the everywhere war" published in *The Geographical Journal* and has since been used in numerous publications to describe how the War on Terror is geographically and logistically dispersed. Gregory, Derek. "The Everywhere War." *The Geographical Journal*, vol. 177, no. 3, 2011, pp. 238–50. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41238044. Accessed 17 Aug. 2022.

imperial imagination to compose its Other, which is the process through which the border defines the center. In *Training for Catastrophe: Fictions of National Security after 9/11*, Lindsay Thomas writes of a similar triangulation by identifying how counterterrorism literatures designed to both inform and train American citizens in the wake of 9/11 utilized the notion of "plot," understood not only in narrative terms but also as a sinister "terrorist plot," to encourage civilians to surveil, recognize and report visual markers alleged to prevent terrorist attacks[95]. This involved teaching civilians to make causal connections between disconnected occurrences and signals often religious and racialized in nature that "deputize[d] citizens to behave as 'professional' agents of the state[96]" (173). As Amir walks the streets of London in his turban and kurta with Captain Meadows, he faces "caustic attention from urchins, pickpockets and, once, a group of drunken youths who besieged and berated Amir Ali for being an 'Oriental despot' who kept women like cattle in his harem" (Khair 54).

Historiographic metafiction has the capacity to challenge not only Western centrality in historiographic models, but also the way in which Western novels tend to exclude histories of coexistence, collaboration, or defeat. Ahmed Gamal's analysis looks at Tariq Ali's 1998 novel *Saladin* about Crusades through the central character, *Sala al-Din*, or Saladin, whose pivotal role as military leader resulted in victory for the Arabs against the Europeans. The novel was published against the backdrop of the first World

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[95] Lindsay Thomas. *Training for Catastrophe: Fictions of National Security after 9/11*. U of Minnesota Press, 2021.

[96] A phenomenon Deepa Kumar calls "banal nationalism," most notably in the phrase "If You See Something, Say Something."

Trade Center terrorist attack in 1998. Ali's novel anticipated politicized rhetoric about supposed fundamental differences between the (Middle)East vs. West debate stemming from the Crusades that would dominate the early portion of the War on Terror. Gamal deepens Hutcheon's reading of historical metafiction to propose that the tactic embodies a "rewriting strategy" that problematizes representation of the subaltern subject in South Asia (Gamal 30). Khair uses these references to make visible Arab and Indian presence, both in the colonies and in London during the late nineteenth century, while also inviting us to consider why England sent troops and weapons to join the Americans in the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, linking that decision to longstanding Imperial conflict over access to resources that resulted in British defeat. This realization encapsulates Gamal's concern that to exceed the genre's propensity for satire must encompass a meaningful "mode of perception" and "process of cognition" (29). *Midnight's Children* and *The Thing About Thugs* are therefore not utilizing historiographic metacognition in opposition to one another, but rather they represent the bookends of a vision about the stakes of national representation within Western hegemony. Rushdie and Khair explore how States have engaged with postcolonial bodies across time from crucially different geographic vantage points:

> "Clock-hands joined palms. Oh, spell it out, spell it out: at the precise instant of India's arrival at Emergency, he emerged. There were gasps; and, across the country, silences and fears. And owing to the occult tyrannies of that benighted hour, he was mysteriously handcuffed to history, his destinies indissolubly chained to those of his country." (Rushdie 351)

Rushdie's narrator acknowledges the burden of representation facing the Indian population after British occupation with an optimistic gaze spurred by the crisis of independence. In the birth of Saleem Sinai, imbued with abilities that exceed the human, is the birth of a nation intent on progress. To "spell it out, spell it out" is a kind of incantation conjoining the uncanny awareness of history being formulated within the present (on the one hand) and the narratives within history co-constituted by literature (on the other hand). Rushdie's narrator views the actions of postcolonial India as inextricably bound to his personal history, a history in chains. Khair nuances this point by pivoting the burden of representation away from the postcolonial subject and towards the Western world; a space he sees as having maintained its control despite having technically released its hold over India. Where Saleem Sinai is handcuffed history, in other words, Amir Ali could be said to be handcuffed to thuggee and the entanglements of representation through discourse. In challenging the burden of that condition through nineteenth- century engagements with sovereign Muslim-majority spaces, Khair utilizes history as a force of illumination, particularly through the inclusion of unexpected and quotidian sources. In doing so, he traces what histories are privileged and which are forgotten. In narrating the voice of Amir Ali, giving voice to his motivations, desires, and perceptions, the author provides a vantage point of how imperial power manages criminal subjectivity as a form of necropolitical power.

Confession as a Mode of Preparedness Discourse

In Chapter Two, I demonstrated how Shukri centers T.E. Lawrence's impact on its Muslim protagonist to show how the reanimation of Lawrence as a heroic figure of the

imperial imagination placed Issa within the crosshairs of the judiciary state of exception. This core relationship between Issa, an imagined character, and Lawrence, a real person reimagining his participation in the Arab Revolt through his memoir, utilizes metafictional qualities to effectively disrupt the historical trajectory of post-9/11 novels by positing a different history of "terrorism" to include nineteenth century State-sponsored profiling rooted in Orientalist configurations of Arab intellectual capacity and criminality. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars* is an intertextual anchor operating within *The Silent Minaret* through which the reader observes the volatile and threadbare quality of the literary facticity. Similarly, Meadows Taylor's *Confessions of a Thug* operates as intertextual point of reference that allows Khair to reimagine the contextual possibilities that procured Ameer Ali's supposed confession.

As a British civil servant living in India, Taylor was intimately connected to the structures of power responsible for managing public opinion, adding credibility to his portrayal of Ameer and, in a larger sense, providing a novel uniquely capable of portraying the linkage between corporate (East India Company), military, and public discourse. *The Thing About Thugs* rewrites the relationship between Ameer Ali and its own unnamed narrator known as "The Englishman" in Philip Meadows Taylor's *Confessions of a Thug*, a novel originally published in 1839 that centers on the practice of *thugee* carried out by professional bandits in colonial India thought to be motivated primarily by their adherence to Hindu goddess Bowhanee. The practice of thuggee involved a small group of men disguising themselves as travelers in order to rob and murder their travelling victims via strangulation or stabbing. While thuggee began before

British occupation, it took on a distinctly different valence as the designation of "thug" functioned as a criminal archetype used by the British to both collect and punish a variety of crimes through an officially instituted Thuggee and Dacoity Department that attempted to stop them. Taylor's novel utilized confession as the premise of its narrative, functioning as a heavily one-sided conversation between an apprehended Ameer, willing to provide every detail of his violent exploits, and the "The Englishman" interviewing him on behalf of the British. Ameer's lurid descriptions of his numerous murders both enthralled and scandalized Victorian readers, resulting in the image of the thug entering the imperial imagination as a recalcitrant colonial subject whose spread necessitated British control. Khair's narrator alters the dynamic by inserting Taylor himself as the recipient of Amir's narrative. He renames Taylor "William T. Meadows," a merger of Philip Meadows Taylor and William Henry Sleeman, Major-general of the British army and superintendent of the Thuggee and Dacoity Department tasked with curbing the alleged rampant spread of thuggee in India. Referred to as "Kaptaan Meadows" in Khair's text, Meadows is more clearly identifiable as an interlocuter between the East India Company and the Victorian public, thereby entwining *Confessions of a Thug* with a larger State apparatus working to convince the British public of the necessity of occupation. Throughout the course of *The Thing About Thugs*, Ali explains how he portrayed himself as a *thuggee* to an unwitting Meadows. Capitalizing off Taylor's hunger for a quintessential thug, Ali fabricates tales of murders in exchange for passage to London, England, where Meadows intends to show him off as a criminological specimen to his phrenological society. This revision of *Confessions of a Thug* resonates

with the unnamed narrator's initial claim that "any story worth retelling is a true story," highlighting the way in which Taylor's text, though fictional, made the thug more concrete to the British public (Khair 11). As Padma Rangarajan outlines in "Thug Life: Confession, Subjectivity, Sovereignty," Taylor was conscious that his novel would be read as truthful as he claimed that reading the grim details of the kinds of murders the thugs was designed to make "the public of England more conversant with the subject" (1006).[97] As a British civil servant living in India, Taylor was intimately connected to the structures of power responsible for managing public opinion, adding credibility to his portrayal of the novel's antihero protagonist, Ameer Ali. While fictional, *Confessions of a Thug* was interpreted as factual by the Victorian public – a fact that positioned Ameer's alleged confession at the intersection of corporate, military, and public discourse. His confession to hundreds of murders throughout the course of the novel both enthralled and scandalized Victorian readers, resulting in the word "thug" entering not only the English lexicon, but the imperial imagination more broadly, as a moniker for describing a recalcitrant colonial subject. The structure of Taylor's novel as confession positions the apprehended Ameer Ali, willing to provide a faithful transcription of his violent exploits, against "The Englishman," who works on behalf of the East India Company.

Khair's *The Thing About Thugs* alters the dynamic between officer and prisoner seen in Taylor's *Confessions* in numerous ways. Khair renames the interrogator "William T. Meadows," a merger of Philip Meadows Taylor and William Henry Sleeman, Major-

[97] Rangarajan, Padma. "Thug Life: Confession, Subjectivity, Sovereignty." *ELH*, Johns Hopkins UP, 84, 2017, pp. 1005-1028.

general of the British army and actual superintendent of the Thuggee and Dacoity Department tasked with curbing the alleged spread of thuggee in India. Whereas Taylor's novel is set in colonial India, Khair shows Captain Meadows bringing Amir to England with the understanding that Amir will share his exploits with the phrenological society Taylor belongs to. After going on tour as a curiosity, Taylor agrees to set Amir free. Altering the interrogator's name in *The Thing About Thugs* makes Taylor the more clearly identifiable interlocuter between the East India Company and the Victorian public, entwining *Confessions of a Thug* with larger the State apparatus intent on criminalizing thugs on shaky, if not illegitimate, grounds. Taylor's novel is based on Sleeman's earlier *Ramaseeana: or, A vocabulary of the peculiar language used by the Thugs* (1836), in which Sleeman transcribed *thuggee* confessions and catalogued communal linguistic intricacies between thugs. The result is a tedious bureaucratic document spliced with an ethnographic study on thug life that served as evidence in support of the creation of an Anti-Thuggee Campaign within the East India Company. Rangarajan points to the efficacy of Sleeman's approach in printing thugs' confessions in their "(apparent) fullness" to authenticate "both the crimes and the unenviable heroics of recording them" that "bolster[ed] a declaration of total knowledge" (1010). Taylor takes these rather dry narratives and turns them into a novel by homing in on one specific thug, Ameer, and increasing his relatability by infusing him with a curious diction and cadence often reminiscent of the British gentry. In a section of *The Thing About Thugs* titled "William T. Meadows, Notes on a Thug: Character and Circumstances," … Khair ventriloquizes Taylor's characterization of Ameer's confession, imitating his tone:

> No, sahib, I have no hesitation in relating the full account of my life, for, as you say, you intend it for the delectation of your own people, and for their education as to the ways and beliefs of the benighted people of Hindoostan…in your illness you wished to hear the account of a real Thug, perhaps even a famous Thug, the full murderous account on condition of a full pardon… (Khair 20)

With a criminal subject functioning as protagonist, Taylor's Ameer is imbued with sensibilities that read as ironic to the project of criminalizing *thugee*. Khair capitalizes off the irony from the predecessor text, making Amir's tone stilted and thus more obviously sarcastic. Amir's apparent confession comes with a tongue-in-cheek thanks for colonizing himself and the backward, unintellectual, "benighted people of Hindoostan," a thanks that emphasizes the role of the colonizer as hollow and ego-centric versus all-knowing. Amir acknowledges that Captain Meadows will capitalize off his "Otherness," referencing the acclaim that having a "famous Thug" will garner Taylor. He reiterates the stakes of their agreement, in which Amir's sovereignty hangs in the balance:

> I came to you on my own, and in my face and in my voice, and wonderfully from my skull, as you still lay recovering in Patna, you read, with the acuity that all sahibs are blessed with, the truth of my narrative. For others had come to you before me, attracted by the word in the bazaar that you had promised a large reward, and you had driven them away as braggarts and liars. But something in my narrative, and I still wonder at the wisdom of Solomon that sahibs possess, made you listen and recognize that what I said was nothing but the truth… (Khair 19)

In imitating Taylor's prosaic rendering of Ameer, Khair accentuates the farcical qualities of the circumstances surrounding the confession and, in the process, questions the project of colonialism more broadly by casting doubt on the confession as a mode of eliciting the truth. *The Thing About Thugs* evidences how confessions were solicited, procured, and disseminated that coincide with recent scholarship surrounding the *thuggee* campaign. For example, when Amir explains that Captain Meadows had "promised a large reward" to entire community for whomever could provide the most salacious confession, Khair questions the legitimacy of both Taylor and Sleeman's portrayals. In Taylor's *Confessions of a Thug*, Ameer explains his final arrest at the hands of the British accordingly: "The [British] man unfolded a roll of paper written in Persian, and read a catalogue of crime, of murders, every one of which I knew to be true; a faithful record it was of my past life, with but few omissions" (Taylor 321). Khair accentuates the promise made in Taylor's narrative that a "faithful record" of Ameer's entire life might have been collected and provided to the British by emphasizing the "fullness" of the confession.

In calling out Captain Meadows' desire for cranial specimens capable of proving the inferiority of Amir's race, Khair rejects the notion that a confession to murders would be received and recorded passively by colonial administrators – the same forces with a vested interest in maintaining and expanding access to land and resources. Indeed, beneath a new campaign intent on eradicating thugs for the good of civilized society, the East India Company's quasi-government was bolstered by renewed funding and increased judicial capacity known as the Thuggee and Dacoity Suppression Acts of 1836. These acts successfully expanded the territories available to the British for the "reception

and detention" of *thuggee* "in any part of those Territories, for the periods specified…within the Territories of any Native Prince or State in alliance with the said Company." This provision thus provided the British with the capacity to capture criminals from not only their own landholdings, but also within those of any allied nation, essentially making the pursuit of thugs an international errand. In conjunction with Act Eighteen, Act Nineteen asserts that "no person shall, by reason of any conviction for any offence whatever, be incompetent to be a witness…", a reversal of the domestic British law which barred anyone with a former criminal conviction from testifying against the accused. Authorities frequently encouraged active suspects to testify by offering to lessen their own convictions, a practice that produced rampant accusations between convicted thugs. Punishment, according to these acts, included "transportation for life, or with imprisonment for any less term, with hard labor," a rule that betrayed British domestic law. Khair points to the extrajudicial measures in his narration of Amir in the promise of a reward for information as well the promise of pardon for the accused. In sum, these new rules expanded the territory upon which the British could govern, providing legitimacy to the narrative that British occupation was a necessary method of securitization and justice for all. The confession performs the integral role of legitimizing and documenting crimes.

The layering of geographies, temporalities, and voices in Khair's text points to tandem imperial processes at work in the late 1800s and the early 2000s. Within both historical contexts, corporations acting in conjunction with the interests of the State through the extension of land, resources, and judicial power underpinned the justification

for military force in Afghanistan specifically. In 2002, public and State discourse abounded surrounding the legitimacy of torture and confession in procuring suspected terrorists from Afghanistan. Historian Alfred W. McCoy describes the extensive conversations amongst academics and political pundits as "fantasiz[ing] about [a] limited, surgical torture" that would both allow for the successful extraction of information from suspects without also violating the Geneva Conventions or tarnishing America's reputation as a leader of humanitarianism (112). Anjuli Fatima Raza Kolb writes compellingly on how such medicalized metaphors on the surgical use of violence formulates discourse surrounding the "epidemic neutralization" of peoples within countries targeted by the War on Terror. Kolb writes that in Kashmir, a country crucial to the prerogatives of Western interests and initiatives, such narratives were designed in an effort to "suppress and evade antistate and insurgent political demands" (229). Therefore, the justification to punish through extrajudicial means, has the additional effect of expanding power to exonerate a "prejustifying sterilization, 'surgical extraction' and care in the form of development funds in the interest of a more broadly conceived public health" (229). A report conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice on the efficacy of Guantanamo Bay accuses the FBI of disobeying a central tenet of interrogation protocol: that confessions must be made voluntarily[98]. Transcripts from 2002 of suspected 9/11 plotter Mohammad Al-Qahtani were declassified, showing a number of torture

[98] U.S. Department of Justice, Office of the Inspector General. *A Review of the FBI's Involvement in and Observations of Detainee Interrogations in Guantanamo Bay, Afghanistan, and Iraq*. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of the Inspector General, May 2008, https://oig.justice.gov/reports/review-fbis-involvement-and-observations-detainee-interrogations-guantanamo-bay-0, Accessed 16 August 2022.

techniques that the FBI subjected Al-Qahtani to, including frequent movement, or "transportation" both within U.S. territory but also to other nations allied with the War on Terror. The CIA outsourced its prisons where it was able to detain, torture, and interrogate prisoners without a paper trail that could later be used in court, moving prisoners around the world to allied nations to remain undiscovered[99] (McCoy 117). The U.S. government utilized a quasi-government by outsourcing its prisons through contracted for-profit companies to detain, torture, and interrogate without a paper trail that could later be used in court. The report concludes that, despite its misgivings on the methods by which the U.S. received information through threats and promises of pardon they were unable to keep, that "under the totality of circumstances" the FBI had done no wrongdoing (U.S. Department of Justice 350). My point in highlighting these documents and extrajudicial acts by the US government is that the nineteenth-century colonial drive to collect and punish thugs, along with the narratives that solidified the thugs' status as enemies of the state, paved a path for the forced confession, bribes, frequent transportation, detention and arrest without warrant, torture, and death in the twenty-first century. The powers-that-be in the War on Terror utilized the same blueprint created by colonial authorities in British India to skirt the existing international accords in place to protect against such measures.

The way in which extrajudicial powers imbricate governable bodies to become judicial norms in support of State prerogatives is a hallmark of modernity, according to Achille Mbembe's seminal study on "necropolitics." Mbembe elucidates how States

determine which bodies are allowed to live and which are allowed to die when deemed to be exceptional through a state of emergency. Accompanying this state of emergency, according to Mbembe, is a "fictionalized notion of the enemy" that labors to replicate the very need for the fictionalized enemy it creates (16). That feedback loop outlining the enemy works in tandem with utopian discourses of "unfettered reason" and "narratives of mastery and emancipation" that delineate why the State deserves protection (166, 168). In the nineteenth century, confession became a privileged mode of testimony, its ties to religious repentance translating into the judicial process of telling the self's truth to the vested higher power of the courts. Rangarajan notes that the confessions were less important as a mode of establishing credibility, which was already assumed (as in Taylor's narrative), but rather to ascertain more knowledge about the whereabouts of other thugs, a reflection of not only the discursive power of the thug as criminal archetype, but also to the necropolitical function that processing, interviewing, and punishing the thugs under a legalized state of exception fueled. To that end, at least 1,562 men were captured and tried for the crime of thuggee under the direction of Sleeman. Of these, 1,404 were hanged or "transported for life" between 1826 and 1832 (Poovey 9). What makes Taylor's fictional narrative remarkable is less its mimicry of interrogation proceedings, but more the way in which the novel was employed as an epistemological form capable of soliciting more thugs. Entering into public discourse those qualities of the thug that rendered them into a state of exception, fictionalizing the enemy, provided the British government with the support necessary to both control the East India Company and, eventually, to govern India. What makes thugs such formidable enemies,

writes Sleeman, is the suddenness of their attacks, their "immediate dispersion after success," the "rapidity of their movements," all of which made them deserving of proceedings and punishments that exceeded the norm. In other words, the thug was a new, advanced kind of enemy, the same narrative device echoing throughout scholarly and political discourse after 9/11. In a speech, former President Bush narrativized the 9/11 attacks as "an attack on the heart and soul of the civilized world. And the world has come together to fight a new and different war, the first, and we hope the only one, of the 21st century" (George W. Bush Library). The result, for both Bush and Sleeman "…vest[ed]…with sufficient powers to enable…by a well-directed system of research, to seek out these criminals, in their usual haunts; to lay open their whole proceedings, and economy; to track their steps, whenever they might set out on their expeditions; to prevent, if possible, their success, or at any rate, to pursue them afterwards wherever they might fly, and effectually to punish and suppress them" at whatever the cost (Chapter 1)[100]. Today, global terror networks empower the State to implement overt and covert surveillance techniques in the name of global and local security[101].

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[100] Sleeman, W.H. "Chapter 1: Institution of the Court for the Suppression of Dacoities—Mr. R. M. Bird's Views." *Report on the Budhuk Alias Bagree Decoits and other Gang Robbers by Hereditary Profession and on the Measures Adopted by The Government of India, For Their Suppression*. J.C. Sherriff, Bengal Military Orphan Press, 1849.

[101] Much scholarship has been written on the ways that U.S. has expanded its territory of power to extend beyond the literal and into the virtual via the War on Terror. While Jon Coaffee's *Terrorism, Risk and the City: Towards Urban* provides a "bird's eye" view of how risk has been incorporated into logistical imperialism, Nussbaum's "Protecting Global Cities: New York, London and the Internationalization of Municipal Policing for Counter Terrorism" provides an "on-the-ground" view of the same phenomenon. Nussbaum tracks the ways in which the 9/11 signaled a dramatic shift in the structure, policy, and ideology in the New York City and London police departments. Major metropolitan or "global" cities are now combining CIA "tradecraft" with law enforcement techniques. NY has overstepped the FBI on numerous occasions due to resentment stemming from the lack of communication regarding the 9/11 attacks to collect intelligence and to conduct investigations and interrogations around the world. This includes unique access

Near the conclusion of Ameer's harrowing story in *Confessions*, readers witness his final capture at the hands of the British. By this point in the novel, the reader has already seen Ameer participate in the murders of hundreds of people in conjunction with other thugs. Ameer is unapologetic for the murders he commits because of his religion and, therefore, he is incapable of reason; doomed to recapitulate his "essential thug-ness" (Rangarajan 1016). At numerous points, Ameer is presented with the opportunity to quit his life of crime for an average family life. Instead, he returns to thuggee, explaining to the Englishman that "Still a restless spirit was within me; I heard of the success of various bands of Thugs in different directions: men came and boasted of their exploits, and again I longed to be at the head of my gallant fellows, and to roam awhile striking terror into the country" (Taylor 244). The avalanche of murders preceding this conversation create a dynamic between author and reader in which we are invited to agree that Ameer is simply beyond judicial proceedings. His appetite for murder so rapacious, so uncivil, that, compared with his very civil-sounding confession, produces a desire the narrative stokes in its telling: that Ameer is a murderer who must be punished.

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to prisoners at Guantanamo and travel to Afghanistan, Pakistan, Indonesia, etc. to interrogate suspected terrorists. NY also has the power to station officers permanently around the globe (often to the FBI's disapproval). In "When the City Itself Becomes a Technology of War," Saskia Sassen explains that the city is a unique space in which localities are able to assume roles traditionally ascribed to the State, ultimately producing an existential challenge to the sovereign state as a "key actor in international politics" (230). Rossiter's *Software, Infrastructure, Labor: A Media Theory of Logistical Nightmares* evidences Sassen's claim by observing how the National Security Agency, under Bush's Protect America Act, allowed U.S. government to collect encrypted communication from anyone around the world, known as PRISM. Rossiter argues that PRISM initiated a new "regime of territorial power" through the program's ability to collect massive amounts of data at a high speed. Rossiter describes the overarching system at work as: "The expansive infrastructural programs undertaken by colonial powers in a large part produced the territorial imaginary of empire and economic system of imperialism" (150). In other words, infrastructure coheres empire by constituting its space and time.

Confessions represents what stands in the way of the colonized subject achieving complete assimilation; his tale stokes the flames of nativism through the ambivalence generated by Ameer's mimicry of British sensibilities.

The clever manipulations of the travelers Ameer and his comrades kill makes his final arrest particularly exciting because, despite Ameer's obvious guilt, he does not publicly admit his murders at the time of his arrest, claiming instead: "…you English are praised for your justice, and long as that list is of crimes I never before heard of, you will not deny me a fair hearing and the justice you give to thousands" (Taylor 321). Ameer's request for a fair trial affirms respect for the British as deliverers of justice. In response, the officer appears to uphold Ameer's request for a trial, promising, "…whatever your crimes may be, do not fear that your case shall be inquired into" (Taylor 321). Ameer's narrative, from start to finish, is a confirmation of what readers already know about *thuggee*. By the time readers encounter Ameer's trial, we are prepared to impart our judgment with ease: we are comfortable in the truth of Ameer's guilt because we have received his confession firsthand. This process of anticipation encourages participation in the apprehension and condemnation of the criminal subject, reflecting what Lindsay Thomas terms "preparedness discourse." Preparedness discourse is marked by future-oriented narrative mechanisms that teach civilians how to recognize criminal subjects (in this case, potential terrorists) often based on visual markers linked to Islamic faith (Thomas 6). Underpinning literary mechanisms within preparedness discourse including "plot" and "character" train civilians to recognize, react, and assume imminent violence as ordinary and predictable. Preparedness discourse informs how the literary can promote

State prerogatives and shape public opinion about criminal subjectivity and the ideological beliefs that surround it.

In looking at both *Confessions* and *The Thing About Thugs*, we see how confession functions in many ways that are similar to preparedness discourse. Both novels represent confession as an act of extracting and circulating information about specific bodies, particularly those existing within the ambiguous space of immigration. The novels can thus be understood as literary representations of bio- and necropolitical management, making apparent the interweaving of governmental and militaristic modes of interpellating and managing exceptional subjects who appear to be a threat to the larger body politic.

Reason and Religion

Lindsay Thomas' argument about preparedness discourse looks at ad campaigns, films, and manuals published by the Department of Homeland Security. In these documents, Thomas traces how the State frames strategies for recognizing and reporting jihadist radicalization and recruitment. Thomas calls this process a "hermeneutics of suspicion" that teaches civilians to recognize, surveil, and report "indicators" of terrorist activity. The threshold for identifying potential terrorists ranges broadly from warning signs of an "increasing" interest in Islam or, even more simply, being both a "male Muslim" and "under 35" (170). The result is a civilian population willing to make causal connections between disconnected events and signals that "deputize citizens to behave as 'professional' agents of the state" (173). The "hermeneutics of suspicion" encourages civilians to surveil, recognize and report on visual markers that make one "appear

Muslim." Despite searching for a relatively small group of people, these policies produce the inverse effect of making nearly everyone a suspect. One month after the attacks of September 11th, President George W. Bush framed the invasion of Afghanistan accordingly:

> …the oppressed people of Afghanistan will know the generosity of America and our allies. As we strike military targets, we'll also drop food, medicine and supplies to the starving and suffering men and women and children of Afghanistan. The United States of America is a friend to the Afghan people, and we are the friends of almost a billion worldwide who practice the Islamic faith. The United States of America is an enemy of those who aid terrorists and of the barbaric criminals who profane a great religion by committing murder in its name. (George W. Bush Library)[102]

Bush's rhetoric encapsulates a humanitarian narrative familiar to imperial and colonial discourse that claims the drive for invasion is in the best interest of Muslim people not only in Afghanistan, but around the world. In fact, Britain promptly promised its full support and participation in the War on Terror and was frequently called a "friend" of the United States in popular news media at the time. The explanation for invasion is opaque; it is claimed that what makes jihadists, a very small group relative to Muslim believers worldwide, such a formidable threat is their capacity to profane the reputation of Islam as

[102] "Global War on Terror." *George W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum*. National Archives. Museum.https://www.georgewbushlibrary.gov/research/topic-guides/global-war-terror. Accessed 16 August 2022.

an ancient belief system. The urge to quell jihadism is based on the ideal of a pure, totalizing Islamic faith. The West asserts itself as the point of contrast to those barbaric criminals, a country capable of taking care of Afghanistan and of utilizing reason to do so. Thus religion, and the maintenance of its purity, becomes the rationale undergirding the state of emergency in support of the invasion. As a result, the process of apprehending a small, but barbaric group of terrorists, places all Muslim-appearing people into the crosshairs, the violent results of which are well-documented in hate crime statistics linked to the "Arab-as-Terrorist" stereotype (Lee 4)[103]. Thomas' argument provides a valuable lens through which to analyze the impacts of preparedness discourse on the American and British public.

By this I mean that domestic fictions surrounding 9/11 tend to respond to preparedness discourse by replicating and dispersing that discourse through postmodern ennui, one-dimensional depictions of the criminal subject, and historical hinges that center American victimization. Global anglophone novels like *The Thing About Thugs* provide a multi-valent challenge to hegemonic norms through their use of metafiction, historical layering, hauntings, and disappearances to challenge conventions of imperial management like the confession and link them to the twenty-first century War on Terror. For example, Khair augments the one-sided narrative of a confession by portraying Captain Meadows as increasingly didactic in response to Amir:

[103] Lee, Cynthia. "Hate Crimes and the War on Terror." *Hate Crimes: Perspectives and Approaches*. Ed. Barbara Perry, George Washington University, 2008.

> I despair of making you understand, for you who grew up among men not afraid of killing other men, nay, having practised that crime as other people practise an art, you have learnt from the selfsame men to frighten yourself with painted dolls and empty Arabic words. Reason is not a tyrannical God like Allah, or a bloodthirsty demon like Bhowanee; Reason does not speak in my ears but gives me ears to listen with…for Reason told me that in the land of Hindoostan all is built on the scaffold of superstitious faith. (Khair 27)

Khair calls out the role that Reason has played in priming the British public to assume the inferiority of Hindu and Muslim religions, those "superstitious" faiths based in an incomprehensible logic. What Captain Meadows also unwittingly reveals is his own regurgitation of hegemonic discourse as he explains, "Reason…gives me ears to listen with" and "Reason told me…all is built on the scaffold of superstitious faith," referring to the myriad channels of discourse that fuel his (incorrect) assumptions about Amir. Through metaphors of the auditory and visual, Khair makes obvious the third voice within this confession: the voice of the British empire. Thus, Captain Meadows undermines his own authority by explaining that he, too, believes in a God, ironically, very much like theirs: A God that tells them who is right and who is wrong, a God who demands that he and his compatriots kill in its name, a God that urges them to remain frightened by visual and sonic cues, those "dolls" and "empty…words," that prepare him to face the enemy. What begins as a critique of the thug's propensity for violence is then explained as a larger problem inherent to Islam and Hindusim that initiates a state of exception using the border to define the middle. When Captain Meadows describes Allah

as "tyrannical," he gestures toward the larger aim of imperialism seeking to unseat forms of existing cultural and political authority. In ventriloquizing Taylor's prosaic style, Khair obviates how *Confessions* participated in the desire to establish a secular Enlightenment rationality in India. This critique of *thuggee* as fanatical, characterized by symbolic, "illogical" deaths stemming from an extremist Islam, are familiar to a twenty-first century readership engrossed in necropolitical War on Terror discourse in which Orientalist-Religious discourse became globalized in service of the war, splitting the world into good and evil, civility and barbarism, modern and backward. Within this paradigm, progress and human rights hinge upon the ability to determine which Muslims be excluded to secure the survival of the larger project of a purportedly inclusive humanism[104].

Khair's fictional depiction of the confession as a mode of preparedness discourse speaks to an important connection between social science and literature, specifically between *Confessions*, nonfiction writing of the Thuggee Campaign, and Terrorism Studies. Even though jihadist attacks had occurred since the 1980's, there was relatively little scholarship on the subject until the attacks of 9/11. Frequently described as "out of nowhere," the attacks triggered academics in think tanks and educational institutions to define what terrorism is and where it came from. Scholars searched for a historical precedent to which they could frame their understanding of groups like the Taliban; this search unearthed ideas and discourses around nineteenth-century *thuggee* connecting

[104] El-Tayeb, Fatima. "Time Travelers and Queer Heterotopias: Narratives from the Muslim Underground." *The Germanic Review: Literature, Culture, Theory*. Vol. 88, 2013, pp. 305-319.

religion to radical violence. Perhaps most frequently cited amongst post 9/11 scholars was David C. Rapoport's 1983 article "Fear and Trembling: Terrorism in Three Religious Traditions."[105] Rapoport's argument was based in evidence from colonial sources, including Sleeman's *Ramaseeana: or, A vocabulary of the peculiar language used by the Thugs*. Rapoport claims that terrorism proceeds in waves of increasing intensity throughout history, with the fourth (and most virulent) "wave" characterized by religious ideology. His study concludes that, "…Because Hinduism provides no grounds for believing that the world can be transformed, the Thugs could neither perceive themselves nor could they be perceived as rebels" (673). The thugs are not to be conflated with anarchists or guerrilla fighters, nor are they to be seen as anti-colonial; Rather, it is the inherent flaws of the Hindu belief system and its predilection for symbolic deaths that need to be addressed. Rapoport adds that, "In Islam and Judaism, the potentialities for radical attacks on institutions are inherent in the ambiguity of unfulfilled divine promises, which no existing establishment can reconcile fully with its own dominance" (673). In War on Terror discourse, the terrorist, like the thug, sits at the intersection of a dual charge of criminality and fanaticism. Alberto Toscano's *Fanaticism: On the Uses of an Idea* argues that the accusation of fanaticism stems from "one-dimensional" Enlightenment thought that frames any unyielding political behavior with psychopathology. Rapoport's comments indicated that Islam can only be interpreted in

[105] Rapoport, David C. "Fear and Trembling: Terrorism in Three Religious Traditions." *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 78, no. 3, 1984, pp. 658–77. *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.2307/1961835. Accessed 17 Aug. 2022.

one way, but also more damagingly, that Islam has never been, and will never be, compatible to any form of contemporary government, and by extension with modernity itself (673). When Rapoport claims that Hinduism provides "no grounds for believing how the world can be transformed" and criticizes Islam's "unfulfilled divine promises," his argument becomes an overarching claim of cultural stagnation, foreclosing our ability to read *thugee* or jihadism as implicated in colonial or imperial context (673). In short, the accusation of fanaticism as it pertains to the thug or the terrorist formulates a way of seeing that ignores a legacy of colonial and imperial interference standing in the way of political sovereignty. Despite his attempt to explore Ameer's interiority, Taylor's *Confessions* replicates Sleeman's framing of the thug as unrepentant and ultimately unchangeable, a representation that served to justify Britain's need to curb a "native system of holy murder" (Rangarajan 1009). In contrast to Taylor and Sleeman, and in ways that undermine both preparedness discourse and assumptions about cultural stagnation, Khair's *Thing About Thugs* offers a counterpoint. At the conclusion of the novel, the narrator's voice returns to shape the closing scene of the novel depicting Amir confronting Lord Batterstone on his voyage to Africa. Amir, now disguised as a lascar, walks up to him: "I see Amir Ali look at Lord Batterstone, seasick and soul-weary. The sea is choppy; the wind is howling; the heavens press down on the earth, heavy with clouds. Lord Batterstone steadies himself against a sudden lurch and looks back at Amir Ali. He sees a lascar. He sees no story worth reading" (310). This is Amir's chance to exact revenge on Lord Batterstone for killing his beloved Jenny. This is his opportunity to strike down a powerful man responsible for spreading racist misinformation that has

indirectly placed Amir, his friends in London, and his family in India in jeopardy, in addition to many others. In this moment, they finally meet eye-to-eye. Revenge, in this moment, would hope to force Lord Batterstone to truly see and understand Amir – to recognize him as Captain Meadows' specimen. Instead, Lord Batterstone "sees a lascar," indicating that for Lord Batterstone, there is no more truth (310). Entrenched in his way of seeing Amir, and the qualities of the people Batterstone believes Amir represents, revenge becomes unsatisfactory, even contradictory. For Batterstone, a vengeful lascar is "no story worth reading," suggesting that what we invest in stories reflect the inherent power dynamics in how we interpret those stories. Stories reveal the power dynamics inherent to racialized ways of seeing and interpreting, forming into preparedness discourse when used to solidify military objectives.

Phrenology, Race, and The Circulation of Skulls

Despite Amir's presence as a figure who problematizes colonialist assumptions about race and religion, he remains constrained by the circuits of colonial knowledge production. Captain Meadows agrees to bring Amir from India to London in exchange for his exclusive confession and on the condition that Amir agree to be studied by the London Phrenological Society. Once in London, the precarity of Amir's life as a colonial subject is accentuated when Amir becomes accused of the serial decapitations that scandalize the city. Lord Batterstone, a powerful aristocrat and Meadows' fellow phrenologist, has been paying a middleman named John May to procure skulls of unique shape, size and deformity by graverobbing in East London. Batterstone takes these skulls and displays them to his Phrenology group, inaccurately claiming that they are really

from exotic places around the world. The horror of this practice intensifies when, to meet Batterstone's demand, May begins murdering the poor to procure new skulls, many of whom are recent immigrants from Britain's colonies. The sheer volume of stolen skulls is made manifest in the architecture of London itself: "…like the streets outside, this is a crowded graveyard, a busy graveyard, and often an anonymous graveyard. It is a graveyard that spills its secrets, so that a heavy downpour leaves a harvest of bones and skulls in the sludge…" (Khair 35). The body is taken from a poor neighborhood surrounding the cemetery that mirrors the decomposition of the body, the houses themselves "falling to pieces" and "slimy and stinking" (36). The gore of the disinterred bodies and the process of their preparation for show at the phrenological society makes visible otherwise unseen processes of imperial violence.

Within London city streets, the deaths are putrid, abject displays of something expulsed that should have remained interred. What their eruption onto the surface of city streets in London reveals is a class dynamic that bolsters the necropolitical dimensions of imperial contact. From the city of London to the domestic interior, we see the circulation of skulls clinging to May, from his family down to his clothes. John May attempts to do his bidding in the underground privacy of his domestic scullery, but the putrid formaldehyde seeps into his home and throughout his person (39). May himself feels absolved of guilt; for him, the decomposition of the skull and its cleaning are indicative of his successful climb into the middle class against the odds of his working-class birth. To that end, May does not "believe in such things as ghosts: he is a no-nonsense man, a self-made man" (42). To continue killing, May must necessarily avoid being haunted. To

be haunted would be to accept the figure of those who are poor, brown, foreign, and Other as part of himself.

Despite May's resistance, the murders of the forsaken people of London permeates, expressed through a gothic affect that emphasizes how colonialism is rotting the people of London through their complicity in its toll on human life. Khair's use of neo-Victorian gothic affect makes immediate and visceral the themes of a haunted generation striving to relieve themselves of a curse with Lord Batterstone the representation of a kind of aristocratic senility in his rapacious appetite for skulls. Manali Jain studies *The Thing About Thugs* through the lens of "Neo-Victorian" texts, a genre that has experienced increased popularity in the twenty-first century. Neo-Victorian texts, according to Jain, are useful to the cultural imagination not because of their urge to "revise" or "fix" the atrocities of the period, but in how they utilize the historical past to provide "afterimages" that can be "imaginatively re-created" in the present (Mitchell 7).

Lord Batterstone exhibits these skulls to prove that looking at the lines and demarcations in them proves a "certain kind of Asiatic or Negroid cranium…will inevitably cause this…man to commit murder" whereas the Caucasian skull, by contrast, has a brain that "excels in the countervailing special organs of ideality, conscientiousness, amativeness and mirthfulness" (Khair 99). The desire to have a physical marker of difference clearly delineating the propensity toward violence of the "Asiatic or Negroid" race works to solidify the dominion of England over colonized spaces around the world. Khair's parroting of sources from the nineteenth century describing this same form of scientific thinking that is heavily racialized emphasizes how the circulation of information creates

truth, in so far as truth aligns with humanist reason, rather than the factuality that such knowledge only proves the racist motivations of its beholders.

Khair's representation of Lord Batterstone's obsession with phrenological differences between Asiatics, Negroids, and Caucasians can also be read as a colonial-era version of Samuel P. Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" thesis, which produces a racial and cultural dichotomy of the modern world under the dubious notion of civilizational unity and conflict. Political scientists like Patrick Sookhdeo and Lee Harris argue that this clash of civilizations helped produce the war against Jihadist terrorism because the Western world positions the Middle East as anti-modern and imagines Islam to be its ball-and-chain[106] [107]. On the other side, the West represents modernity and its necessary global capitalism, projected as the sole route to meaningful democracy. Such clashing dichotomies, whether based on skulls or civilizations, are part and parcel of the political and economic sanctions extending from the nineteenth century all the way to our present time. Khair obviates the necropolitical process of torture, disappearance, and detention that form the state of exception by staging Amir Ali's reception in London against the backdrop of a surging interest in phrenology and the vibrant trade of human skulls that fuel this purported science. Accordingly, Khair represents how racist

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[106] Sookhdeo, Patrick. *Ideas Matter: How to Undermine the Extremist Ideology Behind Al Qaeda*. In Toward a Grand Strategy against Terrorism, 1st ed.; Harmon, C.C., Pratt, A.N., Gorka, S., Eds.; McGraw-Hill: New York, NY,
USA, 2011; pp. 228–251. ISBN 978-0-07-352779-6.

[107] Harris, Lee. *Civilization and Its Enemies: The Next Stage of History*, 1st ed.; Free Press: New York, NY, USA, 2004; ISBN 13 9781451655339.

epistemologies work in the name of science, pointing to the necropolitical underpinnings of the global economic system responsible for keeping the War on Terror in motion.

The procurement, transportation, and dissemination of skulls charts global paths of labor, slavery, and trade linked to colonial and imperial strongholds. To emphasize the global nature of such necropolitical inner workings, the novel concludes with allusions to Lord Batterstone's future endeavors. As his "European collection is almost complete," Batterstone intends to head to India and then to "the Congo in darkest Africa," a phrase conjuring nineteenth century colonial discourse that represented Africa as treacherous, uncivilized, and void of history (178). Even Daniel Oates, a journalist for *The London Times*, describes his newest assignment: "to write about the murderous cults of superstition and irrationality" for a new collection titled "Crimes from the Colonies" in which he would "start with places in Africa, then move to India and finally, perhaps, go to Canada and the Caribbean" (249-250). Participation in the necropolitical framework surrounding thuggee was not limited to the aristocratic class, but rather enjoined the cooperation of the working, middle, and upper classes to maintain its continued functionality. John May and Lord Batterstone refer to the skulls they procure as "the Thing," attempting to abstract the violence they commit. However, their skulls represent a larger Imperial economy reliant upon the subjugation of colonial and postcolonial subjects that make possible the propagation of a secular, Enlightenment rationality; those qualities of "ideality," "conscientiousness" and "amativeness" akin to claims of tolerance, progressiveness, and freedom that liberalism encompasses and linking them to larger modes of political relation providing mutual benefit and recognition between other

likeminded nations. In terms of the War on Terror, that means pressuring other Westernized nations to support and participate in war efforts themselves by providing terrorist suspects to American forces or imprisoning those suspects against in America's "global gulag"[108] (116). Uday Singh Mehta's seminal *Liberalism and Empire* writes that the "urge" of imperial conquest is intrinsic to liberalism, a desire Mehta links the ways in which the philosophy of liberalism, as described by John Locke and J.S. Mill, exemplify the "cosmopolitanism of reason" that delineates the familiar from the strange – the "the generalities that inform the reasonable, the useful, the knowledgeable, and the progressive" and which form the system against which all "strange" experiences may be classified and compared[109] (20). The. U.S. government's claim that the threat posed by terrorist groups is unique and therefore justifies the use of unconventional tactics of suppression is not new. Thugs were similarly outlined as "stateless" and, at the same time, bound to a specific "caste" that justified their acquisition and punishment "on association rather than individual acts" (Rangarajan 1013). After 9/11, rhetoric about the inherent violence in the religious practices of Islam recirculated, making causal links between the entire religion and the "extreme" (strange) acts of violence; primarily referencing suicide bombings. To be a terrorist, as to be a thug, required only one's association with the activity of terrorism to be criminal themselves – from housing a suspected terrorist to providing supplies, arms, or intelligence. The international

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[108] McCoy, Alfred W. *A Question of Torture: CIA Interrogation, from the Cold War to the War on Terror*. Metropolitan Books, 2006.

[109] Mehta, Uday Singh. *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought*. U of Chicago P. 1999.

enactment of counterterrorism measures like those employed in the Anti-Thugee campaign made possible by globalization have furthered the development of "deep states" in countries looped into the hunt for terrorists, a relationship between terrorist groups and governments producing what Christine Fair helpfully defines as "over-developed security institutions which dominate domestic and international affairs," in this case, within Pakistan[110] (9). We can therefore read the suppression of thugs and the extralegal efforts employed to curtail the practice of imperial and liberal modes of expansion whereby subjects such as the thug and terrorist are seen as both outside the state and yet pervasive to it; their ambivalent presence and criminalization serves as justification to expand the territory of imperial control.

Conclusion

The Thing About Thugs provides a unique vantage point from which to observe how War on Terror discourse can work in and through the production of knowledge as it intersects with a variety of epistemological frameworks, including literature, social science, and history. By ventriloquizing Taylor to produce accusations of fanaticism, Khair shows us how, borrowing from Edward Said, "institutionalizing the denial and avoidance of history" results in "…a kind of metaphysical purity of horror" (Toscano 20). The title of the novel itself suggests that what we know about thugs is as conclusive as depressions in the skull are to criminality. Raza Kolb helpfully argues that fiction writers of the Global South have come to overdetermine the shaping of political thought; in the case of Kashmir, Salman Rushdie's depiction of Kashmir as the "exemplary case of a

[110] Fair, Christine. *In Their Own Words: Understanding Lashkar-e-Tayyaba*. Oxford UP, 2018.

raging plague of contemporary Islamism" (230). In a similar vein, DeLillo and others have overdetermined the cultural zeitgeist surrounding the immediate post-9/11 years. Calls for a more global literature addressing the War on Terror have made important inroads to providing nuanced looks at America's use of power as an imperial venture, but these authors, too, are confined within American or British publishers. Critical discussion surrounding the powers and limitations of empathy in depicting the War on Terror are thus limited, despite their attempts, because it is empathy confined by the Western eye. Khair uniquely positions his narrative at the intersection of Western philosophy, literature, and science through metafiction by utilizing canonical British texts to highlight overlapping histories of preparedness discourse. Portraying the result of such discourse, in the case of both the pursuit of the thug and of the terrorist, in the circulation of bodies makes real the consequences of an "all for one and one for all" narrative inciting a state of exception.

Chapter Four

Towards a Postsecular Transnational Feminism: Rajia Hassib's *A Pure Heart*, Fatima Bhutto's *Runaways* and the War On Terror

"Our terrorists, whether in the United States, India, or elsewhere, are… doubly horrifying: they are malignant, to be sure, but they also somehow seem to be symptoms of the deep malaise in our own social and political bodies. They cannot easily be exorcised as evil spirits or simply amputated like bad limbs. They force a deeper engagement with our states, our world, and ourselves" - Arjun Appadurai[111]

In chapters one through three of this dissertation, I addressed the varied strategies used by global anglophone authors to shift the conversation of post-9/11 political and cultural belonging away from a national or territory-bound framework visible in an earlier generation of works by Salman Rushdie, amongst others, towards an interpretation of belonging that draws attention to larger sociopolitical forms of power responsible for the creation of racial, ethnic, and religious difference. Issa and Ali's embrace of their cultural and spiritual background resists the notion that secularism is inherent to progress and modernity. Their depictions defy the post-9/11 resurgence of neo-Orientalized Islamic characters in popular culture that characterized "Muslim-looking" men as feeble and emasculate, on the one hand, or deceptive, sexually frustrated, and bloodthirsty on the other. In doing so, Shukri and Khair effectively turn the Orientalist mirror toward the Western-dominant audience in hopes of stirring the reader's recognition of what Edward Said termed the "post-colonial gaze." Global anglophone authors whose texts were situated outside of the United States emphasize the precarity of the Muslim subject versus the memorialization of grief at work in domestic literature. Feelings of betrayal, fear, and

[111] Appadurai, Arjun. *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger*. Duke UP, 2006.

anticipation at the forefront of these works, both eliciting the sensation of being hunted and haunted, are recognizable aspects of post-9/11 works from approximately 2010-2020, such as Laila Lalami's *Secret Son* (2010), Karan Mahajan's *Association of Small Bombs* (2016), Fatima Bhutto's *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon* (2015), Bilal Tanweer's *The Scatter Here is Too Great* (2014), and Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire* (2017). Women, in these respective novels, play pivotal roles as collaborators and supporters; however, they do not depict Muslim or Muslim-appearing women as the central point of focus. Issa and Ali's greatest allies and confidants, for example, are white-passing and explicitly non-Muslim women. This chapter evidences how Rajia Hassib's *A Pure Heart* (2019) and Fatima Bhutto's *Runaways* (2020) productively center the experiences of Muslim women in order to complicate Western assumptions of the Islamic female "Other" as oppressed by a totalizing Islam and complicit in patriarchal norms. I show how employing a uniquely transnational feminist lens helps illuminate the ways in which the novels' geographic loci and postcolonial historical positioning effectively incorporate intersectional difference; this in turn produces a more expansive way of understanding the social, historical, and ideological underpinnings of universalizing forms of patriarchal fundamentalism that are anti-queer and anti-women.

Representations of Muslim Women in Transnational Post-9/11 Literature

A Pure Heart responds to War on Terror discourse by enmeshing jihadist characters within complex familial dynamics from transnational metropolitan spaces[112]. I

[112] There is a very similar dynamic in Laila Lalami's *Secret Son* (2009). In *Secret Son*, conflict between Youssef and his mother Rachida centers on Youssef's initial desire to emulate his estranged father, a wealthy businessman that owns a hotel in metropolitan Casablanca catering to American tourists. After

read the use of realism as described in chapter one to discuss how global anglophone novels that grapple with the War on Terror utilize the genre to complicate Anglo-American renderings of jihadism. Aaron Chandler lays the groundwork for the domestic dynamics of post-9/11 realism, describing how the genre works to portray massive cultural shifts through characters' interpersonal relationships[113] (261). In terms of the post-9/11 canon more broadly, character portrayals are intended to engender sympathetic responses. As described in Chapter One, O'Neill's *Netherland* and Don Delillo's *Falling Man* represent the trouble with centering the experiences of white male protagonists in New York City. The geographic space of New York participates in the routing of sympathy toward the recuperation of liberal ideologies threatened by the attacks, making the portrayal of their jihadist characters one-dimensional. Where DeLillo utilizes this brand of realism to stage conflict between liberalism and American identity through a "failed" masculinity that assumes the trajectory of infidelity, divorce, and reconciliation, Hassib utilizes transnational movement between America and Egypt to outline warring universalisms: America's imperial liberalism versus jihadists' fundamentalist form of

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attending a protest against the Morroccan government's increase of bus fare that makes Youssef's ability to work unmanageable, he participates in a protest in Casablanca that spawns a sequence of events leading to his involvement in jihadist group *Al Hizb*, the party. It is through Youssef's engagement with metropolitan Casablanca in his father's hotel that he realizes how the circulation of foreign money produces a sanitized, Orientalized version of Morocco that Youssef comes to understand as the reason for his mother's life of poverty and his lack of job opportunities. For both Lalami's Youssef and Hassib's Saaber, the turn to jihadism is a form of anti-Western political mobilization rather than religious fanaticism. In doing so, Hassib and Lalami's texts work to discursively separate Islamic faith from fanaticism by rejecting the notion that faith can be objectively studied in acts of terrorism, pointing instead towards the ruinous conditions wrought by global capitalism.

[113] Gourley, James. Terrorism and Temporality in the Works of Thomas Pynchon and Don DeLillo. United Kingdom, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013.

Islam more specifically known as *wahhabism*[114]. Elleke Boehmer's *Stories of Women: Gender and Narrative in the Postcolonial Nation* is instructive to the following argument about *A Pure Heart* and *Runaways* for its conceptual framework which argues that literature embodies nations. In *Stories of Women*, Boehmer points specifically to how postcolonial texts privilege race over gender through depictions of collective belonging in methods as obvious as the predilection for patriarchal metaphors like "father of the nation" that neglected to acknowledge the role of women outside of supporting roles to their male protagonists[115]. Of particular significance to this chapter is Boehmer's notion of the discourse surrounding nation as a "family drama" in which representative authority concerning nationality, subjectivity, and sexuality are at stake. Unlike early post-9/11 literature from approximately 2002-2008 that problematically used a nation-based dream of reunification as the conduit for empathic connection, Hassib's novel seeks alternative possibilities by positioning the characters' interactions against the backdrop of the

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[114] Timothy Mitchell's chapter "McJihad" from *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil* explores how the West relies upon conservative Islamic regimes to remain the flow of oil. Starting in the 18th Century, Wahhabism is based on the idea of *tawhid*, or the oneness of God. American Oil companies were converts to Wahhabism because they depended on and supported a "unitarian" Islam to operate Arabia. In 1930, the leader of what would become Saudi Arabia, Abd al-Aziz Ibn Saud, counteracted the lack of tourism to Mecca during the Great Depression with oil negotiations with the U.S. Harry St. John Philby was a powerful interlocuter and American businessman in the region – he converted to Islam and was made comparisons between Puritan conservatism and Islamic conservatism carrying the powers to create. In the 1960's OPEC is created to maintain scarcity. In 1930, when oil in Saudi Arabia was first in negotiations with the U.S., no empire was strong enough to take over – so instead they set up a colonizing enterprise, or "oligopoly" in the vein of the East India Company, wherein "companies were given exclusive rights and sovereign power to monopolize trade in particular goods for specific territories" (207). It was also developed in the era of British colonial expansion. Meanwhile the Taliban was inspired by the Deobandi School and Salafism, which inspired what is often considered to be a proto-terrorist group, the Muslim Brotherhood. So, when the U.S. built alliances with the Taliban, they were also putting into motion a form of conservative political and social power in order to enable the building of a 1,000-mile pipeline.

[115] Boehmer, Elleke. *Stories of Women: Gender and Narrative in the Postcolonial Nation*. Manchester UP, 2005.

evolving 2011 Egyptian Revolution and the Arab Spring more broadly. These conditions are embodied by protagonist Rose's troubled relationship to her American husband, Mark, and to anti-Western modes of spiritual and cultural solidarity, embodied by Rose's sister, Gameela. Rose's ensuing inner revolution is marked by nuanced political, religious and cultural sites of identification that defy the pull of patriarchal universalisms surrounding her.

Much has been written on the significance of "appearing Muslim" as a woman in post-9/11 cultural space[116]. Rightfully, these works were concerned with the stakes of representation for Muslim women viewed as oppressed for their observation of the *hijab*, *niqab*, *chador*, or *burqa*. These analyses focused primarily visual markers of Muslim women and how those ways of seeing played into imperial fantasies surrounding American intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq. For the purposes of this chapter, however, I am most interested in post-9/11 global anglophone novels centering the experiences of women for whom Muslim identity, in both a cultural and religious sense, provide fulfillment amidst the uncertainty and anxiety caused by the War on Terror. Saba Mahmood's watershed anthropological study *Politics of Piety*: *The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* cleaves an important boundary around female Muslim subjectivity by challenging poststructuralist scholarship that delimits the notion of agency to "subversion" or the "resignification of social norms" based on imaginaries of secular

[116] Evelyn Alsutany consolidates these voices nicely in her *Arabs and Muslims in the Media: Race and Representation After 9/11* by NYU Press, 2012.

liberalism[117] (14). Accordingly, Mahmood highlights the ways in which women are excluded from contemporary revisioning of spiritually-informed political subjectivity in the twenty-first century. This lack of agency afforded to Muslim women characters is often insidious. For example, critically acclaimed novel and film *Towelhead* (2005) by Alicia Erian is about a young hijabi girl growing up in Texas. The novel defied the conventions of the traditional U.S. ethnic bildungsroman which typically charts a character's emergence from the safe and accepting domestic sphere into the larger world of racial prejudice[118]. Instead, *Towelhead* charted the protagonist's journey into a safer and more enlightened world in order to escape her abusive Iraqi father at home. Erian's novel aligned with both secular and neo-Orientalist stereotypes that portrayed Arab men as controlling, repressive and "backward" to position the United States as enlightened by contrast[119].

Similar in transnational scope to *A Pure Heart* and *Runaways*, Kamila Shamsi's *Home Fire* (2017) is a thought-provoking and popular work of post-9/11 literature that reimagines Sophocles' *Antigone* through the tragic fates of three siblings spiritually adrift after the deaths of their mother and father. Their father was a jihadist who eventually died en route to Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp. His legacy lives on through the only male offspring, Parvaiz, who attempts to join ISIS but eventually changes his mind, a decision

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[117] Mahmood, Saba. *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton UP, 2005.

[118] Alan Ball, Thomas Newman, and Randall Poster. *Towelhead*. USA, 2007.

[119] Amine, Laila. "Alicia Erian's *Towelhead*: The New Face of Orientalism In The US Ethnic Bildungsroman." *College Literature: A Journal of Critical Literary Studies* 45.4, Fall 2018, Johns Hopkins University Press and West Chester University, 2018.

that eventually costs him his life and the lives of his two sisters. The novel has garnered considerable critical attention for its portrayal of Isma, the oldest female sibling and hijabi Muslim, who is constantly surveilled by the British state and public. The opening scene of the novel is Isma being detained and interviewed by British police in Heathrow Airport for wearing a hijab, the first incident of many in the novel in which Isma is victimized by institutionalized Islamophobia. However, she is also victim to the jihadist movements that her brother and father become entangled in, leaving Isma and her sister to make sense of the patriarchal forms of fundamentalism that surround them. *Home Fire* and *Towelhead* encompass the rather limited scope for addressing the experiences of Muslim women in post-9/11 fiction by revisiting the premise that the veil functions as an object representing their oppression. Their scope leaves little room for understanding how Islam might function as a source of political and social agency rather than a mere representation of patriarchal rule. In sum, post-9/11 literature centering the experiences of Muslim women tends to focus on the way that Muslim women are visually surveilled, often depicting them as collateral damage to the violent propensities of the men that surround them. Doing so casts them as vectors of empathy, focusing more on damage control than on revolutionary possibilities. Hassib and Bhutto circumvent this propensity by emphasizing less the way that their protagonists physically look and are observed by others and more on the ideological fissures occurring within their diasporic transnational domestic spaces. This ideological battleground concerns the placement of religion in politics that makes possible an intersectional feminist lens that questions the salience of the nation and the historical narratives that constitute it.

Patriarchal Universalisms in *A Pure Heart*

A Pure Heart begins with a fictional newspaper article from the *New York Times* describing a terrorist bombing responsible for killing nine people at a security checkpoint in Cairo. Barren prose describes a terrorist who, acting alone, denotates himself at a security checkpoint. No other details regarding the victims of the attack or the motivation behind it are given; however, the article explains that this attack forms but one node in a constellation "of attacks [that]…have occurred sporadically since Egypt's 2011 revolution" (3). The subtle linkage between widespread national unrest against an authoritarian regime and "radical Islamic violence" underscores the politically fraught atmosphere that underpins the domestic dealings of the novel. The article closes with the rather foreboding promise that the Egyptian government has, in response, "tightened security measures" (3). The inclusion of the article, titled "Suicide Bomber Kills 9 in Egypt," reminds the reader of the commonplace keywords of War On Terror discourse. Such coverage of terrorism, by the time of the article's publication in 2016, would be read as commonplace and largely unremarkable. In doing so, Hassib places the lives of her characters within the larger geopolitical relationships that exist outside of their domestic lives. By the time the reader has reached the conclusion of the novel, we might reflect on how the brevity of the report belies the gravity of its outcome to the people who both died and survived it. These events are not merely situated within a larger frame, but a core component of it. While the threads tying the characters to this mass killing remain hidden for much of the text, the use of conventional journalistic reportage is likely to provoke feelings in a Western readership regarding terrorist attacks that are familiar

and, for the most part, unchallenged in Western media: namely, that "radical Islamic violence" is unpredictable and unreasonable.

In a state of frenetic retrospection, we meet Rose traveling from the United States to Egypt to resolve the mystery of her sister's unexpected death. Rose, the central protagonist, is an Egyptian expatriate living in New York City with her husband Mark in an increasingly distanced marriage described as an "East-meets-West arrangement" (14). Her personal journey is marked by the inability to untangle the histories and religious positionalities that she embodies. Her knowledge of Ancient Egyptian history informs how she negotiates the relationship between the secular beliefs her parents espoused and the cultural significance of Islam. These cultural and religious negotiations are so frequent as to verge on a kind of neuroses: "…[Rose] wishes she had used honey to sweeten her mother's tea instead of sugar, because the healing powers of honey were mentioned in the Qur'an, and because honey has antibacterial properties, and because, inexplicably, she remembers a papyrus in the British Museum (9). This method of attributing her actions and decisions to different strands of history clouds her ability to identify meaningfully with either her Egyptian or American cultural background through a satisfying resolution. Egypt and America, as contemporary nations, feel distinctly and disturbingly at odds within her consciousness. An Egyptologist working on her dissertation, Rose's preoccupation with ancient Egyptian burial rites interlaces each chapter of the book. Her interpersonal relationships are frequently invaded by intrusive thoughts about ancient Egyptian theology and practices commemorating the dead. The mental fogginess and grogginess induced by travel between Egypt and the United States

informs the negotiations of language, relationships, and, ultimately, the sense of "home" that she struggles to solidify in herself. Put succinctly, Rose desires to identify culturally with Egypt, but she finds she can only incorporate an Egypt of the distant past into her identity. Of the Empire State Building, she explains she "always had a soft spot for [it]…like the temples of the Pharaohs, but she has fallen for One World Trade Center, too…which again, seem to her like glorious, modern pyramids. She loves that building, but it's a guilt-ridden love that she hardly allows herself because she feels that this site should evoke nothing but sorrow. She looks away" (13). The sense of reverence connecting the World Trade Center to the temples of the Pharaohs suggests the totality of knowledge, culture, and empire housed in the architectural achievements around her. The World Trade Center is enclosed in a state of affective untouchability that alters its temporal capacity, enshrouding it in timelessness; a reservoir of grief that effectively contains the sense of national belonging keeping Rose from feeling at "home" in New York City. Hassib gestures towards a lineage of post-9/11 literature that struggles to address the afterlife of the attacks on the World Trade Center, particularly when depicted in the same physical location. Rose feels confined in her alienation and foreignness even though she considers herself to be secular and progressive. Despite her own identificatory desires toward America, she feels perpetually spurned for being "Muslim-appearing." The desire to "belong" to America metaphorically portrayed through the double entendre of "falling" for the World Trade Center, suggesting a kind of prohibitive cathexis rooted in her inability to make the Islam fit within her personal life. As Rose "looks away" from the World Trade Center, she also physically moves away, attuning to another space.

Rose's occupation as an Egyptologist fortifies her identification with Egypt's ancient history in lieu of her ability to identify with its Islamic present. Studying the narratives of ancient Egyptian stories provide the framework for Rose to process feelings of guilt, resentment, and sorrow surrounding the death of her sister, Gameela. Gameela's decision to remain in Egypt with Rose's parents, coupled with Gameela's newfound identification with Islam, created a tension unresolved at the time of her sudden death. In one scene, Rose reflects simultaneously on the recent death of her sister and the story of *Sinuhe*, an ancient Egyptian official who decided to leave Egypt to ensure his own safety after hearing rumor of his King's death. While *Sinuhe* spends his life elsewhere, he yearns consistently to return to his homeland. Finally, as an old man, he is allowed to do so after being invited to return by the new King[120]. Rose explains to herself inwardly that "Sinuhe's tale is one of a failed immigration—he returned to Egypt, found a happy ending in his homeland under the grace of a kind Pharaoh. Why didn't his immigration work? Why did ancient Egyptians cling so closely to home?" (106). What makes, according to Rose, an immigration "work" is ostensibly the complete assimilation into the foreign country. Whereas the promise of multiculturalism lies in a sense of solidarity amongst other contemporary ex-pats, particularly in New York City, Rose has not found that community. Sinuhe's story is supposed to inspire the fulfillment of the hero's journey, but Rose reads it as a foregone conclusion to be dreaded. Returning to the

[120] The tale of Sinuhe has had a wide and continuous impact on Egyptian and other cultures. Scholarship continues the rich interpretations to be drawn from the tale's depiction of Sinuhe's struggle to find a sense of home, a fitting story for inclusion in Hassib's work, particularly as it also demonstrates how the discipline of Egyptology initiated by French colonialism continues to circulate in discourse.

homeland, for her, inspires feelings of failure. Rose's internal fission suggests what Sandhya Shukla has helpfully defined as a combination of "postcolonialism, racial and ethnic formation, and globalization [which] might be seen as three kinds of structuring narratives" that diasporic subjects both engage with and are affected by[121] (553). The identificatory resonance between Rose and pre-Islamic Egyptian history is central to the conflict that prohibits her from mending the fraught relationship with her sister. As an Egyptologist, Rose is surrounded by Western interpretations of Egyptian history and culture. As someone born and raised in Egypt, Rose stands apart from her colleagues; as such, she represents a shift within the discipline that seeks to cleave its associations with Orientalist Egyptology of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Studies of Egypt by academics and scientists ordered by Napoleon Bonaparte began in the late eighteenth century. The production of knowledge institutionalized through Egyptology, Oriental Studies, and later, Middle East Studies, as Edward Said described masterfully in *Orientalism*, disseminated racialized biases housed within quasi-scientific narratives that promoted the expansion of empire. By the mid-1980's, scholarship emerged that called for an "indigenous Egyptology" written by Egyptians rather than Western interlocuters. Scholarly discussions of the period centered on the lack of indigenous Egyptian participation in the study of Egyptology. Scholars cited resistance to "Islamic identity" that "tended to crowd out feelings of kinship or curiosity" according to scholars like

[121] Shukla, Sandhyra. "Locations for South Asian Diasporas." *Annual Review of Anthropology,* no.30, 2001,551-72.

Donald M. Reid[122] (233). This position draws attention to the ways in which colonialism formulated knowledge production around academic disciplines, shaping their fields apart from, if not against, the contributions of Muslim thinkers; a point that supports Edward Said's assertion about how anxiety surrounding the threat of Islamic Empire informed scholarly and popular discourse. Rose's experience echoes what David Spurr describes in *The Rhetoric of Empire* as "the ultimate aim of colonial discourse," to "dominate by inclusion and domestication rather than by a confrontation which recognizes the independent identity of the Other"[123] (32). As the result of being raised in a secular household with parents who encouraged Rose to leave Egypt in pursuit of Westernized notions of achievement, success, and access, and attending Western secular institutions, Rose carries an ingrained sense of distrust in Islam as a form of religious institutionalization.

Reading the tale of *Sinuhe* as a "failed immigration" transposes Rose's own unexamined experience as an unwanted or unwelcome "Muslim-appearing" immigrant after 9/11 onto the experiences of Sinuhe living under a former empire. As Said describes in *Culture and Imperialism*, Egyptian temples and palaces were depicted as empty, desolate, and entirely apart from contemporary Egyptian society. It was therefore important for the British and French to translate and enliven these artifacts to replace the

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[122] Reid, Donald M. "Indigenous Egyptology: The Decolonization of a Profession?" *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 105, no. 2, 1985, pp. 233–46. JSTOR, https://doi.org/10.2307/601703. Accessed 10 Jun. 2022.

[123] Spurr, David. *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration*. Duke University Press, 1993.

"empty and lifeless" state of ancient Egyptian relics to their proper meaning. This also entailed transfer and transportation of these objects to Europe in the pursuit of knowledge (118). Rose's desire to make these artifacts "speak," and to thereby answer her own curious feelings of emptiness despite achieving the normative standards of success for a diasporic subject living in the United States are complicated by the geopolitical power dynamics that overshadow her work. Hassib evidences how The War On Terror, oftentimes broadcast in media discourse as a war happening everywhere except within the United States, is only truly external to domestic space for some. Until her devout Muslim sister's sudden death in a suicide bombing, Rose managed her anxieties through a deep investment in Egyptology. Conjured by that same sense of grief is an attendant guilt at Rose's inability to be physically present in Egypt; if Rose had been physically there, perhaps she would have been able to forecast the "signs" of Gameela's changing nature. Haunted, Rose dreams "that everywhere she goes, the walls are covered with pharaonic reliefs, images of people in profile, among them, of course, Gameela" (15). Rose upholds Gameela's image in her mind not only as a sister, but as an authentic Egyptian, someone who chose not to emigrate and stay true to her roots, reinforcing Rose's own concerns that she is no longer culturally part of Egypt because of her decision to live and work in America, a decision she knows that Gameela disapproved of. While perceived as deeply personal, Rose's experience echoes the larger impacts of a nation-wide Islamophobia that, coupled with a sense of diasporic longing for home within her domestic life, produces anxieties about how she is perceived.

Rose is often quite literally caught between the divergent beliefs of Gameela and Mark, forming a system of competing loyalties that intensifies her desire to find "home," a term that comes to act as a metaphor for ideological acceptance rather than physical location. Rose's husband Mark is a middle-class Anglo-American male that represents the pitfalls of progressive neoliberalism in addressing the multivalent impacts of the War On Terror across the world. Before marrying, Mark became interested in Rose's work as a female Egyptologist working within a male-dominated field. He creates a premise for meeting her by creating a story about gender relations for the newspaper he works for as a journalist. Mark has a firmly engrained sense of righteousness rooted in his conviction that he is capable, as a journalist, of being objective in the pursuit of justice. Like Rose, Mark gives his identity meaning and dimension through his work, imbuing it with the ability to manifest specific interpersonal outcomes: "The article had been the reason he met her, married her, followed her back to the U.S. when she got accepted to Columbia" (211). Seeing Rose at an excavation site of a pyramid in Egypt, he remarks that she was "a solitary petite woman with a mass of black hair…her arms crossed and feet planted firmly apart." He watches her conversing tensely with a male colleague "for minutes before calmly raising one palm and holding it up in front of his face" (210). Mark is intrigued by the way she defies his expectations of how an Egyptian woman should act; expecting subservience, he finds assertiveness. As their relationship progresses, Mark becomes converts to Islam for their marriage, an act he sees as a symbolic sign of his conversion into Egyptian culture and the culmination of his beliefs in an all-encompassing sense of justice:

> "Mark had imagined he was not only challenging the narrative that separated people in different social classes, races, religions, and ethnicities, but building his own narrative, finding a theory…that, in its universality, could be embraced by all, one that did not abide by rules of a certain religion or culture but that rather followed a higher moral code that applied to everyone equally" (210-211).

While Mark's desire to find a "universality…embraced by all" is rooted in altruism, it also betrays a solipsistic position reminiscent of Western humanitarianism by seeking a "higher moral code" rooted in a sense of secular, individualized notion of what equality is and how it will be applied. Nasser Hussein's crucial *The Jurisprudence of Emergency Colonialism and the Rule of Law* considers the place of humanitarian crises within colonial and imperial rule, citing from Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire*, which argues that the notion of a universal humanity ironically also generates its own exceptions to that moral position which is justified by the appeal to justice[124](144). Hussein directly addresses the tensions between the concept of individual liberty and the sovereignty of the State, pointing to the ways in which the War On Terror has intensified this colonial-era process of maintaining an infinite State of Exception in order to maintain control over certain parts of the world[125]. Rose pushes back against Mark's insistence that

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[124] Hussain, Nasser. *The Jurisprudence of Emergency: Colonialism and the Rule of Law*. University of Michigan Press, 2019. Negri, Antonio, and Hardt, Michael. *Empire*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2001.

[125] Melissa Lee Miller describes in "The Imperial Feminine: Victorian Women Travelers in Egypt," that the narratives by Egyptologists in the nineteenth century performed more as autobiographical narratives rather than historical. These quasi-scientific reports demonstrated for the reader ways of seeing Arabs that contributed to the maintenance of colonial order. Within this body of travel literature more broadly, the role of the Arab female is particularly subject to the sympathies and ire of the Western woman. As Miller describes, "Not just the white woman, but, by extension, the world, is a potential victim to this image of the

converting to Islam will produce the desired effect of becoming Egyptian, challenging Mark for not having faith in the religion he professes to respect amongst all others:

> "I've read about every single major religion in the world. I have long ago concluded that, at the end of the day, all religions are the same, just as all people are the same. You want to know if I'm certain that God exists and that Mohammed is his prophet? No one can be certain of this. This is the definition of belief—to think that something is true without having proof. Do I think it's true? Sure. Why not?...And while I'm being honest, I should probably tell you that I would be just as open to being Buddhist or Hindu or Baha'i… (Hassib 63)

Rose's responses to Mark's profession of love and faith worry her on a multitude of levels; for one, she expresses concern about his ability to fit into her Egyptian family because, as she had been told throughout her life, interfaith marriages were not permitted when a Muslim woman intended to marry a non-Muslim man (61). She also fears the social and interpersonal ostracization she faces by not abiding by the patriarchal hegemonic norm (62). Where once Rose found her husband's critical view of the world around him freeing, she has become frustrated by what she calls his "impartial morality" (Hassib 60). Mark's lack of a faith-based belief goes quickly from being freeing to confining to Rose: "He had a marvelous ability to jump cultures seamlessly…Mark held moral stances. Fixed stances" (60). As a journalist, Mark's "objectivity" also reads as a willful ignorance on the larger implications of unacknowledged privilege, a willful

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Arab female which conflates racial and gendered anxieties into an agent of 'trickery, subtlety, and artifice" (309). The continuation of racialized visual markers have extended into law once again through the judicial precedents wrought by the War on Terror.

ignorance that speaks to U.S. exceptionalism. In marrying Mark, Rose sees herself leaving one patriarchal system for another.

Transnational Feminism and Faith

In their youth, Rose and Gameela shared a close-knit relationship within a household "as fervently devoted to its secularism as any religious fundamentalist was to God" (69). When Gameela "magically, instantaneously" began to wear a *hijab* and to eschew attachments to Western forms of media and popular culture, a gulf begins to separate Rose and her parents from Gameela (70). Gameela's parents are most disturbed, seeing their daughter through a Westernized lens that associates Islam with differences in class, privilege, and overall access to modernity, explaining to Rose that: "…she [Gameela] looked like a peasant, that such backward traditions were not for people of their class and education" (104). Juxtaposed with the more stringent belief systems of her parents and her sister, Rose is diminished by her in-betweenness, a fact exacerbated by her emigration to the United States:

> Rose, too, considered herself religious, but she suspected Gameela did not believe that. Rose still prayed five times a day most days. She still fasted the entire month of Ramadan. Her religiousness, though, was a part of her whole, not the center of her being, and she was happy with that. It was precisely because she was religious that she refused to believe that God, the all-merciful, all-knowing God, would hang her by her feet and let every exposed inch of her skin burn in the fires of hell as punishment for her failure to wear the hijab, as the man on her sister's cassette had claimed. (Hassib 104-105)

Rose understands her faith as distinct from other political, social, and class-based positionalities, "part of her whole," in contrast to what she perceives of Gameela's experience of faith as "the center of her being." She imagines Gameela's faith permeating every dimension of her social and cultural experience, expressing a secular anxiety that seeks to cleave religion from processes of the public sphere. Neither Rose nor the reader understand, until Gameela's narration takes over the latter half of the book, that Gameela's participation in the Egyptian revolution is responsible for producing her shift to a more radical spiritual and political activism. When *A Pure Heart* shifts narrative perspectives to enfold Gameela, we are presented with a much more nuanced understanding of how her religious sense of self develops in response to her parents' secular values:

> "They, like many upper- and middle-class Egyptians, were conditioned to see all things Western as superior, a version of Stockholm syndrome often manifested en masse in postcolonial societies. They were also conditioned to crave the approval of their peers, to mold their lives to fit into what other well-to-do Egyptians deemed suitable for people of their rank…She tried to summon the compassion that, in the previous months, she kept reminding herself to feel toward them. But she could not get over the bitterness of knowing that they could never understand her, never see that those classist, self-loathing attitudes were among the main forces that drove her toward embracing a religion that promised equality, that did not rank people based on such superficial attributes, but that instead embraced all who embraced God." (235-236)

Her parents' liberal secularism measures success and worthiness upon material wealth and economic status, two conditions that can only be met, they believe, by espousing Westernized values. Gameela is critical of her parents for what she perceives to be their emulation of the colonizer's values, which she terms a postcolonial "Stockholm syndrome". The promise of material wealth and access to a progressive modernity, for those in Gameela's generation who chose to stay in Egypt, proved to be an elusive if not impossible prospect, particularly after 9/11. Therefore, she finds in organized religion an anti-Capitalist and anti-imperialist form of addressing class difference, hierarchy, and superficiality. Rose assumes that Gameela desires to extinguish her own sense of political agency, believing she "would hang her by her feet and let every exposed inch of her skin burn in the fires of hell" for forgetting to wear her hijab, a position Rose reads as entirely anti-feminist. Hassib's depiction of the fraught relationship between Rose and Gameela embodies how transnational geopolitical and cultural tensions are experienced through gender hierarchies within patriarchal systems.

Saba Mahmood argues that Western feminism is delimited by an underpinning secular liberalism that dictates how a truly liberated woman should act in terms of ideals, behaviors, and expressions, including those of sexuality. Mahmood's analysis charted the women's mosque movement of Egypt, beginning in the 1970's, which was part of a larger "Islamic Awakening" that has come to include the broader inclusion of women in powerful roles within Islam, including as preachers. In her discussion of female Muslim preachers, or *dai'yat*, Mahmood analyzes how the pressures of secularization have impacted Muslim communities, making religious practice a more individual and private

experience, antithetical to the Muslim perspective that faith pervades social life. Within the family of Gameela and Rose, we see how splintering faith into individual bodies, rather than the larger social body of what was, has made it difficult for the sisters to breech their differing methods of spiritual interpretation. Gameela desires an emancipatory faith that serves all people rather than a "failed" emancipatory system, as she sees it, of the Western secular system. Mahmood inverted Western assumptions about the possibilities of female agency within Islam by describing how ritual acts of devotion and piety produced inverted outcomes: "It is precisely this self-willed obedience to religiously prescribed social conventions—what is often criticized as blind and uncritical emulation—that elicits the critique that such movements only serve to reproduce the existing patriarchal order and to prevent women from distinguishing their 'own desires and aspirations' from those that are 'socially dictated'" (148). Rose and her parents assume that Gameela is unable to think critically about how her own identity might suffer in service of a larger ideology, a position that also denies her agency. Because there is no open conversation between family members about their beliefs, Rose and her parents have no idea what Gameela even believes – a situation that spells disaster for the entire family after her death.

Read with Gameela's political activism in mind, her comments read less as religiously fundamentalist and more as anti-Western political positions. In response to Rose's engagement to Mark, Gameela asks: "Does he really believe in Islam, or is he just doing this to marry you? He has to genuinely believe in it, you know. You can't fool God" (66). God, for Gameela, is a source of authenticity, an entity only accessible

through emotional connection to one's values. Gameela questions Mark's assumption that to change faiths is but a matter of words, a mere formality. Without respect given these collective ideals, Gameela doubts that he will regard Rose as a spiritual person, as part of something much larger and more meaningful. To interpret her this way also verges dangerously close, from Gameela's perspective, to stripping away her sister's political agency. If Rose cannot participate in collective forms of addressing societal ills For Gameela, faith and politics are inextricably bound. Mark's definition of faith as "something…true without having proof," delimits access to God through a process of negation in which each religion is adjudicated based on the same criteria. Where Mark conceives of religion as a universal method of applying the same moral lens to each belief system, Gameela finds meaning in specificity and singularity. The differing ideological convictions of Gameela and Mark represent polarizing forms of an institutionalized faith through differing channels, both secular and Islamic. The way in which Rose's internal quandary is the direct result of her diasporic family members and their multifaceted forms of social engagement highlights the convergence of politicized patriarchal ideologies converging through what Ashwini Tambe & Millie Thayer call "spectral transnationalism," the process of digital modalities traversing geographic space and initiating cross-border flow. The result of this spectral transnationalism is a simultaneous local and global "scaling out" that "mak[es] porous the border between political identities"[126] (31). Hassib's novel opens a crucial space for discussing how

[126] Eds. Tambe, Ashwini & Millie Thayer. *Transnational Feminist Itineraries: Situating Theory and Activist Practice*. Duke UP, 2021.

feminism engages with spectral transnationalism, particularly for Muslim women, by allowing for politics of difference to emerge in the name of solidarity between sisters. Elleke Boehmer addresses this space by arguing for a relational feminism capable of addressing historical specificities while at the same time "affirming transformations across cultural and national borders" (13). Boehmer looks to Françoise Lionnet's *Postcolonial Representations* to highlight Lionnet's desire to sketch out a "universal feminism" that "without disavowing the nation (which inhabits her [Lionnet's] frame of particularity), she insists on a dialogue between the nature and function of feminism as a global process and the social function of femininity within different cultural contexts…" to arrive at an "intersubjective though locally grounded political space for women, where reciprocity becomes possible (an assertion of sameness as well as difference, as well as, ideally, the achievement of a 'consensus about the possibility [for women] of sharing certain beliefs" (191).

Hassib's depiction of Rose is particularly important to the canon of post-9/11 literature because, as Daniel O'Gorman argues, transatlantic novels addressing the War on Terror emphasize the production of cultural difference rather than the production of empathy by emphasizing visual faith-based markers that inadvertently support the distinction "ideal" Muslim or Muslim-appearing person who can and should be pardoned, a figure invoked in opposition to the "terrorist figure" within these novels (14). O'Gorman's analysis correctly highlights the unique approach of some transatlantic novels in portraying Muslim characters outside the "us vs. them" binary that were distinct in early post-9/11 novels. The novels that comprised O'Gorman's study, among them

Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, Nadeem Aslam's *The Wasted Vigil*, and Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows*, grapple with Westernized assumptions about Pakistan and Afghanistan as containing a religious "problem" that could be rectified by the institutionalization of secularism. Sherene H. Razack's influential "Casting Out: the eviction of Muslims from western law and politics" charts the ways in which nations institute laws based in the fear of being infiltrated by "Muslims" in general, not just the "bad Muslims" to be reported and punished. These laws, which included those banning forced marriage and family-reunification immigration reinforced and protected whiteness as central to State power under the banner of tolerance and humanitarianism (118). These laws were tied to a distinct colonial relationship towards peoples of West Asian Muslims that translated into a relationship in which "Saving Muslim women from the excesses of their society" ascribed Western women their position as elevated, "emancipated" (86). A transnational feminist lens in *A Pure Heart* and, as I will demonstrate, in *Runaways,* elucidates the failed promise of a Westernized secular modernity wrought by the War On Terror and the destabilization of economies and political structures that feeds into ethno-centric fundamentalist movements both in the West and around the world. Recent works of criticism are exploring the ways in which fundamentalist groups are espousing the notion of female equality to infringe upon the rights of Muslim and non-western migrant women, a process ascribed the term "femonationalism"[127]. In witnessing the female protagonists' sudden or gradual distancing from secularism in Hassib and Bhutto's texts,

[127] Farris, Sara R. *In the Name of Women's Rights: The Rise of Femonationalism*. Duke University Press, 2017. Farris' work is about the funneling of Muslim and non-Western migrant women into domestic and caregiving positions effectively consigning them to a life of domesticity.

we are provided a vantage point from which to understand the warring institutionalized universalisms facing a young generation seeking new forms of political collectivity.

Fundamentalism as a Revolution Deferred

Ideologies converge between family members when Rose arranges for Mark to stay with her parents in Egypt to cover the aftermath of the protests at Tahrir Square. Seeking to write a powerful story for the *New York Times*, he arranges to meet with a young man named Saaber whose brother was killed during protest in Cairo in 2013. This connection is made through Gameela, who cautiously explains that Saaber is sympathetic to The Muslim Brotherhood, an organization that gained strength as an opposition party during President Hosni Mubarak's rule. The organization itself has been accused of terrorism by the United States at various points in the group's collective past and, as a result, meeting with Saaber is a security risk to Rose's family. Mark downplays Rose's concerns about Gameela attending the interview with him, responding: "Seriously, Rose. What's the big deal? She's not a child. She can go anywhere she wants to" (126). Mark's petulant attitude informs Rose's lack of trust in his judgment, representing a gulf of misunderstanding that they find themselves increasingly unable to breech. Mark's belief in a universal freedom bent on viewing all people as equal neglects to consider how Gameela's gender positionality makes her a more vulnerable target to more extremist members of the Brotherhood. Along these same lines, Gameela tries to warn Mark that his status of being a white American journalist may put Saaber in danger if the interview is held in an impoverished section of Cairo, but Mark is dismissive: "What is it with you

people and fear of journalists? What exactly would I be interested in learning from him? How to invade Cairo through its poorest neighborhoods?" (123). Mark's ability to critique larger systems of power is intimately tied to the presumption of safety he experiences a heterosexual white male born and raised in the United States, recalling an arrogance emblematic of America's self-imposed position as "keeper of the free world." Mark's unacknowledged privilege effectively renders how the assumption of Western superiority in terms of knowledge dissemination impacts transnational spaces, particularly in formerly colonized spaces like Egypt.

Saaber explains to Mark during their interview that his father's imprisonment and subsequent death in prison, coupled with the guilt he feels for his brother's death during a protest by police, have forged a deep distrust of secular, pro-Western authority. The Muslim Brotherhood feeds his family in exchange for compliance with their control in his neighborhood to which the police respond by destroying his growing pigeon farm, a series of events that propel Saaber toward a suicide bombing mission that occurs at the end of the novel. The Brotherhood's consolidation of political power culminated with the brief election of Mohamad Morsi to the presidency. After this success, their public appeals decreased. Saaber explains to Mark that "They used to fill my mother's pantry—oil, rice, sugar. They even provided my father with his diabetes medication. Now they are gone and no one has filled that void" (1928). Saaber's radicalization hinges upon a sense of futility at the unfilled revolution against State violence he witnesses during the uprising of 2011. Desiring to help Saaber achieve stability, Gameela continues to meet Saaber to help him find a job. During their final meeting, they head towards a city

checkpoint. While on their way, Gameela begins to understand Saaber's intentions. In the moment before he detonates himself, Gameela notices "a youthful look flash in his eyes," a look that reminds her "of young peasants' kids at the farm when they had to pick between two fruits she offered them, wanting both, wanting everything, but believing there could only be one choice[128] (282). Gameela's final moments of narration crystallize the ways in which access to food water, and resources driving political revolution within a global capitalist system are coopted by fundamentalist movements, whose charge is, conceivably, to make civilians believe that there "could only be one choice."

Rather than suggesting that Rose, Gameela, and Mark are simply representations of their respective home nations, their conflicts expose how racial, cultural, and religious positionalities converge with sociopolitical tensions caused by the War on Terror. Rose is fatigued by the way the revolution has strained the warring ideologies within her parents' household, a fact only exaggerated by Mark's interference. Her parents pressure her to encourage Mark to provide a narrative about the revolution that will support American policy, to "Make sure he lets the West know how the people support Al-Sisi and the interim government. How they are restoring order to Egypt. How

[128] By emphasizing that Saaber comes from an impoverished household with little opportunities for professional growth, Hassib makes space for viewing him through a more empathic lens. Robert Pape's foundational study on the *Logics of Suicide Terrorism* documents that most individuals who go on to conduct suicide attacks are not, in fact, doing so because of poverty. In terms of both education and income level, suicide attackers tend to be from middle class families and often have a post-secondary education, approximately fifty-four percent as of 2004 (262). Gameela compares Saaber to the peasant child's expression at being handed the luxury of fruit, obviating class dimensions inherent to the revolution and to the public's broader perception of who the terrorist is.

they saved us all from the extremist Muslim Brotherhood[129]" (95). The larger geopolitical tensions playing out between Egypt and America in Hassib's novel speak to the fissures caused by a series of interventions and occupations spanning the mid-to-late twentieth century. The relationship between America and Egypt was strained from the aughts through the twenty-tens, with America blaming Egypt for not protecting the rights of political critics, journalists, and women[130]. Hosni Mubarak's lack of support for the 2003 invasion of Iraq came with a caution from then-president Mubarak that doing so would promote "100 more bin ladens"[131]. Egypt's massive political uprising reflects the numerous male-dominated ideologies vying for power to determine Egypt's political and ideological future. Egypt, as with other formerly colonized spaces in the Middle East, continues to be amongst the nations suffering most economically from the War on Terror. Between 2018 and 2019, Egypt was amongst the nations most impacted by terrorist attacks, costing approximately 135.4 million in damages within the year alone[132] (Global Terrorism Index 2020). This is a substantial shift from earlier relations between the

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[129] While the paternalistic narrative ascribed to the United States here links to French colonialism and Western imperialism, it also shows a lack of general knowledge about the U.S.'s own support, at various points, of the Muslim Brotherhood since the 1950's. Deepa Kumar's *Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire* (2012*)* provides an excellent summation of their relationship as well as its links to Orientalist thinkers (66-69).

[130] Jakes, Lara & Mona El-Naggar. "U.S Blocks $130 Million in Aid for Egypt Over Rights Abuses." *New York Times*, Jan 28, 2022. https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/28/us/politics/egypt-us-human-rights.html. Accessed 20 August 2022.

[131] "Mubarak warns of '100 bin Ladens.'" *CNN.com*, April 1, 2003. http://edition.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/03/31/iraq.egypt.mubarak.reut/. Accessed 20 August 2022.

[132] Institute for Economics & Peace. *Global Terrorism Index 2020: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism*, Sydney, November 2020. http://visionofhumanity.org/reports. Accessed 20 August 2022.

United States and Egypt, second only to Israel as recipient of America's foreign aid budget[133] (Pape 149). In exchange for this aid, Egypt is at the behest of American forces to procure suspects, transport or detain them, and to provide information to America. As Robert Pape notes, the appeal of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda lies in its offer to resist American foreign invasion and to create a more autonomous "cross-national military coalition" against the United States. Al-Qaeda has done so by incorporating the argumentative tactic that the U.S.'s meddling is "veiled colonialism," a term referring to U.S. support of repressive regimes, like Hosni Mubarak's, in exchange for his peace with Israel. The larger geopolitical tensions playing out between Egypt and America in Hassib's novel speak to the fissures caused by a series of interventions and occupations spanning the mid-to-late twentieth century. The tensions between Saaber, Mark, Rose, and her family trace the fault lines between nations, underlining the pressure to fill an Egypt asking to be redefined under a more equitable political system with an array of neo-conservative regimes.

After deposing Mubarak and gaining power, the Muslim Brotherhood proved to be disinterested in the emancipatory politics that Gameela had hoped they would invest in; as a result, she distances herself from conservative Islam and begins to have a spiritual awakening that gestures towards a politics that avoids a universal form of faith. Gameela's death prompts Rose to excavate Gameela's belongings as she would an Egyptian burial ground. In doing so, she begins to unravel a new narrative about her

[133] Pape, Robert. *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*. Random House Publishing Group, 2005.

sister's journey towards faith. Rose discovers that Gameela was in love with a significantly older man named Fouad, whom she had married in secret, and who was a socialist that her parents would never have approved of. Rose dreams that Gameela was actually responsible for the suicide bombing. Within that same dream, she also imagines that she herself had "her fingers poised on the button that detonated the bomb" (286). The geopolitical struggle for the future of their respective nations that caused their adherence to varying universalist modes of thinking also caused Gameela, Rose, and Saaber to isolate themselves, producing a devastating conclusion. That Rose imagines herself or Gameela as equally capable of detonating the bomb points to their mutual failure in aligning with a universalist consciousness or belief. Rose now understands that Saaber was constrained by a vision of eternal life and transcendence in which the afterlife promised to compensate for an inescapable array of external, oppressive forces that limited his potential for growth. He "God knows what's in everyone's heart. *Alaamalu belneyyat*. Works are judged based on the intentions behind them, on the purity of one's heart" (257). Whereas Saaber reads a "pure heart" as a unitary, singular path to collective salvation, Rose comes to realize that such a notion is only capable of a destruction that splinters across relational boundaries, as it has within her own life. Hassib urges for a grassroots political collectivity capable of addressing peoples' basic needs. Rose eventually is able to process her sister's death – a development that allows her to relieve the writer's block that has prevented her from finishing her dissertation. Braiding together her life's experiences with the ancient Egyptians' treatment of their dead, she writes:

> The dissertation is about: Immigration in ancient Egypt. Expatriates. Death as expatriation. Religion as a way to negotiate otherness in life. The relationship between the living and the dead as a metaphor for the relationship between the Egyptian and the foreigner and how this is represented in tomb engravings. In the Book of the Dead. In catacomb engravings. Religion and otherness and how they were reflected in Egyptian society in the Middle Kingdom. (Hassib 106)

On the surface, Rose's work hopes to propose a new way of looking at ancient Egyptian stories about the way that the living usher the dying through the process of death. More personally, Rose will write her story of emigration, and her sister's story of finding belonging through faith, into and through Egypt's history, paving a new route to the historical past that provides Rose with a new transnational frame through which to envision the political future. Seeing religion as a way to negotiate "otherness" means that Rose is thinking through a spiritual ideology that is "pure" in the sense that it resists the conditions of oppression that unilaterally but unequally effect all of the characters in the novel. Lucia Sorbera writes persuasively that the "long Egyptian twentieth century" was a feat of feminist activism because women consistently challenged on both a local and colonial level the patriarchal violence that oppressed them as a group[134]. Their activism engendered a broader "human transformation" constitutive of "destroy[ing] habits of servitude and develop[ing] capacities for self-rule," a definition of revolution borrowed

[134] Sorbera, Lucia. "Challenges of thinking feminism and revolution in Egypt between 2011 and 2014", *Postcolonial Studies*, 17:1, 63-75, DOI: 10.1080/13688790.2014.912193.

from Michael Hardt[135]. Where revolution of the early and mid-twentieth century was relegated to the privileged urban upper and middle classes, Sorbera argues that the path of feminist politics ahead lies in a movement centered on the intersection of class and gender after 2014. Hassib's novel ushers forth conversations about reaching this political destination: a transnational postsecular feminism[136].

Filling the Void: Class Consciousness and Gender in *The Runaways*

Both *A Pure Heart* and *Runaways* explore a sense of despondency rooted in the lingering absence of individual meaning that stems from the individualistic and materialistic modes of fulfillment promised by Western attitudes of consumption under global capitalism. In search of a social and political collectivity distinct from Western secularism, the characters of *Runaways* pursue alternative avenues in search of personal fulfillment and meaning making. Through the characters of Sunny and Saaber, we witness what happens when despondency couples with a form of patriarchal dogma that utilizes individualistic sacrifice as a political weapon – the furthest extreme of self-negation intended to conquer personal chasms through retributive violence. In Anita, we see how patriarchal fundamentalist dogma provides the illusory valorization of a certain

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[135] Hardt, Michael. 'Revolution'. in Astra Taylor (ed), *Examined Life*, New York: New Press, 2009, pp 133–154.

[136] It is important to note that discussions of the postsecular must also consider the ways in which the complete purging of liberal secularism might also make way for conservative Islamic political groups to target women's and minority rights for "being pollutant, Western, secular, and complicit with neo-imperialist designs," as Afiya Shehrbano Zia cautions (10). Zia, Afiya S. *Faith and Feminism in Pakistan: Religious Agency Or Secular Autonomy?*, Sussex Academic Press, 2022.

set of values for women that fail to address the gendered dynamics of inequity. Fatima Bhutto's *The Runaways* spans the years 2014-2017 and contains the narratives of three young people from Pakistan: Sunny, Anita Rose (also known as Layla), and Monty[137].

Anita's loss of faith in capitalistic modernity is intimately tied to how Western modes of power and subjugation operate in and through her life. Anita is an intelligent and hardworking student from a poor Christian family. She lives with her single mother and her older brother, Ezra, whom she idolizes. Ezra's sole mission is to become the economic provider for the family. When he finally gains admission to the corporate world, he explains to Anita that he is "working for big men now. Important men. English-speaking, foreign businessmen…They could force the wheels of Karachi to spin this way and that. With their money they could jerk the city to a halt" (1526). Anita's mother makes a meager living as a *maalish wali*, or domestic worker who provides skin treatments to the wealthy. As a child, Anita falls in love with one of the wealthy families her mother works for. Anita engages repeatedly in a domestic fantasy where she becomes sister to the beautiful, older Rima, and imagines herself adoringly called "Baby" by the mother and father of the house (421). As a teenager, Anita's naïve fantasy is shattered when the mother of the house asks Anita to be her servant, despite having shared with her that she intends to go to university. Anita says no, a decision that disappoints her mother Zenobia and begins an awakening to class difference that shapes Anita's decision-making for the duration of the novel. To make matters worse, her brother coerces her into

[137] For the duration of this chapter, I will be referring to Anita as simply "Anita" so as not to confuse the protagonist of Bhutto's novel with the protagonist Rose from Hassib's.

providing sexual favors for the Western businessmen he works for, a decision Anita cannot resist because her family's livelihood depends upon his income. Anita learns from these experiences how her existence as a woman leaves her with limited, domestic-centered opportunities predicated on her subservience. As a house worker, her success would be determined by her relative invisibility; not causing trouble, always being kind, doing as she is told. As a sex worker, her value would be assessed by the male gaze. In either case, Anita understands that her life would contain limited options for self-expression. Elleke Boehmer describes how postcolonial novelists in support of new governmental structures, even socialist ones, oftentimes also neglect to dismantle the patriarchal aspects of nationhood they critique (50). Of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Devil on the Cross*, Boehmer notes how the figures of "Madonna" and "whore" are reinterpreted and recycled into cultural icons of the new regime (51). Such polarization offers female characters supportive rather than centralized roles, limiting their capacity to develop a political agency (46). Such decisions in writing women speak to the pressures of a burgeoning nation emerging onto the global stage amidst Westernized hegemonic forces. Access to Anita's interiority and her centralized role in the Ummah Movement mean that we see Anita engaging with others outside of being victimized by men. The novel's global scale, traversing the Global South and Global North, means that Anita evades the prescription of playing either Madonna or whore through the particular form of cross-border feminist activism she engages in online later in the novel.

Anita's growing discontent over the treatment of low wage workers, coupled with her brother's willingness to sell her body, leaves Anita desiring alternative arenas in

which to create political change. She finds new identificatory possibilities in her relationship with an elderly neighbor named Osama who nurtures Anita's hunger for knowledge by discussing books, amongst them *Wretched of the Earth* by Frantz Fanon and *The Discovery of* India by Jawaharlal Nehru. As they read and discuss, Osama, the "old Marxist" of the neighborhood, teaches Anita how to intellectually equip herself for navigating the pressures of life in Karachi. Through these readings, Anita learns about the uses of insurrection to achieve political ends; additionally, they also review famous South Asian poets, discussing love, honor, and self-defense. These discussions affirm within Anita that there are alternative routes for women that exceed the limitations of patriarchy. Offering advice on how to protect herself from potential men that might threaten to harm Anita, Osama instructs her to "take *their* heart…promise me: you take theirs first" (62-63). His guidance foreshadows how Anita mistakenly gives away her "heart," her sense of authentic engagement with the world, to the Ummah Movement in hopes of ascertaining more power over others, a quality Osama warns her is a misguided form of empowerment. The Ummah Movement is a fictionalized jihadist group stationed in Mosul, Iraq that Bhutto characterizes as encompassing the "strict law of Shariah" (Bhutto 1384). Both *A Pure Heart* and *Runaways* challenge the common assumption that to have a metaphorically pure heart means to embody a singular or univocal sense of devotion, a definition manipulated by patriarchal discourses with reference to sexual purity. Bhutto and Hassib show us how their female protagonists succumb to ideological movements that strip away at their unadulterated sense of self-fulfillment, a reimagined form of purification they seek to bring forth. This revised form of spiritual and political

collectivity, I argue, is a transnational feminist and postsecular formulation. As Anita ascends the ranks within the Ummah Movement through her calls to arms on Twitter and LiveLeak. The Ummah Movement use her as a symbol of the ideal feminine; an archetype embodying a singular, "pure" focus on the movement. They contrast her to "those girls who run away from home, thinking they can hack our war. Those sisters aren't prepared to be the companions of true warriors. They're not of the calibre of our women, our leader" (1733). Anita does not realize that the group's upholding of her ideological devotion is delimited by her sex with the apex form of power being "companion" to a male jihadist, mistakenly believing instead that the group is invested in her individuality, her authentic voice, and her political insights (1733). Through Anita's pivotal relationship with Osama, Bhutto draws our attention to the social inequities drawing Anita to political action while also evidencing a definitive line between the kind of political violence necessary to invoke these shifts and the patriarchal norms operating within jihadist groups.

Anita begins posting videos of herself online passionately conveying the importance of Muslim women participating in political activism. The popularity of her videos amongst fundamentalist circles eventually leads her down an increasingly vitriolic rabbit hole. In their comments of support, Anita feels accepted and appreciated as a woman with a voice, both literally and figuratively. In the wake of sexual trauma, Anita's internal narration explains that her joining the Ummah movement was a "matter of survival," and a "camouflage" that enabled her to fight a larger system of oppression

(3143). The more ideologically "pure" and exclusionary her language, the more attention she receives:

> "…she had her own LiveLeak channel dedicated to exposing the hypocrisy of so-called liberal Muslims. Why were all those Asians – rich Pakistani socialites, Indian cricketers and Bangladeshi writers – holding up 'Bring back our girls' signs, but not saying a word about Arab sisters getting raped by American soldiers out in Iraq? Why did no one question how the Qataris planned to pay for a World Cup, when children all over the Muslim world were dropping like flies to hunger? Where was Red Nose Day for the Muslim world? Where was our 'We Are the World'? (1731).

Anita's rhetoric traces the unequal distribution of wealth wrought by a Western-led world system that has employed the War on Terror as a means for strategic economic gain[138]. The scope of her critique includes several South and West Asian countries with large Muslim populations, cleaving "true believers," ostensibly those willing to disrupt or oppose American-led military and economic occupation, from "liberal Muslims," those already complicit in making money tainted by the exploitation of the Muslim members of the working class in their service. When Anita asks "Where was our 'We Are the World' she draws attention to the "humanitarian" narratives that facilitate the continuation of the

[138] Neta Crawford's study of U.S. budgetary projections of the post-9/11 wars calculated a total of $5.9 trillion dollars in spending and obligations in FY2018 towards the War on Terror. This massive economic commitment highlights the vast network of relationships U.S. oil production and distribution relies upon, an economic arrangement that impacts the livelihoods of millions worldwide. Extractive processes are linked to a longstanding exploitative colonial relationship, a dynamic Peter Hitchcock describes as an "energy regime" (Hitchcock).

War on Terror, often focused on viewing the Arab woman as in need of rescuing[139]. Anita highlights how gender discrimination, racism and nationalism continue work to sequester certain bodies within a national body and quarantine against others in service of a sustained "white" nation. Anita sees the Ummah movement as capable of mobilizing a response to the exploitative dynamics of American occupation with immediacy: positioning their actions and intentions along the front lines of imperialism. While Anita's position is explicit and thorough in its examination of American imperialism, it contains little to no examination of the Ummah Movement's own proposal for changing these social inequities or how Anita will be enfolded into the change it seeks to create[140]. As described by Hitchcock, the formation of jihadist networks are intricately linked to how economic factors inform conflict over the reclamation of a national social identity (228). That Anita's character arc links a profound sense of disillusionment to pervasive issues stemming from the poverty she and her family face points to need that jihadist groups have capitalized on and attempted to fill. As discussed in Chapter Three,

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[139] "Colonization and Humanitarianism: Histories, Geographies and Biographies." *Colonization and the Origins of Humanitarian Governance: Protecting Aborigines across the Nineteenth-Century British Empir*e, by Alan Lester and Fae Dussart, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2014, pp. 1–36. Critical Perspectives on Empire.

[140] Jihadism similarly proposes to address modes of imperial occupation without also providing a specific political system. For example, U.S. economic and political manipulation played a pivotal role in motivating the Taliban to campaign against U.S. forces into order to reassert economic control – an opportunity that had been impossible to achieve since oil was discovered in the Middle East during WWI. As the location of Mecca, bin Laden saw the building of American bases in Saudi Arabia as a multi-dimensional Imperial occupation that threatened to upend what bin Laden saw as Arab sovereignty in both a political, economic, social, and spiritual dimension. Studies concerning the relationship between globalization and the development of jihadist groups have shown that disruptions caused by factors of globalization, like tourism and foreign investment, lead to increased terrorist violence because "dissident groups attracted dissatisfied citizens" (Lutz & Lutz 179). Lutz & Lutz also conclude specifically the spread of secularization accompanying the economic and political management of the Middle East is responsible for the creation of social unrest across Asia.

scholarship within Terrorism Studies frequently pointed to ideology as the central cause of terrorist action and recruitment. To label jihadism as a form of fanaticism is to recall a colonial history that aligns Islam with the backward, anti-modern "other." Western conceptualizations of what drives one toward jihadism are at distinct odds with what data on the subject shows; specifically, that jihadism is a coherent military campaign garnering significant public support (161)[141]. Anita's rhetoric encapsulates these findings by drawing her audience's attention not to Islam, but to an unfulfilled desire to rectify political and economic wrongs through a series of incisive questions, encouraging her viewers to think rather than overwhelm them with information or data. When she informs Osama of her intention to join the Ummah Movement and change her name to Layla, Osama pleads with her to "stand against the onslaught" and "faithfully hold on to the truth" (3143). Osama understands that the Ummah Movement will consume Anita's gift for rhetoric rather than honor her individual voice. He sees Anita's decision as giving away herself, changing her name a sign of the very tyranny of race, gender, and class-based oppression he has instructed her to avoid. *A Pure Heart* and *Runaways* shed light upon a middle path amidst extremist ideologies that promise salvation without actually addressing the fundamental issues of equity that their members' discontent stems from.

Both Sunny and Anita suffer from a pervasive sense of invisibility wrought by class relations tied to a distinctly global modernity. Sunny and Anita are surrounded by pressures to attain wealth and status through social media, their friendship circles, and the

[141] Pape, Robert A. "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism." *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 97, no. 3, 2003, pp. 343–61. JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3117613. Accessed 19 Aug. 2022.

routine chidings of family members. The cacophony directing them to achieve is driven by their parents, who have watched their lives become ensnared in pursuit of an elusive middle-class life. Sunny's father Sulaiman pressures him to attain the typical Westernized hallmarks of success: "First, a bachelor's degree from a marvelous university, next a beautiful job in a booming industry, then an office in the city, a Jaguar, a warm and loving wife, some children. Mixed-race, Hindu, Muslim, Sulaiman Jamil didn't mind. That was all Sunny ever heard at home" (160). Sulaiman sacrificed a sense of community for a chance to attain economic prosperity, a dream he saw dashed as an immigrant:

> "He loathed this poverty of England's, more so than India's – the poverty of takeaway boxes strewn on the roads, festering in unheated homes and the waiting rooms of betting shops, jeans exposing pale buttock cleavage, women slack under clingfilm skies, foolishly burning their great advantages over the futilely toiling masses of the Subcontinent. He hoped that one day his newborn son would avoid this dismal fate – the poverty of the educated and overfed, which was so much more fearful than the rag-and-bone destitution of India" (272).

Sulaiman's critique is pointedly gendered, with the bodies and actions of women representative of this disintegration of values, their "buttock cleavage" and "slack" an indication of their "fearful" privilege (272). London as metropole, standing in for the West more generally, is embodied by the "poverty of the educated and overfed," pointing to the harmful consequences of material accumulation and an unequal distribution of abundance both locally and to the exploitation of labor in the Global South. This is the only point in the novel in which Bhutto provides us with this multi-generational

perspective. In Sulaiman, we see how the seeds of change have begun within Sulaiman's mind; his regrettable discovery that the privileges of modernity would not provide the quality of opportunity that he was promised, a critique not only of the material circumstances of success but the moral circumstances as well.

Sunny and Anita begin the novel in two different geographic locations, with Anita in Pakistan and Sunny in London. As their proximity to the Ummah Movement increases, their lives become physically intertwined when they meet on the battlefront in Iraq, where Sunny goes to carry out his first military tour and Anita arrives to garner more support for the movement with her speeches. Resentful of their parents' struggles, Anita and Sunny choose instead to prioritize political action as a response to the oppressive mechanisms of global capitalism surrounding them. Sunny is a socially alienated and lower middle-class teenager coming of age in a city he comes to see as deceitful in its promise to provide fulfillment. *Runaways* pivots away from the racialized biopolitical lens that seeks to entrench national identity by mourning ontological loss post-9/11; instead, it shows how terror offers new perspectives for addressing the space of the city. In another context, Abdoumalique Simone describes the unique forces that make the city of Jakarta a prime location for depicting the draw towards fundamentalism due to the social "relation of non-relation" that city life can induce; a space "full of multiplying and intersecting identities, often between antagonistic parties" that creates "an explosive mix of amorphous urban conflict" forced to exist in a state of bare life [142](429).

[142] Simone, AbdouMaliq. "People as Infrastructure: Intersecting Fragments in Johannesburg." *Public Culture*, 16(3), p. 407-429. Project Muse muse.jhu.edu/article/173743.

The antagonism and conflict over identities that Simone highlights in postcolonial city space occurs in Bhutto's novel at both a physical and a psychological level in Sunny's character. Struggling with his feelings of homosexual desire, Sunny is brought into the Ummah Movement through his cousin Oz, who impresses upon him that the only way to find meaningful kinship with other Muslim men is to become a soldier for the Ummah Movement. Sunny has reservations about committing violence, asking Oz: "'Cuz, Muslims fighting Muslims… 'Isn't it wrong? How can it be a revolution, if all we do is kill each other?'…He didn't want to leave one life full of lies, only to walk right into another" (Bhutto 1414). Despite his attempts to find male friends, especially those he could bond with over his Pakistani heritage, Sunny is stilted by the shame he feels over his sexuality. For most of his life, he has been bullied by the British children around him. In one exchange, we witness Sunny's repeated attempts to have a friendship with Ben, a half-Pakistani classmate, despite his homophobic and Islamophobic language:

> "Hey, homo, thought u had gone underground with your sleeper cell, Ben replied. Laughing emoticon, bearded-man-with turban emoji. Exploding-bomb emoji. Why did they even make a bomb emoji? Sunny didn't answer. His phone pinged a minute later. Ben was up to hang and smoke later, if Sunny wanted? Nah, Sunny texted, I don't do that shit any more. He never liked it, especially not then, when it made him even sadder. Let's go out, catch a film, eat some Nandos. You bringing your Taliban pals?" (909).

Both being of Pakistani descent and living in London, Sunny attempts to connect to Ben via a shared sense of national origin. His attempts are thwarted repeatedly by Ben's

insistence on Othering Sunny due to his faith, an accusation that broadly links "Muslim" identity to criminal categorization, "terrorist." Jasbir Puar's *Terrorist Assemblages* describes this process as the comingling of sex, gender, and nation within each application of racial order, highlighting "statistical informational ontologies" that conflate Muslim with terrorist… (160)[143]. As an American ally and after the terrorist attacks of 7/7, England implemented a similar suite of laws that expanded surveillance measures and data sharing capacity, resulting in "unsuccessfully opposed identification card proposal and the de facto creation of a national DNA database," according to a comparative analysis between the U.K. and U.S. regarding State implementation of War on Terror policies[144]. From the State down into the individual life of the subject, we see in Sunny how the assumption of his criminality internalizes fear and shame that foments resentment, guilt, and rage. Already insecure about how his sexuality will be received as he comes of age, Sunny is particularly sensitive to the homophobia implicit in his exchanges with classmates; the notion of "Taliban pals" an accusation barring homosocial gathering that borders conspicuously on queerness (909). Puar outlines how the United States, as a heteronormative nation, relies on and benefits from the proliferation of queerness, especially in regard to the sexually exceptional homonationalism and its counterpart, "the queer terrorist of elsewhere," in order to

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[143] Puar, Jasbir. *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Duke UP, 2017.

[144] U.S. Department of Justice: Office of Justice Programs. "State Power in the War on Terror: A Comparative Analysis of the UK and USA." *Crime, Law & Social Change*. Vol 44 Issue: 4-5, 2005, Pgs. 335-359.

maintain power both domestically and internationally (34). While Sunny is the victim of the joke, Ben's way of negotiating difference as half-Pakistani is equally revealing. Ben externalizes his fears onto Sunny, a dynamic that Sunaina Marr Maira explores in her study of "The 9/11 Generation," which describes how young Muslim people in America have negotiated repressive surveillance and detainment measures enacted after 9/11[145]. Maira outlines the impact of surveillance on the post- 9/11 culture wars by examining how the "counterterrorism regime" of the U.S. targets (and also produces) gendered and racialized bodies as objects fit for surveillance. Bhutto's scene evidences how homonationalism and Islamophobia work to disintegrate relationships between Muslim peoples.

After Sunny executes his "first freedom fighter" at the behest of the Ummah Movement, he reaches a state of drug-induced giddiness at having finally achieved the approbation of the men around him; his place within the Ummah Movement finally meaningful. Sunny receives a LiveLeak recording of Layla having sex with an American businessman, a transaction coerced by Anita's brother Ezra. Where once the Ummah Movement upheld Layla as the exemplary Muslim woman: chaste, modest, and devoted to the cause, they immediately plan to execute her once her tarnished image as a sexual being threatens the movement, whose appearance is predicated on ideological purity. Saba Mahmood makes a valuable intervention in Western theoretical approaches to

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[145] Maira, Sunaina Marr. "Coming of Age under Surveillance: Surveillance Effects and the Post-9/11 Culture Wars." *The 9/11 Generation: Youth, Rights, and Solidarity in the War on Terror*, New York University Press, 2016. ProQuest Ebook Central, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ucr/detail.action?docID=4524505.

agency by pointing out how the term is often misapplied in theoretical approaches to the politics of Muslim women. Mahmood defines "agency" as the capacity to "realize one's own interests against the weight of custom, tradition, transcendental will, or other obstacles" a definition wound up in humanism's ascribing of autonomy and self-expression as a default mode of encapsulating what constitutes political resistance (28). Muslim women, according to Mahmood, are often deemed as lacking any political agency because of how they ascribe meaning to collective practices of religious connection, a way of seeing religion through a secular lens that constitutes such women as controllable (28). Hassib's novel makes the careful distinction between forms of Muslim belief and community that Mahmood outlines and the Ummah Movement of Bhutto's novel, which explores a radical political militia that reduces Islamic scripture to a narrow set of ostracizing gendered prescriptions. At the end of the novel, we are still unsure as to whether Sunny or Anita survive. All we know is that their minds have changed: Sunny's in becoming more deeply entrenched in the policies of violence as retribution for the ills of external forces, broadly, and in Anita, the realization that she has been taken advantage of one final time by men. Anita's realization opens pathways toward a multicultural feminism that organizes around the dislocations of peoples associated with the development of 'global' or 'transnational' capital capable of encompassing an array of gender positionalities that aligns in their resistance to the

racialized biopolitical outcomes of the War on Terror that make inhabiting a political and spiritual sense of Muslim collectivity unthinkable or treacherous[146] (56).

Conclusion

A Pure Heart and *Runaways* nuance the notion that fundamentalist radical movements are predicated on a zealous relationship to Islamic texts. Rather, the novels insist that fundamentalist movements capitalize upon the desire for social and political collectivity aimed at Western modes of dominance, a desire manipulated and exploited. By the conclusion of both novels, Sunny, Anita, Rose and Gameela have all realized, at various points individually, that even the radical organization they joined replicates the same modes of dominance they sought to escape. *Runaways*, as the title suggests, is the story of how vulnerable young people in need of a politically active space are unwittingly drawn into movements that replicate the forms of power they seek to escape. The lived experiences of Anita and Sunny develop a burgeoning political agency geared toward class conflict and violent repressive heteronormativity as an attribute of the postcolonial condition, an unrealized desire that leads them instead toward an anti-colonial movement that replicates their oppression a different form. Sunny's radicalization process points to economic disenfranchisement and inequality: "…these mujahid aren't sitting at home, doing nothing and complaining over their artisanal lagers, while their children sleep comfortably in their bunk beds and our children, our sons and daughters, are being massacred…We are fighting to protect Islam" (Bhutto 1384). As Bruce Lawrence notes

[146] Eds. Alsultany, Evelyn & Nadine Naber, et al. *Arab and Arab American Feminisms: Gender, Violence, and Belonging*. United States, Syracuse University Press, 2011.

in the forward to a text on Osama bin Laden's writings, bin Laden neglected to provide a "social program," an architecture of a political system meant to replace the corruption he preached against[147]. Indeed, the messages of his teachings deal with purity, passion, and the glories of martyrdom, not the spoils of conflict. Bin Laden harnessed the political desire for an otherness outside the known world of global capitalism responsible for disenfranchising, in multivalent ways, the people of Afghanistan: "this alone makes it clear how distinctive al-Qaeda is as a phenomenon…no secular movement in the Arab world has ever matched (XXLL). Linda Herrera's important work on the role of social media in youth-led revolutions and uprisings of the Middle East describes the fomenting desperation amidst young people to find solutions to intersecting issues involving climate change, poverty, and political representation. These pressures have caused a profound desire to find an "anti-ideology machine" capable of "sweeping away taboos, desacralizing icons, valuing life and dignity about the market, and freeing the mind" [148] (219). While bin Laden may not have provided a political platform for life after revolution, his achievement was in engaging a youthful audience through technology with the promise of an anti-colonial reckoning that successfully "de-sacralizes" Western norms, to borrow Lawrence's term. Whereas canonical post-9/11 literature predominantly characterizes the figure of the terrorist as someone suffering from an internal and individual disfunction, often sexual in nature, as explored in Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*

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[147] bin Laden, Osama. *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama Bin Laden*. Verso, 2005.

[148] Herrera, Linda. *Revolution in the Age of Social Media: The Egyptian Popular Insurrection and the Internet*. Verso Vooks, 2014.

in Chapter One, Bhutto and Hassib use their characters individual struggles to point toward larger oppressive systems responsible for the multi-valent pressures that produce those internal fissions.

As the paradigmatic figurehead of 9/11 and the divining rod of American homophobic vitriol after the attacks, bin Laden was charged with accusations routinely in War on Terror discourse, including "fanatic," "nihilist," "fundamentalist," and, of course, "terrorist." However, as Bruce Lawrence points out, bin Laden's power lay in his ability to motivate people to political action through polemic language[149]. Bhutto's text allows us to imagine what is at stake for Sunny as he aligns himself with a jihadist group promising vengeance against the larger structures of power that have kept him closeted as both a queer man and a Muslim. Timothy Mitchell writes compellingly in *Carbon Democracy* that fundamentalist political Islam plays a crucial role in the facilitation of global capitalism[150]. In 1930, Saudi Arabia was first in negotiations with the U.S., no empire

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[149] bin Laden, Osama. Edited by Bruce Lawrence. Translated by James Howarth. *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama Bin Laden*. Verso, 2005. One of the central postulations in this chapter, that the role of fundamentalism is increasing worldwide. Lawrence notes that bin Laden did not have a particular gift for rhetoric, but rather in a lyrical kind of storytelling that motivated young people, especially, to find meaning in his proclamations about injustice. The likes of Donald Trump, Marine le Pen, Jair Bolsenaro, Rodrigo Duterte, etc. could be described similarly; they propose to excise existing threats in order to restore an idealized pure, fair, and just history.

[150] Starting in the 18th Century, Wahhabism is based on the idea of *tawhid*, or the oneness of God. American Oil companies were converts to Wahhabism because they depended on and supported a "unitarian" Islam to operate Arabia. In 1930, the leader of what would become Saudi Arabia, Abd al-Aziz Ibn Saud, counteracted the lack of tourism to Mecca during the Great Depression with oil negotiations with the U.S. Harry St. John Philby, a contemporary of T.E. Lawrence, was a powerful interlocuter and American businessman in the region. He converted to Islam and was made comparisons between Puritan conservatism and Islamic conservatism carrying the powers to create. In the 1960's OPEC maintained scarcity in order to facilitate profits.

was deemed strong enough to manage the region; instead, the West set up a colonizing enterprise, or "oligopoly" in the vein of the East India Company, wherein "companies were given exclusive rights and sovereign power to monopolize trade in particular goods for specific territories" (Mitchell 207). When the U.S. built alliances with the Taliban, they were also putting into motion a form of conservative political and social power to facilitate the development of a 1,000-mile pipeline. The West's tolerance, indeed, reliance upon, conservative Islamic regimes to remain the flow of oil defies the assumed relationship between West and Middle East broadcast in Western news media, especially after 9/11[151]. Benjamin Barber's popular *Jihad vs. McWorld: How Globalism and Tribalism are Reshaping the World,* posits generally that the world is now divided into the homogenizing force of capitalism and the tribes that oppose them. Mitchell argues that we are actually living in an age of "McJihad" in which the "mechanisms of what we call capitalism appear to operate, in certain critical instances, only by adopting the social force and moral authority of conservative Islamic movements," leading to "the crisis in Afghanistan [which] reflects the weaknesses of a form of empire, and of powers of capital, that can exist only by drawing on social forces that embody other energies, methods and goals[152] (203-204). What Mitchell's analysis suggests is that the economic and political relationships between the West and Middle East support the notion that

[151] Mitchell, Timothy. "McJihad." *Carbon Democracy*. Verso, 2011.

[152] While the U.S. was vocally disapproving of the Taliban before 9/11, they continued to maintain alliances with them in order to secure the flow of oil. Aramco financed the creation of Saudi Arabia through corporate/state acting companies akin to the British East India Company.

Islam is adopted by conservative politics and that politics adopts strains of religion, not the other way around. These economic and political relationships, so at odds with the narratives seeking to legitimate the War on Terror that this particular "Islamic terror" is a problem to be contained, contributes to the political schisms happening within Egypt and elsewhere, a source of frustrated revolutionary longing for Gameela, who struggles to find modes of representation in the Muslim Brotherhood for its conservative and exclusionary world view that denies her ability to engage because of her gender, but also for Rose as a Muslim woman living in New York City unable to achieve a Muslim cultural collectivity because of the policies of surveillance that make celebrations of Muslim culture and life uninhabitable. Their mutual struggles point firstly to the ways in which the War on Terror is global in its reach and secondly to the importance of a transnational feminist framework in assessing the specific ways that the concept of agency must be thought through relationally when addressing the subjectivity of Muslim women.